



WEEKLY HANSARD

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51ST PARLIAMENT

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TUESDAY, 7 JUNE 2005

Mr ACTING SPEAKER (Hon. J Fouras, Ashgrove) read prayers and took the chair at 9.30 am.

ASSENT TO BILLS

31 May 2005

The Honourable D. Fouras, MP
Acting Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

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: 31 May 2005

"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"

"A Bill for an Act to repeal the Debits Tax Act 1990, and for related matters "

"A Bill for an Act to amend the Freedom of Information Act 1992 and other legislation"

"A Bill for an Act to amend Acts administered by the Minister for Education and the Arts"

"A Bill for an Act to amend local government legislation"

"A Bill for an Act to amend the Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Act 1991"

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

PRIVILEGE

Comments by Member for Moggill

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: I refer to a letter dated 19 April 2005 from the Leader of the House about statements made in the House by the member for Moggill that he was not aware of any research by the CSIRO. The Leader of the House sought a determination from me as to whether the member's comments were deliberately misleading and warrant referral to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee. Honourable members would appreciate that the standard of proof required in cases of deliberately misleading parliament is a civil standard of proof on the balance of probabilities. But the proof must be of a very high order having regard to the serious nature of the allegations.

I have considered the member's comments made on 19 April 2005 and his subsequent personal explanation made in the House on 20 April 2005. I have also considered documents tabled by the Leader of the House on both days. It is important that the member's comments are considered in their proper context. Otherwise comments that are correct may, in isolation, sound factually incorrect.

Based on the most favourable interpretation of what I have before me, I conclude that, when the member for Moggill stated that he had no knowledge of CSIRO research, he was, in fact, referring to CSIRO research about air monitoring. The documents tabled show no evidence that the member was aware of any such research. On this basis, I do not consider that there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate the member intended to, or did in fact, mislead the House. I do not propose therefore to refer this matter to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee.

I would, however, remind members to be careful in their statements. In some circumstances even a factually correct statement can nevertheless be misleading. I repeat: in some circumstances even a factually correct statement can nevertheless be misleading.

PRIVILEGE

Comments by Member for Bundaberg

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: On 21 April 2005 the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and member for Callide wrote to me alleging that the member for Bundaberg committed the contempt of deliberately misleading the House during her contribution to a debate in the House on 19 April 2005. The debate was about treatment provided by Dr Patel at the Bundaberg Base Hospital. During the debate, the member for Bundaberg stated—

The claims by the opposition that have been made widely in the last week that I knew about Dr Patel six months ago and did nothing are blatant lies.

In support of his claim that this statement was misleading, the member for Callide tendered a copy of a letter a Bundaberg woman sent to the member for Bundaberg in August 2003 concerning the woman's health care at the Bundaberg Base Hospital. The letter mentions a medical examination by Dr J Patel.

The member for Callide also tendered for my consideration a copy of the member for Bundaberg's reply to the woman on 23 October 2003. In her letter, the member for Bundaberg states quite clearly that she had made representations to the then Minister for Health on the woman's behalf about her concerns with the Bundaberg Base Hospital. In short, the letters tendered by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition suggest that the member for Bundaberg was aware of Dr Patel six months ago and did in fact take action in making representations to the former Minister for Health.

I find that there is no basis to demonstrate a prima facie contempt of deliberately misleading the House and intend to take no further action in respect of the matter.

PETITIONS

The following honourable member has lodged a paper petition for presentation—

State Taxes

Mr Langbroek from 1,309 petitioners requesting the House to call on the Beattie State Labor Government to immediately abolish all six remaining unfair and inefficient State taxes the GST was meant to replace as part of the promise of the Beattie Government made to Queensland taxpayers to review such taxes.

The following honourable members have sponsored e-petitions which are now closed and presented—

Domestic Violence

Mrs Smith from 527 petitioners requesting the House to establish a Multi-Disciplinary Domestic Violence Death Review Board which would provide information on the nature and circumstance of each domestic violence death as well as possible gaps in legislation and/or service response, as with more information these deaths may be prevented.

Wild Rivers Bill

Mr O'Brien from 189 petitioners requesting the House to modify the Wild Rivers Bill and detailing three measures to modify the Wild Rivers Bill.

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—

31 May 2005—

- Twenty-Fifth Report by the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal dated 19 November 2004, pursuant to the Judges (Salaries and Allowances) Act 1967
- Judges' Salaries and Allowances Tribunal Determination (No. 1) 2005
- Letter, dated 30 May 2005, from the Premier and Minister for Trade (Mr Beattie) to the Clerk of the Parliament enclosing a copy of a letter from the Commonwealth Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Treaties listing proposed international treaty actions tabled in the Commonwealth Parliament on 11 May 2005 and the National Interest Analyses for each of the proposed treaty actions listed

1 June 2005—

- Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (Mr Lucas) to a paper petition presented by Ms Lee Long from 71 petitioners requesting better signage at the intersection of the Kennedy Highway and Kairi Road (Main Street) at Tolga

2 June 2005—

- Crime and Misconduct Commission—Review of the financial management guidelines for the Office of the Speaker—June 2005
- National Transport Commission—Annual Report for year ended 30 June 2004

3 June 2005—

- Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (Mr Lucas) to a paper petition presented by Mr Wellington from 45 petitioners requesting the House to amend the eligibility criteria for the school transport assistance scheme

6 June 2005—

- Report by the Minister for Education and the Arts (Ms Bligh), overseas visit to France, Switzerland, Italy and Denmark, 23 April—5 May 2005

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by the Clerk—

Vocational Education, Training and Employment Amendment Act 2005—

- Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 93

Electrical Safety Act 2002, State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999—

- Electrical Safety Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2005, No. 94

Nursing Act 1992—

- Nursing Amendment By-law (No. 1) 2005, No. 95

Building and Construction Industry Payments Act 2004, Domestic Building Contracts Act 2000, Queensland Building Services Authority Act 1991—

- Queensland Building Services Authority and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2005, No. 96

Legal Profession Act 2004—

- Legal Profession (Postponement) Regulation 2005, No. 97

Land Title Act 1994—

- Land Title Regulation 2005, No. 98

Local Government Act 1993—

- Local Government Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2005, No. 99

Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995—

- Workplace Health and Safety (Codes of Practice) Amendment Notice (No. 2) 2005, No. 100

Chemical Usage (Agricultural and Veterinary) Control Act 1988, State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999, Stock Act 1915—

- Stock Identification Regulation 2005, No. 101 and Explanatory Notes and Regulatory Impact Statement for No. 101

Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 2000—

- Vocational Education, Training and Employment Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2005, No. 102 and Explanatory Notes and Regulatory Impact Statement for No. 102

Acquisition of Land Act 1967, Building Units and Group Titles Act 1980, Coal Mining Safety and Health Act 1999, Explosives Act 1999, Foreign Ownership of Land Register Act 1988, Fossicking Act 1994, Land Act 1994, Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002, Land Title Act 1994, Mineral Resources Act 1989, Mining and Quarrying Safety and Health Act 1999, Petroleum Act 1923, Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004, Surveyors Act 2003, Valuation of Land Act 1944, Valuers Registration Act 1992, Vegetation Management Act 1999, Water Act 2000—

- Natural Resources and Mines Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2005, No. 103

Recreation Areas Management Act 1988—

- Recreation Areas Management Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2005, No. 104

Ambulance Service Act 1991, Building Act 1975, Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990—

- Emergency Services Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2005, No. 105

Rural and Regional Adjustment Act 1994—

- Rural and Regional Adjustment Amendment Regulation (No. 4) 2005, No. 106

Plant Protection Act 1989—

- Plant Protection (Approved Sugarcane Varieties) Amendment Declaration (No. 1) 2005, No. 107

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Freeleagus, Mr A

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.36 am): It is with the greatest regret that I advise the House of the death of Mr Alex Freeleagus, the Honorary Consul General of Greece. Alex Freeleagus, a man who was widely described as 'a friend to everyone', died on Friday, 3 June 2005 after a suspected heart attack.

Alex came from a very remarkable family, as you would know only too well, Mr Acting Speaker. His father, Christy Freeleagus, was the first Consul General for Greece from 1917 until his death in 1957. Alex then replaced him and continued as Consul General for an astonishing 48 years. During that time he did much to promote Greek-Australian relations. His lobbying efforts were instrumental in helping to bring the Olympic Games to Australia. He was also a key organiser of Expo 88, especially with regard to the very successful Greek pavilion.

Alex also excelled in his chosen profession, law. A highly successful corporate lawyer, he earned the respect of colleagues and opponents alike. In his spare time, Alex was an active reservist in the Royal Australian Air Force. He also loved the sea, sailing and snorkelling whenever the opportunity presented itself. Alex died whilst on a scuba diving holiday on Heron Island.

Such was Alex's reputation that he received many honours during his lifetime. Perhaps his most precious was the Silver Cross of the Royal Order of St George, awarded to him by the Greek government in 1973 in recognition of his services to the Greek community in Australia.

Although Alex never married, he firmly believed in family and was very close to his sisters and their husbands. Regarded by all who met him as a gentleman of the highest order, Alex was a truly great Queenslander. I am sure that the House will join with me in sending condolences to Alex's family.

On Friday, which is the day of his funeral, the government will be represented by the Leader of the House and the Minister for Education and the Arts, Anna Bligh, the member for South Brisbane. I know, Mr Acting Speaker, that you will also be attending the service. As I know the Leader of the Opposition would agree, Alex was a great bloke. I knew him really well and I was very sad, as all members were, to hear of his untimely death.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Council of Australian Governments

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.38 am): The Council of Australian Governments meeting in Canberra on Friday was the most constructive I have attended in the seven years that I have been Premier. Cooperative federalism won over political interests. The winners who count are Queenslanders and other Australians. I was particularly delighted to see sensible national agreements on two crucial issues: health and skilling. I was also very pleased to get ethanol onto COAG's radar and into the communique, as part of discussions about climate change and biofuels.

The Prime Minister and state and territory leaders also found common ground on serious national issues including export infrastructure, child pornography, Indigenous issues, the National Water Initiative, a national response plan for mass casualty incidents involving Australians overseas, surface transport security and national competition policy.

For the information of the House, I table a full copy of the communique, which all jurisdictions agreed to as an official record of the meeting. I also table the Productivity Commission's issues workforce paper, which is relevant to the health review. I also table a copy of my letter to the Prime Minister in relation to skilling where he agreed to propositions put by Queensland at that meeting. I seek leave to incorporate the rest of my speech in *Hansard* for the information of members.

Leave granted.

It is true that the Prime Minister and the States agreed to disagree on Industrial Relations (I will have more to say about Queensland's approach).

Also, I refused to budge on our tree clearing laws, which are single-handedly delivering the Federal Government's Kyoto targets and are delivering a fair \$150 million package to land holders (a package solely funded by the Queensland Government).

But the outcome on health, alone, would have made this meeting worthwhile.

Health

COAG agreed to establish a working party to look at a range of vital issues and the Prime Minister agreed to seek the fast-tracking of a Productivity Commission report into health workforce issues.

Shortly before COAG I and other state and territory leaders received a copy of a new Productivity Commission Issues Paper: "The Health Workforce".

It leaves not a skerrick of doubt that recruiting and holding medical professionals is a monumental issue for governments—not just in Australia, but also overseas.

The challenges are magnified many times over when we're talking about regional areas.

I hope that planting this on COAG's agenda may eventually lead to more health professionals in our regions.

On Friday I sent copies of this paper to the Commission of Inquiry into Bundaberg Hospital and the Forster review of Queensland Health.

I seek leave to table it, and I will also highlight some of the compelling facts of particular relevance for regional Members.

A table on page 17 shows about two-thirds of Australians live in our major cities, compared to about three-quarters of health professionals.

This imbalance is tipping increasingly in favour of big city dwellers—so regional Australians are increasingly short-changed on health professionals.

The paper says Australia has been drawing on overseas-trained doctors, and that other nations face actual or looming shortages.

"Thus global competition for health professionals will intensify" (page 16).

COAG also agreed to smooth out the bumps in delivery of health services between the Commonwealth and states, so that—for instance—people with problems that could be treated by a general practitioner don't need to visit a hospital accident and emergency department.

Skills

We also reached a constructive agreement on the skills shortage—the most worrying crisis for Australia's economy.

We agreed with a proposal from the Prime Minister to work together to ensure qualifications are accepted across state borders.

With about 1000 people a week migrating to Qld, we want to encourage qualified people who will take part in building the Smart State.

For some time Tom Barton and I have been discussing ways to improve vocational education and training—and we will soon launch a green paper on this.

Many of the ideas for strengthening our system were taken up by COAG, after I sent a proposal to the Prime Minister last week.

I table a copy of this letter.

Among other things, the Queensland plan will pin-point the industries and regions of greatest need, and unclog the s-bends that are slowing the entry of qualified people into the workforce.

It will lead to more skilled workers when and where they are needed, so that the skills shortage does not become a tripwire for economic growth.

Queensland's plan includes examining ways to:

- reduce the time served by apprentices in some trades, so long as the apprentices are properly qualified. For example, this may involve reducing some apprenticeships from 4 years to 3, and giving high-achieving apprentices opportunities to become qualified more quickly. It will fast-track the entry of professionals into the workforce and give talented young people more incentives to do apprenticeships;
- encourage trade assistants to become apprentices, by recognising prior learning; and
- encourage qualified trades people in professions not hit by shortages to transfer to related trades where there are shortages, by recognising prior learning.

In line with our proposal, Australian governments also unanimously agreed to:

- work together to analyse skill shortages by industry and by region;
- assess Federal and State funding arrangements to make sure funding is going where the shortages are most acute, in the trades and jobs demanding high levels of technical proficiency;
- develop new approaches to the delivery of training needed urgently by industries; and
- work directly with employers on workforce strategies to tackle enterprise skills.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Office of the Speaker

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.39 am): As members would be aware, on 2 June 2005 the Crime and Misconduct Commission released its report on the review of the Financial Management Guidelines for the Office of the Speaker. The report makes 28 recommendations. My government fully supports 19 of these recommendations and supports seven in part. Only two recommendations are not supported in any way, and I will address these in turn.

First, the requirement to treat domestic travel in the manner proposed in recommendation 12 is considered unnecessary in the context of the stronger internal controls outlined in section 5.2.4.5 of the Speaker's guidelines. The government considers that the Speaker should table information on domestic travel of more than five days duration as a note to a report of office expenses to be presented to parliament on a six-monthly basis. It is currently 12 months; we are going to make it six months. This will provide for a practical and effective way to strengthen accountability and indeed make these guidelines amongst the toughest in Australia. In 1998 I implemented a similar system of reporting for all ministerial expenses—these are the six-monthly ones—and these audited reports continue to provide an unprecedented level of transparency.

Second, the government does not support the commission's recommendation that the Clerk of the Parliament report significant noncompliance by the Speaker to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee. The commission's recommendation relies on a precedent about the ability of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards—a nonmember—in the UK House of Commons to refer members to the relevant committee. This appears to be a different power structure and dynamic to the relationship between the Clerk of the Parliament and the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee.

The relevant committee in the UK House of Commons, the Committee on Standards and Privileges, is appointed by the House to oversight the work of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards. The Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards does not appear to refer matters to the committee as indicated in the CMC report. Rather, it appears to be the responsibility of the parliamentary commissioner to report to the committee on findings about breaches of the code of conduct of members of parliament.

There appears to be no particular benefit in giving the Clerk of the Parliament the power to refer the Speaker's noncompliance to the committee. In any case, the relevant referral agencies would be the Crime and Misconduct Commission or the Queensland Audit Office. The government considers that the parliament should be responsible for referring matters to the committee. I want to make it clear that none of this should be interpreted as a criticism of the Clerk in any way because that is certainly not the case. There is no criticism of the Clerk at all.

Any required changes to standing orders or guidelines to effect this change will be made. The government considers that the Premier, as the responsible minister, and not the Clerk should approve the guidelines and any amendments. The government agrees that the Premier should table these in the House.

In regard to the Speaker's overseas travel, the government agrees that it is appropriate that the parliament be informed of proposed overseas travel. Therefore, the government proposes that prior to any overseas travel the Premier table in parliament his approval for the travel, including the destinations, purpose of travel and length of travel.

In regard to recommendation 11, the government considers that the Speaker should be able to undertake duties on behalf of executive government whilst travelling overseas, provided the business is ancillary to the primary purpose of the trip and is deemed necessary by the Premier.

The commission makes some recommendations which indicate that the guidelines are deficient with respect to the receipt of gifts and hospitality benefits. The government agrees that these sections require redrafting and proposes that gifts and benefits policies mirror the ministerial handbook as far as possible.

I will table in a minute my government's full response to the commission's recommendations for the information of the House. They were approved by cabinet yesterday. I had a brief conversation with the Clerk this morning, and I have now written to the Clerk of the Parliament asking him to finalise the drafting of the new guidelines so they can be approved and implemented as soon as possible. The new guidelines will provide tough new rules which will reflect contemporary accountability standards for the Office of the Speaker and provide a more efficient and transparent framework. In fact, these guidelines will be the toughest in Australia.

For the information of the House, I table a copy of my letter written to the Clerk this morning in which I say that I wish to advise that I propose to table the government response. I table that for the information of the House. I have referred the guidelines to the Clerk to do the appropriate drafting. He will then come back and provide the detail. In terms of recommendations, I have set them all out very clearly. I seek leave to have them incorporated in *Hansard* so members can see them for themselves.

Leave granted.

Government Response to the Crime and Misconduct Commission Recommendations contained in the Review of the Financial Management Guidelines for the Office of the Speaker.

Recommendation 1

That consideration be given to the inclusion of a preamble. An example of a suitable preamble could be: 'These Guidelines set out the specific financial management policies, procedures and practices to be adopted in respect of the Office of the Speaker. The nature of the inherent responsibilities and accountabilities is such that there is a significant community expectation of trust in the interpretation and implementation of these guidelines by the Office of the Speaker. To ensure the maintenance of public trust in this significant office of the parliament, these guidelines should be regarded as minimum levels of internal controls. To ensure appropriate accountability, a spirit of maximum integrity should prevail in any areas of uncertainty.'

Government Response

The recommendation is supported in full.

Recommendation 2

That the responsibility for approval, initiation of review and consultation prior to review rest with the Clerk of the Parliament as accountable officer. It should also be the responsibility of the Clerk, having given approval, to inform the Premier, as the appropriate minister, of new guidelines and any amendments. There is a clear public benefit in the guidelines and any amendments to them being made public. Therefore, it is recommended that the Premier, as the appropriate minister, table the guidelines and any amendments made to them from time to time in the parliament when received.

Government Response

The recommendation is supported in part.

The Premier, as the responsible Minister, should approve the guidelines. However, the government supports that the Clerk should carry the responsibility for initiating reviews of the guidelines and undertaking consultation with relevant parties. The government also supports the Premier tabling the guidelines and any approved amendments to ensure that the Parliament is adequately informed of any relevant sections that may impact.

Recommendation 3

That, whenever a change occurs within the Queensland ministerial handbook, the Ministerial Services unit within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet advise the Clerk of the Parliament, so that the need for any applicable amendment to the Speaker's guidelines can be assessed.

Government Response

The recommendation is supported in full.

Recommendation 4

That 'may' in paragraph 3, section 4.1, of the draft revised Guidelines be changed to 'must'.

Government Response

The recommendation is supported in full.

Recommendation 5

That, in the process of further refining, amending and ultimately approving these Guidelines, the requirement as stated in dot point 3 of section 4.4

- that 'The Speaker must personally authorise and certify (in writing) all expenditure incurred directly for themselves, including travel and hospitality'
- be clearly indicated and preserved, to ensure that there is a clear understanding that the responsibility and any ultimate accountability for such expenditure rests directly with the Speaker.

Government Response

The recommendation is supported in full.

Recommendation 6

That additional examples of allowable and non-allowable expenditure be included in the Guidelines wherever possible.

Government Response

The recommendation is supported in full.

Recommendation 7

That the principle 'the expense must be properly authorised' be also included within the current expense management 'probity principles'.

Government Response

The recommendation is supported in full.

Recommendation 8

That sections 5.2.4.1 and 5.2.5.1 of the Guidelines each include the statement that 'claims for reasonable actual costs ... will be met.'

Government Response

The recommendation is supported in full.

Recommendation 9

That the Guidelines include a definition, description or examples of what the term 'reasonable' would represent.

Government Response

The recommendation is supported in full.

Recommendation 10

That the Guidelines include a provision to the following effect:

'At least four weeks before any proposed overseas travel, the Speaker table in parliament an advice of the proposed travel. The advice must incorporate the following detail:

- objectives of the visit
- the Parliamentary Service (or other) program or activity anticipated to benefit from the visit
- the anticipated explicit benefit from the visit for the program or activity that would benefit from the visit
- a draft agenda, including countries and/or centres to be visited, dates and times for all travel, and sufficient detail to substantiate the official nature of the journey
- details of accompanying people whose costs are to be met from public funds, and the purpose for their attendance
- total estimated cost
- a clear indication of any personal component of the travel, including any personal leave (see s. 5.2.5.8).

The Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly should be amended to enable the Speaker to table this advice "out of session" if required.'

Government Response

The recommendation is supported in part.

The government agrees that due to the unique role of the Speaker with respect to the Parliament, it is appropriate that Parliament be informed of proposed overseas travel.

Prior to any overseas travel by the Speaker the Premier will table in Parliament his approval for the overseas travel, including the destinations, purpose of travel and length of travel. In addition the Speaker will be required to table within one month of his return, a full report detailing:

- benefits obtained from the overseas travel;
- any duties undertaken on behalf of Queensland;
- the final itinerary, including countries visited, dates of travel, and sufficient detail to substantiate the official nature of the journey;
- details of accompanying persons (including the spouse) whose costs are to be met from public funds and purpose for their attendance; and
- details of any personal component of the travel.

Details of the total estimated cost of the travel are to be included in the report and/or the actual costs are to be reported in a report of office expenses to be presented to Parliament on a six monthly basis.

The proposed change to the Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly is supported.

Recommendation 11

That the matter of whether the Speaker should be requested to undertake any activities on behalf of executive government while travelling overseas be reassessed; and that, if this practice of requesting the Speaker to undertake duties on behalf of the State of Queensland while travelling overseas were to continue, the details of the request and duties should be tabled in the advice to Parliament by the Speaker.

Government Response

The recommendation is supported in part.

Value for public money from overseas travel by the Speaker can be enhanced if additional business on behalf of Government is undertaken at minimal additional cost. Any Government business would be ancillary to the primary purpose of travel and would need to be deemed necessary and approved by the Premier.

As stated in the response to recommendation 10, details of any activities undertaken on behalf of Government will be provided in a detailed report to Parliament within one month of conclusion of overseas travel.

Recommendation 12

That, at least two weeks before any proposed domestic travel of more than five days' duration, the Speaker must table in parliament an advice of the proposed travel. Details of all shorter trips are to be included in a schedule annexed to the annual report of expenditure required under section 2.3.2 of the Guidelines. The advice must incorporate details comparable to those listed in Recommendation 10.

Government Response

The recommendation is not supported.

The requirement to treat domestic travel in this manner is considered unnecessary in the context of stronger internal controls outlined in Section 5.2.4.5 of the guidelines. As an alternative to recommendation 12, the Government proposes that the Speaker be required to table information on domestic travel of more than 5 days' duration as part of a report of office expenses to be presented to Parliament on a six monthly basis.

The requirement to include a schedule of all other domestic travel to these reports of expenditure is considered unnecessary.

Recommendation 13

Where domestic travel of more than five days' duration, or overseas travel, by the Speaker's spouse is proposed, the advice tabled in parliament in reference to the Speaker's proposed travel must also set out:

- the specific benefit to Queensland of the spouse's travelling; and
- a separate detailed itinerary for the spouse.

Government Response

The recommendation is supported in part.

Within the context of the response to recommendations 10 and 12, the Government supports the notion that public expenditure on spouse travel must be justifiable and the guidelines should reflect this.

Rewording of section 5.2.4.4 is also supported to reflect that domestic travel by the spouse must be for an official purpose. A section titled 'spouse expenses' under section 5 should also be included to clarify that public expenditure on a spouse is not a form of entitlement but must be for a justifiable official purpose. Example wording exists in the Ministerial Handbook.

Spouse travel will be subject to the same approval requirements and be tabled by the Premier in Parliament as part of the Speaker's travel approval.

Recommendation 14

That a requirement to include 'a clear indication of any personal component of the travel' be added to sections 5.2.4.5 and 5.2.5.7 of the Guidelines.

Government Response

The recommendation is supported in full.

However it is considered that the words 'any personal component' are also open to interpretation. Further refinement by including an example is required to ensure that compliance is not expected at an unreasonably detailed level. Normal personal benefits ancillary to travel should not require justification, e.g. free time at night, meals.

Recommendation 15

That overseas travel reporting requirements as detailed in section 5.2.5.9 of the draft revised Guidelines be retained with at least the current specified minimum requirements.

Government Response

The recommendation is supported in full.

Recommendation 16

That the Guidelines contain a clear policy statement indicating that, should there be non-compliance with section 5.2.5.9 of the draft revised Guidelines, the travel will be deemed the Speaker's personal travel and all costs associated with the travel, including spouse travel costs, will become a personal debt of the Speaker (not the Office of the Speaker). This debt should be pursued through the normal debt recovery processes and the relevant authorities (e.g. the Queensland Audit Office) should be advised.

Government Response

The recommendation is supported in full.

However it is considered there may be occasions where for good reason the Speaker may not have complied strictly within the required time frames (eg. some information may not be available, illness). In these exceptional circumstances the Clerk of the Parliament should be allowed discretion not to recover funds and to provide a suitable extension. Normal documentation standards would require such a decision to be adequately documented for audit purposes.

