



RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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WEDNESDAY, 29 NOVEMBER 2006

Mr SPEAKER (Hon. MF Reynolds, Townsville) read prayers and took the chair at 9.30 am.

PRIVILEGE

Matter Raised—State Development and Other Legislation Amendment Bill

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Leader of the House) (9.30 am): I rise on a matter of privilege. As members would be aware, last night I moved a motion to allow for approximately one hour of debate on the consideration in detail stages of the State Development and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This motion provided for the consideration in detail to be completed by 8.37 pm, the third reading by 8.39 pm and the long title to be agreed to by 8.40 pm. As members can see from the *Hansard* I am about to table, the debate on the Police Service Administration Amendment Bill commenced at 8.29 pm. In other words, there was no need to apply the guillotine because the debate had collapsed.

Mr Copeland: That's the point.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! This is a matter of privilege.

Dr Flegg interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Excuse me, deputy leader of the coalition. I will ask you to desist from discussing this while I am talking. I am saying that a matter of privilege will be heard as it should be heard in terms of the dignity of this House and I will ask you to desist from making comments.

Mr SCHWARTEN: There was no need to use the guillotine because the debate collapsed due to the lack of opposition speakers. Members would also be aware that there have been reports in the media that this bill was guillotined. This is not factual and, as such, I ask those who have run this story to correct the record.

Tabled paper: Extract from Hansard Queensland Parliamentary Debates, 28 November 2006, pages 657 and 666.

PETITIONS

The following honourable members have lodged paper petitions for presentation—

Supreme Court Registry

Mr Gibson from 1 petitioner requesting the House to intervene in a matter involving the Brisbane registry of the Supreme Court.

Kirrama Range Road

Mr Cripps from 136 petitioners requesting the House to upgrade the Kirrama Range Road to an acceptable standard to allow general traffic to utilise the road in view of the fact that it is an intricate link to the hinterland and the many attributes of Girringun National Park.

Warana, Public Bus Service

Mr Dickson from 151 petitioners requesting the House to commence a public bus service to provide for residents of The Palms, Melody Court, Warana.

Wyaralong Dam

Mr Lingard from 214 petitioners requesting the House to not proceed with the construction of a dam at Wyaralong.

Home Hill, Police Resources

Mrs Menkens from 513 petitioners requesting the House to immediately station more police officers in Home Hill sufficient for the station to be manned 24 hours per day.

Palm Beach/Currumbin, Needle Exchange Program

Mrs Stuckey from 1,114 petitioners requesting the House to immediately stop plans for a proposed Needle Exchange Program to be introduced in the Palm Beach / Currumbin community and guarantee that it will not be introduced in the future.

Tablelands, Road Upgrade

Ms Lee Long from 141 petitioners requesting the House to ensure the intersection of the Atherton-Herberton Road and Wongabel Road is upgraded to a safe standard by constructing a passing lane as a matter of urgency.

Deaths of Arnold, Ms V and Leahy, Ms J

Ms Lee Long from 84 petitioners requesting the House to appoint an independent investigator and team from outside Queensland to fully investigate all the known facts surrounding the deaths of Vicki Arnold and Julie-Anne Leahy near Atherton in 1991.

TABLED PAPERS

The following ministerial papers were tabled by the Clerk—

Premier and Minister for Trade (Mr Beattie)—

- Government response to Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee Report No. 77 titled Review of the Provisions Covering the Absence and Leave of Members of Parliament Referred by the Legislative Assembly on 28 February 2006

Minister for Education and Training Minister for the Arts (Mr Welford)—

- Response from the Minister for Education and Training Minister for the Arts (Mr Welford) to an e-petition (690-06) sponsored by Mr Fraser from 4021 petitioners regarding teacher aide allocations for the Preparatory Year

Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure (Ms Bligh)—

- Report about Minister's decision on the call in of a development application under the Integrated Planning Act 1997—Development application lodged by Gassman Development Perspectives Pty Ltd on behalf of Visy Industries Australia Pty Ltd with the Gold Coast City Council

MINISTERIAL PAPERS

The following ministerial papers were tabled—

Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport (Mr Fraser)—

- Island Coordinating Council's Annual Report for 2005-2006
- Queensland Local Government Grants Commission Report 2006

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Gatton, Correctional Centre Precinct

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.35 am): I would like to announce to the House today that the Gatton shire has been identified as a preferred location for a new south-east Queensland correctional centre precinct. In December last year the government wrote to south-east Queensland councils calling for expressions of interest. We have always been very clear in our position that we would not force a new prison on any community. Queensland Corrective Services gave four presentations to councils that requested further information about the proposed new jail. Those councils included Warwick, Caloundra, Kilcoy and Gatton.

As I said, the Gatton shire has been identified as a preferred location and the government will now begin a community engagement process with local residents. Gatton shire was identified for a range of reasons. It is located within the Lockyer Valley south-west of Brisbane and is within an hour's drive of the Wacol prison precinct west of Brisbane. This was an important requirement in searching for a suitable location to aid the frequent transfer of prisoners between facilities, courts and hospitals. Gatton shire also has the population base to support such a big infrastructure project and, importantly, has a local council that is in full support.

The Gatton Shire Council has expressed in-principle support for the proposal, and it is easy to see why. This new facility can bring significant investment to the region. It will be worth more than \$375 million in trade value to the local area during the construction phase. It will create jobs for 380 staff in the initial stage, which will increase to 1,750 on completion. Past experience suggests at least 22 per cent of the professional staff required at the jail, such as custodial officers, psychologists, nurses, administration and management staff, will move to the local area instead of commuting, injecting a further \$19 million in wages to the Gatton shire's economy each year.

On top of this, Queensland Corrective Services has written to council to offer a variety of improvements to community infrastructure and services around this project. This includes the relocation of the showgrounds and associated equestrian facilities to the council's preferred location, expanding the Gatton State School site and rebuilding the town pool.

In a perfect world there would be no need for more jails, but as south-east Queensland's population continues to grow, inevitably so will our prison numbers. This government makes no apology for being tough on crime and incarcerating those who commit serious crimes and offences so as to protect the community. The Minister for Corrective Services, Judy Spence, will provide more detail to the House shortly, but I would like to put on the record my thanks to the Gatton Shire Council for its in-principle support.

I would like to table for the House copies of a report in today's *Gatton, Lockyer and Brisbane Valley Star* which deals with a number of quotes and also the state's promises to the shire. I also table a news release that will be issued in relation to it.

Tabled paper: Media release dated 29 November 2006 by the Premier titled 'Gatton Shire named as a preferred location for new SEQ jail'.

Tabled paper: Copies of various articles in the *Gatton Lockyer Brisbane Valley Star* dated 29 November 2006 regarding new jail for Gatton Shire.

Teaching of History in Schools

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.38 am): History is already compulsory for Queensland students as part of the subject called Studies of Society and Environment. Because Australian history is a core part of years 1 to 10 of the Studies of Society and Environment syllabus, Queensland children finish their schooling well versed in our nation's history—and so they should—and we will continue to ensure that history remains a significant part of the school curriculum.

Today Queensland schools teach a combination of traditional topics such as the early explorers, colonial Australia, Federation and the Anzac experience in addition to more contemporary topics such as the Vietnam War and the civil rights and environmental movements. The Studies of Society and Environment syllabus for years 9 and 10 is a compulsory subject that many schools offer as a stand-alone Australian history subject.

In years 11 and 12, students can also study modern history or ancient history as stand-alone subjects. The strong emphasis our schools place on teaching history is reflected in enrolments in the senior secondary subjects of modern history, ancient history and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders studies which have remained strong over the past decade and have increased in the past five years.

History is not about the rote learning of a set of dates, names and places. It is about knowing how this country came about. I did history both at school and at university. I am a passionate supporter of the study of history, but it has to make sense. There is absolutely no point students knowing when Phar Lap won the Melbourne Cup. There is no point in having these crazy dates that mean nothing and rote learning without a broader understanding of our history and our culture. I am a passionate supporter, as are my ministers, in understanding Australia's history—that is, where we have come from and where we are going. Rote learning does not produce that.

In Queensland, teachers of history use a range of syllabus documents including Studies of Society and Environment years 1 to 10 syllabus, the years 9 and 10 history syllabus and senior secondary syllabuses for modern history, ancient history and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders studies to inform their curriculum planning. Our focus should always be on real outcomes. I say to the federal government that wants to make this into a cheap political exercise: let us have the real study of history, not rote learning which is crazy in anyone's language.

Mr Copeland interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Let me take that interjection because normally I would not. I have spoken to Bob Carr about this. Bob Carr is a good friend of mine. Bob Carr shares my passion for history. I do not share his passion for the American Civil War and I think the Gettysburg Address was fantastic but too short. The important point that I want to make is that he shares my passion for history, but he does not believe in rote learning either. The member should not suggest that Bob Carr and I are at a different point on this. Bob Carr and I share the same view about history. I have actually discussed it with him. Let us move on.

WorkChoices

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.42 am): Tomorrow I will attend and address a national day of action at South Bank to rally for better rights for Australians at work. My government has been at the forefront of the national fight against the Howard government's extreme industrial relations legislation. These unfair laws are having a negative impact on the lives of ordinary working Australians. It appears we are in for a long fight and the recent High Court WorkChoices decision was a significant milestone. It represents a fundamental shifting of the powers between the states and the Commonwealth.

In 1973, the people of Australia had the opportunity to give the Commonwealth power to legislate on incomes. Voters in every single state rejected the proposition. In Queensland, 78.3 per cent of the voters rejected the idea. This is important to keep in mind when considering the recent dissenting judgement of Justice Kirby, who said—

... that at four referenda during the 20th century the Australian people had rejected an increase of federal industrial relations powers. By this decision, the majority (of the court) deals another serious blow to the federal character of the Australian Constitution.

In other words, what we have got is constitutional reform by stealth through the High Court instead of by the will of the Australian people. I believe the Australian people should decide these things, not the High Court.

The Prime Minister did not tell the public of these planned changes when the government took control of the Senate. He said there had to be limits to the scope of the corporations powers. So why would anyone trust his recent comments that this decision is not an open invitation to federal intervention? Effectively, this decision frees the federal government to make laws on almost any subject matter, provided they are directed to constitutional corporations and anyone who can affect those corporations.

This could include areas of traditional state responsibility such as health, education, town planning, energy, mining or the environment. Justice Kirby also said in his dissenting judgement—

... By this decision, the majority deals another serious blow to the federal character of the Australian Constitution. We should not so lightly turn our backs on the repeatedly expressed will of the Australian electors and the wisdom of our predecessors concerning our governance ... Once a constitutional Rubicon such as this is crossed, there is rarely a going back.

He is right. The assault on state rights is bad enough but the states have at least some recourse to legal, financial and political powers to attempt to fight these harsh laws. Workers and their families are the ones hardest hit. Even those employees in a union are finding that the dog-eat-dog world of federal industrial relations is forcing them onto contracts they have no wish to sign. The Queensland government—while there remains a state government—will not abandon them. We will fight to the end on this.

The national day of union and community action represents another step on the road to overturning these unfair laws. I encourage all members of the public interested in workers' rights to come along and voice their disapproval of the Howard government's WorkChoices legislation.

Cyclone Larry Recovery Task Force

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.45 am): Today it is also my pleasure to table the latest report from General Peter Cosgrove AC, the head of the Operation Recovery Task Force, which continues its important work with the communities affected by tropical Cyclone Larry. In his 16th report, General Cosgrove says that the recovery is on track despite 150 wet days badly affecting efforts to weatherproof cyclone damaged homes. The General expects that fewer than 100 homes will still be protected by tarpaulins by the end of this week—an extraordinary effort by the home owners, insurance companies and tradespeople involved when we consider some 14,000 homes were damaged by the cyclone only in March.

In his report the General notes that, while some individuals and families are still doing it tough, many of the communities have returned to normal. He also reports that a series of thank you concerts and barbecues were a success. I table that report.

Tabled paper: Operation Recovery Task Force Overview Report 16 dated 22 November 2006.

I seek leave to incorporate more details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Operation Farm Clear is also in full swing—many farmers have taken up the offer of assistance to help clear up the debris on their properties.

Mr Speaker, the General also provides an update on the recovery of primary industry in the region affected by the cyclone—noting the successes and difficulties of farmers growing bananas (a steady increase in the number of cases going to market); sugar cane (vastly reduced crops this season) and mangoes (expecting a good crop and picking has started).

There are still concerns about possible labour shortages and the Taskforce is working with local producers to help address this problem.

I would like to again—pass on my thanks to the General and Taskforce members and the communities who are rebuilding following Cyclone Larry.

I look forward to discussing the recovery effort and any remaining issues with members of the affected communities during my visit to the Far North early next month.

Irwin, Mr S

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.45 am): In relation to the tragic death of Steve Irwin, I want to inform the House that more than 23,000 people took the opportunity to send messages to Terri, Bindi and Bob Irwin and the extended Irwin family. Of these, nearly 1,000 were individual messages of condolence received in Queensland offices. A further 150 messages were received in our London office, 40 in Los Angeles, 28 in Jakarta, 17 in Japan, 11 in Taiwan and seven in Shanghai. I want to advise all of the people who sent messages of condolence that they will now be collated and I will be presenting them to Terri Irwin in the near future. I seek leave to incorporate more details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Mr Speaker, as this house is aware the sudden death of Steve Irwin set off a wave of grief and outpourings of sympathy for his family from people across the world.

Steve's vision and passion for the protection and preservation of wildlife left an important legacy for future generations.

As a measure of respect the Queensland Government arranged for Condolence Books to be made available for people to leave personal messages for the Irwin family.

Condolence Books were located in the Executive Building and at Parliament House in Brisbane, in Environmental Protection Agencies throughout the State, and Queensland Government Trade and Investment Offices in the United States, United Kingdom, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, India, Indonesia and Korea.

People were also able to send their messages via a specially provided web page on the Queensland Government site.

It is hoped these condolence books will provide some form of comfort to his family and tangible proof of the affection and respect with which he was held around the world.

We will continue to work with the Irwin family to ensure Steve's legacy is a continued commitment across Queensland to the conservation of wildlife and wild spaces.

Premier's Awards for Excellence in Public Sector Management

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.47 am): I want to report to the House on the Premier's Awards for Excellence in Public Sector Management. I do this because I want to take this opportunity to congratulate and thank the Queensland public sector for their commitment to delivering for the people of Queensland.

In particular, I congratulate the recipients of the 2006 Premier's Awards for Excellence in Public Sector Management. I initiated these awards eight years ago to encourage and reward achievement among public sector staff for their commitment to quality and excellence. Their achievements directly benefit the people of Queensland and they contribute to building a stronger, smarter state. I table a sector wide report which includes the successful winners as well as the program for the night.

Tabled paper: Copies of Sectorwide December 2006 edition.

Tabled paper: Copies of program for Premier's Awards for Excellence in Public Sector Management.

I seek leave to incorporate details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

This year's eight Award categories attracted 113 nominations and the calibre of entries was outstanding.

The Environmental Protection Agency received the overall Award for Excellence.

Its services and projects are growing community awareness and involvement in environmental and sustainability issues.

These awards also showcase the diversity of Government work, from initiatives that improve safety in Indigenous communities, to providing long-term water solutions, housing solutions for the homeless, and protecting Queensland's forests for future generations.

Receiving the Partnerships and Reconciliation Award was the Department of Communities for the Lockhart River Community Plan 2004-2008.

This community development plan has seen the growth of an innovative learning partnership between the Government and the community.

The Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries received the highly commended award for its Puchiwu Fishing Ltd project, which established a sustainable fishing company in the Indigenous community of Lockhart River.

Mr Speaker, I take this opportunity to congratulate and thank the Queensland public sector for their commitment to delivering for the people of Queensland.

Wesley Mission Brisbane, Centenary Celebrations

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.47 am): I congratulate the Wesley Mission Brisbane for their 100 years of providing community services and aged care. I will be launching the Wesley Mission Brisbane centenary celebrations today here at Parliament House. The Wesley Mission Brisbane has been extending a helping hand to Queenslanders in need for almost 100 years and has to be one of our key providers of community services and aged care. I seek leave to incorporate a tribute in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The organisation led the way in the provision of aged care facilities when it built the first residential village-style aged care facility at Wheller Gardens in Chermide in 1936.

Since then it has developed a range of facilities in Brisbane's north, western and south-western suburbs offering opportunities for independent living, palliative care and accommodation for people living with dementia.

The Mission's programs have also expanded to include disability & employment services, support for youth at risk, young parents, family day care, interpreting services for the deaf, home support for the elderly & emergency relief.

The Govt supports this important work through funding from the Dept of Communities—providing \$3.5M in 2005-2006 for community and disability services.

Wesley Mission Brisbane's plans for growth:

- re-development of Wheller Gardens, including a new retirement community of 350 units.
- Demolition of the existing Wesley House in Ann Street to make way for a 9-storey office building to house new mission activities.
- Significant building program of the Youngcare Apartments at Sinnamon Village to accommodate up to 16 young adults who have multiple sclerosis or other neurological conditions.

The commitment and compassion of your leaders, staff and volunteers is an inspiration to us all.

100 Club

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.48 am): I also want to draw the attention of the House to the fact that the 100 Club will meet here today. It is one of the most exclusive clubs of all time. A person has to be 100 years old to get into it. I am happy to report that the oldest Queenslander is Gladys Hardwick, who lives in my home town of Atherton at the Carinya Home for the Aged. Gladys is 109 years of age. We make them tough where I come from. I seek leave to incorporate details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

There is no more exclusive club in the world than the 100+ Club and I am proud to be its patron.

It is the only social club in the world for people over 100, with 115 current members in Qld today.

Gladys is 109 years of age and I send 'Ma' Hardwick and the staff at Carinya my sincerest regards—Gladys prefers to be called "Ma" because she says Gladys is an old person's name!

Ma Hardwick embodies the great spirit of the 100+ Club—at 103, she was still climbing paw-paw trees to pick fruit for her great-great-grandkids!

I would also like to congratulate the Qld Community Care Network for the wonderful job they do in organising volunteers to visit the aged.

QCCN is the largest organisation of its kind in Qld with 300 volunteers covering an area from Roma in the west, to Bli Bli in the north and to the Tweed River in the south.

Just because someone is over 100 doesn't mean they can't still get out and do things—the list of requests for activities from some of the Club members would put some sit-at-home teenagers to shame!

100 Plussers have been riding in hot air balloons—riding on the back of Harley Davidsons—Working out in the gym—and visiting the Polar Bears at Seaworld.

They are setting the bar high for the rest of us to follow.

Cultural Centre, People's Day

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.48 am): As we know the gallery will be opened this Sunday. The government has been running an advertising campaign to encourage people to people's day. There will be advertisements in Saturday's *Courier-Mail* encouraging Queenslanders to visit the new cultural centre and be part of the free people's day on 2 December. I table that advertisement for the information of the House.

Tabled paper: Advertisement for Queensland Cultural Centre People's Day.

Uren, Hon. T

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.49 am): I want to pay tribute to an old mate of mine, Tom Uren. Yesterday I had the honour of launching in Queensland his book called *The Fight*, and I was delighted to do that. *The Fight* is about much more than the remarkable life and thoughts of Tom Uren, who, as members would know, was one of our servicemen. He survived the Burma railway. He fought for the heavyweight boxing championship of Australia and was a minister in four federal Labor governments. His book is about economic rationalism; about following the USA into Iraq, which he does not support; about the new IR laws, which he does not support; about the treatment of Indigenous Australians; about the failure to recognise climate change; and about the trampling of state rights. I seek leave to incorporate a tribute to him in *Hansard*. I want to table his book. With a bit of luck, those opposite might benefit from it.

Tabled paper: Book by Martin Flanagan and Tom Uren titled 'The Fight'.

Leave granted.

The Fight puts what is happening in Australia today in perspective through the eyes and wisdom of a man who has been on the front line and the front foot for all of his 85 years.

Tom Uren spent 19 years on Federal Labor's front bench.

1969—ALP's first ever spokesperson on the environment.

1972—became Minister for Urban and Regional Development in the first Whitlam Government.

Tom's proudest achievement—creating the Australian Heritage Commission, which led to the compiling of the Register of the National Estate.

Hawke Govt: Minister for Territories and Local Govt and later Minister for Local Government and Administrative Services.

Tom is fondly remembered in Far North Qld for coordinating the Federal Govt response to Cyclone Winifred (Innisfail, 1986)

Retired from Parliament in 1990, the last remaining Member who had fought and suffered in World War 2.

One of Tom's favourite sayings sums him up—There is no progress in hate.

I commend this book to all Australians. Congratulations Tom.

Sun Retail and Sungas, Sale

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure) (9.50 am): I am pleased to inform the House that on Monday, 27 November the government announced the sale of Sun Retail to Origin Energy for \$1.202 billion. I can also advise the House of the sale of Sungas to AGL Energy for \$75 million. I congratulate Origin Energy and AGL Energy on their decision to invest in Queensland, one of the most dynamic regions in the country. It is an investment decision that they will never regret. Sun Retail comprises some 830,000 customers of the former electricity and LPG business of Energex Retail, while Sungas is the former natural gas business of Energex Retail.

In terms of sale values, the prices paid for Sun Retail and Sungas represent outstanding results for the state. While the purchasers have bought a foothold in one of Australia's fastest growing regions, the state has received a full price. Compared to similar interstate sales, the outcome can only be described as impressive. Also, Origin Energy has stated its intention to develop a new LPG business call centre in Queensland with an initial estimate of some 20 employees as part of developing Brisbane's role as the international headquarters of Origin's LPG business. With the domestic retail market opening up on 1 July 2007, the state's interests are best protected by selling these retail businesses. But we appreciate that this can be a difficult transition for the staff of the former entities. That is why the sale and purchase agreement preserves current terms and conditions of employees and provides for reversion employment rights to Energex.

The Sun Retail and Sungas sales will be formally complete on 1 February 2007. Combined with the \$535 million from the recent Allgas sale, the money from the Sun Retail and Sungas sales will see around \$1.8 billion injected into the Queensland Future Growth Fund. This is \$1.8 billion against our original target of \$1 billion. We should also note that there is a third tranche—the Powerdirect sale package—to follow in the new year. Some 390,000 former Sun Retail electricity customers have been transferred to the Powerdirect Australia package, which includes parts of Ergon Retail. Origin Energy, through its acquisition of Sun Retail, will be excluded from the Powerdirect Australia sale.

Despite the better than expected sale proceeds, I can confirm that the priorities for the Future Growth Fund remain unchanged. Those funds are to fund critical water infrastructure, to fund future needs such as clean coal technology and infrastructure such as ports, rail and energy. Overall, this sale is great news for Queensland. These sales will assist to provide a competitive electricity market and to help put pressure on prices when the market opens next year. This sale is also an outstanding result not only for the state but also for Origin Energy and AGL Energy. I would like to congratulate those companies and everyone who has assisted with the sales, including those in Sun Retail, Sungas and Energex who have helped to prepare the assets for sale. I look forward to informing the House in the new year of the Powerdirect sale outcome.

While there has been a favourable response to the sales, it has generated some speculation about the possible sale of other assets. I can assure members that it is not the government's intention to sell our generators. Government ownership of generation has provided Queenslanders with security of electricity supply. As our demand for electricity grows—we are the fastest growing market in the nation—this security is further underpinned through continued ownership of these important assets. We want Queensland to have the strongest, safest and most reliable electricity supply network in Australia.

The Clean Coal Technology Board is currently considering how it allocates the \$300 million from the Future Growth Fund. Three projects are under active consideration and have made presentations to the board. These are the ZeroGen clean coal power project planned by Stanwell Corporation at Stanwell, the Callide A oxyfuel firing project proposed by a consortium led by CS Energy, and the zero carbon project at the Fairview coal seam gas field near Injune proposed by a Santos-led consortium. There will be considerable international interest in these projects and Queensland will be seen to be making a proactive and positive contribution to the science and technology of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Gatton, Correctional Centre Precinct

Hon. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (9.54 am): As the Premier has announced, Gatton has been identified as the preferred location for a new correctional centre precinct. I have had three meetings with Mayor Steve Jones and Deputy Mayor Janice Halstead and appreciate the common sense, practical and open minds that they have brought to the discussions. They can see the many advantages that this proposal presents for the Gatton shire. So can their colleagues, as they have advised me that only one of eight councillors did not support the proposal. Following the Gatton Shire Council's in-principle support, the state government will now start a public engagement process. One of the first parts of this process will be to set up a shopfront in Gatton tomorrow so that people can go in and speak to Corrective Services staff about the proposal. An internet site will be established with information, a 1800 telephone number will be set up and community and other groups will shortly receive a mail-out with information.

Any selected site will be subject to the full range of assessment as required by the Integrated Planning Act and will include consideration of issues such as environmental, cultural and historical, traffic, social impact, hydrology, soil and geology, contamination and also town planning. The state government will purchase a 600-hectare site in the north-eastern corner of the shire and build the complex in stages. Stage 1 will be a 300-bed women's prison followed by a 500-bed men's prison to be built in the next four years. Around 70 per cent of the accommodation will be residential style, with the remainder being individual cells. Corrective Services will fund prisoner family transport services from metropolitan areas directly to the prison to coincide with family visits days.

There have been a lot of rumours and misleading claims made during this expression of interest period. The prisoner advocacy group State INCorrections Network, which would prefer that we had no prisons whatsoever, has deliberately pushed the idea that we plan to build a 4,000-bed megaprison. I have said all along that this new prison complex will not be a megaprison. It will be a prison precinct, and we are looking at providing several prisons such as a women's prison, a men's prison and hospice facilities for elderly prisoners all to be built on the one site. However, they will all be behind secure razor wire perimeter fencing and will take up to just 10 per cent to 15 per cent of the site. This will provide a significant buffer zone, meaning the facility will not even be visible from the road.

Building a prison precinct is nothing new. The current correctional precinct at Wacol has had up to six correctional facilities and accommodation approaching 3,000 beds for male and female prisoners, and the entire precinct is located only minutes away from some of Brisbane's exclusive western suburbs. Myths have also abounded that a correctional centre will make the community unsafe. The Queensland correctional system is recognised as being the most secure in the country and we are proud of our record of no escapes from secure custody since this government was elected eight years ago. The new prison complex will be behind two razor tape fence barriers 3.6 metres high and protected by taut wire detection fence technology and microphonic detection. The perimeter areas will be under constant closed-circuit television surveillance with alarm initiated real-time recording of all events. This announcement today is part of the prudent planning for the future securing land now so that we can build for the future and keep pace with rising prisoner numbers.

Burdekin to Moranbah Water Pipeline

Hon. CA WALLACE (Thuringowa—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Water and Minister Assisting the Premier in North Queensland) (9.58 am): I have good news for the people of Queensland. Construction of the 216-kilometre Burdekin to Moranbah water pipeline has entered the home stretch. The \$280 million project is tracking very well and is both on time and within budget. SunWater advises that, as of this morning, 94 per cent of the pipe is already underground. If water crews continue to get fine weather, the last stretch of the pipeline should be in the ground by 20 December. So far SunWater's construction crews have laid more than 204 kilometres of the pipeline, with the remaining work at the Moranbah end.

Work on the pipeline's four pumping stations is also continuing, with the first pump already delivered and installed. The pumping stations are expected to be completed in mid to late January. Partial power supply from Ergon Energy should be up and running by mid February, with the line to be at full capacity by the end of March. The finished pipeline will carry water from the Burdekin Falls Dam to the Moranbah area where it will feed the booming coalmining industry. I also hope that some spare capacity from this pipeline will be used to feed the booming urban centre of Moranbah.

The project will deliver 16,800 megalitres of water per year to the Bowen Basin, with the potential to increase capacity by a further 6,000 megalitres annually. In addition to the 216 kilometres of the pipeline, the major infrastructure includes a pump station at the Gorge Weir below the Burdekin Dam, three booster pump stations, a 600-megalitre storage point 35 kilometres north of Moranbah and a six-megalitre terminal storage unit at Moranbah itself. The smaller storage unit allows connection to the Eungella and eastern spur pipelines. Six mining companies—BMA Coal, Macarthur Coal, Carborough Downs Coal, Isaacs Plains Coal, Rio Tinto Coal Australia and Excel Coal—have entered into an agreement with SunWater to cover the cost of the project and usage charges over the next 20 years.

The pipeline is one of the most expensive infrastructure developments that SunWater has ever undertaken. I offer my congratulations to all the people who have worked so hard to get this great piece of infrastructure built. Queensland's mining sector is booming, with very strong international demand for coking coal. Projects such as the Burdekin to Moranbah pipeline will ensure that the industry can fully capitalise on this increasing demand. Mr Speaker, as a north Queenslander, you will appreciate the great capacity of the Burdekin Falls Dam and what wonderful foresight the Hawke Labor government had to fund that project in the 1980s.