Recommendation 17

That, with respect to the certification requirements for official functions:

- the Guidelines include some examples of what would be allowable and non-allowable official functions
- the 'Office of the Speaker functions certification' form in Appendix 4 of the draft revised Guidelines be modified to expand the heading 'Nature of function' to 'Nature and official purpose of function'.

- the Guidelines incorporate a sample 'best practice' completed version of the 'Office of the Speaker functions certification' form in Appendix 4.

Government Response

The recommendation is supported in part.

The principles underpinning the recommendation are supported. However, due to the wide variety of functions and the need to keep the guidelines to a workable size, the Government believes that the guidelines would be more appropriately strengthened in relation to a best practice example by:

- including a policy statement at the beginning of section 5.2.6 (Hospitality) similar to that contained in the Ministerial Handbook;
- the Parliamentary Service providing training to the Office of the Speaker including providing one or more best practice examples; and
- the Parliamentary Service monitoring compliance of the certification and advising the Office of the Speaker as compliance or documentation issues arise.

Recommendation 18

That details of official functions held during the year be included in a schedule annexed to the Statement for Public Disclosure referred to in section 2.3.2 of the Guidelines. At a minimum the information should disclose:

- date of function
- nature of function (purpose)
- total cost of function
- class of attendees (not all actual attendees).

Government Response

The recommendation is supported in part.

Information on hospitality by the Speaker is to be presented to Parliament in summary form on a six monthly basis as part of a report of all office expenses.

Recommendation 19

That the Guidelines include a definition, description or examples of what the term 'appropriate' would represent.

Government Response

The recommendation is supported in full.

In addition, it is considered that the understanding of what is appropriate will be enhanced by a policy statement at the beginning of section 5.2.6 (Hospitality) similar to that contained in the Ministerial Handbook.

Recommendation 20

That the need for the inclusion of the 'sensitiveness of specific function' provision be reassessed, to ensure that the need for accountability and transparency is not unnecessarily diminished.

Government Response

The recommendation is supported in full.

However, if such an occasion were to occur in the future, systems would need to be flexible enough to enable the Clerk of the Parliament to maintain such records confidentially.

Recommendation 21

That the following be considered as a revised section 5.2.6.2:

'5.2.6.2 Minor hospitality

The Speaker is provided a minor hospitality allowance of \$2250 per annum, to incur minor entertainment expenses that are reasonably and necessarily associated with the duties of the office. This allocation is to be incurred within the precinct through the Parliamentary Catering Division.

The allocation may be utilised at the Speaker's discretion for matters such as:

- official drinks for the mini-bar in the Speaker's office
- official minor meals or hospitality provided by the Speaker where the cost does not warrant documentary certification requirements.'

Government Response

The recommendation is supported in part.

In line with other recommendations in the report the Government believes that section 5.2.6.2 Minor hospitality should be amended to

'The Speaker is provided a minor hospitality allowance of \$2250 per annum, to incur minor entertainment expenses that are reasonably and necessarily associated with the duties of the office. This allocation is to be incurred within the precinct through the Parliamentary Catering Division.'

Further clarification should be included by way of specific examples.

Recommendation 22

That a definition, description or examples of the term 'reasonably and necessarily associated with those duties' be included.

Government Response

The recommendation is supported in full.

Recommendation 23

That all future purchases from the Parliamentary Services 'bottle shop area' by the Speaker be charged to the Speaker's personal account.

Government Response

The recommendation is supported in full.

However for administrative efficiency for the Speaker and the Parliamentary Service, a process should also be considered which would allow the Speaker to clearly identify at the time of purchase if the expense is to be charged directly to the Speaker's minor entertainment allowance on that occasion.

Recommendation 24

That the 'Declaration of official gifts received' in Appendix 2 of the Guidelines be amended to include:

- a record of 'approved decision' in the 'Gift to the parliament' form
- a record of 'approved decision' in the 'Gift to the Speaker or immediate family' form
- a record of 'the occasion' (e.g. an indication of why a gift was relevant or required).

Government Response

The recommendation is supported in full.

The Government considers that the guidelines should contain enhanced gifts and hospitality benefits sections that mirror the Ministerial Handbook as far as possible.

Recommendation 25

That consideration be given to including a policy and process guide and record form on the 'disposal of gifts' similar to Appendix 18 in the Queensland Ministerial Handbook.

Government Response

The recommendation is supported in full.

The Government considers that the guidelines should contain enhanced gifts and hospitality benefits sections that mirror the Ministerial Handbook as far as possible.

Recommendation 26

That the policy and procedures for the effective and accountable management of offers of honorary membership be dealt with within a gifts and benefits policy and procedure that takes full recognition of intangible gifts.

Government Response

The recommendation is supported in full.

The Government considers that the guidelines should contain enhanced gifts and hospitality benefits sections that mirror the Ministerial Handbook as far as possible.

Recommendation 27

That the statement within section 6.1 that 'Honorary membership of a body should not be accepted if that body pursues policies and practices which are out of line with government policy' be reconsidered, to ensure there is no potential conflict with the 'independent' role of the Speaker.

Government Response

The recommendation is supported in full.

It is considered that the recommendation is sound and the following wording may be more appropriate:

'Honorary membership of a body should not be accepted if that body pursues policies and practices which are out of line with Parliamentary principles or ethical standards as set out in the Code of Ethical Standards, Legislative Assembly of Queensland'.

Recommendation 28

That necessary changes be made to parliamentary procedures to allow the Clerk of the Parliament to report significant non-compliance that the Speaker refuses to correct to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee.

Government Response

The recommendation is not supported.

The Government considers that the Parliament should be responsible for referring matters to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee. Standing Orders will be amended to provide for this referral.

There appears to be no particular benefit in giving this power to the Clerk of the Parliament as should there be non-compliance with the guidelines, the relevant agencies for referral by the Clerk of the Parliament are the CMC or Audit Office.

Mr BEATTIE: I might also advise the House that, in relation to trips undertaken by the Speaker which did not have my prior approval, I have written to the Speaker on 30 May in the following terms—

As you would be aware, the issue of repayment of expenses incurred by you for overseas travel undertaken in contravention of the 1997 Guidelines for the Financial Management of the Office of the Speaker has been raised in the Parliament and was referred to the Crime and Misconduct Commission which indicated it did not have jurisdiction over this matter.

In order for me to assess this issue further, I request that you provide me with a detailed report on your overseas trips as a matter of urgency. I would be grateful for this report for the purpose of assessing the public value of your travel. I would also welcome you seeking my approval retrospectively for those trips undertaken without my approval.

I table that letter for the information of the House. Yesterday the Deputy Premier and I had a meeting with the Speaker. The Speaker has provided me with an initial draft in response to my letter. When I receive the final response, I will then make an assessment and report to the House. I should advise the House that, in his correspondence to me, the difficulty the Speaker had is that quite a number of the documents are with the CMC because of this investigation. He is hoping to retrieve them. I will then report to the House on those trips.

As part of my research, however, I did go back and have a look at a report tabled by then speaker Neil Turner in this House which I will table for the information of the House. In it Mr Turner states—

I table details of my visit to the United States of America and the United Kingdom to attend the Forty-Sixth Parliamentary Seminar at Westminster from 4th March 1997 and 15th March 1997.

I departed Australia on 22nd February 1997, arriving at Washington DC via Los Angeles on 22nd February 1997.

During my stay in Washington DC, I visited the Australian Embassy and held talks with senior officials including the Australian Ambassador of the United States, Mr Andrew Peacock. I also visited the US Congress for further meetings.

I flew from Washington DC on 25th February 1997 arriving at Boston Airport on 25th February 1997. I visited the State Parliament of Massachusetts, holding talks with the Lieutenant Governor, Mr Argeo Paul Cellucci.

On the afternoon of the 25th February 1997 I commenced a private visit until the 2nd March 1997, when I departed New York for London to attend the Seminar.

On the 3rd March 1997 I visited Queensland House and met with Mr D A McManus, Agent-General for Queensland. The conference commenced on the 4th March 1997, finishing 15th March 1997, and I enclose a copy of the relevant itinerary.

I departed London via Singapore to Australia on 15th March 1997, arriving in Brisbane 16th March 1997.

That is it. I table that. The itinerary attached is the one for the actual seminar. All I can say to the House is that that level of reporting will not be acceptable when I examine what the Speaker has done with his trips. So let me make that very clear. What that report shows is that people in glass houses should not throw stones. As I have made clear, I will not accept—and the tough guidelines I have brought in this morning clearly illustrate—breaches of these rules without appropriate justification. But if those opposite regard that as an adequate report then they have got to be kidding.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I just say to everybody: make your own judgment. When I come back, I will make a determination of whether the trips were in the public interest or not. All I am saying is that I would not have accepted that. Let the judgment speak for itself.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr Seeney: You accepted nothing!

Mr BEATTIE: They do not like it.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! I would like the House to return to some sense of order. Member for Callide, I do not want to have to issue numbers in this place.

Mr BEATTIE: I have made my point, Mr Acting Speaker, and it has been well made. I am going to move on.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Members' Entitlements Handbook and Members' Office Support Handbook

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.48 am): On Thursday, 9 June 2005 I will be submitting some proposed amendments to the *Members' Entitlements Handbook* and the *Members' Office Support Handbook* to the Governor in Council for consideration and approval. Once approved, the amendments will apply to all members from 1 July this year, so it is important that I advise the House of these as soon as possible. The proposed amendments will amalgamate a number of existing members' entitlements into a single miscellaneous allowance. This will make the delivery of allowances to members more administratively efficient.

The current newspaper/publication allowance, the postage allowance and the car allowance will all be incorporated into the miscellaneous allowance that will be indexed for CPI, which is the normal practice. There will be no net increase in entitlements for members as a result of this amalgamation; it is just putting them in one area.

In addition, it is proposed that members—including ministers—no longer be provided with mobile phones from parliament, as outlined in the *Members' Office Support Handbook*. Members currently have up to \$1,500 in mobile phone calls paid by the Parliamentary Service. In future they will receive the allowance of \$1,500 per annum which will be indexed for CPI and will be included in the miscellaneous allowance. Members will be able to keep their current mobile phone, as they are due to be replaced shortly and the book value is negligible, but no additional funds will be provided for ongoing mobile phone replacement. Members will have to buy their own phones out of the \$1,500.

Before 30 June 2005 members will need to decide whether they will continue to use their current mobile phones. Those members wishing to continue using their current phone will need to contact a telecommunications provider and organise the transfer of the number and billing arrangements. Those members not wishing to use their current mobile phone will need to contact a telecommunications provider and organise a new phone and plan their own billing arrangements. The Parliamentary Service will continue to meet the costs on the current phone service until 30 June 2005 in accordance with existing entitlements. However, from 1 July members will receive their allowance as part of the miscellaneous allowance and the parliament will no longer meet any mobile call costs.

I reiterate that all proposed changes to members' entitlements that I have outlined today will be effective from 1 July 2005. They will be paid on a six-monthly basis in advance on 1 July and 1 January of each year, and they will be indexed for the CPI annually. Formal notification of the changes will be provided to members as soon as possible following Governor in Council approval. I table a copy of the letter that I have written to the Clerk that sets out the details.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Greats

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.51 am): I advise the House that on 31 May I was pleased to announce another five Queensland Greats. They include Mr Bill Brown OAM, Dr Tony Gould AM, Dr Aila Keto AO, Mr Terry Jackman AM and Mr Rod Laver MBE. As a tribute, I seek leave to have details incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Now in its fifth year, our Queensland Greats program recognises significant contributions to our community and the development of the Smart State.

The awards honour individuals who share the vision and ideals of Queensland and who have played significant roles in our history and development.

These people are our living legends and they fully deserve public recognition.

The five new names join the 20 which have already been engraved on plaques and placed in Roma St Parkland.

The 2005 Queensland Greats are:

Mr Bill Brown OAM

Bill Brown, 92, is Australia's oldest living Test cricketer. Bill was a team-mate of the late Sir Don Bradman, and a member of the legendary Invincibles.

He made his debut for New South Wales against Queensland at the Gabba in November 1932, run out for a duck without facing a ball. He was Wisden Cricketer of the Year (1939), averaged nearly 47 in Tests, and over 50 in 1st-Class cricket, making 39 1st class hundreds. He would have undoubtedly played more Test cricket if it were not for the war.

In June of 2000, Bill was awarded the Order of Australia for service to cricket as a player, selector, coach and administrator and for his involvement with the cricket charity Lord's Taverners, which raises money to help disadvantaged young people.

Dr Tony Gould AM

Tony Gould has been a driving force behind the development of the performing arts in Queensland for more than 20 years.

In July 1979, following a world-wide search, Tony was named Director of Queensland's \$130 million Performing Arts Complex at the Queensland Cultural Centre.

Under Tony's direction, the Complex has become known internationally for its contribution to the development of social-justice performing arts programs, arts education activities and special initiatives for the elderly, the young, the disabled and the disadvantaged of the community.

In recent years, Tony has left another lasting legacy as artistic director of the past five Brisbane Festivals. Tony believes this has been his greatest contribution to Queensland.

Under the leadership and vision of Tony Gould, many artists and new companies have been nurtured and have flourished and the arts in Queensland are a thriving and dynamic industry.

Dr Aila Keto AO

A recognised authority on World Heritage, Dr Aila Keto helped achieve the landmark closure in 1988 of the rainforest timber industry in North Queensland and the subsequent end of all rainforest-logging on Queensland public land in 1994.

Dr Keto's determination also helped achieve three successful World Heritage listings—the Wet Tropics, Fraser Island and the Central Eastern Rainforest Reserves of Australia.

The listing of Queensland's Wet Tropics as a World Heritage site in 1988 saved 1.5 million hectares of land, some of it containing the oldest blueprints for life on earth.

In 1999, Dr Keto effectively preserved another 1.25 million hectares of Queensland hardwood forests when she helped negotiate the historic South East Queensland Forest Agreement.

An Adjunct Professor since 2002 in University of Queensland's School of Agronomy and Horticulture, she also helped develop the Centre for Native Floriculture at the University of Queensland Gatton Campus.

Mr Terry Jackman AM

Terry Jackman is one of Queensland's leading business identities and has been an influential figure in the growth of the State's tourism industry.

Terry commenced work at the age of fifteen for Birch, Carroll & Coyle Limited, Brisbane, where he worked for 20 years, the last five as the company's Chief Executive.

In 1989, Terry formed Pacific Cinemas Pty Ltd, now the largest privately owned cinema exhibition group in Australia.

Terry is the long-term Chairman of Tourism Queensland. In this position he has played a central role in the continued success and growth of the Queensland tourism industry.

Mr Rod Laver MBE

Born August 9, 1938 in Marlborough (near Rockhampton), Rod Laver left school at age 15 to pursue a career in tennis. His maiden international triumph came during his first trip abroad in 1956, when he won the US Junior Championship at age 17.

Three years later he was ready to take his place among the world's best when he won the Australian singles and doubles titles and was runner-up at the Wimbledon Championship. The Australian victories were the first of Laver's 20 major titles in singles, doubles and mixed doubles, placing him fifth among all-time male winners.

Laver turned professional in 1962 and in that same year became the first male Grand Slam winner in tennis since Don Budge in 1938. He won the Grand Slam again in 1969, the only person ever to do so twice.

During a 23-year career that spanned the amateur and open eras, he won 47 pro titles in singles and was runner-up 21 times.

In 1970 Laver was honoured with the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for his services to sport. He was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame in 1981 and the Sports Australia Hall of Fame in 1985.

PREVIOUS QUEENSLAND GREATS

2004 Greats: Professor Julie H Campbell, Hugh Cornish, Dr Richard Lewandowski, William Robinson, Nick Xynias AO BEM

2003 Greats: Professor Peter Doherty AC, Mr David Malouf AO, Mr Reginald Murray Williams AO, Mr Angelo Puglisi, Dr Evelyn Scott AO

2002 Greats: Mr Wayne Bennett OAM, Dr Clem Jones AO, Ms Olga Miller, Professor Lawrie Powell AC, Professor David Tudehope AM

2001 Greats: Dr Robert Anderson OAM, Dr Joe Baker OBE, Ms Diane Cilento, Sister Angela Mary Doyle AO, Mr Ted Smout OAM

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**Suncorp Queenslander and Suncorp Young Queenslander of the Year Awards**

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.51 am): Yesterday I also had the pleasure of announcing that the 2005 Suncorp Queenslander of the Year is Dr Geoff Hill. I was also delighted to announce that the 2005 Suncorp Young Queenslander of the Year was Alen-Igor O'Hran. I seek leave to have a tribute incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

This is Queensland Week and it's a time in which we, as Queenslanders, celebrate the people, places and achievements of our great state.

Yesterday, on Queensland Day, I was pleased to announce the recipients of the 2005 Suncorp Queenslander and Suncorp Young Queenslander of the Year Awards.

These Awards recognise Queenslanders for their outstanding achievements and contributions to the Smart State.

The 2005 Suncorp Queenslander of the Year is Dr Geoff Hill.

Dr Hill has made an enormous contribution to science and medicine not only in Queensland, but nationally and on the international stage.

He is a specialist in bone marrow transplants, which remains the only curative treatment for patients with a number of malignant conditions, particularly leukaemia.

But Dr Hill isn't just concerned with the treatment. He wants to find a cure for it.

Through his internationally renowned research, he has provided substantial detail on immune response to bone marrow transplants and his work has added to the advances in the field.

His work has now progressed to multi-centre Australia-wide trials, led from Brisbane.

He has published numerous articles in international medical and science journals and his work has provided paradigm shifts in the understanding of transplantation for the treatment of malignant disorders.

Dr Hill also continues to teach clinical medicine to medical students and immunology to science students and post-doctoral Fellows and share his extraordinary knowledge.

Dr Hill also provides expert sub-specialist medical care for desperately sick patients with leukaemia and lymphoma who require bone marrow transplantation at the Royal Brisbane Hospital.

I was also delighted to announce the 2005 Suncorp Young Queenslander of the Year, Alen-Igor O'Hran.

Alen arrived in Australia as a refugee from the former Yugoslavia over eight years ago.

Born and raised in Sarajevo, he was forced to flee the war torn country at the age of eleven.

Without either of his parents he was sent to Belgrade where he waited to be reunited with his brother, who had also escaped Sarajevo some months later.

Together with his older brother, Alen fled and sought refuge in Poland where he lived for nearly four years without his parents.

After finally being reunited with his mother, they arrived in Australia to start a new life in 1996.

Since arriving in Australia, Alen has worked very hard and he is an inspiration to all young Queenslanders.

After graduating from high school, Alen commenced tertiary study and has now graduated with First Class Honours in Law as well as a Distinction Degree in Business and the Dean's Award for Excellence.

Since graduating, Alen has chosen to make Rockhampton his home and has been appointed an Associate to the Honourable Justice Dutney, of the Supreme Court of Queensland.

Suncorp contributes a \$2000 bursary to the Young Queenslander of the Year to help them continue their studies.

Alen is currently undertaking his Master's degree and I'm sure the bursary will come in handy.

This is the 16th year Suncorp has been involved in the Awards and I commend them for their great support.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**Aviation and Tourism Industries**

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.52 am): Just last Thursday the Minister for State Development and Innovation announced that Jetstar would establish an A320 flight crew based in Cairns. The airline will base three aircraft at Cairns International Airport within three years. This move will create 135 jobs. The carrier explained that the reason for its decision was to be in a position to operate additional domestic services into tropical north Queensland as well as develop new routes. It was a great announcement. I seek leave to have details incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

It's predicted that international tourism arrivals to Australia over the next decade will grow at an annual rate of 5.8%.

By the year 2014, Australia can expect 9.3 million visitors.

We want those visitors to see Queensland not just as a good choice to visit, but their first choice!

But we have to have the right combination of infrastructure, products and services to attract and accommodate this growth.

That's why a new Queensland Tourism Strategy will be developed to establish a clear and common vision for the sustainable growth of tourism over the next 10 years.

Industry will be taking a leading role in developing the strategy and we'll work in partnership, with a joint Industry/Government Steering Committee overseeing the work.

There will also be a significant consultation process, with a series of 17 regional workshops around the state, publication of an information brochure and a special website.

In relation to aviation, there has been much happening in aviation—a key to Smart State and there's plenty happening.

Aviation has played a major role as one of the foundations of our tourism industry.

In the past two years, new international services into Queensland have boosted seat capacity by 37%, contributing \$573 million in direct spending.

There was a 20% increase in domestic seat capacity in Queensland between May 2004 and May 2005.

This represents an extra 37,500 seats a week.

Companies moving ahead with expansion plans include Boeing, Virgin Blue—Operations and Maintenance, Australian Aerospace, Sikorsky, Smiths Aerospace, Raytheon and Australian Airlines.

The Alteon/Virgin Blue simulator centre and the Qantas Heavy Maintenance Facility at Brisbane Airport are two recent additions to our industry.

Aviation Australia, the \$15.2 million training centre we established in 2001 has been so successful, it is to be used as a model for training centres for other Queensland industries.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Angel Flight Awards

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.52 am): Last Thursday I had the privilege of presenting the inaugural awards recognising some of the wonderful people involved with the Angel Flight charity. I previously informed the House that this presentation would be held on 2 June. Today I want to table a list of the recipients of the Star Awards, Angel Flight pilot awards and Earth Angel awards, which I do. I highlight that Queensland based Angel Flight Australia coordinates non-emergency flights. It is a great organisation. I seek leave to have details incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Last Thursday, I had the privilege of presenting the inaugural awards recognising some of the wonderful people involved with the Angel Flight charity.

I have previously informed the House that this presentation would be held on June 2 and today I want to provide details of the recipients of the Star Awards, Angel Flight pilot awards and Earth Angel awards.

Queensland-based Angel Flight Australia co-ordinates non-emergency flights.

The emphasis is on transporting relatives or carers to be with family members who have been transferred to hospital some distance away. Or, they transport patients who otherwise would have faced long and arduous car trips to a hospital.

All the flights are free for the patients and their family members.

Angel Flight has grown from 88 volunteer pilots when it started in April 2003 to 1,200 pilots today.

In addition, there are 900 volunteers on the ground who do things like provide transport to and from airports, and there are 900 health professionals, mainly in public hospitals, who provide referrals and valuable assistance.

Angel Flight Australia was founded by Brisbane businessman Bill Bristow, who was recognised for his personal dedication and commitment by being named Queensland Australian of the Year for 2005.

Since 2003, there have been more than 750 flights helping more than 500 patients or their carers or family members.

5 EARTH ANGEL MISSIONS

DAVID NUGENT from Toowoomba Queensland

PETER RIACHI—Indooroopilly QLD

Pete didn't know he had been included on the list, but in addition to being a very busy General Manager of Angel Flight, he also takes time to volunteer as an Earth Angel, often accompanied by his young son Jordan. Pete has completed 8 missions and will be carrying out another one this afternoon when he takes Kayla and family to Archerfield.

10 EARTH ANGEL MISSIONS

BRYAN PADWICK

Bryan is from Grays Point in New South Wales and has completed 11 missions

20 EARTH ANGEL MISSIONS

IAN DAGGER

Ian is from Annandale New South Wales and has completed 23 missions with another one coming up on 9th June.

And now, those without whom Angel Flight would literally not have got off the ground—Angel Flight Pilots.

The first category is for those who have completed

FIVE MISSION FLIGHTS

From Toowoomba in Queensland

DAVID LAUGHTON

DAVID & KYLIE RAMPA

From Cremorne Point NSW, David and Kylie fly as a team. Unfortunately Kylie is unable to be here today and sends her apologies.

CLYDE STUBBS

From Alderley in Queensland, Clyde has completed 6 Mission flights.

TONY TAGGART

From Sandringham in Victoria, Tony has completed has completed 6 mission flights.

BARRY & CHERYL ARENTZ

Another husband and wife team, Barry and Cheryl are from Forestdale here in Queensland and have completed 7 Mission Flights

WAYNE COTTERILL

From Sandy Point NSW, Wayne has completed 8 Mission Flights.

TEN MISSION FLIGHTS

JENS MEINECKE

From Graceville Queensland, Jens has completed 10 Mission Flights with another one set for 12th June.

SHAUN AISEN

From Malvern East, Victoria, Shaun has completed 12 Mission Flights

TREVOR STEEL

Trevor comes from Golden Beach on the Sunshine Coast. He has completed 12 Mission Flights and has volunteered for two more on 11th July.

20 MISSION FLIGHTS

ROGER LENNE

From Tatura in Victoria, Roger has completed 21 Mission Flights and has two more on Monday.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.53 am): South Bank Corporation has reappointed convention centre specialists Convex to run the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre for the next 10 years. This decision results from a year-long tender process and coincides with the centre's most successful year ever. It had 844 bookings forecast for the financial year 2004-05, an increase of 24 per cent. This is in my portfolio. I seek leave to have details incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The Centre plays an important role in Queensland's economy, bringing many visitors and businesses to Brisbane.

The South Bank Corporation estimates that, under Convex's management, the Centre has injected more than \$1 billion into Queensland's economy over the past 10 years.

It has also helped Brisbane obtain international recognition as a great city in which to hold a convention.

In the first 10 months of the current financial year, the Centre had confirmed 54 conventions, bringing some 40,000 delegates to Brisbane and generating economic benefit for Queensland in excess of \$84 million.

The Centre is currently averaging 30 new bookings every week.

With more than 900 events currently booked through to 2012, the Centre is set to inject a further \$488 million into the Queensland economy.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Freedom of Information

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.53 am): I notice that there were some reports on the weekend in relation to freedom of information. To clarify the record, I seek leave to have incorporated in *Hansard* a ministerial statement setting out how we compare with the federal system.

Leave granted.

My government is open and accountable and an essential element of that accountability is a strong commitment to Freedom of Information (FOI).

The FOI process in Queensland is largely similar to that which operates under Commonwealth legislation with the same types of exemptions from access.

Since the FOI Act was introduced in 1992, members of the public in Queensland have been able to access information relating to their personal affairs for no charge whatsoever.

There is currently an application fee of \$34.40 for non-personal information and the flat rate of \$20.40 per hour for processing and decision making. The Commonwealth Government's application fee is \$30 and they charge \$15 per hour for locating documents and \$20 per hour for consultation and decision making.

My government also waives processing and decision making charges for people with health care cards or pensioner concession cards even if they want access to non-personal information.

We charge nothing for an internal review of a decision and external review of decisions are also free. By comparison, the Commonwealth Government charges \$40 for an internal review of a decision and up to \$606 for an external review.

My government does not condone secrecy and is constantly striving and successfully achieving new standards of accountability.

Mr BEATTIE: I notice there was some reference made to some communication between one of my staff members, Fiona Kennedy, and the Information Commissioner. I seek leave to have details of that exchange incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

On 22 February 2005 the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice issued a media statement announcing he would ask the House to endorse the appointment of Ms Cathi Taylor as the new Information Commissioner.

At that time Ms Taylor was an executive director in the Environmental Protection Agency and worked on the Great Barrier Reef Water Quality Protection Plan.

I signed this plan with the Commonwealth and have a strong interest in it, so Ms Taylor was in communication with my staff.

The Attorney-General's announcement led to media interest in Ms Taylor—who, like most public servants, did not have media expertise or media advice, on-tap.

It was perfectly reasonable for her to take advice from someone she had dealt with—for example the Director of the Government Media Unit, Fiona Kennedy.

Ms Kennedy recalls that on the afternoon of 22 February they discussed basic issues, such as having a photograph ready to provide to media, on request.

That evening Ms Taylor copied Ms Kennedy a photograph and statement she had sent on request from a Courier-Mail columnist, Des Houghton.

Ms Kennedy responded by email: "Nice photo! Is this the only media inquiry?"

Ms Taylor wrote back: "Yes, so far. Des asked me where I was born and what year—what is he going to research using that info?"

Ms Kennedy responded: "He's going to have your star chart done."

Mr Houghton wrote about this in his column last Saturday—although he did not give his readers the contents of the email chat, and he did not disclose how he knew about it.

Mr Speaker, the Courier Mail received this material under FOI following a request from Mr Hedley Thomas.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Bundaberg Base Hospital

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.54 am): Finally, I notice that some issues have been raised about a meeting I had at Bundaberg Base Hospital. I seek leave to have incorporated in *Hansard* details of that along with an attachment for the information of members.

Leave granted.

The Courier-Mail on 30 April 2005 carried a front page story in relation to an inaccurate set of union minutes allegedly of my meeting with union officials at the Bundaberg Base Hospital on 12 September 2000.

The matter was last week—one month later—raised in press conferences and on talk back radio.

On 29 April I provided The Courier-Mail with a statement responding to their initial questions.

That same day I supplied a copy of my statement and the complete file on the meeting with the union officials to Mr Peter Forster for his inquiry.

That was because it is the Forster Inquiry that is reviewing administrative and management practices within Queensland Health.

At no time were clinical issues raised with me in that 15-minute meeting in Bundaberg.

Last Tuesday I invited anyone in the media to look through that file.

We have nothing to hide.

Dr Flegg misled the media and the public claiming it was he who released the meeting's inaccurate minutes.

He is clearly wrong—given that the Courier Mail's Hedley Thomas had them and reported on them one month earlier.

A wrong prognosis indeed!

Had Dr Flegg done his homework he would have found the meeting notes he was pedalling were inaccurate.

Mr Richard Cleal, then of my office, who was present at the Bundaberg meeting, followed up on issues raised at the meeting through a series of discussions with the Health Department, Health Minister's Office and a representative of the Bundaberg Hospital unions.

Issues raised included employment of specialists and an individual medico's continued employment, however that was not linked to clinical activity rather some attendees believed a doctor was being treated unfairly by management.

At a later time (November 2000) Mr Cleal spoke with a union representative from the meeting outlining the process concerning the medico's continued employment and how the matter was being dealt with by the Medical Board.

That is why all material that I have on this matter has been forwarded to Mr Forster and his inquiry and also to Commissioner Morris.

Commissioner Tony Morris QC—after all this was aired last week—said that he had had requests asking whether I (Premier) would be called to give evidence at the inquiry.

The commissioner is reported to have said that he had received a dossier relating to my activities in relation to the September 2000 meeting and that it was all on the public record.

'I don't see that would be a useful purpose to trouble the chief executive of the State Government,' he said.

However, the commissioner also is reported to have said that if a strong argument was put forward, he would summons me.

I again repeat if I summonsed I would gladly appear.

I place on record that I am to meet with the Commissioner Tony Morris later this week.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Literacy and Numeracy

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education and the Arts) (9.54 am): The results of national benchmark testing in reading, writing and numeracy, released last week, confirmed Queensland's schoolchildren are up there with the best in Australia. The report's 2002 results showed that in particular our students at the upper primary school level are performing above the national average across each of the testing areas. They also show that our students, across all levels of primary school, have the highest rate of participation when sitting for the tests.

The results show that 90.2 per cent of our year 7s are achieving the national reading benchmark compared to a national figure of 89.1 per cent. It is an even better story in the area of writing—93.9 per cent of Queensland year 7s achieved the national benchmark compared to the national figure of 90.7 per cent, placing Queensland first in the country. Similarly in numeracy, 88.3 per cent of year 7s surpassed the benchmark, which is well ahead of the national average of 83.5 per cent, again placing Queensland above all other states and territories. This is a great result for Queensland students, and the report gives us a vital snapshot of the percentage of our students who are achieving above the national benchmark. Literacy and numeracy are the most important skills a child can acquire through the primary school years, and they underscore the state government's commitment to the Smart State.

This data has been available for the years 3 and 5 levels since 1999 for reading and since 2000 for writing and numeracy, but last week saw the publication for the first time of nationally comparable data specifically about year 7 students for 2001 and 2002. The reporting of the results against the national benchmarks is part of the commitment of state, territory and Commonwealth education ministers to provide the public with a clear picture of our students' progress through the education system. As previous results have shown, there is a need for improvement in the year 3 and 5 results in Queensland, and the government's Literate Futures Strategy is designed to improve those results.

In addition, from 2007 the statewide introduction of the prep year should also help address a key issue in this regard. That is, Queensland students who sit these tests are younger and have had less formal schooling than students in any other state. In most cases, Queensland students have had up to one year less formal schooling than students at the same year level in other states. The extra year of education in prep should help address this lag in performance level in those early years. It is exceptionally encouraging that the student outcomes have dramatically improved in our state by the year 7 level.

There is also encouraging data for Indigenous students in Queensland. While our Indigenous students' results still lag behind those of other students at an unacceptably low level and require further attention, it was heartening to see that the results of our Indigenous students were well above the national averages, with more than 82 per cent of Indigenous year 7s achieving the national writing benchmark. That result was more than 10 per cent higher than the average achieved nationally, which was 71.6 per cent.

The Beattie government has invested significant resources in the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills. It is encouraging to see these sorts of results.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Elective Surgery

Hon. GR NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Health) (9.57 am): This government has been meeting and exceeding the total monthly elective surgery targets since July of last year. In 2004-05, \$83.74 million was committed for base elective surgery. As part of this government's election commitments, an additional \$25 million was provided in 2004-05 for elective surgery, allowing additional

patients to be treated this year. A further \$5 million has been provided to undertake joint replacement surgery and \$2½ million for cataract surgery and for two additional ophthalmology training positions at the Royal Brisbane and Women's and the Townsville hospitals. Queensland Health is committed to reducing waiting lists for these surgical procedures. The results are there for all to see.

Every quarter elective surgery figures are published on the Queensland Health web site. I am advised that Queensland hospitals are on track to achieve the base election commitment targets for elective surgery. In addition, we are on track to achieve additional joint replacements and cataract surgery. The \$5 million is to undertake 400 joint replacement surgical cases during 2004-05 in our public hospitals. The latest confirmed data, as at 28 February, indicates that the target will be achieved. For cataract surgery during 2004-05, the public hospital target is 700 cases, and Queensland Health facilities are on track to meet this target. The private sector has also been engaged to undertake a further 300 cases that could not be accommodated within the public system due to limited capacity or where ophthalmology services are not available.

There were an extra 242 hip replacement operations in Queensland acute public hospitals in 2003-04, and an additional 362 knee replacement procedures were conducted during this period when compared with the figures for 2002-03. The February 2004-05 year-to-date comparison identifies that Queensland Health has completed 75 hip replacement procedures and 164 knee replacement procedures—more than for the same period last year. These figures clearly demonstrate that Queensland Health staff are achieving many positive outcomes for patients.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Racing Inquiry

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing) (10.00 am): I table a copy of the report of the Queensland thoroughbred racing inquiry, which has come at a cost of around \$4 million to Queensland taxpayers. Last November, I promised a full and open inquiry relating to matters raised by the Leader of the Opposition and others in relation to thoroughbred racing. These matters were:

1. Allegations that Brisbane based racing bookmakers have offered artificially inflated betting odds on thoroughbred races held in Queensland since April 2002 in contravention of the law or the relevant rules relating to racing and betting;
2. The content of a memorandum apparently under the hand of Mr Ron Goddard, now deceased, in relation to Mr Wayne Wood, the chief investigator of the Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board;
3. The conduct of the Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board and its staff in connection with the appointment and termination of staff, including stewards, since April 2002;
4. In relation to items 1, 2 and 3:
 - (a) whether there is sufficient evidence to justify the bringing of disciplinary or other proceedings or the taking of some other action against any person under the relevant rules relating to racing or the Racing Act 2002 or any other act; and
 - (b) whether there is sufficient evidence to justify referral of any matter to the Commissioner of the Police Service or the Crime and Misconduct Commission for investigation.

On top of that, I also stated that the appointed commissioners, Martin Daubney SC and Tony Rafter SC, were free to return to me to request an extension in the terms of reference or an extension of time. The commissioners did approach me on 15 February for an extension of time, which was granted. However, no such extension—I will say that again: no such extension—in terms of reference was sought. As the commissioners state in this report—

This Inquiry was delegated the task of inquiring into, and reporting on, three defined issues. The terms of reference did not, however, operate as a straitjacket on our investigations. We were at all times open to the prospect that matters could come to our attention which might warrant our seeking broadening the terms of reference, or at least referral to other investigative bodies.

As the commissioners remark in the introduction of the report—

As appears from the body of this report there is a regrettable tendency in this industry, as in many others, for rumour and gossip to spread. A number of people were prepared to speak with our investigators only on an 'off-the-record' basis, and flatly refused to cooperate on the record, let alone provide any hard evidence for the 'information' they were providing.

In numerous instances, separate investigations by inquiry staff into that information made it clear that the informant was completely unreliable, or that the 'information' was nothing more than gossip, rumour or speculation.

Accordingly, one of the most time-consuming tasks for us and the investigators was separating fact from racing industry fiction.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! Member for Warrego.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I will say it again—

Accordingly, one of the most time-consuming tasks for us and the investigators was separating fact from racing industry fiction.

This certainly was the greatest challenge that the commissioners had to overcome, but overcome it they did to produce this high-quality report. I might add they were assisted by counsel assisting the inquiry, Mr Ralph Devlin and Mr Gareth Beacham, and a team hand-picked by the Commissioner for Police to turn over every stone, follow every lead and interview every complainant. I thank the minister for police for her suggestion and her very generous offer to provide those excellent police officers. The commissioners have commented to me on the high standard of the Queensland Police Service in that regard and I would ask that the minister pass that on to the Commissioner for Police.

What we have here is the most extensive inquiry into racing ever conducted in the history of this state. It is as thorough and professional an analysis as anyone could expect and I would like to congratulate the commissioners and their team on a job well done.

So, what has this seven-month, \$4 million inquiry found in relation to the three areas of complaint? It has found no evidence of price rorts, no evidence to support that Wayne Wood is of poor character and no evidence of any unlawful behaviour or misconduct on behalf of anyone at Queensland Racing in relation to the departure of individuals, including Mr Kevin Martin—now chief of staff to the Leader of the Opposition—from that organisation.

I said in this parliament on 20 October 2004 that I was tired of people gossiping about people behind their backs without putting the evidence on the table. This report vindicates my stand. However, the opposition, it would seem to me, has never bothered about evidence but merely sought the privilege of this parliament as a medium to repeat gossip without the risk of defamation. I remind the House of one of the more disgraceful misuses of this privilege by the Leader of the Opposition, again on 20 October 2004, when he, without any evidence whatsoever or any attempt to gain the truth, attacked the character of Mr Wayne Wood, the Queensland Racing chief investigator.

A government member: He does it all the time.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Yes, he does do it all the time. It was this attack, along with others raised by the opposition, which was the last straw that forced me to pursue this expensive commission of inquiry.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! Member for Warrego.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I know that the member finds it funny that \$4 million worth of taxpayers' money was wasted in this inquiry.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: I warn the member for Warrego under standing order 253.

Mr SCHWARTEN: It was clear to me that the opposition would stop at nothing to bring down the racing industry in this state.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: They don't like it, do they?

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! Member for Lockyer.

Mr SCHWARTEN: The fact is the inquiry has completely exonerated Mr Wood and it will be interesting to see if the Leader of the Opposition has the same character as our Premier by unreservedly apologising to Mr Wood for all the hurt that he has caused him and his family. It would also not hurt the QTC to consider such a course of action, as, by the evidence, it too contributed to this harm. I know the *Courier-Mail's* worst journalist, Mr Tuck Thompson of course, will not apologise for his lack of research and the harm that he caused Mr Wood.

The report is critical of the chair of the Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board, Mr Bentley, and Dr Mason in regard to the non-advertisement of the chief investigator's job, and rightly so. However, Mr Wood had no say in this matter so deserves no such criticism. As for Mr Bentley, the *Hansard* record abounds with opposition attacks upon him yet the only issue arising from this inquiry concerning him is a human relations matter. He has not been accused of misconduct or, indeed, of unlawful conduct. The commissioners have noted his interference in a personnel matter and have recommended it be referred to the CMC and that has occurred. It should be noted, however, that the report states—

There is no evidence at all that Bentley influenced or attempted to influence either of the selection panels. Turner expressly said in evidence that he did not hold any evidence that Bentley attempted to directly influence the views of the second selection panel in the discharge of their functions. None of the members of the panel allege such interference, or attempted interference. On the contrary, they appear to have benchmarked A—

which was the candidate for the position—

against the second round of available candidates at the \$65,000 salary standard and determined another candidate should be given the position.

The commissioners also looked into the All About Class race in Rockhampton and, while finding nothing unlawful or any misconduct, it has been referred back to Queensland Racing for whatever action it sees fit. Other matters have been referred to the CMC.

As for the bet rorts, again a lot of people, including former Supreme Court Judge Bill Carter and members of the opposition, as well as the *Courier-Mail's* worst reporter, Tuck Thompson, accused me of covering up, stupidity or a lack of understanding. Yet despite this extensive and expensive inquiry and sifting through bookies' records and other documents, no evidence to substantiate any accusation has been unearthed. In fact, the statement of former betting steward Luke Bailey on this issue was comprehensively demolished and discredited in this report. The only thing to come out of it, apart from some sensible recommendations regarding the conduct of betting at race meetings, was that bookmaker Gallagher had not been following the Rules of Racing by not registering his bets, an offence which perhaps Mr Bailey himself should have noted, or indeed another steward, and saved the taxpayer \$4 million. In any case, this matter has now been referred back to Queensland Racing for action.

I would like to also pass on the commissioner's gratitude, expressed personally to me, for the fair and balanced coverage offered by the *Courier-Mail's* Mark Oberhardt and also the *Gold Coast Bulletin's* Julian Tomlinson. This is in sharp contrast to the biased and lazy approach by the *Courier-Mail's* worst journalist, Tuck Thompson—

Mr Hopper: I think you'll get a mention tomorrow, Rob.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I hope so. I will say it again. This is in sharp contrast to the biased and lazy approach by the *Courier-Mail's* worst journalist, Tuck Thompson, who got it wrong so many times that the *Courier-Mail* was forced by the inquiry to show why it should not be charged with contempt. It is also on record that Mr Thompson pre-empted the inquiry by a stupid and ill-advised statement on Crikey.com.au, where he referred to Queensland Racing as a bent organisation, which is clearly not the case according to this inquiry.

One thing which has come out of the inquiry is the motives of the opposition in this matter. No doubt it comes as a surprise to many that one of the former employees of Queensland Racing now works for the opposition. Clearly the Leader of the Opposition, the shadow spokesman and others have been caught up in Mr Martin's desire to square up Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board chair Bob Bentley for what has now been proved to be his justifiable, deserved and lawful sacking.

By becoming Martin's mouthpiece in this chamber and misusing the position those opposite hold by not declaring their conflict of interest in this matter, taxpayers have been forced to fork out over \$4 million on this inquiry. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to quiz Mr Martin and report back to this House regarding a letter which was circulated by him while he was at the Queensland Principal Club which had the forged signature of the then chair, Sandy Bredhauer.

This matter arose in evidence before the inquiry. It has been suggested that Mr Martin scanned in the signature without approval which is, at the very least, an act of dishonesty. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to report back to this parliament on this important matter. I ask him to get to the bottom of this matter on behalf of this parliament. Following that, I call on the opposition and Mr Martin to accept the umpire's decision and move on in the interests of racing.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Patel, Dr J; Morris Inquiry

Hon. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (10.12 am): I would like to put on the record my support for Queensland police in their work to investigate Dr Jayant Patel. On 27 April police received a letter dated 26 April from Mr Morris about the police investigations into Dr Patel. On 28 April the most senior officers from State Crime Operations Command met with Mr Morris. Police have also been liaising with the health commission of inquiry on a regular basis about security arrangements for the inquiry.

Last week Commissioner Atkinson wrote to inquiry commissioner Tony Morris in a bid to speed up the process of uncovering evidence that might lead to extraditing Dr Patel. Commissioner Atkinson has also asked Mr Morris to identify three to five cases that present as the strongest potential cases at this stage, to enable police to fast-track investigations into these. Commissioner Atkinson has indicated this should occur as soon as possible.

He has also asked for a further meeting between senior police, the royal commissioner and the Coroner to keep this matter progressing. Police need a strong brief of evidence before considering the extradition of Dr Patel. Queensland police use the support and resources of their Australian Federal Police colleagues in any extradition proceedings. This process cannot be a knee-jerk reaction.

I also want to make one thing clear. Neither I nor any other politician can or should intervene in police operations. I note last week that a *Courier-Mail* reporter foolishly suggested that we should.

Mr Schwarten: It was probably Tuck Thompson.

Ms SPENCE: No, it was the *Courier-Mail's* second worst reporter, I think. This has been clear since the advent of the Police Service Administration Act after the Fitzgerald inquiry. The question of

charges and possible extradition is a matter for the Queensland Police Service, and not an area where the government is able or would want to intervene. Commissioner Atkinson has indicated that all relevant files relating to the incidents at Bundaberg Hospital are now in the hands of the commission of inquiry.

Any further police investigation into this matter will be heavily circumscribed by the health commission of inquiry. Indeed, as per the inquiry's own terms of reference, Mr Morris may, where there is sufficient evidence to justify it, refer any matter to the Commissioner of Police for investigation or prosecution.

Too much is at stake to rush this important process of collecting evidence only to fail in the court process. Police need to prove both to the Commonwealth government and to the jurisdiction in which Dr Patel is located that there is a strong case. The most critical part of the work undertaken by police will be to ensure that enough evidence can be brought before a court on a criminal charge to allow an extradition order to succeed. The last thing we want to have happen is police to rush in, be ill prepared and fail in the court process.

The police commissioner, Mr Atkinson, has spoken at length in recent days about the need for police to have evidence that is strong, is not speculative and, most importantly, will stand up in court, both in Australia and in whatever country Dr Patel is in. This requires hard facts and evidence. I support Commissioner Atkinson's attempt to work with the health commission of inquiry to progress this matter in the most expedient and professional manner possible.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Truck Operators; Train Derailment, Central Station

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.16 am): There is no place in the transport industry for fly-by-night truck operators who put the safety of other road users at risk. Such is the government's determination to clean up the industry that I have called for national cross-border action to tackle dangerous driving practices. Big trucks do not stop at state borders.

I told my ministerial colleagues at the Australian Transport Council meeting in Alice Springs on Friday that Queensland was leading the way. We are working hard towards cutting-edge vehicle identification technology to tackle heavy vehicle driver fatigue. Measures to reduce driver fatigue—one of the biggest killers on our roads—are contained in Queensland's proposed intelligent transport strategy. The strategy places our state at the forefront of new technology. We need to embrace this to better monitor and manage heavy vehicles on our roads.

While Queensland is leading the country in chain of responsibility legislation, there is no room for complacency. At the ATC we put on the agenda the need to have a demerit points system for logbook related fatigue offences. Again, Queensland is leading the way on that.

The 21st century needs modern technology such as mandatory global positioning systems on trucks. GPS can be used to monitor the weight carried by trucks to stop dangerous overloading. It can be used to ensure that our roads and bridges can safely carry trucks. Already, we are piloting GPS tracking technology with a number of local transport companies. GPS is the way of the future. It is used by our fishing fleet, as the minister for primary industries has indicated. Our system means that we can remotely monitor a truck anywhere it travels in Queensland or indeed Australia. Our message is simple: 'If you break the rules, we'll find you and we'll prosecute.' Recently a company faced a record fine after pleading guilty to 306 charges for breaching driving hours regulations.

Another new technology is the automatic numberplate recognition. It can tell us who is using our road network and when. We are using that in the Brisbane urban corridor to monitor truck traffic and get a better understanding of our traffic movements—where it is from, what its purpose is and where it is going.

At the ATC I was also able to successfully secure backing from the states and territories to further examine the prospects of an Australian design rule to make cutting-edge bluetooth mobile telephone technology mandatory for all new cars on Australian roads. In the past five years there have been two fatalities and 18 hospitalisations where mobile phone use was a factor. Driving while using a hand-held mobile is illegal and dangerous, which is why the Beattie government recently increased penalties to \$225 and three demerit points.

A number of European and upper-range Australian cars are now being fitted or are capable of being fitted with a bluetooth device that means motorists can use their mobile phone whilst it is still in their pocket. This means that whoever sits in the car and whatever phone they have, given it is bluetooth equipped, they can use the hands-free facility that that car offers. It is better than lining the pockets of multinational phone companies that deliberately force motorists to change car kits every time they change their model of phone. They have to spend hundreds of dollars to refit their car to suit that mobile phone. Members of a family can have different phones. With bluetooth technology all of them can use it

safely. The Beattie government was one of the first to respond to the growth of the mobile phone industry by making the use of hand-held phones illegal. Now we would like to take it a step further to save lives and money.

Queensland is also leading the charge for a new safety rule to ensure all motor vehicle manufacturers provide good-quality spare wheels with new vehicles. There is currently no mandatory requirement to supply a spare wheel when a motor vehicle is purchased. I find it amazing that in a huge country like Australia it is not mandatory to have a spare tyre in our cars, particularly in rural areas with flat tyres et cetera. I called on the ATC to introduce an Australian Design Rule requiring every new vehicle sold to have a safe and suitable spare. I will make complementary changes to our motor safety certificate requirements. There were 1,381 crashes in Queensland from 2000 to 2004 where a defective tyre contributed. Some 11 of those crashes resulted in a fatality. Those statistics cannot and should not be ignored.

I also want to thank rail passengers from Caboolture for their patience this morning. Just after 5.30 am, the front bogie of the front carriage of the Beenleigh train left the rails as the train approached platform 2 at Central Station. Passengers were escorted by rail staff onto the platform. No-one was injured. The incident caused delays of around 10 minutes. The train is expected to be back on track at midday. QR is looking into the cause.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Trade Mission, Asia

Hon. H PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries) (10.20 am): From 12 to 21 May I had the privilege of leading a trade mission to Asia to promote the quality and integrity of Queensland food and agribusiness products and services. I table a comprehensive report on the trade mission, itineraries, supporting information and other relevant materials for the information of the House.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Tree Clearing

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Mines) (10.21 am): During the last sitting I gave a progress report on delivering the government's \$150 million financial assistance package for land-holders directly affected by our new tree-clearing laws. Today I want to update the House on progress being made assessing ballot applications for the final 200,000 hectares of remnant vegetation available for clearing in Queensland. The ballot draw was concluded last September to establish an order of assessment for 860 eligible applications covering land across the seven ballot regions. Those 860 applications sought to clear a total 776,461 hectares—nearly four times the 200,000 hectares available under the ballot. That explains why not all ballot applications can be successful. My department is assessing applications as quickly as possible to give successful land-holders sufficient time to clear before broadscale clearing ends in Queensland on 31 December 2006.

I can report today that so far 104,510 hectares—or more than half the total land available through the ballot—has already been allocated to applicants. We have been paying particular attention to expediting applications in the mulga lands and channel region and the gulf plains and north-west highlands bioregions. These two bioregions contain some of the largest amounts of land available for clearing and there were issues that made it important to expedite assessments in those areas. It takes longer to arrange clearing contractors to be available out west. These areas are more sensitive to changes in weather conditions that could affect clearing work, and the ongoing drought is a particular challenge.