Alert Doctors Strategy

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Health) (10.01 am): As I reported to parliament recently, the Beattie government is committed to addressing the risks associated with doctor fatigue through our \$3.6 million Alert Doctors Strategy. Doctor fatigue is a very important issue for the wellbeing of our medical practitioners and patients alike. That is why we are moving quickly to develop safe, intelligent and workable solutions. Queensland Health has engaging world-renowned experts from the University of South Australia's Centre for Sleep Research to help develop an evidence based fatigue management framework for Queensland Health's doctors.

Last week, the Alert Doctors Strategy steering committee met and agreed to pilot the fatigue risk management system in at least 10 regions throughout Queensland. The pilot sites will cover a broad range of working environments, including remote hospitals with one doctor, and city hospitals with all specialist services available after hours. It will also consider the number of international medical graduates employed, the geographical spread and the travel time for doctors who are employed at the hospital. This study will help us to better understand the issues, risks and solutions before the fatigue management system is rolled out across the state. The steering committee will finalise the pilot sites over coming weeks to ensure that the 12-month pilot will get underway next year. This initiative builds on Queensland Health's fatigue reporting and management arrangements that are already in place at hospitals to reduce the risk from workplace fatigue.

I am especially concerned about the work pressures with respect to young doctors, particularly in a climate of global workforce shortage and increasing service demand. That is why medical managers have been instructed to review the rostering and work arrangements of junior doctors to ensure that work practices that may lead to fatigue are managed. Local working groups have been set up in major hospitals to take immediate steps to address fatigue risks from junior doctors' hours of work. All of these initiatives are being delivered in close cooperation with the AMA Queensland, the relevant unions, doctors and other key stakeholders.

In addition, Queensland Health will sponsor the 18th International Symposium on Shiftwork and Working Time to be held in Yeppoon next year. The Central Queensland University will host the symposium, which will bring together a range of international experts in the field. Our \$15,000 sponsorship of this event demonstrates the Beattie government's support for evidence based approaches to the safety and wellbeing of our employees in an environment of global shortages of doctors and other clinical professionals.

Sugar Cane Smut

Hon. TS MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries) (10.03 am): The federal government, in particular its junior partner, the Nationals, has left no-one in doubt as to where it stands in regard to Queensland sugar cane growers. It could not care less. Since 12 June this year, when sugar cane smut was first discovered in the Isis region, the federal government has turned its back on growers. Pleas to the Commonwealth to contribute financially to the costs incurred in fighting smut fell on deaf ears. A letter to the federal minister for agriculture, Peter McGauran, asking the Commonwealth to join Canegrowers, BSES Ltd—

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr Cripps: It's a Labor program.

Mr MULHERIN: I take the interjection from the members opposite.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Toowoomba South, you have interjected. You are very repetitive. You are probably the most repetitive member in this House. Let the minister answer your interjection.

Mr MULHERIN: I take that interjection from the members opposite. This shows that the coalition is the town agent for the federal government. The Beattie Labor government will stand up to any federal government, regardless of its political colour.

A letter to the federal minister for agriculture, Peter McGauran, asking the Commonwealth to join Canegrowers, BSES Ltd and the Queensland government by taking a position on the smut recovery working party, headed by Dr David Watson, received no response. Last Thursday night before the Primary Industries Ministerial Council I personally asked Mr McGauran for the Commonwealth to join the battle. I offered the Commonwealth a position on the sugar cane smut working party, which will identify measures to manage the impact of the disease on industry and facilitate recovery. They were not interested, not even in an observer's role. The federal government just does not care. Given the federal sugar seats held by the Nationals—Hinkler by Paul Neville and Dawson by De-Anne Kelly—I would have thought there would be greater concern for the industry.

Even Queensland Nationals Senator Barnaby Joyce has showed scant regard to the plight of Queensland growers by attempting to blame the state government for the industry agreed, scientifically approved response to managing the disease. The response, or lack of it by the Nationals, is a classic case of that party's claim of representing rural and regional Australia being nothing more than hollow rhetoric.

This government is the only government that has been prepared to put its hands in its pockets to help our growers. The Beattie Labor government is the only government that has rolled up its sleeves and worked side by side with industry against sugar cane smut. Both the Queensland government and industry have recognised the significance of this threat to a billion-dollar national export industry. Eighty-five percent of the raw sugar that is produced in Australia is exported. It is time the Commonwealth did the same and recognised this threat.

WorkChoices

Hon. MM KEECH (Albert—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading, Wine Industry Development and Women) (10.06 am): Queensland women have been dealt a devastating blow by the failure of the states' High Court challenge to the Howard government's workplace relations laws. The failed challenge is another setback for women and further exposes them to workplace exploitation.

The changes to the industrial relations system, introduced by the federal government under WorkChoices, are a threat to the rights and privileges Queensland workers have earned through our own industrial system—a system that has worked well here in Queensland, particularly for women. All members should have a great concern about the move towards individual contracts and agreements and the likely widening of the gap between male and female take-home pay.

Australian Bureau of Statistics research shows that women covered by collective agreements have an hourly wage rate that is 11 per cent above women who are on individual agreements. Clearly, it pays to belong to a union. Unions have argued that AWAs fail women, and they are absolutely right. Women on Australian Workplace Agreements—AWAs—earn only 70 per cent of the average earnings of men on AWAs, compared with women covered by awards who earn 84 per cent of men's average earnings. So when it comes to equality in pay, women certainly still have a long way to go. But women know that the Howard government's unfair WorkChoices is not the answer.

Women remain largely concentrated in part-time and casual employment where the workplace laws will have the most detrimental effect. Under these laws, many women stand to lose rights related to their employment conditions as well as losing penalty rates on casual jobs and the right to claim recompense for unfair dismissal. It is a fact: women are worse off under individual agreements. When faced with a take-it-or-leave-it scenario, they might be forced to trade pay for carer's leave or time off during school holidays to the detriment of their families.

One of the hidden costs of the new system, which is only just coming to light, is women's increased susceptibility to bullying. While occupational health and safety laws in the past have attempted to penalise and reduce bullying, the new laws expose women to bullying by giving more power to employers to decide their own workplace structures. In fact, the story I am hearing from women is that there is now less public scrutiny of unethical behaviour in the workplace. We are going to see more women in lower paid and low-status jobs being bullied as a result of their reduced bargaining power.

Women know that now that our legal challenge has failed they are in dire straits. I urge women to join with their work colleagues and the unions tomorrow for the National Day of Union and Community Action—8.30 am at Southport, South Bank, the Gold Coast showgrounds and other regional centres throughout Queensland.

Mr Johnson: Have you invited Merri Rose?

Ms KEECH: The opposition thinks women's rights and women's equality of rights is a laughing matter; the Beattie Labor government does not.

Fair Go Queensland Advisory Service

Hon. RJ MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (Minister for State Development, Employment and Industrial Relations) (10.10 am): Next week marks the first anniversary of a major Queensland initiative helping working men and women and their employers across the state. This initiative is helping thousands of Queenslanders and their families. I would prefer that we did not have a need for it, but the Fair Go Queensland Advisory Service, which was set up to take calls from anyone worried about WorkChoices, is needed now more than ever.

The Fair Go hotline will live for another year or until a new fair and reasonable federal government is elected to get rid of the awful unjust WorkChoices law. The hotline has taken thousands of calls over the year—many also have been made to the Wageline advisory service from workers across Queensland, men and women, young and old, under either state or federal awards. And I can inform honourable members that the hotline has taken plenty of calls from employers.

Surprisingly, almost as many calls came from employers. They say that they are trying to avoid getting caught up in the complexities of WorkChoices and that agreement making—in particular, Australian workplace agreements—is too time consuming when fair conditions are already contained in state awards. The feedback from employers also highlights support for state awards because they help in staff retention, and even staff poaching, by paying entitlements in excess of WorkChoices. So, a sizeable number of employers do not like WorkChoices and a huge number of workers hate it.

Hotline advisers have heard from all of those employees who need help after being sacked or forced to resign or accept lower wages or work longer hours or work on public holidays. Many of the calls are from older male workers and younger female workers—which is no surprise as they are among those who most fear losing their job or who traditionally have been among the most exploited in the harsh world of AWAs. That is why as much as we would like to go back to the days prior to WorkChoices we cannot. And that is why the Fair Go Queensland Advisory Service will continue to help workers, their families and employers.

Water Smart Buildings Program

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology) (10.12 am): The Department of Public Works continues to lead the way in the drive to reduce water consumption in Queensland government buildings, facilities and parks. The Water Smart Buildings program is well advanced on a number of fronts, including the fitting of the latest technologies designed to save water.

A newly formed task force has started installing flow restrictors and water efficient showerheads in the more than 50 buildings across south-east Queensland. These works are expected to be completed well ahead of the level 4 water restrictions deadline of June 2007 for non-residential users. Contractors have also been engaged to adjust urinal flush rates and replace inefficient single-flush toilets with the latest dual-flush model.

We can see the results of these modifications already. Alterations to the Queensland Police Headquarters in Brisbane have saved up to 8,000 kilolitres of water in three months. This is a saving of more than 40 per cent, far exceeding the level 4 restrictions requirement of 25 per cent. In commercial office buildings, a reduction of at least 25 per cent will be achieved in the use of water suitable for drinking.

Significant water savings have also been achieved at Roma Street Parkland. A range of strategies has been carried out to deliver an annual saving of 90,000 kilolitres of town water. As an interim measure, recycled water is being carted in and used to supplement lake and stormwater, while investigations continue into alternative water sources to meet the parkland's long-term needs. The Water Smart Buildings program continues to establish the Queensland government as a leader in water conservation.

Aviation High School

Hon. RJ WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Education and Training and Minister for the Arts) (10.14 am): I want to inform the House of the high-flyers in aviation education who were recognised here at a ceremony at Parliament House yesterday. Ten Queensland students and teachers have been recognised for outstanding achievement in aviation education at the 2006 Boeing Education Awards ceremony here at Parliament House. The awards were part of the aerospace project, a leading-edge project established in 2004 to create career pathways for students in the aerospace and aviation industries. It is the only education project of its kind in Australia. Through this project our government is working with industry partners to help ensure young people have the skills they need to take advantage of Queensland's position as the aviation hub of the South Pacific.

I congratulate Steve Wright, a teacher from Hendra Secondary College. He is the second teacher from that college to win the Boeing Education Excellence Scholarship, which will see him fly to the Boeing headquarters in Seattle to undertake professional development. Other winners were Tom Jarrett and Jack Goener from Iona College—each of whom won awards and scholarships—Luke Vandevorst from Caloundra State High School, who won the Aerospace Studies Award; and Harley Clarke from Townsville, who won the Year 10 Aerospace Award. These award winners are the future of this booming industry in Queensland.

The sector employs an estimated 14,000 people, with some 6,000 of those jobs generated by industry expansion in only the past five years. The Brisbane airport precinct alone has nearly 11,000 employees, with an estimated 32,000 jobs to be created by 2023. And Queensland is on track to become the aviation hub of the South Pacific, as I mentioned. This is evidenced by number of major companies that have established or expanded corporate, maintenance and technical facilities in Queensland over the past decade.

This expansion means enormous job opportunities for our young people. Today I am pleased to announce that our government will support this growth by establishing Australia's first dedicated aviation high school at Hendra in Brisbane next year. From the beginning of the new school year of 2007, Hendra Secondary College will become known as Australia's 'Aviation High', providing students with a direct pathway to careers in the aviation industry.

Our government will invest \$18 million over the next four years to establish Australia's first dedicated aviation high school. This is a historic step for education in this country and will ensure Queensland students are well positioned to take up careers in this burgeoning industry. The high school will work with Aviation Australia, universities, training providers and industry to provide students with direct pathways to careers in the aviation and aerospace industry in Queensland and internationally.

Hendra Secondary College was selected as the site for 'Aviation High' because of its already strong links with the aviation industry and its proximity to the Brisbane airport precinct. Students at the school will continue to study a broad range of subjects but within an overarching aviation context. These subjects are designed to support a variety of aviation careers—everything from caterers and flight attendants to pilots, meteorologists, aviation lawyers and engineers.

We are currently consulting with students, their parents, teachers and the community about the transitioning of the high school. Existing years 10 and 11 students will be able to complete their studies at the school with the full range of their selected subjects. The establishment of 'Aviation High' is a first for education in this country. It will support the growth of this important industry in Queensland and give our young people a launching pad into careers in the aviation industry in the future.

Rural and Remote Paramedics

Hon. PD PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.18 am): Last week I had the pleasure of launching the new Graduate Certificate of Rural and Remote Paramedic Practice and met the 20 paramedics who are now undertaking the course to help boost health services in isolated Queensland communities. This course is the first of its kind in Australia and is part of a Beattie government election commitment to explore an expanded scope of practice for QAS paramedics working in rural and remote areas.

This is new and exciting ground for the Queensland Ambulance Service and is a key part of our efforts to look for better ways to maximise the clinical expertise of our highly trained paramedics who do such a fine job in rural and remote communities across Queensland. The course was developed in partnership with the James Cook University, Mount Isa Centre for Rural and Remote Health and the North Queensland Workforce Unit of Queensland Health. I commend them for their help and cooperation.

The establishment of this qualification will enable 60 paramedics over three years to develop an extended scope of practice to isolated communities in Queensland, providing greater assistance to rural doctors and remote area nurses in the communities where they live and work.

After completion of the course, the paramedics will be classified as isolated practice paramedics. The course will equip graduates with contemporary skills, knowledge and abilities to complement the isolated health teams; help paramedics working in isolated communities to integrate their pre-hospital emergency care knowledge with low acuity community care; give graduates an understanding of international and national health strategies; and provide them with a range of skills, drugs and understanding that equips graduates to assist the health teams to develop localised strategies.

The Beattie government is committed to providing all Queenslanders with the best possible pre-hospital care, regardless of where they live. From Camooweal out west, to Thursday Island in the Cape and the border communities down south, the Queensland Ambulance Service delivers an innovative, effective and efficient service to rural and remote communities, and this new course is an excellent addition.

Rothwell to Kippa-Ring Bus Priority Project

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.20 am): I inform the House of good news for motorists and public transport users in Brisbane's north and Redcliffe with the opening of the Rothwell to Kippa-Ring Bus Priority Project, including T2 lanes, three months ahead of schedule. This project is a big win for both motorists and public transport users alike, and it has been followed closely by the member for Murrumba and the newly elected member for Redcliffe.

This key TransLink project was completed by the Transport Infrastructure Projects Alliance, which is made up of Queensland Transport, Ove Arup as the designer and Seymour Whyte Construction as the constructor. Work started in May this year and opened to traffic last week.

Public transport users, road users and the local community will benefit from reduced travel times along Anzac Avenue and upgraded and safer intersections at Nathan Road, Chelsea Street and Mewes Road. Eight new indented bus bays with new bus shelters have been constructed replacing existing bus stops. The indented bus bays will allow buses to stop off the side of the road and, therefore, not stop traffic on Anzac Avenue.