We believed it important to expedite ballot assessments here so departmental staff can devote their full attention to dealing with an expected upsurge in fodder-harvesting permit applications as the drought bites harder. We are making solid progress dealing with ballot applications across all seven bioregions. But we also recognise affected land-holders need more timely delivery of a whole new range of services that have arisen as a result of our new vegetation management arrangements. That is why the Beattie government is committed to ensuring that we have the resources necessary to accelerate the assessment of ballot applications and delivery of those services.

SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Report

Hon. KW HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (10.24 am): I lay upon the table of the House the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's *Alert Digest No. 7 of 2005*.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

State Budget, Capital Works

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.24 am): The state budget to be delivered at 2.30 this afternoon by the Treasurer provides him with an opportunity to address some of the areas of neglect of previous state budgets, most particularly the issue of capital works. The Nationals have been concerned to observe over a long period of time the decline in capital works as a proportion of the spending of the overall state budget. In actual fact, in the last year of the Borbidge-Sheldon government some 27.83 per cent of the budget was being spent on capital works. In this current budget year, it is 20.41 per cent of the state budget. That is a significant reduction in the overall proportion of the budget spent on capital works, and there is no doubt that we are now starting to suffer consequences as a result.

Later today we will need to see very much demonstrated in the Treasurer's budget a real commitment to road infrastructure. If we can believe what this government has been saying—that there will be \$55 billion of extra infrastructure in south-east Queensland over the next 20 years—then we would need to see a budget implication this year and beyond of some \$6 billion for south-east Queensland alone, because we have problems with water, we have problems with road infrastructure and we have problems with bridges.

The other thing that Queenslanders want to see today in the state budget is simply this: they do not want to see the other areas of this state neglected by an infrastructure drought—that is, including north Queensland, central Queensland, western and south-western Queensland and north-western Queensland. We have to deal with all of those areas, and we have to deal with all of those areas properly. This is a prime opportunity to use that so-called large budget surplus to address infrastructure issues and health issues, including a blow-out in waiting lists, particularly in the area of urgent and semiurgent surgery, for which more and more people are waiting longer. The question that many people are asking is: if things are so rosy, how come we have so many problems?

Pacific Edge 2006 Regional Arts Australia National Conference, Mackay

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (10.26 am): I am pleased to announce that Mackay has been selected to host the Pacific Edge 2006 Regional Arts Australia National Conference in September next year. This major event has been coordinated by the Queensland Arts Council on behalf of Regional Arts Australia, which represents the interests of people working with and for the arts in regional, rural and remote parts of Australia. One of the largest arts conferences in Australia, it will cater for more than 800 delegates and is expected to contribute up to \$2 million to the Mackay community, benefiting local businesses in the area of tourism accommodation, hospitality, retail outlets, restaurateurs, education groups, transport and bus companies, entertainment and other services.

The conference will focus on the artist and cultural connections between Australia and the Pacific region in Mackay, which is home to the largest South Sea Islander community in Australia. The conference will also explore artistic and cultural issues that face coastal areas, touching on traditions associated with the reef, ocean and beach. Overall, the Pacific Edge 2006 Regional Arts Australia National Conference will provide an excellent opportunity to showcase the city's cultural facilities such as the award-winning Artspace Mackay, the Mackay Entertainment Centre, the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens and the only purpose-built conservatorium of music facility in regional Australia. Organisers of the conference are also planning a festival to coincide with the event which will give the wider Mackay community the chance to join in a wide range of activities.

I want to acknowledge the contributions of the Mackay City Council and Tourism Mackay and other businesses in putting in this bid. Queensland has the opportunity only once every 14 years to host this conference. I look forward to the conference and the opportunity for our city to extend it warm, regional hospitality on this special occasion.

Commissions of Inquiry

Mr QUINN (Robina—Lib) (10.28 am): During the last sitting of this House I outlined to members the crisis management check list that the Premier uses every time there is a problem with his government. I must apologise to the House. In fact, I left off two critical steps of that check list. Just let me remind everyone what the first six of them are. First of all, the Premier expresses concern about the

issue. Then he launches an inquiry into the issue. Then he says that he knows it will not be popular with the ALP. The fourth step is when he says it will cost him votes. The fifth step is when he says it will cost him seats at the next election. Then he promises to fix the problem. We have all seen those before. Now here are the last two. Step No. 7 is that he always says that the buck stops with him. But immediately in comes step No. 8. What does he say? Then he attempts to lay the blame elsewhere. He says that the buck stops with him, but then immediately he tries to lay the blame elsewhere.

We have seen it in relation to the Bundaberg Hospital issue. We have had all of these steps and then he tries to lay the blame. What has he done this time? He has said that all the doctors looked at Patel and could find nothing wrong with him. In terms of Bundaberg Hospital, the reality is that Queensland Health runs the hospitals in this state. This government is responsible for the staff within the hospital system. The Premier is right: the buck stops with the Premier. The buck stops with the government of the day. The Premier is responsible for the performance of the doctors and the staff within Queensland Health and no-one else. The buck stops with the Premier.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Racing Inquiry; Bentley, Mr B

Mr SPRINGBORG (10.30 am): I refer the minister for racing to the report of the inquiry into thoroughbred racing in Queensland that has referred three matters to the Crime and Misconduct Commission, including a specific reference in relation to Mr Bentley's involvement in the employment process involving his son-in-law. If as the minister claimed in the media this morning that 'Mr Bentley is exonerated for any misconduct or unlawful behaviour' why has the matter been referred to the CMC? Does the minister consider that the referral to the CMC amounts to exoneration already?

Mr SCHWARTEN: We see yet again another attack on Mr Bentley on behalf of Mr Martin. The great question that came out of this inquiry is: why is the opposition so obsessed with Bentley? The answer is that Martin got the spear from Queensland Racing. Why did Martin get the spear from Queensland Racing?

A government member: Because he's a dud.

Mr SCHWARTEN: An honourable member said because he was a dud. It does not say that in the report. It says that Martin's eviction from Queensland Racing was lawful. I suggest the members opposite get over it.

In terms of Bentley's referral to the CMC, I would invite the member opposite to for once in his life read the report. He would not have asked such an idiotic question if he had read the report. The report states clearly that there was no misconduct or unlawful conduct by Bentley. There is a matter in relation to his interference in a HR matter—in the employment of a person. But that is the end of it. There is no other reference to Bentley being a crook or anything else as those members opposite have said and continue to say under privilege in this parliament.

As I said, the reason the taxpayers today are \$4 million out of pocket is members opposite taking up the cudgels on behalf of Mr Martin.

Mr Hopper interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Mr Martin wrote the member's speeches for him because he is too illiterate to write them himself. We all know that. There is plenty of evidence of that. That should have been looked at by the inquiry, too. The fact is that gossip, rumour and innuendo was repeated in here under oath. No more despicable was the attack upon Mr Wood. If the Premier of Queensland did that, he would have been up on his feet apologising for the inadvertent hurt that he caused. But no, we do not have that. The Leader of the Opposition is back on the Bentley bandwagon yet again.

We have spent \$4 million worth of taxpayers' money because the opposition wanted to square up Bentley for sacking Martin. That is what it all boils down to. There is the matter of the forged signature. I have asked the members opposite to look into that. We have been waiting for their full report on it. There was no such outcome out of this inquiry in regard to Mr Bentley. I wish the members opposite would get on with life. They should recognise the fact that we have a good industry in Queensland and they should stop trying to bring it down.

State Taxes

Mr SPRINGBORG: I refer the Treasurer to the backflip that he performed yesterday in which he told Queenslanders that the promised massive cuts to land tax were being reduced due to the fact that he was busy slashing a raft of other state taxes—taxes that he knew had to be abolished since Peter Beattie signed the GST agreement back in 1999. Is it not a fact that the proposal the Treasurer put to the federal government means that, rather than these taxes being abolished in 2006-07, they will, in fact, not be abolished until 2010-11 and that this watered-down tinkering with land tax will still see the state government reap more income than ever before?

Mr MACKENROTH: If the opposition leader comes in at 2.30 pm he will find out what we are doing in relation to land tax and other taxes. There is something that the Opposition Leader does not understand about the abolition of those business taxes that he mentioned. He needs to understand that the intergovernmental agreement, which was signed by Peter Beattie as the Premier of Queensland with John Howard, meant that we would abolish a certain number of taxes by 1 July 2005. We have honoured every one of those commitments. It was also in the agreement that we would review a range of other taxes in 2005.

When I went to the Treasurers' meeting in Canberra in March this year, the federal Treasurer put forward a proposal that would have the states abolishing a number of other taxes by July 2010. In that proposal he suggested that, in the area of stamp duty on commercial transactions, stamp duty on the sale of real property—not goods and chattels or goodwill, but real property—should be reviewed in 2010. He did not suggest that it should be abolished but that it should be reviewed in 2010.

At that meeting we agreed that the states would go away, consider the federal Treasurer's proposal and get back to the Commonwealth with a response. On behalf of Queensland, I have responded to Peter Costello. We have committed—and I have already told the parliament this—to abolish the taxes that the federal Treasurer asked to be abolished not by 2010 but by 2011. We simply put that out by one year. Those taxes and the schedule will be in today's budget. We have met absolutely every commitment that the federal Treasurer has asked us to meet, except that it is within one extra year.

Although we have given that proposal to the Commonwealth, as yet I have not received a response. I have included the abolition in today's budget. The abolition of the taxes that will affect the forward estimates has been factored into today's budget. This government has met in total every one of its commitments to the GST under the IGA.

Industrial Relations

Mr CHOI: I direct a question to the Premier and Minister for Trade. Given that the Liberal-National plan to wreck industrial relations would jeopardise Queensland's tearaway economic success, does the government plan to protect our state from the Victorian-style industrial disease?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for the question. The answer to the question is yes. I look forward to today's budget. I want to acknowledge the Treasurer as being the best Treasurer that Queensland has ever had. I know that today the people of Queensland will be delighted by the best budget that Queensland has ever had. I look forward to it.

A government member: It's about being in the right place at the right time.

Mr BEATTIE: I was acting Treasurer at one stage. The Treasurer is better than I was. There is absolutely no doubt about that.

I return to the issue of industrial relations. Queensland workers and their families will not be cowed by the federal Liberal-National coalition's strongarm tactics on industrial relations and nor will the Queensland government. The Prime Minister may have the letter of the law on his side to some extent but I am confident that most Queensland workers and businesses want to keep the status quo, because it has fostered industrial harmony, jobs growth and economic prosperity. Queensland has the lowest unemployment rate in Australia and it has the highest growth rate in Australia. Therefore, we will use our legislative power to protect as best we can the basic rights of 1.6 million Queensland workers and the fundamentals of our economic success. If the Liberal-National party federal government wants to quash these rights, it faces the wrath of Queenslanders.

Queensland has the lowest strike rate in 30 years. We lost just 2.5 working days per 1,000 employees to disputes in the 2004 December quarter. That is well below the national rate of 6.1 working days and a mere fraction of the 8.7 days lost in Victoria, which is under the federal regime—the Victorian disease, as the honourable member quite accurately described it. We do not want the Victorian disease here, nor do our workers and nor do our businesses. The Liberal-National coalition's plans would also jeopardise Queensland's industrial harmony, high employment rate and stunning economic growth.

I table for the information of the House a letter I wrote to the Prime Minister urging him not to upset the industrial balance in this state. Given Mr Springborg's public comments—and I welcome them—supporting the state based regime, I anticipate that he will support this bill of ours when it is introduced into the House. I look forward to that. Our planned changes to the Queensland Industrial Relations Act will protect conditions including long service leave, superannuation, redundancy pay, notice of termination, dispute-settling procedures, weekend penalties, overtime loadings, shift loadings and jury service. We will also protect the basic award rights of outworkers, who are highly vulnerable to exploitation and would be left exposed by the Liberal Party regime.

I want to advise the House that, in terms of the national wage case which has just been decided, the IRC has increased the minimum wage by \$17 per week from \$484.40. We submitted a \$20 per week increase and Queensland supported that. The ACTU requested \$26.60. The federal government said \$11 up to classification tradesperson (C10) Metal Industries Award. We have to fight to protect our industrial relations system.

Tilt Train Derailment

Miss SIMPSON: My question is to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. I refer to the derailment of a passenger train at Central Station earlier this morning in which the front wheels came off the track. When the major tilt train accident occurred outside Bundaberg last November, serious concerns about maintenance were raised but, of course, seven months later the inquiry into this accident has not been completed. Queenslanders deserve to know if these incidents are linked, so will the minister tell this House where the tilt train inquiry is at and when we can expect the report to be concluded?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for her question. When we set up the inquiry in relation to the tilt train derailment we wanted to make sure it was as thorough as it could be. So what did we do? We changed the law to give the joint inquiry very, very wide powers to deal with the matter. In fact, there are discussions going on now at a federal level, with the federal minister in fact, with regard to some issues involving an aviation incident. Not only did we give the inquiry wide powers; we also asked the inquiry to be chaired by the ATSB. The last time I checked the Commonwealth government was a Liberal-National government. So we asked the ATSB to chair the inquiry.

The premise in the honourable member's question was that the interim rail investigation report into the tilt train accident dealt with serious infrastructure issues. Can the member tell me where it says that in that document? The honourable member would be well aware of the track condition index of the track outside Bundaberg—continuously welded, heavy duty concrete sleepers. She should not come into this place and make claims about this document that are simply not true. The ATSB will conduct its investigation without interference by me or the honourable member. It will conduct the investigation thoroughly and get the full cooperation of the Queensland government—Queensland Transport, and Queensland Rail and me.

The honourable member asked about the derailment this morning, and I have previously given some details to the House about that. We do have the QT safety regulator in attendance. Since 1997 there have been seven derailments in our Citytrain network—all of them happening at low speed. I can give some other statistics about our rail system. Adjusted for population journeys, we have one-third the level of Citytrain derailments of New South Wales.

In the *Sunday Mail* at the weekend the member opposite was complaining about the \$360 million that was spent on the upgrade of the track between Rockhampton and Cairns as part of the tilt train upgrade. Do those opposite not understand that continuously welded concrete sleepers on a high-quality track massively reduce maintenance requirements and massively reduce the likelihood of derailments? We announced recently, as part of the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan, that we will be putting down concrete sleepers and railing the narrow gauge section of our urban track between Dutton Park and Lytton junction. Queensland Rail leads Australia in spending on rail infrastructure. This state leads Australia and, frankly, it has led from the days of Bjelke-Petersen onwards. So those opposite should not blow their credibility by calling for things they know nothing about.

Freedom of Information

Mr TERRY SULLIVAN: My question is directed to the Premier. Can the Premier detail how Queensland compares with the Commonwealth when it comes to changes to freedom of information?

Mr BEATTIE: What an intelligent question. My government is open and accountable, and an essential element of that accountability is a strong commitment to freedom of information. The FOI process in Queensland is largely similar to that which operates under Commonwealth legislation with the same types of exemptions from access. Since the FOI Act was introduced in 1992 by a Labor government, members of the public in Queensland have been able to access information relating to their personal affairs for no charge whatsoever. It is free—absolutely free—for the individual.

There is currently an application fee of \$34.40 for non-personal information and a flat rate of \$20.40 per hour for processing and decision making. The Commonwealth government's application fee is \$30 and it charges \$15 per hour for locating documents and \$20 per hour for consultation and decision making. My government also waives processing and decision-making charges for people with health care cards or pensioner concession cards even if they want access to non-personal information.

We charge nothing for an internal review of a decision, and external review of decisions is also free. By comparison, the Commonwealth government charges \$40 for an internal review of a decision and up to \$606 for an external review. My government does not condone secrecy and is constantly striving for and successfully achieving new standards of accountability.

I see from time to time some columnists who rail about all this. My good mate Des Houghton does it from time to time. Des had one of his typical tirades against the government, which he does every weekend. I look forward to reading them, with some degree of enthusiasm, to see how far off the mark he is.

Mr Terry Sullivan interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Des is a decent bloke; he is just wrong. The good thing about that is that he is entitled to be wrong. But I remind him of this: when Mr Springborg was a minister there were 1,963 documents he hid from scrutiny under freedom of information legislation. He was there for only four months, so that means that he hid nearly 500 documents a month. I say to Des: if you are going to attack the state government why not get into the federal government as well—or get into your mate John Howard—I do not know why Des is running a protection society for the federal Liberal Party, or John Howard; maybe he is too scared to take on the federal Liberals—if there is something wrong with our system then it is similarly wrong with the federal system. Come on, Des, give us go. Don't start rewriting the facts just to try to bash us up. If you want to bash us up, do it fairly. Earlier today I incorporated some material about one of the matters that he referred to in relation to Ms Fiona Kennedy of my office. How did he find out about it? From freedom of information.

Energex

Mr SEENEY: My question without notice is to the minister for energy. I refer to the industrial dispute that caused 200 Energex employees to walk off the job yesterday. I table a copy of the Queensland Services Union newsletter regarding attempts to interfere in the operations of the Industrial Relations Commission. Does the minister agree with the Queensland Services Union's claims that this dispute within Energex and Ergon has been inflamed by the activities of other ministers within the government?

Mr MICKEL: The problem is that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has addressed the question to the wrong minister. We have a minister for industrial relations. That is where the question should have gone.

A government member interjected.

Mr MICKEL: I will take the question as the honourable gentleman suggests, out of the goodness of my heart.

Mr Schwarten: And a recognition of his stupidity.

Mr MICKEL: Well, no, I would not be that uncharitable. What we have in the electricity industry when it comes to infrastructure is prudent avoidance. What the honourable member for Callide has engaged in in recent months is prudent avoidance of ever asking me a question on energy. What he is doing is applying this basic principle when it comes to his knowledge of the electricity industry.

Let me say this: when it came to solving the industrial issues in the electricity industry, it was the Treasurer and I who took to government a plan that recognised what was going on in Australia as a whole—that is, under the Howard-Costello government we had a skills shortage. That skills shortage was going right to the heart of the electricity industry and our ability to address those skills issues. So we made sure that we retained and obtained skilled workers for the electricity industry. That is what we have done.

I will tell honourable members what we will not be doing, and that is having a bar of the federal industrial relations policy. That will not happen in Queensland. We are going to fight it all the way. We intend to make sure that the average workers in this state and the families who we proudly represent hang on to things like leave loading, sick leave and jobs. That is what we will be fighting for when it comes to industrial relations issues. That is the dividing line between this side of the House and the other. When it comes to putting legislation before this House, which I hope we do, but I will leave it up to the industrial relations minister and the Premier to do that—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr MICKEL: I can hear them baying, and the reason is that we stand up for average working families in this state in making sure that the basic entitlements they have and the basic protections they have always had under the industrial relations system are enshrined. We are not going to weasel away and let the federal government whittle away rights that working families have had and have taken for granted for generations. So that is answering the question. There is no way that we are going to let John Howard and the Liberal Party undermine basic working conditions for working families. That is the answer to the question today. That is the fundamental right for working families—us and them. We stand up for families; they want to whittle away their rights and entitlements.

Apprentices and Trainees

Mr WILSON: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations—a topical area. Given the national concern over skills shortages, can the minister update the House on Queensland's performance on apprentice and trainee numbers and whether young people are going into the traditional trades where shortages are worse?

Mr BARTON: I thank the member for a very good question. Before I answer the question, I would like to make the point that here we have the Deputy Leader of the Opposition tabling today a document that came out on 15 February. A lot of water has gone under the bridge. It has taken him from 15

February until now and then he could not ask the minister for industrial relations about an industrial relations dispute.

But let us get back to what is a very important issue, because I can assure members that that dispute that he mentioned is all over, Red Rover. Two of the major energy bodies have carried the proposals by massive majorities and the third one is out for ballot right now. There was a case before the full bench of the industrial commission in the intervening period that comprehensively made a decision about this matter. Regrettably, several unions cannot understand decisions of full benches of the commission, but that is another matter.

Let me come back to what is the real issue. Last week the National Centre for Vocational Education Research put out its latest figures. It is an independent body that looks at the training figures in this nation. It estimated that in Queensland there were 69,900 apprentices and trainees in training at the end of December last year. What is most important in a time of skills shortages is that this represents an increase of 2,800 on the previous 12 months and is 21,300 or nearly 44 per cent higher than the numbers in training in the year 2000. It has achieved this growth at the same time that apprentice and trainee numbers in Australia have fallen by 11,200. Queensland is increasing its apprentices and trainees while the national figure is falling.

What is most important about this, and what is really exciting, is that nearly half of all Queensland apprentices and trainees—46.7 per cent of them—are in the traditional trades that need to address industry growth and skills shortages. Again, Queensland is well above the national average, which is only 39.2 per cent. So again Queensland leads the way on training.

The figures for school based apprentices and trainees—a matter very near and dear to the heart of the minister for education and me—continue to grow strongly. More than 10 per cent of new commencements in the December quarter were school students taking up the opportunity to earn or learn. Again, if we look to a national comparison, the national figures were 5.2 per cent. So we are double the national average in terms of school based apprentices and trainees. These young people are seeking a secure future—a future for themselves through undertaking vocational training while also helping Queensland industry with a ready supply of skilled employees in the future. We should congratulate those students and the employers who are putting them on.

Patel, Dr J; Morris Inquiry

Mr QUINN: My question is directed to the Premier. I refer to his release of details relating to the payment of the air fare for Dr Patel to flee the country and the subsequent Morris inquiry, and I ask: since it is evident that this information was provided to his office prior to it being made available to the Morris inquiry, will the Premier instruct Queensland Health to provide all relevant material directly to the inquiry rather than being sent to him first so that he can sanitise it and put his own favourable spin on these monumental blunders?

Mr BEATTIE: I say to the honourable Leader of the Liberal Party that that is an outrageous claim. Bearing in mind that we will be bringing down such a great budget today, nothing is going to spoil my good mood. So I am going to be very generous.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! I was going to say to the Leader of the Liberal Party that imputing improper motives is against the standing orders. I let it go because I am sure the Premier can handle it.

Mr BEATTIE: As I said, Mr Acting Speaker, I am in a really generous mood, because we are taking Queensland to a whole new level today. We are building a new Queensland today with this budget. We have a record budget. It is just fantastic.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Callide under standing order 253.

Mr BEATTIE: We will see in the budget a dramatic increase in the amount of expenditure on Health. I will leave the details to the Treasurer, but let me come back to the question.

What the Leader of the Liberal Party says is not true. He will recall the history of this. We asked for all information to be provided. As soon as we were alerted as to the information, the Minister for Health and I were notified and the commission was notified. There was no sanitising of anything. The whole lot of it was released. We went out and took it on the chin and announced it. That is what the Minister for Health and I—

An opposition member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Please, rudeness is not a good thing, and it is not the member's question. We made it clear that we were going to take this on the chin. The coward's way out would have been to just send it down to the inquiry and run away from it. We did not do that. We sent it down to the inquiry and we faced up to the news conference.

Mr Quinn: That's a good spin.

Mr BEATTIE: Hang on, I faced up to it. Gordon and I said this publicly: 'Any information that comes to our attention we will release publicly and will go to the inquiry.' That was in the early stages.

Mr Quinn: Who's running the inquiry? You or Morris?

Mr BEATTIE: Robert, stop it. Stop it, Robert. As a former teacher, he knows what it is like when there are naughty students. Naughty students are not good. As a teacher he ought to know better.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Lockyer under standing order 253.

Mr BEATTIE: This was in the early stages when these things were happening. Now that the inquiry is up and running, they get all the information. The instructions from the minister and the instructions from the director-general have been clear. In fact, having been provided by the minister and the director-general with their appropriate instructions to the department, I wrote to Tony Morris and gave him a copy of the instructions that all information was to be provided directly to the commission. So the commission gets it all. We are not going to run away from this. I said that we are going to fix this up. We know that there are problems. We will take them head-on, we will take them on the chin and we will deal with them.

One matter I should have mentioned earlier was that there was a report from the parliamentary ethics and privileges committee. One of the recommendations was in relation to entitlements. I dealt with some of that this morning. On the other matters, I should have mentioned that in relation to that I am still looking at DTA. No final decision has been made in accordance with the recommendation from the committee to have a look at these things. I will come back about that in the future.

Police Resources

Mrs SMITH: My question is to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. Last week I was honoured to represent the minister at the induction ceremony for 97 new graduates into the Queensland Police Service. The minister has stated that police numbers in Queensland will increase to 9,150 by September this year. What progress has been made in this regard?

Ms SPENCE: I thank the member for Burleigh for the question, and I thank her for representing me at the induction ceremony at Chandler last week while I hosted the police ministers conference here in Brisbane.

The member is quite right: the 97 new officers who were inducted last week represent a major milestone in the Police Service in this state because for the first time in this state's history we have over 9,000 sworn police officers out there on the beat in Queensland. In fact, as of today we have 9,055 police officers. Two thousand new police officer positions have been created in the last seven years under the Beattie government. In fact, we have increased this Police Service by a third since our election in 1998. We are well on the way to meeting our commitment to have 9,150 sworn officers by September this year. Mr Acting Speaker, as you can imagine, there will be more good news this afternoon in the budget in terms of police numbers and police resourcing.

Mr Mackenroth: There won't be any bad news in the budget.

Ms SPENCE: There will not be any bad news, certainly not! What few people understand, though, is that we have the highest number of support officer positions to support our civilian positions and to support our police officers of any state in Australia. That means the police officers in this state are more heavily supported by civilians than in any other state in this country. We also have plans this financial year to start civilianising another 500 police positions. That means putting 500 extra police officers out there on the beat where the Queensland public expects them to be. We are more than fulfilling the Queensland public's expectation of creating a safer state.

When I travel around the state what I hear from every community is their desire to have more police officers. In every part of this state the communities want police officers in their schools, in their shopping centres and in their local neighbourhoods. We are well on the way to meeting those public expectations. In fact, in the next 12 months we expect to establish a permanent police station in the Aboriginal communities of Wujal Wujal and Hope Vale for the first time. I recently announced that the Palm Island community police station would operate 24 hours a day. There are very few parts of Queensland that will not have a permanent police position by the end of this financial year.

These new police officer positions have meant a reduction in crime in most categories of crime. In the annual statistical review, which is published in November each year, it will be found that in most categories of crime against property and most offences against people we are seeing good reductions. We are also seeing an increase in the number of police prosecutions and charges.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Before calling the honourable member for Nicklin, I welcome to the public gallery teachers and students from Ipswich Girls' Grammar School in the electorate of Ipswich.

Sunshine Coast Hospitals

Mr WELLINGTON: My question is to the Minister for Health. In relation to his announcement of a new public hospital to be built at Sippy Downs on the Sunshine Coast to relieve future pressure on the Nambour Hospital, I ask the minister: who from Nambour Hospital management and who from Nambour Hospital staff will be consulted in relation to the planning of how this new hospital will link with the Nambour and other Sunshine Coast hospitals in the delivery of future health services? When will they be consulted?

Mr NUTTALL: The question asked by the honourable member is a valid one in relation to the delivery of services on the Sunshine Coast. Can I say to the honourable member that we will consult not only with the public sector but also with the private hospitals and all health providers on the Sunshine Coast. I will come back to the public sector in a minute. I do not think any one group is the font of all wisdom in terms of what is required and what is not required. Obviously, senior management at the Nambour Hospital will be consulted during the process. As I said, we will also consult with the private sector.

On the Sunshine Coast we have Noosa Hospital, which is a privately owned hospital but is run in conjunction with the state government; the hospital at Caloundra; the Nambour Hospital; the new one at Sippy Downs; the private hospital at Buderim and the one at Nambour as well—

An honourable member: Selangor.

Mr NUTTALL: Yes, Selangor. Those hospitals need to be consulted, and the local GPs need to be consulted as well in terms of service delivery. The planning for any hospital will take several years. I understand that an announcement is imminent about another private hospital that may be built on the Sunshine Coast. We do not want to duplicate what they might be providing, so we will have to talk to them as well. We will do that over the coming years.

More importantly, we also need to consult with community leaders. I think that is important. We will do that. We will probably engage in some public consultation. I would think that we would advertise and write to community leaders. If there are people we have left out or will leave out in the process, I would invite the member for Nicklin and any other local members on the Sunshine Coast to advise the minister's office so that we can ensure that those people are consulted.

Mr Cummins: What about training doctors?

Mr NUTTALL: What about training doctors? I think that is a good point. As we are building the new hospital next to the university, I have encouraged the university to speak to the federal government about making that university a medical hospital. As we know, at the moment that university trains nurses. We would like that university to be accredited so that it can train doctors as well.

Tilt Train

Dr LESLEY CLARK: My question is to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. Could the minister please inform the House what benefits the people of Queensland get from the tilt train that travels from Cairns to Brisbane?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for her question. The honourable member is a champion for the people of far-north Queensland, as are the other government members in that area. On the weekend I read with great interest some incredibly uninformed comment in an article in the *Sunday Mail* that lacked a response from the transport minister because the journalist did not ask me to provide one. In that article the Cairns Mayor, Kevin Byrne, said that the Cairns tilt train was full of freeloaders. Does the shadow minister endorse that comment? That is what he said.

Mr Schwarten: What did he say?

Mr LUCAS: He said that the Cairns tilt train was full of freeloaders. Generally, in relation to our Traveltrain network, we spend \$107 million a year in subsidies to actually have a fair dinkum rural and regional rail service. I make no apologies for that. I am proud that we support that. Did you know, Mr Acting Speaker, that the majority of people who travel on the Cairns tilt train are on concessions? They are pensioners. I am delighted that they travel on it. I am delighted that each year the minister for communities pays my department—Queensland Rail—\$23.8 million to have those people travel up to Cairns. Cairns is a wonderful, world-class tourist destination. It is not just the property of the five-star people who fly up business class on the aeroplane. It is the property of the mums and dads and the pensioners as well.

If the Mayor of Cairns wants to pooh-pooh the pensioners for catching the tilt train, I think it is a very, very sad indictment on him and his failure to defend the interests of the tourist industry. What happens is that pensioners use their vouchers for the tilt train—and we welcome them—and they go to Cairns and they go to the three-star hotels or the caravan parks or the small establishments. They go to the places that are run by the mums and dads and battlers and small business owners of Cairns and far-north Queensland. They might have lunch at the RSL or the leagues club or the football club where the kids of Cairns families' prepare the meals and serve them.

If the Mayor of Cairns thinks that the government is not committed to supporting those sorts of people, then he is wrong. If the Mayor of Cairns is so distracted from his duties that he cannot support the tilt train and the people who use it for the benefit of the tourist industry in that area or to visit relatives, then maybe he should consider what he is doing in his job and get someone else who wants to do it.

According to surveys conducted by QR, 86 per cent of people who travel on the tilt train say it is very valuable. Some 71 per cent say that it has a big advantage over other forms of transport. The honourable member opposite was also mentioned in the article. I would be interested to know the source of the information for her claims. The amount of \$360 million was spent on the track alone as part of that project. That benefits rail freight and that benefits people generally who get goods there, such as the honourable member opposite. We spend money on our rail network.

Citrus Canker

Mr HORAN: My question without notice is to the Minister For Primary Industries and Fisheries. The commonsense plan to destroy all citrus trees in the Emerald region was put to the minister with the full support of all growers in October of last year. Since then the minister has deliberately and cruelly peddled the false hope of domestic market re-entry to buy himself time and save the government compensation costs when everyone knew that the minister's plan was impossible. Will the minister admit his total failure to manage this crisis and will he now provide compensation to these people who have been wiped out by his incompetence?

Mr PALASZCZUK: At the outset let me just say that the proposal for the complete eradication of all trees in the Emerald region was taken to the national management group on behalf of the citrus industry by the Queensland government last December and it was rejected by the national management group. So let us put an end to that. You cannot have it both ways.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! Member for Toowoomba South, you have asked your question.

Mr PALASZCZUK: Let us have a look at the current situation. Is the honourable member aware that last week at the national management group the Queensland government put forward a proposal to provide up to \$9.2 million to support the citrus growers in the Emerald region? Does the minister know what happened? There was a lack of leadership by the federal Minister for Agriculture, who was the first person to say N-O, no support for the citrus industry. He stated 'What we are going to do is accept my plan.' His plan was the complete eradication of the remaining citrus trees in the Emerald region. We as a government agreed to that provided that there was a compensation package of up to \$9.2 million that would be shared under the new deed that the federal Minister for Agriculture endorsed. But when the first opportunity came for the federal minister to do something about the deed that he had endorsed and signed he did not walk the walk. Consequently, what do we have? We now have a citrus industry in Queensland and the Queensland government—

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! You have asked your question.

Mr PALASZCZUK: —who are leading the defence of the Australian citrus industry in Queensland. We are leading the defence and we are expecting to fund that entire defence. The buck stops with the Commonwealth government. There are precedents whereby the Commonwealth government has paid out ex gratia payments, as the member for Hinchinbrook knows, in relation to the Daintree and fire ants. It is a breach of federal quarantine. It is not a breach of Queensland laws; it is a breach of federal laws. The Queensland government is prepared to put its hand in its pocket provided our plan for a compensation package of up to \$9.2 million is first of all accepted by the Commonwealth and the citrus industry. This is the first chance the federal Minister for Agriculture has to show some leadership. He has never been to the Emerald region to talk to the citrus growers. It is up to him now to show leadership and that leadership is to say to the states and to say to the citrus industries, 'Let's support the Queensland plan; let's support the Queensland growers.'

Gold Coast Water Reuse Scheme

Mr POOLE: My question is to the Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women. I refer the minister to the state—

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! Member for Toowoomba South! I could not hear the question. I am not going to allow interjections when a member is asking a question. I will deal with it very harshly.

Mr POOLE: My question is to the Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women. I refer the minister to the state government's decision to provide \$10 million towards the cost of a \$30 million water reuse scheme on the Gold Coast and I ask: can the minister please advise the House of the benefits of this approach and whether the state government will continue to support councils in this way?

Ms BOYLE: The answer to the member's question—a good question—is that indeed we will continue to support the councils of Queensland with continuing funding programs and, in fact, with a new funding program designed to ensure the environmental sustainability of new infrastructure. We all know that there is no more important issue facing Queenslanders than the issue of water, in particular in terms of its wisest use and its highest quality. That is where the councils of Queensland have a significant role to play.

There are good examples already of councils doing wise work with water. For example, some are working on reducing water demand and loss through leaks. Presently the government makes available \$65 million per year to councils to reduce water demand and to save on loss through leaks. When you think about it, it has really been very poor practice on the part of all Queenslanders that so much of our water has been wasted, in particular through leakages and through poor control of demand.

I have to say that when it comes to conserving water, one of the leading councils is the Gold Coast City Council. It is among a small group of councils leading Australia in their response to drought, population growth and the use of cutting-edge technology. Just last week I joined Gold Coast councillors and opened the Gold Coast's new reclaimed water scheme. It is treated waste water stored in a disused quarry rather than released into the Albert River. The water produced by the scheme will be used by five local cane farmers and by a palm grower. It will be used by industry and it will be used for watering open space. This will provide massive savings in potable water use that has previously been used for industry, farms and open space. What an improvement in our understanding of the value and power of water. We are going to, through the Gold Coast scheme, save 20 million litres of treated waste water, instead of this being piped out into the Albert River and thereby, of course, contributing to the decline of water quality in our catchment areas and in our marine environment. This will be wisely used and replace potable water use. I encourage other councils in Queensland to have a close look at the funding program, to care about their environment, to put their schemes together to minimise discharge into creeks, catchment areas and the marine environment, to stop using potable water for industry and agricultural uses and instead to follow the Gold Coast City Council's lead in establishing a recycling scheme that is the latest in technology and the best in Queensland.

Simpson, Mr D; Cancellation of Surgery

Dr FLEGG: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Health. I refer to the case of Gold Coast patient Mr David Simpson. Mr Simpson is one of many Queenslanders caught up in the epidemic of cancellation and postponement of urgent medical treatment. Mr Simpson was diagnosed with a life-threatening cardiac condition on 22 April at a Gold Coast Hospital. Immediate surgery was sought at the PA Hospital. He was unable to be transferred for his life-saving treatment. He has been admitted on a number of subsequent occasions and prepped a number of times for surgery only to be turned away, including one occasion where this disabled and only partly sighted patient's wife and carer was not even notified that he was discharged from the PA Hospital with no money or warm clothes. Given that the minister and his department can find money for all sorts of administrative and peripheral activities, when will the minister accept the most basic of his responsibilities to provide life-saving treatment to those in desperate need and assist Mr Simpson and the many others who are in the same tragic predicament?

Mr NUTTALL: In relation to Mr Simpson, I am not prepared to discuss his individual case here in parliament other than to say that it has been brought to my attention. I have asked the department to do what it can to assist Mr Simpson. I understand he is scheduled for surgery in July. I have been advised that surgery has been cancelled on several occasions due to other emergencies that arose which necessitated the cancellation of Mr Simpson's—

Mr Horan: There's not enough resources to treat him.

Mr NUTTALL: Well, that is not the case.

Dr Flegg: That is the case.

Mr NUTTALL: I am trying to answer the honourable member's question, if he would allow me to. There are a number intensive care beds that we have in our hospitals. The surgery that people quite often require necessitates an intensive care bed. That is why it is important for us in the future to try to co-locate with private hospitals so that if we do have—

Dr Flegg interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Moggill under standing order 253. You never allow the minister to answer a question you ask. I think it would be in the member for Moggill's interests to ask the question and allow the answer to be given. I call the minister.

Mr NUTTALL: If we are in a position where we can co-locate with the private hospitals—and if members look interstate they will find that it does happen interstate—then we can actually buy an intensive care bed for a few days so that surgery does not have to be cancelled. The member knows and I know that an intensive care bed, with all the bells and whistles and the staff needed, costs around

\$600,000 a year. It would be wrong of me as the minister to have a number of intensive care beds waiting just in case. The member would be saying to me—

An opposition member interjected.

Brisbane International Film Festival

Ms LIDDY CLARK: My question is to the Minister for Education and the Arts. More and more school groups, children and teenagers are attracted to the Brisbane International Film Festival each July. Can the minister outline how the program will be expanded this year to better cater for them?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the member for Clayfield not only for her question but also for her very well known passionate support for the arts in Queensland. She is the leading light and example to all of us in that regard.

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to announce this morning a new program called Cine Sparks, an Australian film festival for young people. This is an expansion of the existing children's program that has been part of the Brisbane International Film Festival for a couple of years. This program will receive an extra \$325,000 a year to considerably expand its program. As I have said, there has been a small children's part in the Brisbane International Film Festival, otherwise known as BIFF, since 2002.

The new program will appeal to nine- to 18-year-olds. It is expected to attract about 10,000 children this year and grow to an anticipated 20,000 children and young people by 2007. That will be assisted by the fact that those under 18 will be provided with free admission to all of those programs.

We believe that film is very important in Queensland, not only because of its significant role in the arts of today and the future but also because it is a very important business and a very important source of jobs for Queenslanders, particularly those in the south-east corner around the Gold Coast studios. We believe that it is important for us to foster a love of film in young people because not only will they be the film employees of the future but also they will, hopefully, be some of our best educated audiences of the future. We want them to expect a film culture in Queensland.

The expansion of BIFF to include an Australian film festival for young people is a first in Australia. We believe that it will make a real difference over time to the number of people in Queensland who are part of the film industry.

BIFF's home for the past 11 years has traditionally been the Hoyts Regent Theatre in the mall. Some components will stay there, but from this year the major part of the festival will be moved to the South Bank precinct, with programs in both the cinemas and the Suncorp Piazza. That co-locates them with the Griffith University film school and the Queensland Music Festival and makes them more accessible to many families.

The Cine Sparks program will expand the traditional boundaries of film. Programs will be sourced internationally from places such as Japan, Iran, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands and Spain, with a number of short films featuring on the program done by children and young people. This will provide some balance to the mainstream films that kids see in cinemas every day. I hope what this program does is expose many young Queenslanders in the next few years to the breadth of cinema and what film can and should be and provide some balance to that which comes out of Hollywood.

Health System

Mrs PRATT: My question is to the Minister for Health. Craig has been confined to a motorised wheelchair which has been modified on the recommendation of occupational therapists and MASS personnel. MASS reportedly has now lost Craig's records and now questions his requirement for his motorised chair. To replace his current chair Craig has to pay almost a quarter of his pension for three years. Will the minister step in and relieve this man's distress as he cannot meet the costs and fears a reduction in his mobility and quality of life?

Mr NUTTALL: I say to the honourable member that I am only too happy to have a look at the case that she has raised in the House today. MASS is a subsidised program; it is not there to totally replace the equipment of people. Over the last 12 months we have been able to bring the waiting list down to nothing, which is a first for the program. We are on top of the issues in terms of supporting people in need. In terms of this individual case, I am only too happy to have a look at the circumstances.

Mrs Pratt: You have had the matter for a few weeks.

Mr NUTTALL: If the member has known for some time, as I have indicated to all honourable members, then she has the opportunity to talk to the local management. If they are not helping then obviously the member can get in touch with me. As I have indicated to the House—

Mrs PRATT: I rise to a point of order: The minister's office has had that for quite some time, as he knows.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! That is not point of order.

Mr NUTTALL: As I indicated to the House and the honourable member today, I will have a look at it today and get back to her today.

Sirutis, Mr R

Mr LEE: My question without notice is to the Minister for Emergency Services. Media reports say that a donation of \$50,000 will be made to emergency services groups following the successful search and rescue of Richard Sirutis on Moreton Island last month. How will this money be divided up?

Mr CUMMINS: I thank the member for the question. It is a generous gesture from the company that Mr Sirutis works for. All emergency services organisations involved will be very thankful. I have also asked the Department of Emergency Services to organise a thankyou barbecue for the various groups involved. This is being planned as we speak.

The donation that the member for Indooroopilly mentioned will be a very good final chapter for the Moreton Island search and rescue, which had such a happy ending. On behalf of all emergency services volunteers and members involved in the search, I would like to thank Mr Sirutis and his company. I understand that the SES will be receiving around \$33,000 of the \$50,000 donation and the money will go to the 11 SES units which spent probably 6,000 hours searching Moreton Island.

A government member interjected.

Mr CUMMINS: It was a marvellous effort. Another \$9,000 will go to the Queensland Rescue helicopter service. While the exact details of how the donated funds will be spent are yet to be determined, the units that will benefit from the donation include Beaudesert, Brisbane, Caboolture, Esk, Gold Coast, Ipswich, Kilcoy, Logan, Pine Rivers, Redcliffe and Redlands. These funds are likely to be spent on new equipment for the groups I mentioned.

More than 511 SES volunteers took part in the search effort on Moreton Island over 10 days. It was very well documented and covered by the press. The search also involved other key operational areas from the Counter Disaster and Rescue Services division of Emergency Services. The Queensland Rescue helicopter, Volunteer Marine Rescue and Coastguard also undertook search activities.

The Queensland SES worked very closely with other key agencies in the search effort, including the Queensland Police Service and the Australian Defence Force. The community helicopter providers, RACQ CareFlight and Energex, which are partly funded by grants from the government each year, played vital roles in the search and rescue effort.

The SES groups involved had some great publicity out of this rescue. I hope that this happy ending will spark more people to join their local SES groups and also motivate high school students to join emergency services cadet programs so that they can take up careers within the Department of Emergency Services and its divisions. This was a great effort by all groups concerned and showcases how well all of our emergency services groups interact in Queensland to achieve results. It was a very good outcome for this overseas tourist. While he was hurt during the time he was lost, it was a great outcome for him to be finally found.

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

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Office of the Speaker; Racing Inquiry

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 am): This morning in this place we heard the Premier deliver his response to the Crime and Misconduct Commission's consideration of his draft guidelines for the operation and accountability of the Office of the Speaker. It is interesting to see the Premier weaselling his way around any significant commitments that enhance that accountability in many areas. From day one the Premier has sought to shift responsibility from himself to the Crime and Misconduct Commission with regard to the alleged indiscretions of the Speaker. The Nationals have always said that there were some very easy and some very demonstrable facts in this case. One of those facts was that the Speaker did not comply with the requirements from the Premier to actually seek the Premier's approval before undertaking overseas travel. The second one is that the Speaker did not submit a report to this place. Those two things are absolute demonstrable facts. There is no debating that. There is no saying that that is not fact in any way whatsoever.

From day one the Premier has sought to deny his responsibility, absolve himself from responsibility and shift this issue to the Crime and Misconduct Commission, which he did. The Crime and Misconduct Commission was also subject to the Premier's request to review his draft guidelines. You cannot have your cake and eat it, too. If one seeks the advice of a body such as the Crime and Misconduct Commission to look at draft guidelines for the accountability of the Speaker and the Office of

the Speaker, then when it comes back with recommendations that one does not like one cannot then stand up in this place and repudiate what one does not like. That is the reality.

If one wants to do something like that—that is, if one says that, at the end of the day, they are the complete and absolute arbiter and they will decide—then the Premier should have decided that on day one. He told us this morning that he does not want to see a situation where the Clerk can go directly to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee. Frankly, that is something that should happen, because there are matters which need to be resolved from time to time—matters that might strike at the heart of the operation of this place and potentially be a contempt.

What the Premier is demonstrating by his actions is that he wants to quarantine the Speaker from any opportunity whatsoever to be accountable to this parliament. We know that the Premier and his government will use their huge majority in this place to quarantine—to protect—the Speaker from any issues where the Speaker may be under a cloud for any form of ethical breach or any form of ethical guidelines breach. They are matters that the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee are there to actually look at. That is fact. That is in the guidelines. There is no doubt about it. Today we have seen the Premier erecting in this place a barrier against accountability for future Speakers. That is what he has basically said.

The other issue which needs to be dealt with is this: what is now going to be done to recover the money which was claimed without authority by the Speaker? What is going to be done? Absolutely nothing if one listened to Mr Beattie in this place this morning. The Premier does not want to confront that particular issue. One cannot consent to a situation where a Speaker has not followed the guidelines which have been laid down in this place. Those guidelines clearly are to seek the approval of the Premier before undertaking overseas travel and to report back to this place. That has not happened. The Crime and Misconduct Commission in ruling on the Premier's draft guidelines has basically said that there needs to be a process of recovering the wrongfully claimed expenditure in the future. It is saying that. That is to go in those guidelines, but the parliament reserves the right as the ultimate body responsible for its own actions to recover that money or to sanction the Speaker here and now. The Premier does not want to confront that particular demon.

What did he do in this place this morning? He stood up here and has invited the Speaker to retrospectively apply for approval for trips which were taken over the last six years. How crazy is that? What sort of signal does that send to the community at large? It basically says that there is one rule for this place and there is one rule for everyone else. That being the case, what about those employees in a whole range of companies throughout Queensland or Australia or public servants who have been duped, who have been in some way disciplined and dismissed for not properly claiming travel expenses? The CMC has chased people all over this country for matters of \$50, \$100, \$200 or \$300 relating to incorrectly claiming travel entitlements and allowances. Those people are sanctioned and, in many cases, disciplined and dismissed.

Mr Horan: People are jailed.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Some people are actually jailed for those sorts of things. Wouldn't it be a lovely old circumstance if everyone in the community had the opportunity to retrospectively right something which they had done wrong? Wouldn't the community love that? Wouldn't everyone in the community love the opportunity to retrospectively correct their inappropriate claim for some \$50,000 or \$60,000? They would love that. There are people languishing in jail cells across Queensland who did not follow the guidelines and who would love that opportunity. There are a whole range of other people who have been dismissed and disciplined. That is wrong. That sets no example whatsoever for the community at large, and this Premier has to show some leadership in that particular area. There has to be exactly the same standard in this place for the operation of members of parliament and the Speaker as would operate in the community. If the government is going to allow some sort of retrospective validation or approval for things people have done wrong, then it should extend it to the community at large. There will be hundreds of thousands of Queenslanders out there who will be jumping for joy.

The other issue I want to address today is the quite pathetic attempt by the minister for racing to absolve himself from any responsibility with regard to the whole Queensland Racing inquiry. We heard lots of name-calling this morning from the minister. We often hear lots of name-calling from the minister because he is very good at that. He attacked the opposition. He attacked any demon he could find. He attacked the *Courier-Mail* and all of those sorts of things. This is a man who is reconstructing history. This is a man who has not read the report of Daubney-Rafter. This is a man who is in denial. He is a minister who is not wanting to confront some of the fundamental issues which were raised in that particular report. We cannot have a circumstance where the head of Queensland thoroughbred racing is under a Crime and Misconduct cloud. He must stand down whilst this matter is being resolved. We are talking about an industry which finds itself under an integrity cloud with many unanswered questions most of the time anyway, but that is acceptable to this minister.

When we raised the issue here today and in the media yesterday, what did the minister come out and say? He said that Mr Bentley is exonerated for any misconduct or unlawful behaviour in this report. I thought, 'Did I read the same report as the minister?', because what it said was that matters which

Mr Bentley was involved in regarding the employment of a person—namely, his son-in-law—and any interference in that selection process should be referred to the Crime and Misconduct Commission. Gee whiz, I would love to be exonerated like that if I were under a cloud! Maybe it follows on from what the Premier is doing with regard to the Speaker. There would be a whole range of other people out there who, when they go before an inquiry, are under police investigation and when they are asked, 'Are you under investigation?', they can say, 'No, I'm exonerated.' This is called self-exoneration or exoneration from on high. It is extremely interesting.

An opposition member: Arrogance!

Mr SPRINGBORG: It is arrogance. It is contempt. It is absolutely contemptible from the minister. If people are before the CMC, they are not exonerated. They are under a cloud. I do not know; maybe the minister has a different definition by which he operates, but they are under a cloud. They are under an integrity cloud. They are under a potential misconduct or criminal cloud, depending on what the CMC is looking at. But certainly that is not a clearance. It is not a clearance in my language. It is not a clearance in the language of anyone out there whatsoever. These are serious issues, and this minister should have the guts to stand Mr Bentley aside until such time as the Crime and Misconduct Commission properly investigates this matter and decides whether there is a case to answer.

This is not just a matter of somebody writing to the CMC; this is a matter of a properly constituted inquiry with two commissioners and counsel assisting who have referred Mr Bentley to the Crime and Misconduct Commission. There is no clearance whatsoever. Maybe the minister is just assuming that the CMC will do what the CMC used to do and clear Mr Bentley. Maybe the minister is prospectively exonerating Mr Bentley. But with the current CMC, the minister may get a different outcome. The minister is prospectively exonerating Mr Bentley.

Time expired.

Wee Week; Ipswich Half Marathon; ME/CFS/FM Awareness Week

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (11.39 am): I am delighted to bring to the attention of members of this House that last week was national Wee Week. One's wee is very important to one's health. Wee Week is a public awareness campaign that highlights the importance of the early detection, better management and prevention of kidney disease in the Australian community. Wee Week is an initiative of Kidney Health Australia. The week focused on the importance of having a regular kidney and urinary health check, particularly for the one in three Australians who are at an increased risk of suffering from kidney disease.