Whilst on site, the alliance team was asked by Redcliffe City Council to construct 650 metres of footpath along Anzac Avenue. The alliance will be finishing the footpath and some minor landscaping within the next week.

I must say what a pleasure it is to work with the Redcliffe City Council. The mayor is a really good guy to work with. He has a great vision for the peninsula. It is great to work with the Redcliffe City Council because of its far-sightedness.

Also, following an approach from the member for Murrumba, the project team constructed a memorial grove for the RSL in Henry Pieper Park. The memorial grove was opened in early October and features trees propagated from slash pines that were originally planted along Anzac Avenue to commemorate the men and women who gave their lives in the First World War. Together with the members for Murrumba and Redcliffe, I attended that opening and it was a truly wonderful day.

The alliance contract allowed the constructor and designer to work together and fast-track construction during the design process. This led to time savings with the constructor removing barriers off the road earlier, increasing on-site resources and opening up more work areas on site. I congratulate them on their work and on finishing this important project so far ahead of schedule. Finally, I again thank the veteran community of the peninsula for their wonderful work in relation to the memorial park.

Foster and Kinship Care Week

Hon. D BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety) (10.24 am): Queensland's foster and kinship carers are the unsung heroes of our communities, taking into their homes and often their hearts children who have been neglected or abused. They do a marvellous and vital job. We have recognised their efforts with a boost in payments to foster carers of up to \$107 a fortnight, costing an extra \$9 million a year.

I am pleased to say that the Queensland government has allocated \$44,000 to celebrate our foster carers during Foster and Kinship Care Week 2007, which runs from 11 to 18 March. This provides an opportunity to recognise and thank foster carers for the time, effort and love that they put in to caring for vulnerable children and young people.

Community organisations will be able to apply to PeakCare Queensland and Foster Care Queensland for grants to hold events during the week. Grants are available for up to \$500 for small events and up to \$2,000 for larger events. The events can be for training and information-sharing opportunities or to celebrate the contribution carers make right across the state.

Ideally, Foster and Kinship Care Week will raise awareness of our foster carers and may well encourage more people to consider becoming foster carers. While the number of foster carers in Queensland increased by seven per cent to 2,900 in the past financial year, with over 6,600 children in care in Queensland we still need more carers. When parents cannot or will not do the job that they should, it is up to us. After all, our children only get one chance at childhood.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Censure of Leader of the Opposition

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.25 am): I give notice that I shall move—

That this House notes the misuse of parliamentary privilege by the member for Callide and Leader of the Opposition, and censures him for his lack of commitment to upholding the high standards expected of his office and as a member of this House.

MOTION

Allocation of Time Limits

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.25 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That notwithstanding anything contained in the standing and sessional orders, I be permitted to move at 11.30 am today the motion of which I have given notice this morning, with time limits for speeches and debate as follows—

Leader of the House—10 minutes

Leader of the Opposition—10 minutes

All other members—five minutes

Total debate time before question put—one hour.

Motion agreed to.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Patel, Dr J

Hon. KG SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Premier in Western Queensland) (10.25 am): Today the *Courier-Mail* reports that only 47, or fewer than 13 per cent, of the compensation claims by former patients of Jayant Patel have been resolved. Yesterday I advised the parliament that 156 claims—not 47—have been resolved and a further 20 claims were due to be mediated this week. I also advised the House that another 47 claims had been closed. This means that those 47 claims are not eligible for a compensation payment. Therefore, as I reported to the House yesterday, more than half, or 52 per cent, of the eligible claims for compensation have been resolved or are currently being mediated.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Criminal Code Amendment Act

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.27 am): I give notice that I shall move—

That this House calls upon the government to repeal the Criminal Code Amendment Act 2006 and reinstate previous sections 56 to 58 of the Criminal Code so that members of this House who provide false information to this House or its committees are subject to the criminal law as they were for over 100 years.

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Ministerial Accountability

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.28 am): Yesterday in this House I was subjected to a tirade of abuse from the Premier and called all sorts of names because I asked the questions that Queenslanders are asking. I asked the questions and raised the issues that Queenslanders are asking at barbecues, in pubs and at coffee shops throughout Queensland. Queenslanders want to know what happened, Queenslanders want to know who was involved and, most of all, Queenslanders want to know why it happened.

This parliament exists so that corruption cannot flourish unnoticed in the government. The parliament exists so that this government has to answer questions. When the questions get uncomfortable, the Premier squeals. The more uncomfortable the questions are, the louder the squeals from the Premier, the member for Rockhampton and all his mates. When they squeal, we know we are getting close. You can run, but you cannot hide because this parliament exists. We have an obligation to come here and ask questions on behalf of the people of Queensland.

We will continue to ask questions on behalf of the people of Queensland no matter how many nasty names the Premier calls me and no matter how many phone calls the member for Rockhampton gets from his mates. We will come into this place and ask the questions that the people of Queensland are asking around their barbecues, in the pubs and at the coffee shops, because they deserve to know why, they deserve to know who was involved and they deserve to know what happened. That is our role and that is the role of this parliament.

I will protect the role of this parliament against all the criticisms that might come because we are getting close to the corruption that has flourished in this government. The smell of corruption is getting stronger. The whiff has become a stench. We know that there is something that the government wants desperately to hide and we will use every opportunity to expose it.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Ministerial Accountability

Mr SEENEY (10.30 am): My first question is to the Premier. Mr Speaker, could I make it clear that I recognise your ruling yesterday and my question does not refer to former Minister Nuttall. I refer to the Premier's statement in this House yesterday regarding the obligations of former ministers to declare their financial interests, and I ask: will the Premier seek written confirmation from all of his previous ministers that they did not seek or receive obligation-free loans from businessmen who were doing business with his government?

Mr BEATTIE: As has already been indicated when the Deputy Premier was Acting Premier, all former ministers were contacted by my office and all former ministers have given a clear understanding—

Mr Seeney: A written understanding?

Mr BEATTIE: As I was saying, Mr Speaker, all former ministers have given a clear indication that they have complied with the register. That advice has been provided to my office, and I accept that advice. I am not aware of anyone who has not complied with that register. If the Leader of the Opposition has any information that is different to that provided to my office, I invite him today to provide it directly to the head of the CMC. In other words, what I am saying to the Leader of the Opposition—

Mr SEENEY: Mr Speaker, I am happy to accept that invitation if the Premier will show me the information that has been provided to his office.

Mr SPEAKER: Excuse me! Leader of the Opposition—

Mr Seeney: Provide me with the information.

Mr SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition! I will not warn you again that you are not to speak over me. I already discussed that with you privately last night. There is no point of order.

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, let us go to a higher authority. Let us not rely on the ethics and standards of the Leader of the Opposition, who has none. If he has any information, what he ought to do is provide it to the CMC.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Speaker, that is obviously offensive. I find it offensive and I ask him to withdraw.

Mr BEATTIE: I withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: The Premier has withdrawn.

Mr BEATTIE: Let us be really clear about this. If the Leader of the Opposition has anything other than mud, which he is using this House to try to throw it, let him take it to the CMC. He should either put up or shut up. That is what he ought to do. If he has got information, then he should take it to the CMC. He should not come in here and try to muddy people's reputations, as he did yesterday. It was an absolute disgrace what he did yesterday. He came in here and tried to defame somebody without any information.

Mr Lucas: Worse than Debnam!

Mr BEATTIE: Let me take that interjection. You will become and have become the Peter Debnam of the Queensland parliament. Peter Debnam went out and defamed people without any basis of information, and what happened? He damaged his own career. I found it interesting to read what your long-term National Party member Di McCauley said about you. What did she say? She said, 'It's not for me to catalogue'—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: You don't like the truth, do you? What did she say about you?

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! If you give it, you have got to cop it, and if you give plenty of it, you have got to cop it. I say that to both sides.

Mr BEATTIE: That is right; I agree. What did Di McCauley say? She said—

It is not for me to catalogue all the nasty tricks which were played out at this time, but the situation was not a happy one and it seemed to me that Seeney was indeed the ugly face of politics—

Time expired.

Ministerial Accountability

Mr SEENEY: I have read Mrs McCauley's book, thank you, Premier.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Get on with your question, please.

A government member interjected.

Mr SEENEY: I take that interjection.

Mr SPEAKER: Excuse me! Have you got a second question to ask? If you have, ask it please.

Mr SEENEY: My second question is also to the Premier. Premier, last week I offered to meet with you to discuss in a bipartisan way the administration of the members' pecuniary interests register and other accountability issues. Premier, firstly, you dismissed my proposal out of hand. You then indicated to the media that you would meet me this week, but you have now written to me deferring that meeting for some time in the future and then only 'if necessary'. Premier, why are you afraid to eyeball me and discuss these issues in a bipartisan way? What are you scared of?

Mr BEATTIE: I need to have appropriate witnesses when I meet dishonest people. I have some standards. Let me make it absolutely clear. Based on the behaviour—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: It is your question time. I am happy to answer it. Let me make it clear. Based on your dishonest behaviour this week and the way you behaved yesterday, I have no intention of meeting you on this. You have no constructive contribution that you can possibly make. I am not going to engage in the political nonsense that you do when you come in here and use parliamentary privilege to try to defame decent people. Let me go back to Di McCauley, because in her book—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, are they going to continue to disrupt the whole House all morning, or are we going to be able to answer questions? If they want to behave like that—

Mr SPEAKER: Excuse me, Premier. I am on my feet. I indicate that there has been plenty of latitude given in this parliament to members of the opposition. I ask you to allow the Premier to now continue.

Mr BEATTIE: He does not want to hear the truth, but let us see what Di McCauley actually said. She said—

... Seeney was indeed the ugly face of politics and I wanted nothing to do with him.

Can I tell you this. You want to meet with me, but I agree with Di McCauley: you are the ugly face of politics and I want nothing to do with you, end of story.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Speaker, this is from a man who talks about parliamentary standards.

Mr SPEAKER: Excuse me, there is no point of order.

Mr SEENEY: I find the Premier's remarks offensive obviously—

Mr SPEAKER: Get to the point, please!

Mr SEENEY:—and I ask that they be withdrawn—

Mr SPEAKER: Can I just—

Mr SEENEY:—and they are juvenile.

Mr SPEAKER: Thanks for talking over me again! I am not going to take that too much longer, Leader of the Opposition. I indicate to you that, if you have a point of order, state the point of order. You do not need to elaborate before you state the point of order. State the point of order and I will judge it. There is no point of order. I call the Premier.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Speaker, with the greatest of respect—

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, am I going to get time to answer any of these questions, or are we going to need an extension of time?

Mr SEENEY: With the greatest of respect, my point of order is that I find the Premier's remarks obviously offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: He has asked for them to be withdrawn.

Mr BEATTIE: I withdraw. Let me go to someone independent to make a judgement on the integrity of the Leader of the Opposition, who wants to use this parliament for nothing more than denigrating honest people. Let me come back to Di McCauley. She wrote to the National Party on 20 September 2006. She was a long-term minister in the National Party government and a decent person.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: I will give the Premier extra time to answer this. I ask members of the opposition to desist for a moment while the Premier answers the question.

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, let us be really clear what is happening this morning. The Leader of the Opposition is trying to disrupt this parliament for political purposes. He is endeavouring to do it at every opportunity. He wants to come in here and ask questions to try to score a cheap point, but then he tries to disrupt the House because he does not want to hear the answer. But I am determined to put it on the record, because I believe from what happened yesterday that the integrity of the Leader of the Opposition is now the issue, as it was with Peter Debnam. It is the same lack of integrity, lack of honesty and lack of decency that we have from the Leader of the Opposition. That is the issue now, as it was in relation to Peter Debnam, who went in and defamed people without any basis. He threw mud, and what happened? It came back and rebounded on him, and then he was damaged because he acted in a dishonest and disreputable way.

Let us talk about what Di McCauley said on 20 September. She said—

Unfortunately, Jeff Seeney will need more than an expensive new suit to appeal to urban voters and I predict he will preside over an increasing decline in the National Party in Queensland.

She went on—

I am saddened that I have no avenues to use my conservative vote, although I suppose I could join the Liberal Party. However, given their present state I think I would prefer to have a tonsillectomy without anaesthetic.

What we have here is this, and I want to say this very clearly: the Leader of the Opposition has not learnt the Peter Debnam lesson. If you are going to make unfounded allegations against good people, you will destroy your own career.

There is one other thing. I want to remind members of the House about the article entitled 'MP unrepentant for tactical lie'. Who was the person who said a tactical lie was acceptable? The Leader of the Opposition. I want to make this point: here is a person as Leader of the Opposition who believes that a tactical lie is acceptable. I do not believe that a tactical lie is acceptable.

Mr SPEAKER: Just before I go on, I indicated to the members of the opposition that if there was going to be constant disruption of the parliament and interruption of a minister on his feet I would allow the Premier extra time, and I will. I do not need to be reminded by those of you who wish to rush that process.

Ministerial Accountability

Ms NOLAN: My question without notice is to the Premier. Yesterday the member for Callide made a number of allegations against current and former members of this House. Has the Premier had the opportunity to check the veracity of his statement?

Mr BEATTIE: I want to thank the member for Ipswich. No-one on my side of politics in any way suggests that this place should not be robust—of course it should—and the government of the day should be accountable. That also means that when the opposition puts matters to the government of the day it should do it on a factual basis. If every one of us in this place used the rumours, innuendo and false allegations in the House that are sent to us then there would be no standards in this House at all. Very decent and innocent people would be defamed under parliamentary privilege. What the Leader of the Opposition did yesterday is nothing short of an absolute disgrace and he is not worthy of holding the office of the Leader of the Opposition. He is not worthy at all. Di McCauley has summed him up absolutely precisely.

Let us look at what he said yesterday. The member for Greenslopes, to whom the Leader of the Opposition referred, said that his pecuniary interest register is impeccable. The member for Murrumbidgee has also forced a correction on the public record. He improperly defamed both of those members—members of this House. He does not even have the courage to come in here and apologise. The former member for Inala indicated that his entry was 100 per cent correct, and the former member for Chatsworth made it clear that he declared everything he had to declare. Where are the apologies to these four people? Where are the apologies to these four honest, decent people who have been maligned because of some smear from the Leader of the Opposition? Four of them! Two of them are sitting here now and have had the record corrected after the Leader of the Opposition has smeared them. Records of what he said yesterday about Terry Mackenroth were reported in the press today, none of which is true. The Leader of the Opposition can leer and smile like the village idiot, but honesty is important. Four people! The only member I have not been able to contact is the former member for Barron River, Lesley Clark, who happens to be overseas. On her behalf and on behalf of the members who are no longer able to defend themselves in this House, I call on the opposition leader today to unequivocally apologise. It is about time the National Party elected a leader with integrity. Let me tell you this—

Mr Lucas: Say it outside.