Kidney Health Australia is committed to an Australia that is free of kidney and urinary tract disease. The risk of kidney disease increases if a person has diabetes, or has high blood pressure, or is over 50 years of age, or has a family history of kidney disease, or is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island descent, or smokes. It is recommended that if a person fits one of these categories that person should ask their doctor for a kidney health check. A kidney health check includes a blood pressure test, a urine test for protein and also a blood test for creatinine. If kidney disease is detected and treated early, a person can double the life of their kidneys.

The Kidney Check Australia Task Force is committed to educating health professionals about who and how to screen for kidney disease as well as assisting health professionals in developing the skills that are required to effectively manage kidney disease and common associated conditions such as diabetes and hypertension.

Moreover, Kidney Health Australia and its foundation partner, Servia Laboratories Pty Ltd, are currently embarking on a project to develop a national chronic kidney disease strategy. The aim of this strategy is to develop chronic disease management strategies and programs to facilitate comprehensive and holistic best care for patients across the continuum of progressive kidney failure. I urge all members to promote this worthy cause in their electorates with the slogan: are you one in three? Check your wee.

I would also like to talk briefly now about the Ipswich half marathon, which will be run for the Ipswich Hospital Foundation. The foundation has announced an exciting new venture for the Ipswich and West Moreton community: the Park to Park Half Marathon, 10-kilometre and five-kilometre fun runs and children's races on Sunday, 31 July 2005. This hotly contested half marathon will showcase first-time contenders and veteran athletes who will slog it out for cash prizes. All profits will go to the Ipswich Hospital Foundation, which provides medical and health research to encourage a healthy community. The half marathon will start at The Park, which was formerly known as Wolston Park, early on that Sunday morning.

The event enables a wide range of residents and visitors to be guaranteed to have a great fun-filled day. The target is for at least 1,000 runners to participate in this year's event. The Ipswich Hospital Foundation has engaged the professional running services of InTraining to guarantee that the race and the fun runs are handled in a very professional manner. A number of corporate sponsors are also on board, including Wingate, Ipswichfitness, River music station, InTraining Running Centre and Ross Llewellyn Motors. All other Ipswich businesses are invited to be part of this half marathon.

I encourage individuals and teams to register for the event. I also issue a challenge to members of the House to participate with their family and friends on the day. Members and the community have a few weeks to start their training in preparation for this exciting day. All inquiries about the event can be directed to the Ipswich Hospital Foundation. On that particular day I will be walking, not running. At the end of the race I will also be there to congratulate the prize winners.

I would like to congratulate the Ipswich Hospital Foundation on its innovative fundraising ideas. I also acknowledge the efforts of Tom Yates, a tireless and enthusiastic worker, who is supported by a great team of helpers.

Last month was ME/CFS/FM International Awareness Week. Those affected by ME/CFS feel utter exhaustion, extreme illness, muscle aches, tenderness and joint pain. They also have difficulty sleeping, high temperatures, headaches and flu-like symptoms, poor circulation and impaired hearing and vision. Sufferers are also sensitive to food, chemicals, perfumes and cleaning products. That makes everyday life very difficult for the sufferers of these particular illnesses.

In our corner of the globe the Royal Australasian College of Physicians has added a lot of value to the promotional work being done by organisations and has also produced clinical practice guidelines. Its working group is made up of specialists in immunology, neurology, rheumatology, respiratory medicine, infectious diseases, occupational medicine, paediatrics, psychiatry and general practice to ensure that the sufferers have great diagnosis and prognosis.

Freeleagus, Mr A

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (11.45 am): Last Friday I received a call from a friend within Brisbane's Greek community who informed me of the death of a good friend, Alex Freeleagus. Alexander Christy Freeleagus AO, CBE, AM was born on 28 December 1928 in Brisbane, the son of Christy Freeleagus and Ariadne Coroneos. Alex was educated at the Church of England Grammar School in Brisbane and then went to the University of Queensland, where he studied law.

Alex's father, Christy, had held the position of Queensland's first Honorary Consul-General for Greece since 1919. Alex was appointed Vice-Consul in 1951 and upon his father's death became Honorary Consul-General in 1957. He joked that he had no choice as his father had told him that he was the Vice-Consul whether he wanted the position or not, but I know that he was proud and happy to serve the Greek community in the position that his father had held before him.

Alex was a solicitor, director and then senior partner at Henderson and Lahey Solicitors, now Clayton Utz, from 1973 to 1993. He was also a director of Oil Search Australia Ltd, a subsidiary of Origin Energy Ltd. Alex will be best remembered for his service to the community. He was a member of the Queensland Council of the Australian Bicentenary Authority from 1986 to 1988, founding chairman of the Brisbane Biennial Festival in 1991, convener of the visit to Brisbane of the Ancient Macedonia Exhibition in 1989, Dean of the Consular Corps from 1977 to 1978 and again from 1989 to 1990, Greece's Commissioner-General for Expo 88, Chief Attache for the Commonwealth Games in 1982, Liveryman of the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators, founding chairman and after that national vice-president of the Queensland British Order of Australia Association from 1975 to 1985, national vice-president of the Order of Australia Association from 1986 to 1987 and a valued adviser to successive state and federal governments on immigration and citizenship matters.

Alex's military service saw him retiring as Wing Commander, Specialist Legal Consultant, after 40 years of Army and Air Force reserve service. He received a number of honours for his service to the Greek community and the ex-service community. He was awarded an Order of the British Empire—Commander (Civil) in 1976. He became a Member of the Order of Australia in 1977 and an Officer of the Order of Australia in 1995. In 2001 he received a Centenary Medal. Alex was also awarded the Silver Cross of the Royal Order of St George 1 and the Gold Cross Patriarchate of Constantinople. As honourable members would realise, Alex Freeleagus lived a remarkably full life of achievement and service to the community.

As I said at the outset, Alex was a friend. Our friendship grew out of my association with Brisbane's Greek community. Alex knew that I turned 21 in Greece and that I have a great love and respect for the Greek community and their many achievements in Queensland and Australia.

Alex loved Queensland and his Greek heritage. Like many of my Greek-Australian friends, he had family links to the beautiful island of Kythera. On many occasions he spoke to me about the many Queenslanders with Greek heritage who have made Queensland what it is today. He also spoke to me at length about Australia's architectural heritage, which owes so much to Greek builders and architects. He was proud of the hugely successful Athens Olympic Games and talked of nothing else for months prior to the games.

I will always remember our trip to Townsville, where we met the local representatives of the Greek community, who were so generous with their friendship and hospitality, and then our drive to Ingham, where we unveiled a plaque in memory of Joice Nankivell Loch. It was Joice Loch's life story in the book, *Blue Ribbons Bitter Bread* that captured Alex's imagination. He spoke to me at length about

Joice's life, the fact that she was Australia's most decorated woman and that for the last 50 years of her amazing life she lived in the tower of Prosforian in Ouranoupolis. I know that Alex wanted me to visit Ouranoupolis and see the ancient Byzantine tower of Prosforian that was Joice Loch's home. I will keep my promise and some day make that trip—maybe on the way back from Kythera.

Alex was without doubt a great Queenslander who left his mark in so many ways. He was also extremely proud of his Greek heritage and worked tirelessly for most of his life for the Greek community in his role as Honorary Consul-General for Greece. Alex was a good friend, a champion of the Greek community and a caring and loving family man. Alex touched the lives of thousands of Queenslanders who will remember him. He was a great Queenslander. Alex Freeleagus had the respect of his peers and the love of his family and friends. No-one can want for more. I will miss you, mate. On behalf of my wife, Cathy, and our family I convey our condolences to Alex's sisters, Rene and Evie, and their families.

Bundaberg Base Hospital; Patel, Dr J

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (11.51 am): It is now 77 days since a letter written by nurse Toni Hoffman which alerted my community to Dr Patel was tabled in this place. It is now 61 days since the Minister for Health, accompanied by Director-General Steve Buckland, visited Bundaberg Base Hospital on 7 April and told staff that there would be no investigation into 'Dr Death'. On 8 April we all read how reporter Headly Thomas decided to Google Dr Patel's history and then on 9 April poor old 'Minister Know Nuttin' was in front of the cameras, two days after he said that there was not going to be an investigation, saying that there was going to be an investigation. It is now 49 days since this Labor government was dragged kicking and screaming against its will to establish the Morris royal commission into 'Dr Death'.

This state is in the middle of the worst health disaster since World War II. There are 87 deaths under investigation, and approximately 2,000 Bundaberg and Burnett families are affected. Families of victims are even now being asked by the media if they would give permission for their dead relatives' bodies to be dug up. I am sure that every member of this House would agree that that would be a very distressing and hurtful experience.

In this month's edition of *Health Matters* the Director-General, Dr Steve Buckland, writes in the editorial about distressing and hurtful experiences also. He penned these literary jewels, these words of wisdom—

... we as professionals will no doubt hear things that are distressing and hurtful.

This is inevitable given the state of hysteria and distrust currently being whipped up in the community ...

It will not come as any surprise to honourable members that the victims of Dr Patel have taken, as I have, great offence at these insensitive and oafish comments. The Premier, the health minister and their senior staff just do not get it. If hysteria and distrust are out there in the community—and I have no doubt for some of 'Dr Death's' victims they are—those strong human emotions are a result of the horrific reality of what has become our Third World health system caused by the negligent management of Labor Party imbeciles. The victims wrote to the Premier expressing their utter dismay and outrage upon reading the current 'Directions' column of Dr Buckland, who I am assuming is under orders from the health minister to inspire public confidence and lift professional morale during one of Queensland Health's darkest hours, with a dissertation which amazingly in approximately 568 words fails to mention the word 'patient' once.

A meeting of patients and victims of Dr Patel carried a vote of no confidence in Dr Buckland last Thursday evening. What did this weak health minister do? Did he show leadership and discipline his director-general? Did he have the decency to travel to Bundaberg and say sorry to the victims? No. He has done what he has always done, and that is to accept unquestioningly the lame excuses being fed to him by an out-of-touch and arrogant health department. He should be pinning a mushroom to his lapel instead of a rose. If a state of hysteria and distrust exists, it is because of the Labor government's incompetence—not victims, media, the National Party or anybody else whipping up anything in the community.

Again, I direct the attention of the House to the writings of the health minister's right-hand man, Dr Buckland, where he says—

The best way to counter this is to continue to do what we do best, to look out for each other ...

In reply to this amazing insight into Mr Nuttall's Queensland Health philosophy, members of the Bundaberg Base Hospital patient support group quite accurately say—

The Queensland public were under the apparent misunderstanding that what Queensland Health was supposed to do best was to fulfil its duty of care to provide the best quality of health care possible to the patients entrusted to it.

We need look no further for an example of the health minister's department 'looking out for each other' than when it allowed Dr Patel to continue operating for two days after he was named in this parliament and then gave him a one-way, taxpayer funded air ticket to America. The health minister is a weak manager happy to accept any story fed to him by an arrogant and out-of-control department. He has the blood of Dr Patel's victims on his hands and he should resign immediately.

Reconciliation Week

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (11.55 am): Last week was Reconciliation Week—a time during which all Australians could reflect on the past and put their minds to how, through both symbolic and practical measures, Indigenous Australians can proudly enjoy their culture and unique position as first Australians while at the same time proudly enjoying the same prospects in economic and social terms as non-Indigenous Australians now do. I started the week in Canberra attending the National Reconciliation Planning Workshop and ended the week being inspired by Noel Pearson, who powerfully, intellectually and provocatively outlined his manifesto when delivering the inaugural Mabo Oration, sponsored by the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Commission and QPAC. Noel Pearson stressed that the Mabo decision in 1992 was and is the cornerstone of reconciliation—legally, historically and morally. It has now been 13 years since the High Court finally had the courage to expose the lie that was terra nullius. But, as we paused last Friday, 3 June to celebrate this historic decision, it was also a time to reflect on Eddie Mabo the man and his legacy.

There are not many people who could say that they have single-handedly changed the course of history, but that is what Eddie Mabo has done. After the High Court ruled in his favour, Australia would never be the same again. On that day the highest court in Australia confirmed what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had always known: the land belonged to them and in some places, such as the Murray Islands in the Torres Strait, their ownership had survived more than 200 years of European settlement. The court said that Eddie Mabo's people were entitled as against the whole of the world to possession, occupation, use and enjoyment of their traditional land. The court decision and the legislation that followed it for the first time recognised and gave legal protection to the inherent rights of Indigenous Australians. The Mabo decision also ended forever one of the great lies of Australia's history—terra nullius or the land of no-one.

The High Court decision made Eddie Mabo a household name overnight, but his struggle was a long one. His case took 10 years to wind through the courts. In the years before cheap air fares, he had to travel by bus from his home in Townsville to the High Court in Canberra—a journey that could sometimes take up to four days. Tragically, Eddie never saw the High Court make its judgment. He was not there when the federal parliament passed the Native Title Act or when the Indigenous Land Fund that resulted from that act was introduced. Eddie Mabo died from cancer in January 1992.

Eddie Mabo's legacy transcended his own life and his land on Murray Islands. A new generation of Indigenous leaders, including Queensland's Noel Pearson, took up his fight in the courts and in the corridors of power. Where once Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders had protested on the streets outside, these leaders sat across the table from the Prime Minister and negotiated the new legislation as equals. This process was repeated all over Australia. The Native Title Act gave claimants a right to negotiate. This strengthened the power of Aboriginal communities and brought in a new culture of cooperation. As a result, pastoralists, miners, local governments and other developers are now more willing to sit down and reach agreement with Indigenous people. I note that last week the 100th ILUA has now been registered in Queensland. In this way Aboriginal communities will be more able to share the benefits of economic development on their traditional land.

Of course, while Eddie Mabo had a great victory, the High Court did not wave a magic wand. Most Aboriginal communities were not able to claim land under native title because they had been dispossessed and could not prove the continuous association that the law requires, and the social justice package promised to Aboriginal leaders as compensation for the loss of land never saw the light of day. It was negotiated and agreed by the Keating government but then shamefully reneged on by the incoming Howard government after the 1996 election.

Sadly, the years since the Mabo decision have still not seen a major improvement in the lives of so many Aboriginal people. Turning the situation around is an immense challenge, but for our part the Beattie government is determined to work with Indigenous communities to do this. Our aim is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have the same prospects for health, prosperity and quality of life as all Queenslanders.

In working to achieve this, we could do a lot worse than draw on the example of Eddie Mabo for inspiration. Eddie showed us that with determination, creativity and belief in yourself one person can achieve what many others regard as impossible. Eddie Mabo does not fit the profile of someone who could take the Queensland National Party government to the High Court and win. He did not have a university degree, he was not wealthy and he did not hold high office, but he has left us a legacy.

Maryborough Base Hospital

Mr CHRIS FOLEY (Maryborough—Ind) (12.00 pm): Last Saturday I was immensely proud of the people of Maryborough who turned up in droves to show positive support for the Maryborough Base Hospital. In fact, we had around 5,000 people, which is about 20 per cent of our population. So, by any measure, that is a tremendous outcome, and I congratulate the people for turning up in droves.

The resolution that resulted from that meeting to the Hon. Peter Beattie, Premier of Queensland, is that our No. 1 priority is to facilitate a fully functioning accident and emergency unit at the Maryborough Hospital with senior doctors and CT machines. The resolution calls on senior doctors located in Brisbane to be rotated to Maryborough on a three-monthly basis until more permanent staff can be found. The resolution also says that the act of discouragement of doctors who contemplate living in Maryborough and the inducements for senior medical staff to live in Hervey Bay should be investigated. Given the expanding population centred around both Maryborough and Hervey Bay, nothing less than two fully functioning accident and emergency departments is acceptable.

Hervey Bay serves a population of approximately 50,000 and Maryborough serves a population of about 35,000, including outlying areas. Most of these people would have to travel through Maryborough to reach the Hervey Bay Hospital, and we are very concerned about overloading that hospital as the people of Hervey Bay deserve their own facility. In addition, Maryborough has hundreds of Hervey Bay people who daily use the hospital via the industrialised work force and it also caters for continual trauma cases from the Bruce Highway and on weekends from the very significant sporting population in our district.

The meeting also called on the government to look at the current role of community health councils, which are now reduced to giving strategic advice. The meeting called on that role to be investigated as well. One of the big things that came from that rally—and as I said it was a positive rally; a show of support for the fact that we do love our hospital—was the clear mandate that the level of pay for doctors should achieve parity or better with other states. I will talk a little bit later about that.

We also call on the Queensland government to begin restructuring Queensland Health and demolishing the scandalous levels of bureaucracy that are consuming health dollars in administrative salaries instead of paying higher salaries to medical staff. A concern that we have had in recent days relates to the effect of the closure of our children's ward. Over a period of time we have seen that changed around, but again due to a lack of specialists those services are not able to be offered.

On the issue of doctors' wages, I noted a comparison of wages in the editorial in the *Chronicle* this morning. An intern in a Queensland hospital, after six years of study and a huge HECS bill, earns \$47,000 a year and as a junior doctor in the regions is likely to face critical life-and-death decisions. Without an experienced doctor beside them, who would want that responsibility for that sort of money? By comparison, the state government pays its new police officers \$46,000 after six months of recruit training. They are well deserving of that, but members would have to agree that even midlevel administrative officers in hospitals are now paid more than junior doctors, and it does not get much better for the medical staff, either. Even a senior house officer is paid only \$54,000, which is akin to a teacher's salary. Registrars or principal house officers after four years in that role get a measly \$75,000.

With the added burden in Queensland of a suffocating, bullying, inefficient and bungling bureaucracy, it is no wonder doctors are feeling that this state is no longer a green pasture for them. We call on the government particularly to up the wages, because if there is low morale within Queensland Health and low wages obviously that is a double disincentive for doctors to work in the state. One of those things can be fixed today. With a massive budget surplus, I call on Queensland Health to significantly increase the wages of doctors. The Western Australian experience was that it was losing heaps and heaps of doctors to the eastern states, and it drew a line in the sand and said, 'Enough is enough.' That state radically increased wages and all of the doctors came back. We call on Queensland Health to do similar—to provide a decent pay packet. Queensland is the greatest state in Australia. People want to move here, and we want doctors to want to move here for good wages and a great place to live.

Hervey Bay Hospital; Gupta, Dr H

Mr McNAMARA (Hervey Bay—ALP) (12.05 pm): I wish to bring to the attention of the House the appalling treatment handed out to Dr Harish Gupta, an orthopaedic surgeon working at the Hervey Bay Hospital, by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons in frustrating his efforts to become accredited for private practice by that body. I note that last Friday Matthew Franklin, writing in the *Courier-Mail*, drew attention to a recent discussion paper issued by the Productivity Commission for last week's COAG meeting. As Matthew Franklin noted, the Productivity Commission stated that entry rules and conduct codes administered by some professional bodies involve an element of income and workload protection and that transparency and accountability mechanisms and structures that would minimise the scope of unwarranted patch protection seem to have been lacking within parts of the health work force.

The treatment meted out to Dr Gupta regrettably illustrates precisely why the Productivity Commission has these concerns. I should also note at the outset that concerns about the practices of the College of Surgeons have been canvassed twice over the last two years by the ACCC. In the ACCC's 30 June 2003 determination, it expressed concerns that the college's processes lacked transparency and accountability; that there were problems with the timeliness of decisions; and that subjective criteria could be used to mask the process of excluding competent overseas trained surgeons. As Dr Gupta's experience shows, nothing has changed and these concerns are valid.

Dr Gupta qualified as an orthopaedic surgeon in South Africa in 1993. He trained at one of the world's major tertiary hospitals in a department whose training is accredited and accepted by all orthopaedic associations in the English-speaking world. I table for the benefit of members glowing references as to Dr Gupta's skill, academic qualifications, leadership, professionalism and teamwork by Professor Einhard Erken, the head of the University of Witwatersrand's Department of Orthopaedic Surgery; by Dr Mark Eltringham, an orthopaedic surgeon who was his supervisor at Johannesburg Hospital; by Dr Michael Dooley, a fellow of the Australian Orthopaedic Association who worked with Dr Gupta at Logan Hospital; and, finally, by Associate Professor Stephen Withers, the clinical skills coordinator of the School of Medicine at Griffith University.

Yet somehow, despite these outstanding academic results and surgical skills, the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons has managed to declare Dr Gupta unsuccessful in two attempts at his examinations in October 2003 and May 2004. These two attempts have cost Dr Gupta in excess of \$10,000 in examination fees as well as further costs for travel and accommodation in Melbourne for the exams. But it is not the cost of the process that is outrageous; it is the lack of transparency and fairness in the marking process that is simply unacceptable.

Dr Gupta had to engage lawyers to obtain feedback on how it was that he had failed despite the ACCC authorisation and the college's own standing orders providing for this feedback. When some five months after he requested the feedback Dr Gupta finally received it, it became apparent why the college did not want to release this information. The scores do not add up. The college uses a curious closed system of marking that requires a candidate to get 63 marks out of a possible 70, totalled over seven papers and categories.

Remarkably, Dr Gupta was given 62 marks on both attempts at the examination process. However, Dr Gupta was not merely close; he was not merely unlucky. His scores were adjusted downwards on all occasions whenever he got part marks. He got either 8.5 or 9 on all seven categories both times. When he finally accessed the examiner's notes, he discovered that notations such as 8½ with an arrow upwards were rounded down to 8½; where he had a notation 9 to 8½, that also became 8½. Groups of submarks that left him over 8.5 when totalled were also similarly rounded down in the internal processes where the submarks would have added up to a whole mark on their own. Most disturbingly, his feedback was written by doctors other than the examiners, and reliance was somehow placed on something called 'other parameters', which was referred to in the examination guidelines.

Dr Gupta was not the subject of the recently released Australian Orthopaedic Association report into orthopaedic services at the Hervey Bay Hospital. While I am a strong believer in the need to maintain the highest possible standards in medical care, one of the undeniable problems that exists in trying to recruit overseas trained doctors to Australia, and to regional Queensland in particular, is the perception—validly held—that the various colleges engage in all sorts of practices designed to frustrate perfectly well-qualified doctors from becoming accredited for private practice.

Martin, Mr K

Mr HOPPER (Darling Downs—NPA) (12.10 pm): Today in his ministerial statement Minister Schwarten continued his approach of character assassination, using the privilege of this House when he attacked the opposition's Chief of Staff, Kevin Martin, accusing him of fraud. This is an extremely serious charge to bring against a qualified lawyer. The minister has been quite deliberate in his attempt at character assassination.

Let me place on the record the true position regarding the minister's allegation. A draft letter was settled by Kevin Martin in his role as legal adviser to the QPC as a result of a decision of the then board of the Queensland Principal Club and following advice from senior counsel. It was circulated to all board members with a scanned signature of the then chairman for approval prior to it being forwarded. This was common procedure for the circulation of documents to the board of the QPC for approval prior to dispatch due to the fact that members of the board resided throughout Queensland.

The minister's allegation against Martin was raised by Bentley at the Daubney-Rafter inquiry, notwithstanding that it had been previously examined when the interim thoroughbred racing board was appointed by then Minister Rose. No action was taken at that time in the light of the explanations offered. Daubney and Rafter deliberately decided not to follow up these allegations of Bentley. They deliberately decided not to pursue the issue further and give Martin access to the records of Queensland Racing to enable him to rebut the detail of allegations by Bentley. If Daubney and Rafter thought there was any substance at all to these allegations, surely they would have investigated the matter fully.

Is the minister suggesting that the Daubney-Rafter inquiry was incompetent or derelict in its duty in not pursuing this matter? For the information of this House, I table the correspondence exchanged between Mr Martin and the Daubney-Rafter inquiry on this point and I invite all the members opposite to draw their own conclusions as to the weight that should be attributed to this allegation. I ask members who do have a look at it to please try to help the minister to understand exactly what has happened. He might listen to the members opposite. They can judge for themselves. Once the members opposite have had a look at this, they can go to the minister and explain it to him. No doubt the minister will continue to

abuse his position in this House, to abuse Mr Martin and to abuse other people in the racing industry who have been the victims of this ALP purge that has occurred and whose names are recorded for posterity in the Daubney-Rafter report.

There is another issue that shows the minister's incompetence. Let us have a look at QFleet. QFleet has again made the news. Take a look at the disgraceful collection of cars on the allotments at Zillmere. Approximately 1,000 cars are parked on these allotments, with a similar number of vehicles scattered in various locations throughout the state. According to a *Courier-Mail* article on 6 June 2005, those vehicles are valued at \$40 million. That is \$40 million of taxpayers' money spent on government vehicles. It is time for the government to re-examine the provision of government vehicles and have a close look at bringing some efficiency into the disposal of motor vehicles. This is not rocket science. I am sure that even the minister for public works and housing would understand that.

The number of vehicles purchased each year is clearly identifiable and, similarly, even with a rough estimate, it is clear when those vehicles will be up for disposal. It is absolutely disgraceful that this government's inefficiencies mean that this government is quite prepared to allow \$40 million worth of taxpayers' assets to lie idle and devalue as a consequence on the spare allotments throughout the state.

Whilst I am on the subject of QFleet, I must draw members' attention to the ineffectiveness of the government's uptake of ethanol blended petrol. Most drivers of QFleet vehicles are ignoring the government's policy. I understand that the government's own bureaucrats are responsible for the handbooking of the much-lauded ethanol policy. How embarrassing is that! Once again, it is evidence that the minister for public works and housing cannot do his job properly. He is about as useful as an ashtray on a motorbike, unless of course he is engaging himself or his office in political interference with the FOI process.