Mr Mickel: You don't have the guts to do it.

Mr BEATTIE: If the Leader of the Opposition is not prepared to go outside and repeat what he said in this House then he is a coward. He should have the courage to go out and do it.

I will say one thing about Rob Borbidge. Rob Borbidge was the most formidable opponent I had in my time as leader. He would never have done what the current Leader of the Opposition has done. What the Leader of the Opposition appears to have done is randomly pull their names out of a hat and he has used the protection of parliamentary privilege to take a cheap shot at them. These people have families and children like everyone else, but the Leader of the Opposition does not care. He will do anything to destroy someone's reputation to win a vote. He claimed that the entries—

Mr SPEAKER: Before I call—

Interruption.

MOTION

Extension of time

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.43 am): I move—

That the Premier be further heard.

Division: Question put—That the Premier be further heard.

YES, 54—Attwood, Barry, Beattie, Bligh, Bombolas, Boyle, Choi, Croft, Darling, English, Fenlon, Finn, Fraser, Gray, Hayward, Hinchliffe, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Jones, Keech, Kiernan, Lawlor, Lucas, McNamara, Mickel, Miller, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, O'Brien, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Purcell, Reilly, Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Struthers, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Weightman, Welford, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Male, Nolan

NOES, 30—Copeland, Cripps, Cunningham, Dempsey, Elmes, Flegg, Foley, Gibson, Hobbs, Hopper, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, Lee Long, Lingard, McArdle, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Nicholls, Pratt, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Rickuss, Dickson

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Resumed.

Mr BEATTIE: As I was indicating to the House, decency, honesty and integrity are important in this place. The opposition leader on a number of occasions has, in my view, abused the privileges of this House. I go back to what I said before about 'MP unrepentant for tactical lie'—the newspaper article which I will table in a minute. The last time he did this a parliamentary committee found that Mr Seeney did, in fact, mislead the House. The committee report states—

We suggest that the Member for Callide consider his duty, the statements made, and what appropriate response he should take upon himself to ensure the accuracy of the parliamentary record, and the reputation of the House.

Did he do it? No, he did not. As a result, what happened? The then Leader of the Liberal Party, Bob Quinn, said this. An article in the *Courier-Mail* states—

Mr Seeney has also alienated the Nationals' potential coalition partner. Liberal Leader, Bob Quinn, yesterday called on him to apologise for the false accusation.

So the then Leader of the Liberal Party, Bob Quinn, agreed with me in relation to this. What happened when I was away overseas and the Leader of the Liberal Party came out and attempted to besmirch and smear the Acting Premier? What did the Leader of the National Party say? He said this—

Credibility is everything in opposition and credibility is everything in government and you need to be absolutely sure of your facts.

That is what he said. What he is saying to Bruce Flegg, the Leader of the Liberal Party, is: 'You should get your facts right,' which he did not, 'but don't worry about me. I am the Leader of the National Party and I can do what I like. I can make things up.' That is exactly what happened here.

Let me come back to the point. I want to make this very clear. The Leader of the Opposition claimed that the entries in the returns were minimalist. In the case of the former member for Chatsworth he inferred that there was something suspicious because he listed only minimal investments in real estate after a long career in parliament. If the Leader of the Opposition had dug a bit deeper into his hat he would have found exactly the same thing in relation to his own colleagues. Is he suggesting that the member for Burnett, the member for Cunningham, the member for Toowoomba South and the former member for Robina have done something wrong? They are in exactly the same boat. Why has he set out to defame people? If he had done his homework he would understand how it works.

The former member for Robina was in parliament for 17 years yet listed only a joint interest in one property. Is Mr Seeney suggesting that the former Leader of the Liberal Party is corrupt in some way? Of course he is not. The behaviour of the Leader of the Opposition is unworthy.

Mr Lucas: A disgrace.

Mr BEATTIE: It is an absolute disgrace for this institution. I have sat through—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Can I ask members of the opposition to desist from interjecting. I indicate to the Premier that under standing order 231 this matter will be raised again at 11.30. I ask you to draw this to a quick conclusion.

Mr BEATTIE: I want to draw this to a conclusion because there is only one conclusion we can reach about the Leader of the Opposition: he is not worthy to hold the job. He will do anything. I warn the people of Queensland today: you cannot believe a word this man says.

Mike Horan was Leader of the Opposition at one time. Mike was about as tough as an opposition leader gets. We would sit in this chamber and Mike would give it to us every day. But one thing I know about Mike: he would never have raised this issue in the way the current Leader of the Opposition has. People like Mike Horan, Vaughan Johnson and some others opposite have a bit of integrity. The Leader of the Opposition has none. He wants to use this place as cowards castle. Let me tell him that the people of Queensland will make the same judgement about him as the people of New South Wales made about Peter Debnam.

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the member for Moggill, it is with a great deal of pleasure that I welcome to the gallery today a delegation of parliamentary administration from the People's Congress of Inner Mongolia Regional Standing Committee of the People's Republic of China. I extend to the delegation a very warm and cordial welcome from me as the Speaker and from members of this parliament.

Currumbin Valley, Hideaway Development

Dr FLEGG: My question without notice is to the minister for local government and planning. It relates to his approval of the Hideaway development in the Currumbin Valley. Can the minister advise what contact Mr Mackenroth or representatives of Mr Mackenroth have had with him or any member of his government in the process of his lobbying for this development?

Mr FRASER: I am happy to provide the answer to this. At no time have I ever discussed this application with either Mr Mackenroth or any other member of the Devine board. What I have done and what I did with the benefit of crown law advice was I met with representatives of Devine—they sent their legal representatives—at the same time as I met with Friends of Currumbin and representatives of the Gold Coast City Council.

I did that because I thought it was important that all parties be heard at the same time. In the interests of natural justice anything that those parties had to say should be said in front of the other parties. So that meeting was convened in my ministerial office. It was convened during the process with the benefit of crown law advice.

I am happy to provide that information because it is important that the parliament recognises that this process was undertaken carefully and deliberatively. It took a time to reach this decision. It is a decision, however, which, in the circumstances, was required and is lawful. There can be no suggestion in any way that this decision is anything other than a lawful and proper decision. The meeting that took place was in the company of all those people. At the meeting Devine was represented by its legal representative, a partner from the legal firm Deacons.

Leader of the Opposition

Ms MALE: My question without notice is to the Premier. Yesterday the member for Callide criticised the Premier for not reading his speech to the Queensland Press Club. Could the Premier advise the House whether he has had the opportunity to do so overnight?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for the question. The answer is yes. What it confirms to me is that the Leader of the Opposition cannot under any circumstances tell the truth. I will go through this. I pointed out at the Queensland Press Club that the Leader of the Opposition had indicated that he wanted to overturn the convention on how the Premier is chosen. I indicated that he had advocated the Liberals and Nationals doing a back-room deal and taking a vote on who the Premier would be before the general election and not after.

Remember what I said. The Leader of the Opposition leapt to his feet—and this is all in *Hansard*—and indicated that I got it wrong. He said—

Obviously the Premier has not read my speech. I will send him a copy.

He goes on. He said I got it wrong. I have actually read the speech and I did not get it wrong. I said that they were going to meet before the election. What did he say in his speech? He said—

The Premier will be the person who is elected by all coalition members in the joint party room to be coalition leader and has then—
which means after—

led the alternative government to victory at an election.

Let us see what the press report said. Let us see how the dishonest man was reported. Let us see what the media said about it. Did the media commentators agree with me or with the Leader of the Opposition? The Leader of the Opposition misled the House yesterday. Let us go through it. I am delighted that those opposite keep putting up with him as leader; the longer the better. Let us come to the point. Let us look at what the commentators said. Do they agree with me or not?

Let us take Steven Wardill from the *Courier-Mail*. He said, 'Mr Seeney said the leadership ballot will be taken before a state election. It was unlikely to change afterwards.' In other words, he is saying that Steven Wardill got it wrong. Let us talk about Madonna King. What did Madonna King say? She said, 'I understand that there will be a vote of the National and Liberal parties in the lead-up to an election.' She is wrong too. Both of them reached the same conclusion having read the speech. They are both obviously idiots like me. They cannot understand him. We move on to Michael McKenna in the *Australian* who quoted him on the 25th and 27th. He said things like, 'Under the plan the elected leader would likely be Mr Seeney because the Nationals have the numbers.' This is a gerrymander. If the Liberals buy this—I will not be unkind because we are in parliament—I will sell them the Sydney Harbour Bridge a bit later on. He goes on—

... would serve as Premier regardless of which coalition partner won the election.

In other words, all of the reports—Michael McKenna and Jeremy Pierce from the *Gold Coast Bulletin*—and all of these people are wrong. All of these people are idiots according to the Leader of the Opposition. I simply say this: tell the truth. Come in here and correct the record. Come in here and correct the record.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Currumbin Valley, Hideaway Development

Miss SIMPSON: Mr Speaker—

Mr SPEAKER: I call the member for Maroochydore.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Miss SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Excuse me, Member for Maroochydore. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to allow the member for Maroochydore to ask her question.

Miss SIMPSON: My question is to the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure. Minister, I refer to the decision announced yesterday that the call-in of Devine's Hideaway at Currumbin would proceed. Would the minister please advise this House if she has met with or discussed this matter with the former Treasurer, Mr Terry Mackenroth, or any other development applications with which he was involved?

Ms BLIGH: I have never met with Mr Mackenroth or any member of the Devine board about this application or indeed any other. I have from time to time been at functions where David Devine has been present. He has never used those opportunities to raise this matter with me.

Whitsundays, International Airport

Ms JARRATT: My question is to the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure. Deputy Premier, the Whitsundays is fast becoming the nation's premier tourism location. It is widely believed that its future development would be advanced by the addition of international air access. Could the minister detail any progress on this front?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question and for the widely recognised passion and enthusiasm she has for the Whitsunday region and what is happening in that exciting part of the world. I am pleased to take the opportunity today to put on the record the Queensland government's strong commitment to the growth of the tourism industry and indeed other sectors of industry in the Whitsundays and the region's economy more generally. Like many others involved in the tourism industry, the Queensland government believes that continued strong growth in domestic passenger numbers and the provision of international air access to the Whitsundays will be a key element underpinning future investment in and the economic growth of the region. The government believes that, in turn, this will lead to further reinforcement of the Whitsundays as a tourist destination of international significance.

Critical to our vision for strategic development in both tourism and industry will be the provision of upgraded airport infrastructure with international air access in the region. International air access is critical for the continued development of this part of Queensland. Current indications suggest that the proposed new Laguna Whitsundays international airport offers the greatest potential to satisfy the objective of upgraded aviation infrastructure. Members would no doubt be aware that the development of this new airport has languished with an impasse between the Whitsunday Shire Council and the developers concerned—an impasse which has resulted in a prolonged court action. This impasse is clearly not in the best interests of the region and the state government has a responsibility where we can to play an active role in resolving the outstanding issues and progressing the project.

To that end, I have asked the Coordinator-General to meet with the mayor of the Whitsunday Shire Council and other key stakeholders in the region to progress this optimal infrastructure outcome as quickly as possible. The government will be keen to ensure that at the time the Laguna Whitsundays airport becomes the principal gateway for air access to the region the legitimate interests of the Whitsunday Shire Council are protected and that alternative future uses for the Whitsunday Coast Airport, which will be of long-term benefit to the shire and its residents, can be found.

It is envisaged, for example, that the new international and domestic airport would be managed by an independent operator for the benefit of the whole region. In progressing this matter, the Coordinator-General will be focused on ensuring that this new gateway will be a true regional facility with the capacity to service local mining, horticultural, business and community interests as well as the tourism industry. I take the opportunity to call on all parties in this matter to put the interests of the region first and to come to the party and find a settlement that will see the project progress as quickly as possible rather than allow this to be tied up in a court wrangle for many years to come using the money of ratepayers in the Whitsundays.

Yandina, Proposed Industrial Estate

Mr WELLINGTON: My question is to the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure. Minister, on Monday evening I attended another community meeting at Yandina where there is real anger over the ongoing investigation of their community as the potential site for a future large industrial estate, and I ask: will the minister please clarify why the Bridges area near Yandina was identified as a potential future industrial development site when the community is firmly of the view that there are other more suitable sites on the Sunshine Coast for industrial development?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question and for his long interest in this issue. I know that the member for Nicklin understands that in the planning process for the South East Queensland Regional Plan the need for development of future industrial space was certainly a very important part of securing the economic future of regions like the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast. Having said that, I accept that locating industrial land is sometimes very difficult and that communities have legitimate concerns and those concerns need to be openly and honestly discussed with those communities and managed to the extent that they can be and any potential impact mitigated.

When the south-east Queensland plan was being developed, the then minister responsible undertook a very broad consultation process with a range of stakeholders, including the 18 shires and the 18 councils of south-east Queensland. Councils were invited to put in submissions about future development in their area and parts of their council area that may or may not be appropriate to be included either inside or outside of the urban footprint as well as matters such as appropriate industrial land. The relevant council, the Maroochydore council, in relation to the Bridges land put in a submission to the SEQ process and that submission proposed this land as a suitable area of investigation. So I think it is important to understand that this is an area being nominated as a suitable area for us to investigate for future industrial development.

The decision to go ahead or not to go ahead is yet to be made. When the plan was put together, I guess we had the opportunity to settle the matter of the footprint and then leave open further consultation on issues such as the location of industrial land. We have just been through a very big process in the Bromelton area with the Boonah and Beaudesert shire councils, and that process has now been almost settled in relation to decisions being made about that. We are still some way from making a decision in relation to the Bridges land, but can I assure the member that one of the reasons it has been identified as an area of investigation for this purpose is that the local council put it forward in its submission to government—and we try wherever possible to recognise that councils know their areas best—to consider. Because of a number of other characteristics about the land, we agreed with it and that is why it has progressed as the member knows it has over the last 18 months. So I thank the member for his ongoing interest. I look forward to being in a position to make a decision about its future very soon.

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the member for Pumicestone, I welcome to the public gallery teachers and students from the Southside Christian College at Salisbury in the electorate of Yeerongpilly, which is represented in this House by Simon Finn.

Smoking Laws, Pubs and Clubs

Mrs SULLIVAN: My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. Minister, I refer to the state government ban on smoking inside pubs and clubs which came into force on 1 July 2006, and I ask: is there any evidence that the new smoking laws are having a positive impact on the community and Queensland businesses?

Mr ROBERTSON: I thank the honourable member for the question. In September independent research was conducted for Queensland Health to investigate the level of awareness about the new smoking laws and gauge their impact on the community and business. I am pleased to inform the House

that the survey results are extremely positive and clearly demonstrate the significant impact our smoking bans are having on people. Not only do they demonstrate that the majority of Queenslanders are embracing the new smoking bans but thousands are actually giving up the habit.

Most Queenslanders are well informed about the new smoking laws. In fact, 93 per cent of those surveyed were aware that it is illegal to smoke inside pubs, clubs and at outdoor eating and drinking establishments. But the truly pleasing results are these: two per cent of smokers polled report that they have successfully quit as a result of the new tobacco laws. This equates to an estimated 14,000 smokers when the survey results are applied across the Queensland population. Some 22 per cent of smokers report that they have attempted to quit as a result of the new laws, and this equates to approximately 123,000 Queensland smokers. A further 27 per cent of ex-smokers report that the new smoking laws have helped them remain nonsmokers.

The smoking bans are also having a positive impact on businesses. Twenty-one per cent of those polled say that they are visiting Queensland pubs and clubs more often because of the smoking bans compared to 10 per cent who have said that they have reduced their visits. Thirty per cent also reported that they are visiting outdoor eating and drinking establishments more often as a result compared to the nine per cent who said that they were visiting less often. These statistics confirm the feedback that we have been getting that people are finding smoke-free pubs and clubs more pleasant and comfortable environments.

The results of this survey provide clear evidence that creating smoke-free environments help people to quit and may even prevent them from taking up smoking in the first place. This is a great outcome for all Queenslanders, because the benefits of quitting are immense. With over 3,400 Queenslanders dying from smoking related diseases each year, it is vital that we continue to encourage people not to smoke.

Currumbin Valley, Hideaway Development

Mr HOBBS: My question is directed to the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport. It relates to the call-in approval for the Devine 530-house Hideaway @ Currumbin development and the inconsistency between this ruling and the previous call-in decision for the similar Montville Links development. I note that both developments had been approved by the relevant local government authorities, were both within local planning guidelines, and were both outside the regional plan urban footprint. Will the minister explain why the Devine application was so quickly assessed and approved while the other was rejected out of hand? Or is the real difference the influence of former Treasurer, Terry Mackenroth, on the minister's government?

Mr FRASER: The reality is that the Devine application in the Currumbin Valley related to enduring rights that had existed under a previous planning scheme.

Mr Hobbs: So did Montville.

Mr FRASER: The reality is that, with the Devine application at Currumbin, that aligned with the planning scheme of the Gold Coast City Council.

Mr Hobbs: The same with Montville.

Mr FRASER: Whereas with Montville there was a critical difference.

Mr Hobbs: No, there wasn't.

Mr FRASER: The point to make—

Mr SPEAKER: I ask the member for Warrego to allow the minister to answer the question properly. I think your interventions are stopping him answering it properly for you.

Mr FRASER: The real point that needs to be made is that the application that I called in in relation to Devine was assessed in a time that was beyond the normal time lines of IPA, because it was a complex decision. I did not make the assessment on the Montville proposal. As the member would be aware, that was made during the term of the previous parliament. I am sure that the decision maker in that regard could provide the member with some further advice.

I say to the member for Warrego that there is absolutely no suggestion that anything improper occurred here. I take offence in the extreme to the suggestion in his line of questioning that there is something untoward that has gone on here. I made this decision and I am happy with the decision that I made, knowing that it was a lawful decision. If the member believes, or if he has any shred of evidence, or any suggestion that anything that I or any other member of the government has done is in any way illegal, unlawful or otherwise not in accordance with what should occur in this place, then he should walk past those seven seats and say it beyond that bar of the parliament. I know absolutely that the decision that I made with regard to this issue was lawful, correct and advised at every step along the way in a careful manner.

I do not believe that a decision such as this would be made in the future, because it is an enduring planning right. This government made the decision to legislate for a South East Queensland Regional Plan, which puts this area beyond the urban footprint. This matter represents the sort of planning decisions that were made in the past and it is an enduring right.

These decisions will not be made in the future. One of my favourite sayings is, 'He who seeks equity must come with clean hands.' The reality is that the only side of politics that would ever allow these sorts of developments to occur in the future is that side opposite. What did the member for Warrego say during the election campaign? As members may recall, he wrote to the development community. What did he say? 'We want to release more land. We want developers to have a say.' The member opposite was prepared to say to the development community in this state that the coalition was prepared to release more land. We would have seen more developments such as the one that occurred with Devine, not fewer.

So if the member for Warrego wants to hold hands with the member for Currumbin and suggest that this decision was in any way an improper decision or something that would not occur under a coalition government, I take offence in the extreme. The member should put up or shut up.

Child Safety Officers

Mrs KIERNAN: My question without notice is to the Minister for Child Safety. Can the minister inform the House of measures being used to attract child safety officers to rural and remote locations across the state?

Ms BOYLE: I thank the member for Mount Isa for this question. It is a matter of some considerable importance in Mount Isa and the north Queensland area in particular. I am able to say that we have done very well in getting the new Department of Child Safety up and running. Mr Speaker, I give my compliments to you. You showed leadership by increasing staff numbers in the Department of Child Safety by 75 per cent. However, the job is not complete. We still need to do more to diversify the workforce. We need more men in the Department of Child Safety. We certainly need more people from diverse backgrounds in the human services sector and maybe we also need more people from such backgrounds in health, policing and education.

One problem we still have is recruiting for the regional and remote areas of Queensland. Today I am pleased to announce that the Department of Child Safety has introduced a package of incentives to entice more child protection workers to the bush. From 1 July 2006 incentives will be offered to staff to go to our priority areas: Aurukun, Weipa, Bamaga, Charleville, Cooktown, Cunnamulla, Doomadgee, Emerald, the gulf, Kowanyama, Longreach, Mornington Island, Mount Isa, Normanton, Palm Island, Roma, South Burnett/Murgon and Thursday Island. Child safety officers working in these remote areas will be eligible for an annual bonus of \$10,000 for each year they are based in these locations. Staff who move to these priority areas will also be eligible for rent assistance for the first three years that they are there. This brings a child safety officer's employment package from \$40,000 to \$60,000 per annum plus super to at least \$50,000 to \$70,000 per annum plus super and rental assistance for eligible officers. After serving 18 months in a priority area, staff will be able to transfer to a location of their choice.

An allocation of \$3,000 a year for each staff member will also be provided to child safety service centres in the priority areas to enhance training and professional development opportunities for staff. On top of that, in some of these areas government employees receive an extra week of annual leave, making a total of five weeks annual leave. As well, last week applications closed for 15 scholarships of up to \$9,000 each for people such as nurses, teachers and police officers to build on these skills to qualify as child safety officers. I am told that interest was very strong and we have good candidates for those positions. There is no doubt that the new Department of Child Safety is up and running, but there is more work to do.

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the member for Caloundra, I indicate to members that there is too much audible conversation in the House. I did not want to interrupt the Minister for Child Safety, because she was making such a great statement to the House. But there is too much audible conversation.

Law and Order

Mr McARDLE: My question is to the Attorney-General. I refer the minister to a recent report in the Gold Coast media which revealed that a number of offenders from the same outlaw bikie gang have been given bail despite allegedly committing further offences whilst on bail. I table a copy of the article.

Tabled paper: Copy articles in Gold Coast Bulletin dated 28 November 2006 titled 'Bikies take liberties'; 'Nick the Knife still on streets, albeit with curfew'; and 'Second time for Morrison'.

As a deterrent to people committing offences whilst on bail, will the Attorney-General legislate for a mandatory jail term for people who are convicted of committing offences whilst on bail?

Mr SHINE: I have not seen that article. I will peruse it and advise the member of my consideration after that.

Bowen Basin, Accommodation

Mr PEARCE: My question—

Mr Mickel interjected.

Ms Bligh interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: I ask the Deputy Premier and Minister Mickel to desist and allow the member for Fitzroy to have a say.

Mr PEARCE: My question is to the Minister for Natural Resources and Water and Minister Assisting the Premier in North Queensland. What has the government been doing to help ease the shortage of land for accommodation in the booming coal towns of the Bowen Basin?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Fitzroy for his question. He is such a fine advocate for the good citizens of the Bowen Basin. If I know Jim Pearce, he will be heard even if Minister Mickel is a bit loud in the front here.

Today I am pleased to announce that the Beattie government will create 78 new residential allotments in the Bowen Basin mining towns of Blackwater and Dingo. The Department of Natural Resources and Water has been working closely with the Duaringa Shire Council to release state owned land for residential allotments in these booming mining towns. As my colleague Minister Wilson would be very aware, this part of the state is a hive of mining activity. We want to help these central Queensland towns cope with their rapidly rising populations and demand for residential land.

The Beattie government is working collaboratively with councils to identify priority areas for development. We are doing everything we can to make land available for development as quickly as possible. Staff from my department met council representatives late last month, and they have agreed to an action plan to release land. They have worked out a program that will create 73 new residential allotments in Blackwater and five new allotments in Dingo.

Coalmining is the lifeblood of both Blackwater and Dingo. As the member for Fitzroy would know being a former coalminer, it is the lifeblood of our state's economy. In particular, Blackwater is known as the coal capital of Queensland. Its coalmines produce millions of tonnes of coking and steaming coal each year. The Beattie government is making every effort to ensure that conditions are favourable for the continued growth of the industry in both Blackwater and Dingo by ensuring that people have places to live. The additional land, located in various areas throughout the towns, will go a long way to meeting the immediate and longer term needs of the two towns.

The government is happy to consult with local governments and mining companies when approached with proposals for areas of land required for town expansion. Last year the government provided 35 residential allotments in Blackwater by public auction. Since January 2005 my department has offered more than 325 hectares in total of state land to mining companies, local governments and on the open market in Bowen Basin mining towns.

Rail Freight Rates

Mr JOHNSON: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. I refer to the increase in rail freight prices of up to 100 per cent over two years being imposed on regional and rural residents of Queensland who daily depend on rail for their livelihood. I also refer to the community service obligations of Queensland Rail and the comparison with the subsidies for urban passenger rail. I ask the minister: isn't this strategy of massive price increases without consultation really a means of discouraging the use of rail so that the minister can justify the closure of regional rail lines?

Mr LUCAS: Since 1995 when the Tories ripped up most of the rail lines, under successive governments—both conservative and Labor—we have invested substantial funds in our rail networks, whether they be urban or rural rail networks. We are at a point in time in Queensland when investment in our rural and urban rail networks is unprecedented. I am delighted to preside over that. The money that we have invested in our coal network is second to none. For example, the southern missing link—which now has exclusive conditional project status—will not only have benefits for freight but also have enormous economic benefits for rural Queensland. I make that point because we have said that if we proceed with that I will ensure that we future-proof that line in terms of making it standard gauge capable.

The honourable member asked about government support and funding. For example, we spend \$107 million a year on subsidies for our Brisbane to Cairns network—our rural passenger network. That is a large amount of money, bearing in mind that with airfares its use is declining. But we make no apology for doing that because people in rural and regional Queensland deserve that. Some of the subsidies that we have for rural airfares run into the hundreds of dollars per seat.

Mr Johnson: I'm talking about freight rates, Minister—100 per cent!

Mr LUCAS: As someone with extensive experience both as a former transport minister and in the road transport freight industry, the honourable member would know that not to have freight rates that reflect the cost of providing them leaves us open to prosecution under the Trade Practices Act. As farmers know—as anyone in business knows—the secret to having a fair dinkum long-term sustainable business is sustainable freight rates, and that is what QR in its commercial business will do and that is what every road transport operator in Queensland does.

Mr Johnson: You only do it for coal and minerals.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Gregory, I ask you to desist from that constant yelling out and interjecting. I ask the minister to take his place.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! If you are going to ignore the authority of the chair, I have the appropriate mechanisms in that regard which you are aware of. I call the minister.

Mr LUCAS: At the present time, for example, we have rail slots going down the range from Toowoomba to Brisbane that are being held for grain traffic, notwithstanding the fact that we do not have grain traffic to put on it. Coal could pay for that run down the range straightaway, but we do support our rural producers. I want to make sure that we have viable rural industries. We are still using cattle trains because we support rural industries both sustainably and legally.

Time expired.

Rent Auctions

Ms DARLING: My question is to the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology. I have recently received a complaint from a constituent in my electorate about the practice of rent auctions. I know that, as the minister in charge of the Residential Tenancies Act, the minister is having a review and his office has advised me that he is including rental auctions in that review. Can the minister advise the House whether it is his intention to legalise that practice as part of the review?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I thank the honourable member for that question. The date of 14 February 1966 gave us decimal currency and 29 November 1966 gave us you, and this parliament is better for it. The member's very important question is symptomatic of what is happening out there in the rental market which, as I have advised this House on a number of occasions, is in an appalling state of collapse in Queensland. The private rental market, with 70,000 houses having disappeared from the under \$200 a week market over the last five years, should concern every member of this parliament just as it concerns the member for Sandgate.

In answer to the question about whether the review I am undertaking of the RTA will legitimise this practice in legislation, my initial reaction is no. I do not believe it is an Australian way to go about the business of renting a house. I believe that landlords should set a rent that they believe is what they are owed in return for the investment that they have made, and it should be left at that. At the moment there is no law that prevents real estate agencies from conducting rental auctions, but I am mindful of making sure that this practice desists.

The whole idea of the review is that we ask for views, and no doubt the REIQ will favour us with its views. But the nub of this problem is the absence of investment in the private rental market in the under \$200 a week housing market. It does not matter whether one is living in the Nanango electorate where the RSL is in hot water about rent assistance being applied to the billers. The RSL is saying that it wants to get the rent assistance off the federal government. The RSL cannot be blamed for taking that view, but it has upped the rent by some \$50 a week.

A single mother has written to the Premier saying that she is struggling to get on her feet and her rent went up by \$20 in one instance and six months later it was to go up by \$50 a week. So what was a \$190 a week house is now a \$250 a week house. She is trying to get on her feet and start a small business. Her income has not increased. Mr Pearce, the member for Fitzroy, raised an issue with me that was raised in the *Morning Bulletin* of a lady whose rent has gone up by \$40 in the last 12 months. There is no way in the world that her income has gone up by that much. She has a number of little kids, she is on her own and she is struggling to make ends meet. There is no joy in sight for her because the rent assistance that she is entitled to is not being increased.

Time expired.