All members should remember the infamous email from the minister's director-general to the Premier's director-general about FOI requests from the opposition relating to the damage to ministerial and electorate cars. The involvement of ministerial staff and top-level bureaucrats in the FOI application, before it was sabotaged with a cabinet exemption, shows the extent of political interference and political pressure applied to the departmental FOI officer. It was nothing short of a scandal.

Insurance Premiums

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (12.15 pm): Queensland's insurance premiums continue to remain far too high. Members will recall the circumstances existing three years ago when premiums went through the roof. Community organisations, sports clubs, church groups, horse-riding groups, show societies and volunteer groups—any group of people you could think of—all faced horrendous insurance increases. In many instances groups were forced to close down or severely curtail their undertakings. Members will recall that there was an almost universal call for the curtailment of lawyers' promotion of the exercise of the injured's right to seek justice by way of compensation.

The Beattie government—in many ways the leader of the nation—was the first to respond to calls for significant changes to laws relating to the procedures for bringing claims, the entitlement or otherwise to bring claims and the important limitations on the quantum of various heads of damage. These changes were set down comprehensively and, indeed, provided a precedent for change in legislation beginning with PIPA, the Personal Injuries Proceedings Act, the Civil Liability Act 2003 and the Professional Standards Act 2004. These pieces of legislation represented the positive response of the Beattie government to spiralling insurance costs. As I indicated, all Australian states followed suit with similar legislation.

The intent of the Queensland legislation was to achieve a balance between adequate compensation for injured Queenslanders caused by wrongdoing, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, continued access to affordable insurance. Members may recall supportive remarks at the time of the Chief Justice, Paul de Jersey—that is, supportive of the legislation—which had the effect of restricting some claims, more onerous procedural requirements and limitation on the quantum of damages. For example, in a wide-ranging speech on negligence law on 23 May 2003 to the Insurance Council, the Chief Justice said—

The government's efforts to reform the law should be applauded, not because they support any particular industry, but instead because they appear to represent a reasonable solution to an otherwise intractable problem.

Two weeks earlier, on 8 May, the Chief Justice said to the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons—

In the area of medical negligence, the government has indeed cried 'forward', having witnessed a decade of gradual court-directed movement, and to its credit it has clearly indicated the direction in which it intends to go.

Subsequently, the Chief Justice has seemingly had a rethink. One can detect a change of direction in his consideration because in a speech this year to the LAWASIA Conference he asked whether tort law reform had gone too far. The Chief Justice stated that it has never been demonstrated that reducing the recoverability of damages by persons injured through the wrongdoing of others would alleviate problems in the insurance market. In answer to my question on notice No. 474, the Attorney-General said—

I share the Chief Justice's concern that insurance premiums should be reducing further and I raised my concern with insurers at the March meeting of the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General.

This week in the *Australian Financial Review* there have been reports of statements from the Law Council of Australia and from the New South Wales Law Society also pointing to the problems that are occasioning people who otherwise would have had a claim for damages in this area. The *Courier-Mail* also this week has referred to this subject matter. It has quoted the case of the Greenbank Sport and Recreation Club and the pony association of Queensland and said that they were among the 5,000 sports clubs facing collapse after an average 300 per cent jump in public liability premiums.

We have heard from the Chief Justice, the Attorney-General and the Law Council. What about the federal government? What about the apologists in this House for it? What about those who cried crocodile tears for the community groups—they referred to them as the fabric of society—who were suffering at that time? Yes, what about the Nationals? I congratulate the Attorney-General, who has advised me that he has called upon the Commonwealth to legislate to give the ACCC the power to ensure that the savings resulting from the state government measures are passed on to consumers and not merely leading to increased profits for insurers. I also join with the Chief Justice and the Attorney-General and ask them to keep under consideration the alteration to the changes of the law I referred to earlier with a view to dropping some of the effects of them, thus enabling fairer access to justice to those who are amongst the most disadvantaged in our society—that is, injured Queenslanders.

Time expired.

Department of Emergency Services

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—Lib) (12.21 pm): Recently there have been ongoing concerns raised by both paramedics and fire service officers as to their terms of employment. In particular, paramedics are concerned at the attempted shift from 14-hour rosters to 10-hour rosters, while fire officers are equally concerned with the decision to introduce a trial of the use of auxiliary firefighters in selected locations throughout Queensland. In relation to the firefighters I refer to volume 19 No. 25 of the firefighters union *Code 2* of 25 May 2005. It states—

The Australian Government Productivity Commission releases data on Government agencies yearly. The Productivity Commission shows that the number of Queensland permanent firefighters has fallen from a figure of 2025 in 2000, to 1930 in 2004. By comparison, every other state or territory (other than the Smart State) recorded an increase in the number of permanent firefighters. The DES insists that the Productivity Commission figures are inaccurate. One would expect that the Productivity Commission doesn't get the data by asking a local taxi driver. Clearly, the DES provides the figures. But even if we accept that the Productivity Commission cannot understand the data provided to it by the DES, a better place to look might be the DES Annual Reports.

The 2000/01 DES Annual Report shows a total of 1941 uniformed operational staff, including 1827 Station Officers and Firefighters. The 2003/04 Annual Report (the latest issued) shows a total of 1930 uniformed staff, or a reduction of 11 personnel, 5 of whom are Firefighters or Station Officers. These reductions have taken place while the population of Queensland has increased enormously by people moving to this Smart State. They have also taken place when the QFRS operating budget has increased from \$238m in 2000/01 to \$303.5m in 2004/05. A 27.5% increase in income in 4 years, with a reduction in the number of firefighters! Smart State indeed.

And on the subject of only telling part of the story, of particular interest is the statement in Parliament Wednesday 25 May by our Minister Chris Cummins. The Minister stated '*That is 230 new firefighters since the Beattie government came to power.*' Yep, 230 'new' firefighters, but not 'additional' firefighters. And yes, a reduction since 2000.

The union has made it very clear on a number of occasions to the department and the minister that the proposal they are putting forward is not in accordance with the best interests of the state. The minister and the department continue to ignore men and women on the ground. The web site of the union states—

At no stage has the Union questioned the capability of auxiliary firefighters to provide emergency services to their communities. What we have questioned is whether it is appropriate to replace a career firefighter with another firefighter who has not even completed the basic recruit course.

Let us turn to the question of the Queensland Ambulance Service and the hardworking paramedics and the situation that they find themselves in. Paramedics have been screaming out to be heard by the department and the minister not to move to a 10-hour shift. The reasons for that are numerous and cogent, including that the 14-hour shift allows a much greater down time for recovery than a 10-hour shift. Officers can spend more time with their families, attending such things as school functions with their children and other activities, which they will miss out on as a consequence of a 10-hour shift.

One really has to wonder why the department and the minister are not listening to these men and women. I suppose it comes down to the question of leadership. It comes down to the question of being able to communicate across all levels of a minister's department, taking into account all considerations and points of view and then making an informed and cogent determination. If a minister relies upon the advice of so-called experts for everything that is done, he misses the most important element in the decision-making process and that is 'how does my decision impact upon the men and women on the ground?'

Finally, I turn to the question of the ambulance levy introduced on 1 July 2003 and imposed indiscriminately across Queensland. The Liberal Party has moved to ensure that all people who operate a business will be exempt from paying the levy where the business owner can provide proof that the

person is paying the levy at least once on one other account such as a house. Surely the money the minister is going to save by way of the GST windfall to this state is enough incentive to get him to try to convince his cabinet colleagues to remove this inequity. Let us hope that the government follows my party's line in this area and announces today that this inequity is, in fact, removed.

Hardchrome

Ms LIDDY CLARK (Clayfield—ALP) (12.26 pm): As the Smart State we look for new and innovative contributions from the business community and we look to open our borders as we form partnerships with businesses relocating to Queensland. But it is vitally important that we also acknowledge and highlight existing Queensland businesses that epitomise Smart State practices. One such business is Hardchrome, a Queensland owned and self-funded company which began with a backyard shop in the fifties and has grown to become a key player in supporting the multibillion-dollar mining industry. From its origins as a refurbishment and repair service for local industry, including Golden Circle, Theiss and Mount Isa Mines, Hardchrome is now positioned as a key repairer and manufacturer of hydraulic components for the five largest mining equipment suppliers in the world. It achieved and maintains this vital role because these global companies recognise Hardchrome as the best in the world.

A tour of the Hardchrome premises in the electorate of Clayfield reveals its commitment to continued excellence, from the exceptional health and safety standards to the machinery the company has invented and built on site—and all with the camaraderie and respect for all staff that is often the hallmark of a company that remembers its origins as a family concern.

In terms of staff, Hardchrome currently employs 150 workers including 22 apprentices, several who have worked at the company for over 20 years. These workers represent a unique skill set who have developed specific techniques to achieve the efficiency that has attracted so much overseas business. It is this dedication to finding solutions that led Hardchrome to develop its manufacturing arm as an alternative to importing components, thereby stopping millions of Queensland dollars disappearing overseas. Clearly, its technical expertise is backed up by astute business acumen.

General manager Neil Smith informs me that the company's financial forecasts indicate a potential 100 per cent growth over the next five years. Hardchrome has already opened a branch in Mackay to service north Queensland, and the potential creation of between 25 and 60 new jobs clearly points to a well-managed and proactive Smart State business.

Hardchrome is a perfect reminder of how the vast mining industry is reliant on its support network. One excavator out of business costs the industry a million dollars a day, which is why the mining supply firms look to the speedy expertise of Hardchrome to minimise these cost impacts and why Hardchrome's business continues to enjoy rapid expansion as the mining industry enjoys a boom period both here and overseas.

As we all know how vital the mining industry is to the Queensland economy, we, too, must be grateful for Hardchrome's less visible but undeniably pivotal role in keeping this key economic contributor operating at high levels of productivity. The growth of Hardchrome from its humble beginnings as a backyard business to its position of linchpin in a multibillion-dollar industry is a Queensland story we should embrace and trumpet as an example of what a Smart State industry can be and should be. Hardchrome is a business that should be heralded as a model and studied from both a technical and economic perspective.

I heartily recommend that departments, if they are fortunate enough to have dealings with Hardchrome, assist this sterling business, treating it fairly and with respect and encouragement. To do any less would be to make a mockery of our commitment to be truly the Smart State. Hardchrome is a local manufacturing company in Eagle Farm, in the electorate of Clayfield.

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

RETAIL SHOP LEASES AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. T McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Innovation) (12.30 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Retail Shop Leases Act 1994. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Second Reading

Hon. T McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Innovation) (12.30 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Queensland's retail sector has been actively involved since 2003 in a review of the Retail Shop Leases Act 1994. The Retail Shop Leases Amendment Bill 2005 represents the outcome of this two-year review process. Our existing legislation, the Retail Shop Leases Act 1994, was established over 20 years ago, in 1984, to provide minimum standards for retail shop leases and to establish a dispute resolution mechanism for retail leasing arrangements.

Put simply, the current act outlines the basic rules on which retail shop leases are drawn. This act has provided significant assistance to the retail industry since its inception. There is no denying that Queensland's retail sector is a vital part of our state's economy. That is why this government is committed to ensuring the legislation governing Queensland's retailers is effective, fair and just.

The retail industry is an important sector in creating jobs for Queenslanders and in contributing to Queensland's Smart State economy. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, there are approximately 35,500 retail businesses in Queensland. This makes the retail industry the third largest industry in the state. The sector represents 16 per cent of all business establishments in Queensland. The retail industry provides the highest number of jobs in Queensland. In particular, the retail sector is the largest employer of females in our state and makes a significant contribution in employing young people.

It is therefore important to review those areas which significantly impact on Queensland's retail landlords and tenants. By improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the legislation, the overall business environment is improved. The bill refines the existing act to reflect the changing needs of a dynamic sector. This bill provides a commercially practical and beneficial set of minimum lease standards that will guide the relationship between landlords and their tenants.

Retail tenancy dispute resolution processes will be enhanced and provide improved access to low-cost options to resolving disputes between the retail tenant and their landlord. In particular, minimising disputes and maintaining access to a low-cost dispute resolution process is seen as contributing to the operational efficiency of Queensland businesses.

The review of the Retail Shop Leases Act 1994 officially commenced in September 2003 with the release of the review of the Retail Shop Leases Act 1994 discussion paper. Even before the release of the discussion paper there were significant discussions with the retail sector to seek its input into the issues to be raised in the discussion paper. The discussion paper examined the effectiveness of the legislation, the structure of the act and the suitability of the dispute resolution processes.

In conjunction with the distribution of the discussion paper there was a statewide program of seminars and workshops to encourage retail tenants and their landlords to put their views forward during the review. When submissions to the discussion paper closed in November 2003, an industry working group was formed to review all submissions and to make recommendations for my consideration. The industry working group was made up of landlord and tenant representatives of the key stakeholder organisations—the National Retail Association, the Queensland Retail Traders and Shopkeepers Association, the Queensland Branch of the Property Council of Australia and the Shopping Centre Council of Australia.

I wish to record my appreciation for the outstanding contribution by the industry working group. Its input to the development of the legislative proposals contained in the bill was substantial. It is pleasing to know that the industry working group was able to reach agreement on all of the changes proposed to the legislation. At every stage of the review process there has been a genuine process of industry engagement and consultation.

Following my consideration of the recommendations from the industry working group, the policy review paper, which set the government's preferred position, was released for public consultation in September 2004. After analysis and consideration of further public submissions in response to the policy review paper, the Retail Shop Leases Amendment Bill 2005 was developed. This legislation will contribute to the development and maintenance of an environment within which business can prosper.

The Retail Shop Leases Amendment Bill 2005 is in keeping with the government's objective to nurture a positive environment for Queensland business and industry and to provide clarity and certainty for the retail industry. The bill refines and enhances the existing act to promote a partnership between retail tenant and landlord and to achieve the object of the Retail Shop Leases Act 1994—that is, to promote efficiency and equity in the conduct of retail businesses.

It is important to note that the provisions of the bill relating to standards for retail shop leases will only apply to new leases entered into after the commencement date of the amendments. Also, the new provisions for the act's dispute resolution processes will only apply to retail tenancy disputes lodged after the commencement date.

I would like to highlight a major contribution to equity and the small business retail sector. In keeping with the object of the act—that is, to promote efficiency and equity—the role of the small

business sublessee or franchisee has been identified. In recognition of the rapidly changing nature of the retail environment, the bill provides some very practical solutions for non-retail activities in retail shopping centres and ensures that the act's application to short-term retail shop leases is commercially viable.

I am aware that retail tenancy interest groups welcome the government's proposal to provide additional benefits to tenants who sell their businesses. These outgoing tenants will no longer be liable for ongoing rent and other expenses if the new operator fails. The proposals within the bill have been developed in full consultation with the retail sector and play a genuine role in acknowledging the nature of the business partnership between landlord and tenant.

Each of the parties to a lease will have within their business relationship clearly defined responsibilities for their mutual benefit. I have ensured that the bill has incorporated the knowledge of industry participants to enhance landlord and tenant relationships. This bill reflects a very practical example of this government cooperating and working with industry to provide economic benefits for all Queenslanders. This government has recognised that improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the legislation will contribute to the improvement of the overall business environment, particularly for small businesses. The bill is in keeping with the government's overriding objective of ensuring that the Retail Shop Leases Act maintains its currency and relevance in this dynamic and evolving sector. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Hopper, adjourned.

CROSS-BORDER LAW ENFORCEMENT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. RJ WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (12.40 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend legislation relating to the enforcement of the criminal law. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Second Reading

Hon. RJ WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (12.40 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Cross-Border Law Enforcement Amendment Bill 2005 will bolster protection against terrorism and organised crime for Queenslanders, our way of life and our institutions. It will give law enforcement officers powers that are effective and appropriate to fight crimes of this nature and severity. Criminals have national and international networks, moving drugs, guns and proceeds of crime across state borders. The bill gives Queensland law enforcement officers more power to target organised cross-border criminal networks such as drug cartels and criminal motorcycle gangs. It amends the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000, the Crime and Misconduct Act 2001, the Evidence Act 1977 and the Witness Protection Act 2000 and makes minor consequential amendments to other relevant legislation.

The background to this bill includes an agreement between national, state and territory leaders at the April 2002 leaders summit on terrorism and multijurisdictional crime. We agreed on behalf of Queensland to deliver national model laws to fight cross-border crime. Queensland government officers participated in a joint working group of the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General and the Australasian Police Ministers Council on National Investigation Powers, which published its report entitled *Cross-border investigative powers for law enforcement* in November 2003. The report contains model laws for cross-border powers in the areas of controlled operations, assumed identities, surveillance devices and witness anonymity. The objective of the model laws is to enable seamless cross-border investigation of serious offences. Under the model laws, state or territory officers will be able to continue their investigations in another state or territory under a warrant or authorisation issued in their own jurisdiction. Jurisdictions' current laws on these areas differ markedly and only operate within the territorial borders of each jurisdiction. This means officers must obtain a fresh warrant or authorisation for each jurisdiction they operate in which they wish to operate.

As a result of the agreement on model laws, each Australian jurisdiction will introduce legislation based on the model laws. Jurisdictions will then recognise each other's legislation, creating a national cross-border scheme. Queensland is the second state to introduce legislation adopting the model laws to create this scheme, so we are at the forefront of the fight against cross-border serious and organised crime. During development of the bill, Queensland consulted extensively with the other states and territories to ensure a smooth path to recognition of Queensland legislation. The bill implements the model laws in the areas of:

- controlled operations;
- surveillance devices;
- assumed identities; and
- witness anonymity.

Before I turn to the detail, I will briefly explain what these four major areas deal with. Firstly, a controlled operation is an investigative method used by law enforcement agencies to identify suspects, gather intelligence and obtain evidence of criminal activity to support a prosecution. Instead of using a traditional law enforcement approach that immediately terminates criminal activity once it is detected, a controlled operation permits the criminal enterprise to continue to unfold under controlled conditions. During a controlled operation, a covert or undercover police operative may be required to commit offences—for example, possessing dangerous drugs—but only under strict controlled conditions and only after the appropriate authorisation has been obtained. Controlled operations legislation provides authority for law enforcement officers to be involved in conduct which would otherwise be unlawful and provides for evidence obtained in that way to be admissible, notwithstanding the potential illegality of the manner in which it is gathered. An important accountability measure unique to Queensland legislation is the requirement to obtain the recommendation of the Controlled Operations Committee before authorising a controlled operation. The Controlled Operations Committee consists of the Commissioner for Police, the Chairperson of the CMC and is chaired by an independent member who is a retired judge.

Secondly, surveillance devices legislation regulates the use of electronic devices to monitor, record, listen to, overhear or track persons reasonably suspected of being involved in a criminal activity. A warrant is required when the use of a surveillance device is otherwise unlawful. The underlying policy is to prevent the unwarranted intrusion into the privacy of individuals through the use of surveillance devices. Queensland's existing legislation enables a police officer to apply to a Supreme Court judge for a warrant to use a surveillance device. A warrant may also be obtained from a magistrate when the device sought is a tracking device. Another unique and important accountability measure in Queensland legislation is the requirement to involve the Public Interest Monitor in applications for surveillance device warrants. The Public Interest Monitor makes submissions to the judge or magistrate on whether a warrant should be issued. Under current practice, the warrant always requires the applicant to give the Public Interest Monitor an affidavit providing details of compliance with the legislation. This bill will require such a report to either the judge or the Public Interest Monitor.

Thirdly, assumed identities legislation regulates the acquisition and use of false identities for law enforcement purposes. Current Queensland legislation regulates the use of assumed identities for controlled operations. The model in this bill goes further and regulates the acquisition and use of assumed identities by law enforcement bodies generally whether or not as part of a controlled operation. Fourthly, witness anonymity protection legislation provides for the protection of a law enforcement operative's true identity when giving evidence in court if revelation of the true identity might endanger the operative or another person or prejudice an ongoing investigation.

Current Queensland legislation dealing with these areas operates within Queensland only. The bill confers powers in the four areas on the Queensland Police Service, the Crime and Misconduct Commission—but only for its major crime function—and the Australian Crime Commission. The bill will enact a single set of laws in these areas for both local and cross-border investigations and will ensure recognition of Queensland laws by other states and territories. It will enable Queensland law enforcement officers to operate in other jurisdictions under Queensland warrants or authorisations. For example, an undercover Queensland police officer may be infiltrating a drug network on the Gold Coast under a controlled operation and, while travelling in the suspect's vehicle, the suspect unexpectedly travels across the border to an address in Tweed Heads to purchase drugs.

Under current legislation, the operation would not be able to continue across the border as the undercover officer may be criminally liable for any offences committed in New South Wales and the evidence could be challenged in court. The bill will allow the undercover officer to continue the operation across the border and enable the evidence obtained to be given in court.

The national model laws set a minimum standard. However, our government is committed to maintaining Queensland's existing high standards where these exceed the model law minimum standards and these are retained in the bill. For example, it retains Queensland's front-end accountability requirements such as the Public Interest Monitor and the Controlled Operations Committee. However, the bill also includes the model laws' postoperational accountability requirements such as inspection, record-keeping and reporting requirements. The combination of existing front-end safeguards and the enhanced postoperational requirements sets a new benchmark in accountability.

The new postoperational inspection and monitoring will be conducted by—

- the Public Interest Monitor and the independent member of the Controlled Operations Committee for police operations;

- the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Commissioner for CMC operations; and
- the Commonwealth Ombudsman for Australian Crime Commission operations.

Other examples of Queensland's existing safeguards that are not in the model laws but are retained in the bill are—

- keeping the existing limitation preventing covert entry to a building under a magistrate's tracking device warrant;
- prohibiting installation of a surveillance device in the office of a practising lawyer, except where the lawyer is a suspect in a relevant offence; and
- if an optical surveillance device is to be used in a dwelling, requiring the warrant to stipulate the room in which the device will be used.

The bill will also retain a higher threshold offence requirement for controlled operations authorisations and surveillance device warrants. Surveillance devices and controlled operations will be available for indictable offences punishable by seven years imprisonment or more and for certain prescribed offences that fall below the seven-year threshold, for example specified child pornography, weapons and prostitution offences. This is substantially higher than the model law threshold of only three years. However, the three-year threshold will apply to obtaining a magistrate's tracking device warrant. Magistrates' tracking device warrants can currently be obtained for any indictable offence, but the three-year minimum must be used to ensure recognition of Queensland's laws by other jurisdictions.

Currently, surveillance devices and controlled operations can be obtained for serious indictable offences. This definition does not have a particular offence threshold. Rather, it refers to broad categories of indictable offences such as offences involving serious risk to, or actual loss of, a person's life or child abuse, including child pornography. Adopting a particular offence threshold is a clearer method of capturing the types of offences for which these powers are to be used and better reflects the structure of the model laws. The net change in the offences covered by the new offence threshold is minimal. For some offences, for example drug offences, there will be a relatively minor expansion but for most offences there is little or no change.

What will Queensland's adoption of the model laws mean for interstate law enforcement officers? They will be able to operate in Queensland under their own warrants and authorities. The trade-off is that they will use these covert powers in Queensland having satisfied in their home state or territory jurisdiction lower thresholds, procedural and accountability standards than their Queensland counterparts. However, this trade-off is necessary if Queensland's laws are to be recognised by other jurisdictions so as to ensure seamless cross-border investigations, particularly by Queensland law enforcement officers. The only ways to avoid this trade-off would be for Queensland—

- to abandon its existing higher thresholds and standards by adopting the model laws without any alteration, or
- to abandon the cross-border scheme altogether.

Queenslanders' security is paramount to my government and the cross-border scheme will enhance this security. The trade-off I have described delivers cross-border investigative powers while securing our higher thresholds and standards.

The model laws do not cover corruption commissions. Accordingly, there will be no changes to the CMC's powers for its misconduct function, that is, investigating official misconduct and police misconduct. The bill therefore makes consequential amendments to the existing surveillance device provisions in the Crime and Misconduct Act 2001 to remove references to major crime and relocates existing controlled operations and activities provisions regarding misconduct offences from the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 to the Crime and Misconduct Act 2001. The overall effect is that—

- the CMC will access covert powers for its misconduct function under the Crime and Misconduct Act 2001 without any expansion of current powers. These powers will continue to operate only in Queensland;
- the CMC will have covert powers for its major crime function under the same provisions as police under the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 based on the model laws and these will have cross-border application.

Our government is committed to fighting cross-border organised crime. These laws will give new muscle to covert surveillance investigations of criminals and organised crime gangs who operate across state and territory borders, leaving them nowhere to hide. The bill delivers on this commitment while also preserving Queensland's safeguards to ensure, as far as possible, that the law continues to protect the rights and legitimate privacy of Queenslanders. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Hopper, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 12.56 pm to 2.30 pm.

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

First Reading

Hon. TM MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (2.31 pm): I present a bill for an act authorising the Treasurer to pay amounts from the consolidated fund for the Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Service for the financial years starting 1 July 2005 and 1 July 2006. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER read a message from Her Excellency the Governor recommending the necessary appropriation.

Second Reading

Hon. TM MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (2.32 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I introduce the Appropriation Bill for the Legislative Assembly and the Parliamentary Service for 2005-06.

The Government remains committed to the independence of the Legislative Assembly and this extends to the means by which public moneys are appropriated to ensure its continued functioning.

We are therefore adhering to the recent convention that the Legislative Assembly's appropriation be contained in a Bill separate from the Appropriation Bill for the other activities of government.

The Appropriation (Parliament) Bill will provide the necessary funds to ensure the continued operations of the Legislative Assembly and the Parliamentary Service.

These include advisory and information services to assist the Parliament, its committees and Members to fulfil their constitutional and parliamentary responsibilities, the services provided by the Parliamentary Library, Committee Office, Parliamentary Reporting Service and Chamber and Security Services as well as the provision of accommodation, hospitality and Members' entitlements.

Mr Acting Speaker, I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Springborg, adjourned.

APPROPRIATION BILL

First Reading

Hon. TM MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (2.33 pm): I present a bill for an act authorising the Treasurer to pay amounts from the consolidated fund for departments for the financial years starting 1 July 2005 and 1 July 2006. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER read a message from Her Excellency the Governor recommending the necessary appropriation.

Second Reading

Hon. TM MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (2.34 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

INTRODUCTION

The Budget that I present today will do more than any other in living memory to shape the future of Queensland.

Seven years of sound, disciplined financial and economic management by the Beattie Government has built the foundation for the future prosperity of the State.

The Beattie Government, from the outset, has had a clear vision for the future of Queensland.

We have been delivering our vision to create the Smart State.

The quality and range of services has been enhanced.

The Smart State Building Fund has seen our capital program grow.

Our economy has grown and strengthened and our unemployment rate is now the lowest in 30 years.

This Budget represents a landmark in the delivery of our vision for Queensland by providing for:

- a first ever long-term plan for infrastructure development for South East Queensland including an additional investment of approximately \$2 billion over four years for the first phase of the plan;
- more than \$470 million over four years to support a 10 year Smart State Strategy; and
- comprehensive measures to assist the most disadvantaged people in our communities, including an additional \$180 million over four years for disability services, further funding to support our child safety reforms, initiatives to improve indigenous health and a package of initiatives to address homelessness.

In addition, this Budget provides an unprecedented commitment to the progressive abolition of six stamp duties together with a significant land tax relief and simplification package.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Mr Acting Speaker, the Queensland economy has once again outperformed the national economy—for the ninth consecutive year.

Economic growth in 2004-05 is estimated to be 4¼%, more than double the 2% growth estimated nationally.

This growth has seen a number of records being set in Queensland in 2004-05:

- the unemployment rate has broken through the 5% barrier to its lowest rate in 30 years;
- 104,000 jobs have been created in the past year, more than in any other year in Queensland's history. Indeed, Queensland's estimated jobs growth of 5¾% during the year is the highest since 1988-89;
- almost two thirds of the adult population are participating in the labour force; and
- there are more people employed as a share of the working age population.

During 2004-05, Queensland has been responsible for around 40% of all jobs created in Australia—double our population weight of just under 20%.

A booming domestic sector has driven overall economic and employment growth in Queensland in 2004-05.

Consumer spending is estimated to grow at an above-average rate for the third consecutive year, underpinned by increases in household wealth, strong growth in incomes and exceptional labour market conditions.

Housing investment in the State is expected to rise a further 5% in 2004-05 and business investment by an estimated 13¼%.

The Queensland economy is forecast to maintain momentum into 2005-06, with economic activity predicted to rise a further 4¼%, exceeding forecast growth nationally for the tenth consecutive year.

With Queensland's economic growth remaining strong, overall employment in the State is forecast to grow a further 2½%, well above the 1¾% growth forecast nationally in 2005-06.

As a result, the unemployment rate is forecast to remain around its 30-year low of 5% in 2005-06.

Growth in consumer spending in Queensland, at 4¼%, is forecast to again outpace that nationally in 2005-06, reflecting our faster rate of population growth and superior labour market performance.

Capital investment is expected to make a significant contribution to growth in 2005-06, with both private and public sector investment forecast to continue to grow solidly.

Importantly, strong global demand and increases in domestic production capacity are forecast to see exports grow at a five-year high of 6¼% in 2005-06, despite Queensland's current drought conditions. Being Australia's major coal producer, Queensland is forecast to continue to reap the benefits from the global resources boom, while other mineral exports are also forecast to rise.

This excellent performance of the Queensland economy has not been by accident. Since 1998, the Beattie Government has laid the foundations for Queensland's strong growth in its Smart State vision. Initiatives such as our Smart State Strategy and our commitment to investment in infrastructure will see the Queensland economy continue to grow strongly.

GROWING A DIVERSE ECONOMY AND CREATING JOBS

Our 10 year Smart State Strategy is founded on a vision of Queensland where knowledge, creativity and innovation drive economic growth to improve prosperity and quality of life for all Queenslanders.

As part of our Strategy, the Beattie Government will speed up industry innovation through substantial investments in research and development and boosting commercial capacity for global export and trade gains.

We have already invested heavily in innovation infrastructure establishing a range of new world class research facilities.

Building on the success of the Smart State Research Facilities Fund, this Budget provides \$128 million over four years for an Innovation Building Fund to stimulate research, development, commercialisation and technology diffusion. The fund will support the establishment of pioneering research and innovation institutes, facilities and centres of excellence as well as fund major items of research equipment.

This Budget also increases funding for the Smart State Research Facilities Fund by \$20 million which will bring the total committed under the Fund since it was launched to \$170 million.

The Innovation Building Fund will be complemented by the establishment of a \$60 million four year Innovations Project Fund which will provide operational funding for collaborative projects and research projects that are strategically important to Queensland both in terms of established and emerging industries.

To help ensure Queensland research facilities have access to top researchers and PhD students, we will invest \$12 million over four years in an Innovation Skills Fund to provide scholarships and fellowships to attract and retain top research talent.

As part of the redevelopment of the former Boggo Road Gaol site, we will establish an integrated knowledge precinct focusing on ecoscience. A Health and Food Sciences Precinct will be developed at Coopers Plains by co-locating and integrating the research capabilities of several research organisations.

Support will also be provided for the development of a facility to manufacture pharmaceuticals to international regulatory standards for use in pre-clinical and clinical trials.

Mr Acting Speaker, 60% of Queensland is currently drought declared under our drought relief assistance scheme. The Beattie Government will participate in and contribute funding to the expanded Commonwealth-State Exceptional Circumstances Scheme recently announced by the Australian Government which will provide much needed additional support to farmers suffering from prolonged drought conditions.

The Beattie Government is committed to supporting and strengthening the international competitiveness of our established industries such as agriculture, mining, tourism and business services.

As well as continuing to support a range of industry development and export programs, this Budget will provide for initiatives such as the Queensland Aquaculture Development Initiative, the development of new Asian markets for horticulture and \$20 million over four years to establish the Smart Exploration Program to identify and support new opportunities for mineral exploration in Queensland.

REALISING THE SMART STATE THROUGH EDUCATION, SKILLS AND INNOVATION

In addition to providing an immediate stimulus for innovation, our Smart State Strategy takes a long-term view of investing in knowledge and skills to build our capacity as an innovative society.

We are reshaping Queensland's education system as part of our Education and Training Reforms for the Future Initiative.

Full implementation of the Prep year will occur in 2007. Leading up to 2007, an additional 25 State and non-State schools will phase-in the preparatory year in 2006, bringing the total number of schools with the new preparatory year program to 121. In addition, a major building program for the Prep year forms part of our record education capital program of \$455 million.

Our \$56 million over four years Smart Classrooms initiative will enable our 1,300 State schools to allow students, their parents and teachers to have access to class work and on-line learning materials anywhere, anytime.

Laptops or personal computers will be provided to 1,500 teachers in 2006 as part of a \$3.5 million trial to improve learning and communication through technology.

To nurture excellence among our best students, this Budget provides \$40 million for the construction and fit-out of two new Queensland Smart Academies for senior students who excel in science, maths, technology and the creative arts.

A new Queensland Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Framework will be developed and progressively implemented at a cost of \$8.25 million over three years. The Framework will provide a consistent approach to assessing and reporting student achievements and performance.

The Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector is critical to the State's prosperity. We will continue to implement our three-year Smart VET Strategy which is increasing training places in priority industry areas.

As outlined in our Smart State Strategy, we will also undertake a comprehensive review of the VET system in order to develop a range of strategies to make the system flexible and responsive to rapidly changing skills needs in the economy.

MANAGING URBAN GROWTH AND BUILDING QUEENSLAND'S REGIONS

By 2026 the population of South East Queensland is expected to reach around 3.7 million—an increase of over one million people.

Mr Acting Speaker, the Beattie Government has made the management and coordination of urban growth in South East Queensland a priority.

We have released the draft South East Queensland Regional Plan which sets out the future pattern of development for the region. The final plan will be released later this month.

We have also released the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program which outlines our infrastructure priorities to support the regional plan.

Our infrastructure plan identifies projects amounting to around \$55 billion over the next 20 years.

The first phase of the plan involves an increase over current Budget commitments of approximately \$2 billion over the next four years including:

- \$691 million for road projects such as the duplication of the Houghton Highway, extension of the Centenary Highway corridor from Springfield to Yamanto and the upgrade of the Mt Lindsay Highway;
- \$584 million for busway infrastructure projects; and
- \$574 million for rail projects including a new line from Darra to Springfield.

In addition to dealing with the population growth challenge for South East Queensland, the Beattie Government is addressing the need for infrastructure and services for Queensland's regions.

This year the overall capital program is \$8 billion, \$1.9 billion more than last year's record program. Almost 60% of this investment is outside the Brisbane region, including:

- a Rural and Regional Roads Funding Initiative involving additional funding of \$359 million over four years;
- \$88 million over three years as part of the Accelerated Road Rehabilitation Program to replace 36 timber bridges in central and southern regions and rehabilitate 71 kilometres of the Dawson Highway; and
- \$145.6 million in additional funding over the next five years for local governments outside South East Queensland for water, sewerage and water recycling infrastructure.

Our capital program for 2005-06 includes \$2.28 billion for energy projects, \$1.25 billion for roads, \$538 million for ports and \$760 million for rail infrastructure which will support State economic growth and build Queensland's regions.

We have also committed \$100 million over three years for a joint program with local governments throughout the State for capital projects which will be practical tributes to Queensland's 150th birthday in 2009.

IMPROVING HEALTH CARE AND STRENGTHENING SERVICES TO THE COMMUNITY

Mr Acting Speaker, the Beattie Government is strongly committed to the ongoing improvement of hospital and health services for Queenslanders.

The Health Budget will increase by \$413 million or 8.4 per cent on last year's comparable Budget.

To ensure that this substantial investment is producing the best possible health outcomes for Queenslanders, we have initiated a comprehensive review of Queensland Health's administration, management and performance systems.

As part of our third term agenda, the Beattie Government is delivering on our commitments in areas such as elective surgery, cardiac services, oral health care, emergency departments, mental health services and child health initiatives.

In addition, this Budget provides service enhancements and expansions including:

- an additional \$60 million over four years for cardiac services;
- \$62.5 million over four years for cancer prevention;
- a \$65 million four year program to enhance community mental health services; and
- \$78 million over four years for healthier ageing initiatives.

Queensland's health infrastructure is world class and we will continue to invest strongly in this area.

Additional capital funding of \$96 million over four years is provided for the expansion of the Caloundra Health Service and integrated ambulatory and community health services in Robina and Caboolture.

Our health capital program also includes the reconstruction of the public component of the Mater Hospital, continuation of our residential aged care upgrade program and the construction of six new primary health care centres across the State.

Mr Acting Speaker, the Beattie Government is very committed to improving the quality of life for Indigenous Queenslanders through partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

This Budget provides an additional \$89.5 million over four years for Indigenous health initiatives, including measures to reduce demand for alcohol and other substances, renal and cancer services and to build enhanced capacity to address Indigenous health issues by increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed in the health system.

Good basic infrastructure is essential to improving health in our Indigenous communities and we have allocated an additional \$100 million over five years for new environmental health infrastructure such as water supply and sewerage in mainland Indigenous communities. We will also be seeking the support of the Australian Government to provide a matching funding contribution to this key priority.

Our last two Budgets have provided for major enhancements to disability services and this Budget is no exception.

New funding of \$180 million over four years will further advance our program of enhancing respite care, emergency and crisis care, early intervention and viability support for service providers.

The Disability Services Budget for 2005-06 will be \$520 million. This is 90.2% higher than in 2000-01.

In addition to supporting non-Government providers of disability services, the Budget allocates an additional \$24.3 million over four years to support non-Government organisations providing government funded services in areas such as family support, domestic violence and homelessness.

People who are homeless are among the most disadvantaged in our community. Over the next four years, we will provide \$120.4 million in recurrent funding and \$115.1 million in capital funding to build on existing responses to homelessness and to establish new and innovative responses including:

- redeveloping the Lady Bowen complex at Spring Hill to provide accommodation and support services for homeless people in the inner city of Brisbane;
- additional crisis and traditional accommodation for homeless people in Cairns, Townsville, Gold Coast, Mt Isa and Brisbane; and
- initiatives to address the complex health needs of people with mental illness, alcohol and drug problems who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN AND ENHANCING COMMUNITY SAFETY

Last year's Budget included a major funding increase to implement our child protection blueprint. This Budget builds further on that funding commitment.

The Budget for the Department of Child Safety will total \$395 million in 2005-06, an increase of 45% on the previous year's comparable Budget.

The increased funding provides for accelerated implementation of key Blueprint recommendations including complete funding by the end of 2005-06 of the two main elements, increased frontline staff and additional alternative care placements, which were previously planned for 2007-08.

The Beattie Government is on track to achieve our target of 9,150 police officers by September 2005 and we will continue to grow the number of police officers consistent with our commitment to keep the police to population ratio at or above the national average.

We are also implementing a three year police civilianisation program which will see 500 police officers return to operational policing duties.

As well as enhancing staffing resources, policing infrastructure and resources are being enhanced including additional capital funding of \$60 million over four years for new and upgraded police stations, watchhouses and police housing and \$16.9 million additional funding in 2005-06 for police information and communications technology.

Queensland's successful Youth Justice conferencing program will be expanded at a cost of \$10 million over four years.

Early intervention services for men who perpetrate domestic and family violence are a critical preventative measure and will be improved with additional funding of \$3.75 million over four years.

Over the next three years \$231 million of additional capital funding has been provided for the replacement of Townsville Women's Correctional Centre, the expansion of the Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre and the redevelopment of the Sir David Longland Correctional Centre.

PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

The actions of the Beattie Government show the priority we give to protecting the environment.

Sensitive South East Queensland native forests are being protected.

Water resource management is being reformed.

Broad scale land clearing is being phased out.

The management of national parks has been enhanced.

To support recent initiatives, this Budget provides an additional \$9 million over two years for the implementation of the New Vegetation Management Framework and \$10 million over four years to improve capacity to address non-compliance with our natural resource management legislation.

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service estate will grow by an estimated 3.46 million hectares as a result of our election commitments including the Western Hardwood forest transfer process and Daintree land acquisition. The management needs of the expanded estate will be addressed with additional operating funding of \$58 million and \$25 million in capital funding over four years. This includes funding for the employment of 50 former Western Hardwood's timber workers.

Our EcoBiz program will continue with \$10 million funding over four years to support Queensland industries adopting resource-efficient practices, particularly in water, energy and materials management.

An additional \$4.4 million over four years is allocated for the Queensland Sustainable Energy Innovation Fund which will encourage local innovation to develop, demonstrate and commercialise world-best sustainable technologies.

GOVERNMENT FINANCES AND REVENUES

The Beattie Government has demonstrated its financial management credentials over the last seven years.

Queensland's fiscal position is now stronger than it has ever been.

Fiscal strength is not an end in itself, but it provides the means for the long-term service and infrastructure commitments that this Budget provides.

Queensland's strong economic and employment growth coupled with a boom in our coal mining industry and strong investment returns have contributed to a forecast operating surplus in 2004-05 of over \$2.7 billion.

The Budgeted operating surplus for 2005-06 is \$934 million with lower forecast operating surpluses over the forward estimates reflecting a combination of long term investment return expectations, tax reductions, service enhancements and growing operating expenses flowing from our record infrastructure program.

We will finance our record capital program through a prudent combination of borrowings and operating sources which will see our AAA credit rating comfortably maintained.

Mr Acting Speaker, Queensland has and will continue to have a competitive tax structure.

In last year's Budget, we improved stamp duty concessions for home buyers, reduced the duty rate for Class 1 general insurance, abolished credit card duty and committed to the abolition of the Bank Accounts Debits Tax from 1 July this year.

This Budget provides for an unprecedented commitment to the abolition of a further six taxes.

Over a five year period from January 2006 to January 2011 we have committed to a staged program of abolishing:

- stamp duty on leases;
- stamp duty on credit business;
- stamp duty on non-quotable marketable securities;
- stamp duty on mortgages;
- stamp duty on hiring arrangements; and
- stamp duty on business conveyances other than real property.

In aggregate the abolition of these stamp duties will save taxpayers around \$1.6 billion over the next five years.

Queensland's property market has enjoyed a sustained boom period bringing enormous benefits to property owners and investors.

It has also meant that as property prices have risen, many property owners have been faced with increased land tax bills or have had to pay it for the first time.

I am pleased to announce that this Budget provides a substantial package of land tax relief and simplification at a cost to revenue of \$847 million over the next four years.

Having watched with interest the land tax changes in other state budgets, it is clear that none come near the scope and breadth of the changes I am announcing today.

The key features of our relief package which will take effect from 1 July 2005 are:

- resident taxpayers will not be subject to land tax until their landholdings (excluding their principal place of residence) amount to \$450,000 compared to around \$276,000 currently;
- companies, trustees and absentees will not be subject to land tax until their landholdings amount to \$300,000 compared to \$170,000 currently; and
- effective land tax rates will be reduced for all taxpayers.

In addition, caravan or residential parks which have more than 50% long-term residents will be exempted from land tax. This will complement our existing exemption for retirement homes.

Currently, a land tax exemption applies where a principal place of residence is used exclusively as a home. In recognition of changing work arrangements, we will develop legislation which will have effect for land tax in 2005-06 to allow a full exemption where certain working arrangements are incidental to the residential use and where there is limited letting of a home for residential purposes. An apportionment of the exemption will apply in other circumstances.

This relief package will reduce the number of taxpayers in 2005-06 by around 50,000 relative to the number of taxpayers in the absence of these changes and around 21,000 fewer taxpayers compared to 2004-05.

Two new simplified tax schedules, one for residents and one for companies, trustees and absentees will replace the current 19 step schedule, statutory deductions, resident rebate and phasing-in rebates.

The effective reduction in land tax rates will be greatest for smaller business and resident investors. Nevertheless, companies, trustees and absentees with high value landholdings will have their tax rate reduced from 1.8% to 1.5% and higher value resident investors will have a tax rate of 1.25%.

The scope and capacity for further land tax relief will be reviewed in each annual Budget context, taking into account future property market conditions.

CONCLUSION

Mr Acting Speaker, this is a landmark Budget for Queensland.

We have committed to an unprecedented program of tax reform which will secure our competitiveness.

We have maintained our focus on improving services, particularly for those most in need in our community.

Our South East Queensland Regional Plan and our long-term infrastructure plan will shape the future development of the fastest growing urban region in Australia.

Our 10 year Smart State Strategy will shape the way we develop our skills and innovate to secure a better quality of life.

All of this will be achieved without jeopardising our strong financial position.

This Budget, more than any other Budget before, will shape the future of Queensland.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Springborg, adjourned.

BUDGET DOCUMENTS

Hon. TM MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (3.08 pm): Mr Acting Speaker, I lay upon the table of the House the following documents—

Budget Speech

Budget Strategy and Outlook

Capital Statement

Budget Highlights

Ministerial portfolio statements

Regional budget statements

LAND TAX AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. TM MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (3.08 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Land Tax Act 1915. 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) (3.09 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Land Tax Amendment Bill 2005 makes a number of amendments to the Land Tax Act 1915 that are necessary to implement initiatives announced in the state's 2005-06 budget. I seek leave to have the speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

There is no denying that Queensland's property market has enjoyed a sustained boom period over recent years, bringing enormous benefits to property owners and investors and confirming our reputation as the growth capital of the nation. However, increasing property values have resulted in an increasing number of smaller land owners becoming liable for land tax for the first time, and liable land owners facing greater land tax liabilities generally.

Land tax is an annual tax levied on the aggregate unimproved value of freehold land owned in Queensland as at midnight on 30 June each year. The current land tax settings in Queensland incorporate a number of mechanisms to determine the land tax payable. There are effectively two regimes, one for natural residents, and one for companies, trustees and absentees.

Natural residents are entitled to a \$220,000 statutory deduction to the value of their land holdings, in addition to an exemption or deduction for their principal place of residence, before tax is imposed. A 15% rebate is then available for natural residents after taxation. In addition, natural residents receive the benefit of a minimum tax payable amount of \$350. This means that land tax assessments are generally not levied for tax liabilities less than \$350.

For companies, absentees and trustees, there is a tax free threshold of \$170,000. If the taxable value of land owned by these taxpayers is below this amount, the land is exempt from land tax. If the taxable value is above this amount, land tax is payable on the full value of the land holdings. A phasing-in rebate eases the impact of the taxable value being just over the exemption threshold. The phasing-in rebate cuts out when the taxable value reaches \$235,000.

In most other jurisdictions, the land tax calculation involves simply applying the rate table to the taxable value. Queensland's current system is far more complex and, consequently, difficult to understand. Queensland also has more rate bands than any other jurisdiction.

States must raise revenue, through the limited means available to them, to finance essential services, such as police, education and health, demanded by the community. Land tax is an important revenue source for Queensland and is not subject to review under the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Reform of Commonwealth-State Financial Relations. While it is important for the Government to preserve this important revenue source, the amendments contained in this Bill are designed to reduce the flow-on effects of increased land valuations for taxpayers. These amendments will also greatly simplify land tax in Queensland. The general changes alone in the Budget measures produce overall savings for taxpayers of approximately \$147.5M in the coming year, \$208M in 2006-07 and \$245.8M in 2007-08.

The Bill amends the Land Tax Act 1915 by removing the existing land tax rate scale and replacing it with two separate land tax rate scales; one for natural residents and one for companies, absentees and trustees. The new land tax rate scales will replace the existing 19 rate bands with only 5 rate bands for companies, absentees and trustees and only 6 rate bands for natural residents.

The new rate scales are designed to incorporate features of the current land tax scheme, such as statutory deduction rebate, exemption thresholds, etc, and to provide rate reductions as well.

For example, the 1.8% flat rate of tax which applies once land holdings reach the highest tax band of \$1.5M has been reduced to 1.25% for natural residents and 1.5% for companies, absentees and trustees, as well as increasing the threshold at which the flat rate will apply to \$3M for natural residents and \$2M for companies, absentees and trustees.

In addition, with the new rate bands, all taxpayers will benefit from increased tax thresholds. Currently a natural resident does not pay tax if their land holdings are less than \$275,997. This will now increase to \$450,000. Similarly, the current \$170,000 threshold for companies, absentees or trustees will now increase to \$300,000. Natural resident taxpayers also do not lose the benefit of the 15% rebate and the minimum tax payable amount as these land tax features have been incorporated into the new land tax rates.

These changes mean that residents with land holdings of less than \$450,000 (excluding their principal place of residence), and companies, absentees and trustees with land holdings of less than \$300,000, will not be liable for land tax. As a result, some 38,000 residents, and 12,000 companies, absentees and trustees, who would have been paying land tax in 2005-06, will no longer be liable. All taxpayers will be better off under the changes than if there had been no change.

By way of example, on an unimproved value of \$450,000, excluding their principal place of residence, the tax payable by a resident under the current legislation would be \$1,916.75. Under the amendments, the new tax liability will be \$400, representing a saving of \$1,516.75. For a company, absentee or trustee with land holdings of an unimproved value of \$300,000, the tax payable under the current legislation would be \$3,095. Under the amendments, the new tax liability will be \$1,500, representing a saving of \$1,595.

Fewer and broader rate bands within the new rate scales will also reduce the instances of taxpayers jumping multiple tax rate bands disproportionate to their land value increases, thereby producing further savings for taxpayers.

As a result of these amendments, the application of the deduction for land used solely for primary production purposes is to be brought into line with the current principal place of residence exemption. Currently, if a natural resident owns primary production land, the resident cannot claim the benefit of the \$220,000 statutory deduction as well as a deduction for the primary production land. The deduction is also available for an absentee who is an Australian citizen, a relevant proprietary company, an exempt charitable institution or a trustee. In contrast, residents may claim the principal place of residence exemption applies in all instances where the qualifying conditions of the exemption are satisfied, as well as the statutory deduction. With the incorporation of the statutory deduction into the new land tax rates, the primary production deduction will now apply in the same manner as the principal place of residence exemption, that is, as a separate exemption. This ensures the continued operation of the primary production deduction. It also provides additional benefits to those in the agricultural sector in that they may now claim the exemption while also enjoying the benefit of the new land tax rates and the increased thresholds.

In addition, three year averaging of land values will continue for all taxpayers.

The Bill also introduces a new exemption for land used predominantly as a caravan park and/or a residential park, for manufactured homes, and where the majority of sites are used for long term residential accommodation. A tenancy of more than six weeks will be considered long term. This approach is consistent with the Residential Tenancies Act 1994, which uses a six

week test to determine whether a tenancy is short term or long term. The new exemption will benefit long term residents of caravan parks and residential parks.

In addition to the amendments contained in this Bill, a further land tax change is proposed. Currently, a land tax exemption applies where a principal place of residence is used exclusively as a home. In recognition of changing work arrangements, legislation will be developed to allow a full exemption where certain working arrangements are incidental to the residential use and where there is limited letting of a home for residential purposes. An apportionment of the exemption will apply in other circumstances. The legislation to support this initiative will be introduced in a separate Bill later this year but this change will have effect for land tax in 2005-06.

The amendments in the Land Tax Amendment Bill 2005 will also apply for the 2005-06 financial year and will reinforce the competitiveness of Queensland's land tax regime compared to other States.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Seeney, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Leader of the House) (3.09 pm): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 3.09 pm.