Department of Housing

Mr STEVENS: My question is to the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology. I refer the minister to the annual report of the Department of Housing for 2005-06. Given that John Howard's federal government has given this government hundreds of millions of extra GST dollars, could the minister explain why 2,500 fewer households were assisted by his department during 2005-06 compared with 2001-02 whilst at the same time the average waiting time for assistance has almost doubled?

Mr SCHWARTEN: The honourable member is new to this place and obviously he has not been listening to anything that I have been saying in this regard. He has scant understanding, but he will get a briefing from the department so he will be better informed about the crisis that is befalling it. Simply coming in here and toeing the tory line from Canberra about the GST and so on will not wash in here.

The reality is that the private rental market, which he is so wedded to and that the federal government is funding, has collapsed. That is why so many people are coming onto the public housing waiting lists, which his mob has taken \$400 million away from. And he wonders why there is a waiting list. It does not surprise me that a real blue blood tory like the member lacks that understanding.

Mr Horan: You sold houses for \$175,000 and you're buying them back for \$365,000.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I know that the member is a buffoon, but he does not need to tell everybody. The truth of the matter is that—

Time expired.

CENSURE OF THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Leader of the House) (11.30 am): I move—

That this House notes the misuse of parliamentary privilege by the member for Callide and Leader of the Opposition, and censures him for his lack of commitment to upholding the high standards expected of his office and as a member of this House.

A couple of days ago I read an article in the *Courier-Mail* which involved you, Mr Speaker, that quoted the Chief Justice commenting on how great it was to get back the portrait of TJ Byrnes. As a fellow student of history, I congratulate you on returning that painting. The Chief Justice said that he discovered the whereabouts of the portrait through newspaper articles of the time, which he described as tomes of reliable journalism and reliable fact.

Can members imagine how it would feel if they were not members of this parliament and read headlines suggesting that they had been involved in roting simply because they had not bought a number of investment homes, properties or whatever over a period. Let us take, as an example, the member for Gladstone who is in exactly the same circumstance as the former member for Chatsworth. Imagine that one has only managed to scrape together enough money to buy an investment home and an ordinary home, and is then called a criminal under parliamentary privilege. Can members imagine what that feels like and can they imagine how future generations will judge those people. That is the only criteria that the Leader of the Opposition used—or misused—yesterday.

I draw the attention of the Leader of the Opposition to the statement that he made yesterday in the parliament when he said that he only managed to pay off the family home, yet only last year the investment property that Mr Mackenroth purchased was the subject of an article in the *Australian* newspaper. I believe that it was on 9 June that Sean Parnell recorded that it was lodged in the pecuniary interests register. The member was not even able to tell one skerrick of truth in that whole episode. There were, in fact, two properties and he only mentioned that he had a half share in one over that period of time. Again, there is no element of truth whatsoever.

What was Mr Mackenroth's crime? Mr Mackenroth and other members who were named had not invested in shares, housing, cattle or anything like that. I did not know that that was testament to being guilty of corruption. I think that most of the citizens that the member proudly says he is protecting would be horrified to learn that he can stand in here under parliamentary privilege and cast a smear and a slur over people in this state who have what would appear to be the means to buy extra properties or make other investments but have chosen not to do it. That is the logic of what the member is saying. It is dishonest, despicable and unworthy of his office.

Of course, there is a pattern here. This morning I heard the honourable member say that he had read this book.

Mr Seeney: Do you want me to tell you the page number?

Mr SCHWARTEN: Has the member read it?

Mr Seeney: Yes, I have. Go to page 45.

Mr SCHWARTEN: It is page 92, from memory.

An opposition member: Why don't you just table it?

Mr SCHWARTEN: No, I value it too much. It was given to me by Di.

Mr Seeney: Did you get a mention?

Mr SCHWARTEN: The member should just wait a minute. She said—

One night I received a very late phone call from Seeney, who said he had heard that I was to be in Monto the next day. When I said that was correct, he said there was to be a hi-jacking of the train into Monto as a protest about the Goss Government closing the rail line, but his advice to me was to stay well away as it could result in adverse publicity for me. He was intending to stay well away also, and leave it to the 'hotheads'. I was rather pleased that Seeney seemed to be trying at least to be helpful and thanked him for his advice. The next day, during afternoon tea at the function I was at, I decided to go down to the railway station and see how the 'protest' was going. The sight of Seeney leading the charge and getting extensive television coverage for his efforts greeted me.

The night before the member had told her that he was not going to be there. Indeed, he said that he would leave it to the hotheads. She went to the afternoon tea and bang! She was slam dunked. That is how the Leader of the Opposition treats his own people. This morning he said that he has read this book, but what did he say when he became the Leader of the Opposition? He said that he does not know what Di McCauley has against him. How could he possibly read this book and not know what she has against him? There is page after page after page of why she is crooked on him, and she has very great justification for being so.

Here we see a pattern of untruth, and of course we know about that pattern of untruth. This morning the Premier outlined what the member said about his brother, which was untrue. In her article, Rosemary Odgers says that he is unrepentant about it. The member is lower than a dingo's droppings. He comes into this place and misuses the privilege of the parliament to besmirch someone's name simply because they happen to be the Premier's brother, and then he says that it is all part of a tactic. That is what we heard yesterday.

It is all part of a tactic and a pattern—a pattern of despicable dishonesty. The Leader of the Opposition does not have the stomach, the courage, the backbone or the guts to go outside this place—he has to walk only a few steps—and shout it from the rafters. I know what the former member for Chatsworth will do with him. He sits over there with a supercilious smirk on his face. He is a prime example of a bully. He is someone who can dish it out but cannot take it. I know that the member will—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr Seeney: You used to be better than this.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I remind members of the opposition that they have made a lot of interjections in the last six or seven minutes. I am not too sure if you want me to give the member more time to speak. I ask members to desist and listen to some of what the minister is saying.

Mr SCHWARTEN: My view on this matter is that just because someone has been a member of this parliament, and a very successful one—and I am not just referring to Mr Mackenroth but to all the other people whose names were dragged through the mud yesterday—and has chosen not to invest in property, that person ought not to be subjected to such disgraceful, filthy, underhanded, despicable, slimy slurs.

Mr Seeney: Tut-tut!

Mr SCHWARTEN: The Leader of the Opposition can laugh at that all he likes, but the truth is these are people he is talking about. I say to the Independents here today that I know what this mob is going to do. The Liberals are not going to be as decent and as honest as Bob Quinn was when he condemned the opposition leader for the tactical lie. He said that the Leader of the Opposition should apologise to the parliament, the committee of this parliament said that the Leader of the Opposition should apologise to the parliament, and the Leader of the Opposition refused to do it. That is the sort of bloke he is. If I get it wrong, I apologise and I am happy to do so. I have got a lot of things wrong in my time, and I have apologised to the people concerned.

Each and every one of the Independents should cast their minds back to what happened yesterday. Where was the evidence that any of those people named yesterday deserved to have their name dragged through the mud? Where was the action that caused them to have their names besmirched and their families called into question in that regard? How would members feel if somebody else did that to them in this parliament?

I say to the Leader of the Opposition that the office he holds is very serious. He was in here this morning lecturing us about how he was going to stand up for the standards of the people of Queensland, and he told us what the people were talking about out there. I will tell the Leader of the Opposition what people tell me about him. I know what the National Party says about him. People whom I know who are rusted-on Nationals do not like the way he has behaved. They do not like the way he misuses his position in this parliament, and they do not believe it represents what conservative politics and good opposition is all about.

So, again, I say this to the Independents, especially those who have committed the cardinal sin of not investing all their money in big property, shares, investments and all the rest of it that these people say they must do to be a successful member of parliament who is not corrupt: here is your opportunity today to place on the record your dismay and disgust at the action of this person and the misuse of his position.

Time expired.

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure) (11.41 am): I rise to—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members are having a go at the previous speaker while the Deputy Premier is on her feet. Can we have a bit of respect in that regard.

Ms BLIGH: I rise to second the motion moved by the Leader of the House. At the heart of it, this motion is about the protection of the privileges of the parliament. The privileges of this parliament are enjoyed collectively and they must be protected collectively. Erskine May has this to say about parliamentary privilege—

Privilege is the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively ... and by Members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions, and which would exceed those possessed by other bodies or individuals. Thus privilege, though part of the law of the land, is to a certain extent an exemption from the general law.

Members of parliament are able to come into this parliament and make claims and assert matters and they are protected from the law of defamation. It is precisely because we enjoy that opportunity that it is called a privilege, because that is not something enjoyed by normal people outside of this House.

Parliamentary privilege, as I said, exists to protect the institutions of this parliament. Each and every one of us has an obligation to protect it, and when it is abused it is diminished. When it is abused by one member of the House, it diminishes the privileges enjoyed by every other member of this House—not just those on this side, but every single member of the chamber. The privileges that they enjoy are brought into disrepute when they are abused.

Make no mistake about it: the member for Callide yesterday abused the privileges of this House. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that yesterday was a clear and unequivocal abuse of the privileges of this House.

An opposition member: Tell us about it.

Ms BLIGH: I will be very happy to outline it. What the member did was use the protections of this chamber to launch an attack that was baseless and scurrilous and he did not have a single shred of evidence. The only evidence preferred in favour of his proposition was that the decision not to acquire certain assets constitutes a prima facie evidence of rorting. What an extraordinary grasp of the law. As much as I do not want to see these allegations repeated, I think it is important that I put on the record some of what Mr Seeney said for those who did not hear it. He claimed—

It is simply ridiculous to suggest that any former minister had no other assets besides a half share in his family home. What did he do? Did he give the money away, hide it under the bed or, the more plausible of answers, fudge the entries in the pecuniary interests register? That is the only explanation.

What an extraordinary slur on someone's character, without one shred of evidence. There was not even the merest skerrick of evidence.

But there is nothing new in the member for Callide making baseless claims that smear people's reputations without a shred of evidence. We heard the member for Rockhampton outline many other occasions when the member for Callide has taken the opportunity to do this. I remember when the member for Callide became the opposition leader and we were treated to a couple of weeks of assertions that old Jeff was gone and that we were going to see new Jeff. New Jeff was going to walk the hallowed halls of this institution and he was going to be a more dignified Jeff. We were going to see new Jeff, no longer the thug, no longer the person who would be the bully or the liar.

Mr Seeney: Mr Speaker—

Ms BLIGH: I am sorry, I apologise. That was unparliamentary. New Jeff was not going to be dishonest like old Jeff. But what we see is untruth upon deceit upon dishonesty. I respect the institutions of this parliament and I am happy, like the member for Rockhampton, to correct them when I am wrong.

What happened yesterday was the clearest demonstration yet that the member for Callide is not up to the challenge of leadership. Leaders do not lead their team down a path like this. What we will see now no doubt is a series of opposition members stand up and back the behaviour that we saw yesterday because that is what they have got to do, but I do not believe any of them liked it or want to be part of that kind of team. Do you know what? When the dirty player on the team is the captain, the team never makes it to the top of the league—never, no way, absolutely no way.

In my view, the parliament has absolutely no choice but to censure the behaviour of the member for Callide yesterday. Those who vote against this motion are voting in favour of an absolute abomination of the privileges of this House.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.46 am): What a wonderful display of mock outrage we have seen this morning. In the short time available to me, let me put on the record the actual facts of the issue that we are talking about here today and then we will have a discussion about whether it was reasonable. Let me correct some of the nonsense we have seen from the government.

What I did yesterday was look at a number of members who had made minimalistic entries in the pecuniary interests register. I said—and government members should read the *Hansard*—that there were a number of examples and then I looked at one of those examples. I did that as part of a debate about whether or not it was reasonable to believe the government that current ministers and former ministers had appropriately addressed their responsibilities to complete that register, as they need to do under the rules of this House. That is what the debate was about. It was nothing to do with the old philosophical warhorse over there who wants to turn it into a battle between capitalism and socialism and all the rest of the nonsense, but we will excuse the member for Rockhampton because we appreciate fully his philosophical background.

The point that I made, and I will make it again very clearly, is whether or not the pecuniary interests register is being treated appropriately by ministers and former ministers of the Labor government. That is the question that is very reasonable to ask.

Mr Schwarten: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. The honourable member is misleading the House. What he is saying is not true. What he said is that the previous minister had managed only to pay off his mortgage in 2004 and that is the sort of declaration we get from Labor ministers.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Speaker, given the controversial issues that have arisen over recent weeks—and given your ruling I will not refer to them—this issue is very much alive in this parliament this week. We need to address whether or not the pecuniary interests register has been properly respected and whether ministers and former ministers have met their responsibilities. That issue is very much alive. How do we determine that? The first thing we do is go to the register and look at the entries and the things that ministers and former ministers have declared, and then we ask ourselves: is that reasonable?

I would suggest that Queenslanders all over Queensland should ask themselves whether it is reasonable for a minister who has been in this place for many years—20-something years—to have a declaration such as the one that was put into the register by the former member for Chatsworth.

Procedure—Speaker's Ruling—Complaints Procedure

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Leader of the Opposition to take his seat. I warn the honourable member that there is a procedure in schedule 2 of the standing orders for making complaints concerning alleged failure of members to comply with the requirement relating to the registration of interests. I expect that honourable members will abide by the procedure laid out in standing orders and will refrain from abusing the privileges of the House.

Mr SEENEY: Are you suggesting I cannot defend the argument?

Mr SPEAKER: I call the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr SEENEY: I will keep going and see how I go. It is a reasonable question to ask in the context of whether or not the ministers have properly met their obligations. To transpose that to the accusations that the member for Rockhampton and the Deputy Premier have made is drawing a huge bow indeed. We have to ask ourselves why we have seen this sort of reaction in the parliament today. I would suggest that the answer to that is pretty obvious: because we are getting pretty close to the truth as to how far this whole affair—for want of a better word—goes within the government.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Again the honourable member is misleading the House. That is not what he said yesterday at all. What he is saying is that no-one in Queensland would believe—

Mr SPEAKER: That is part of the debate that is taking place.

Mr SEENEY: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. Why can the member for Rockhampton say that but I am not allowed to say it? Mr Speaker—

Mr SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, take your seat please. I just indicate to you that there is no point of order. Please resume your speech.

Mr SEENEY: As I was saying, we have to wonder why the government has reacted to this particular issue in the way that it has today. That is the question. As I outlined in the address I gave earlier this morning in this parliament, this parliament has a specific purpose in our democracy. It is the place where the government cannot hide. It is the place where the government has to come every day the parliament sits and subject itself to scrutiny. It has to come here and be able to withstand the attacks and the challenges that it is our role to bring to this place.

Mrs Reilly interjected.

Mr SEENEY: That is the role that the opposition plays no matter who sits here. The role of the opposition is to challenge and to question the government, and the government should be able to come in here and withstand the challenges.

Mrs Reilly interjected.

Mr SEENEY: If we did not have parliamentary privilege that role of challenging and questioning would be blunted and thwarted by people such as the noisy backbencher up here who wants to talk all the time about suing anybody who raises an issue. Parliamentary privilege exists so that the opposition can raise issues on behalf of the people of Queensland without being subject to those sorts of puerile nonsense threats. That is why we have a parliament. That is why this parliament exists. That is why the system has developed as it has over centuries and that is why I will stand here and advocate its protection. It means that corruption cannot flourish in the government unnoticed. It means that ministers cannot accept undeclared loans from businessmen without scrutiny.

Members opposite can run, but they cannot hide. They can dodge, they can use the mechanisms to delay the day, but sooner or later they will have to answer the questions. Putting that day off will not blunt our enthusiasm to find the answers to those questions. We will do that and I will do that as Leader of the Opposition. I will do that despite however many names the Premier calls me, despite his mock outrage and despite the histrionics of the member for Rockhampton. All that does is provide encouragement. All that does is give a very clear signal that there is something there that they want to hide. The fact that we are debating this motion today makes me a damn sight sure that there is something there to find, and we are going to find it. We will use the mechanisms of this House for the rest of this week, next year and years to come—justice may well be slow but it will be sure. We will get to the bottom of this.

The government can move as many censure motions as it likes. The Premier can call me all the names he can think of. He can go back to his schooldays and get all the schoolboy taunts, but it will not matter; we will still come in here and ask the questions that he does not want asked. We will use this parliament as it should be used to expose the corruption that is rife within his ranks, to get to the bottom of that stench of rottenness that is becoming even more apparent to everybody in Queensland. That is our job on behalf of the people of Queensland. That is what they pay us for. It is a very important role. This parliament does not exist just to provide cushy jobs to a lot of useless union officials who could not earn a quid anywhere else. This parliament exists for a very specific purpose.

Mr Gray interjected.

Mr SEENEY: It exists—and there is a good example, the member for Gaven. He would not earn a feed anywhere else but he was swept in here on the tide because it is the only place that he could get a featherbed.

Mr SPEAKER: I ask the member to return to the substance of the motion.

Mr SEENEY: I enjoyed taking the interjection from the member for Gaven, a great example—

Mr SPEAKER: I ask the member to return to the substance of the motion.

Mr SEENEY: In the limited time I have remaining let me assure the Premier that we are going to have a lot more of these debates because I am going to keep asking the questions. I am going to stand up here and I am not afraid to look him in the eye. He can scurry out of here every time that I deliver a two-minute statement, as he does because he is not game to sit there and look at me. However, I will be raising these issues until we get to the bottom of the stench of corruption that we know is there and that members opposite know is there because they protest too much.

Time expired.

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—Lib) (11.56 am): I find it incredible that in the last week of this parliamentary sitting year the member for Rockhampton, with all the pressing issues that confront Queensland, would want to waste the time of this House on a clearly politically motivated stunt—in fact, what I call an ambush motion. He moved the motion just before question time and then put another motion to allow it to be debated straight after question time. I do not know whether the honourable member's ancestors were bushrangers, but he has certainly inherited the tendency to want to ambush.

What is this about? The Premier and those opposite sat down and watched TV last night and saw what a terrible day they had in here last night and decided they had to come around and try to get some decent TV coverage today. That is what this waste of the parliament's time is all about: trying to get a TV story up tonight because they looked so stupid last night. In fact, in a government that has the smell of corruption around it, all it wants to do is distract and deflect. What is easier than making personal attacks and spreading innuendo about people on this side of the House to try to muddy the waters? It is those opposite who smell. Their government is the one that has crisis after crisis. All this is about is wasting the time of this House trying to make a political statement.

Yesterday we saw the Premier make an absolutely scurrilous attack on the member for Caloundra.

Mr Seeney: Totally right.

Dr FLEGG: It was absolutely scurrilous and was made under parliamentary privilege. Then what sort of hypocritical words did we hear this morning in the tirade that he made? We heard 'these people have families', 'repeat it outside', and 'unequivocally apologise'. If the cap fits, wear it. The Premier ought to get up and apologise in this place or repeat his statements outside.

I heard comments from the Premier in relation to the pecuniary registers of those on this side of the House—in fact, comments in relation to my own. He does not bother to get any facts right. It was a wild stab in the dark which misled the House. He has no interest in coming in here and stating things as they are or even being remotely accurate. He wants to smear this side because he has to deflect the smell from the other side.

I can tell the House that we do not have any problem providing honest and full pecuniary registers on this side of the House. We are happy to do it. But we do not write the cheques. We do not do the deals. We do not sign the contracts. The accountability and importance of exposing these registers is with those on the benches on the other side—the government benches.

Mr SPEAKER: I ask the member for Moggill to take his seat. I warn the honourable member that there is a procedure in schedule 2 of the standing orders for making complaints concerning alleged failures of members to comply with a requirement relating to the registration of interests. I expect that honourable members will abide by the procedures laid out in the standing orders and will refrain from abusing the privileges of the House. I call the member for Moggill.

Dr FLEGG: This debate is about accountability. It is not, as the member for Rockhampton tried to say, about trying to make an issue of whether his colleagues on the other side were lousy savers and had nothing. It is to discuss whether people were making contrived arrangements in relation to the register.

Privilege—Speaker's Ruling—Referral of Member to Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee

Mr SPEAKER: I ask the member for Moggill to take his seat. I have warned honourable members that there is a procedure laid down in the standing orders for complaints of nondisclosure of interests which should be used. I made a statement to this House last night to that effect. The conduct of the member in raising matters in this way, in contravention of the standing orders and my rulings, risks bringing the House into odium or ridicule and constitutes a prima facie breach of privilege. The member stands referred to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee. I call the member for Moggill. The member's time has expired.

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.02 pm): This debate is about protecting the standards and privileges of the House. This is about ensuring that the community has some respect for parliament. The community expects parliament to behave in an appropriate way. That means that the privileges of the House should not be abused. We should not have information put to this House that is scurrilous, without any foundation or without any fact.

We had 10 minutes from the Leader of the Opposition and not one fact did he put on the table. My challenge to the Leader of the Opposition is this: if he has any information about any minister or former minister or member or former member who has not put appropriate material in their return that he table that information in this House in the next 12 hours. If he cannot do that then what he has demonstrated is that he is nothing more than a mud-slinger.

My challenge to the Leader of the Opposition is very simple. My challenge is this. In my view he has the next 12 hours to put the material on the table of the House. Tomorrow is our last sitting day this year. If he has any material he should put it on the table of this House.

What did he do? He tried to get out of what he said. If we go back to the *Hansard*, what did he say? He said, 'Fudge the entries in the pecuniary interests register.'

Mr SEENEY: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. You would not allow me to discuss what I said yesterday. You sat me down.

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

Mr BEATTIE: My concern about what has happened here is that the Leader of the Opposition has deliberately maligned people, without any foundation or any facts, on the basis of their longevity. Let us look at the reality here. If we look at the return for the member for Nicklin—and I am sorry to raise this—we find that he is in the same position as those referred to by the Leader of the Opposition before. What has he done? If ever there was an honest man in this place it is the member for Nicklin. He should be treated in the same way as Terry Mackenroth or anyone else.

The only issue is longevity. What about the former member for Robina. The former member for Robina was here for almost 17 years and yet he lists only a—

Mr SEENEY: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Once again, you would not allow me to engage in that sort of debate.

Mr SPEAKER: Before you got to your feet, I was just going to also remind the Premier that there is a procedure in schedule 2 of the standing orders for making complaints concerning the alleged failure of members to comply with the requirement relating to the registration of interests. I expect that honourable members will abide by the procedures laid down in the standing orders and will refrain from abusing the privileges of the House.

Mr BEATTIE: That is exactly right. I am not making any allegation against anyone. That is the difference between the Leader of the Opposition and me. What I am saying is very simply this. The fact that the former Leader of the Liberal Party was here for 17 years and he had only a joint interest in a property means nothing. It does not mean that he acted improperly. I would use those complaint procedures if they were necessary, but none of them are because no-one has behaved inappropriately. The only person who has alleged inappropriate behaviour is the Leader of the Opposition, and what a disgrace it is. He has named people in this House. He has abused privilege. He has brought the House into disrepute. He is not fit to be the Leader of the Opposition.

I make the point again. The Leader of the Opposition was making allegations on the basis of ownership of property and longevity. I am saying in terms of the former member for Robina that there is nothing wrong with having served here for almost 17 years and listing only a joint interest in one property. There is nothing wrong with it. Nor is there anything wrong in relation to the return of the member for Nicklin. This is a disgrace.

I make this point and make it clearly. If the Leader of the Opposition has any evidence of any improper behaviour then he should put up or shut up. He has an opportunity to go to the CMC in the next 12 hours or table any information on the floor of this parliament. He could not even tell the truth about his own speech that he made to the Press Club. He misrepresented it in the House yesterday. He could not lie straight in bed. The reality is that—

Mr SEENEY: On a point of order. That is offensive and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr BEATTIE: I withdraw. I make this point. If the Leader of the Opposition continues down this road he will simply bring the National Party into more disrepute, if that is possible, which electorally is beneficial to us. My concern—and this is why this has been done today—is to protect the privileges of the House, to make sure that this House is regarded appropriately in the community and to protect the innocent reputations of decent people. If we follow the logic of the Leader of the Opposition then something was wrong with the returns of a string of people including Independents, members of the Liberal Party, members of the National Party and members of the Labor Party, which is absolute nonsense.

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12.07 pm): We have to look at why the government has moved this motion and ask: is it factual and is it reasonable? We have been limited when discussing why it is not factually based because of the rulings that the Speaker has made with regard to the register of pecuniary interests. We also know that this is in fact totally unreasonable.

The Premier protesteth too much. He is not interested in the rights and privileges or the standing of this parliament. He is interested only in his own image. He saw the television last night and he did not like what he saw so he thought they would have a stunt and move a motion of censure against the Leader of the Opposition and use their extraordinary numbers—59 out of 89 members—to push it through. It will be seen for what it is—a tactic.

If we put this to the reasonableness test we will see that this Labor government never moved a motion of censure against Gordon Nuttall. In fact, they recalled the parliament and moved special legislation to wipe his slate clean of his sins. Then they went further. They changed legislation that had stood the test of time for 100 years to make it legal to lie to parliament.

We have to look at this motion before the House where the leader of the government, Peter Beattie, has moved a censure motion against the Leader of the Opposition. The Premier is simply pulling a stunt. Those opposite have no respect for the real standards of this place and the fact that this is a House of debate. We need to bring issues of concern to the parliament.

There are many issues of concern about the whiff of corruption in this Beattie Labor government. We know that there are issues that are currently being investigated by the CMC surrounding former minister Gordon Nuttall and we understand that there are issues that are currently before the ethics and privileges committee which we are not allowed to discuss because of the ruling in that regard.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Maroochydore, I ask you to resume your seat. You indicate that I have ruled that they are not to be discussed because of my ruling. The ruling was specifically in terms of the standing order which all of the members of this House have agreed to. If you wish to change that standing order, it is up to you as a member of parliament to bring that up. So I would ask you to respect that my ruling was pertaining to standing order 271 and it is clear in that standing order.

Miss SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr Speaker. In the previous debate over 12 months ago the matters were also before the ethics and privileges committee, but I understand that with regard to this issue currently before the ethics and privileges committee there is a ruling that you are referring to in the standing orders and we cannot refer to that particular matter. Where is the reasonableness test? When this government gets into trouble and when its integrity is brought into question, it pulls a stunt and takes the time of this parliament when there are many other issues before the parliament with regard to legislation and seeks to besmirch the reputation of the Leader of the Opposition.

Dr Flegg: And the mover isn't even here! He's not even interested in his own debate! He can't even be bothered to be in the chamber!

Miss SIMPSON: That is right; the Premier has gone. Most government ministers have gone, because they know that ultimately they have 59 seats in this House. They will take their vote. They will besmirch the reputation of the Leader of the Opposition, but they will do it by the fact of the arrogance of their numbers. This is a government that said that it was going to rule as if it had a majority of one. We have not seen any evidence that this government has the humility and respect for this parliament.

Mr Copeland: We saw what they did in question time.

Miss SIMPSON: We saw what happened at question time; I take that interjection. We have a situation where the government, by weight of its numbers, is able to give whatever time it likes for what are essentially ministerial statements during question time.

The state opposition—the formal opposition in this place—may only get seven or eight questions in question time, but the government by weight of its numbers is always able to put through what it wants to do. In this case, it did not want to have a question time. But, if we truly respect the rights and privileges and the role of this parliament, the need for question time to be available to the official opposition is one that we must see as being sacrosanct. When we have a government that wants to abuse its rights in this place, it becomes even more important that the role of the opposition is not overridden by the fact that the government has these numbers.

Time expired.

Hon. DM WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (12.12 pm): The Leader of the Opposition raised the question of whether any former ministers have received loans from business. I advise the House that I have never received any loans or indeed any money payments whatsoever from business. He also inquired about my pecuniary interest register. I would like to advise the honourable member that I have no shares and I have no investment properties and own no land other than the property that I live on. Furthermore, it is not my intention to acquire such assets while I remain a member of this House. It accords better with my own personal values system not to be encumbered by such assets. Personally, I feel more comfortable making a decision about a project if I am not a player in the economic game of which that project is a part.

I expect that I could easily enough purchase a few shares, watch the business pages for a fluctuation, sell them at a profit, buy a larger parcel and then roll on. But if I were to take time away from my family and constituency work to do that, given the nature of the electorate that I represent, I would feel as if I was moving myself into a world far removed from that of the people who sent me here. I do not wish to do that. I came here to promote a philosophical position which is that everyone should have an equal opportunity for a happy and fulfilling life. If I had wanted to make money, frankly I would not have come here at all. I would have spent my life practising law instead.

Consider what lies behind the assumption that the opposition leader is making. The assumption is that if you are not getting rich out of being here there is something wrong with you. He stands for the 19th century view that parliamentary service is an additional activity that might be undertaken by a gentleman of property either to add lustre to his business activities or to pursue some eccentric interest

he might have to assist someone else or some other cause. That is not my view of it. My view is that the business of parliament is to change the world for the better and my personal preference is to do it full-time untrammelled by competing personal economic objectives.

The opposition leader's presumption that if you do not have a swag of property on your pecuniary interest register then you are an object of suspicion entitled to the presumption of guilt makes no sense unless you understand that his concept of parliamentary service is that 19th century one. From his point of view, the parliament is merely the extension of the club where the interests of property and the propertied elite are looked after by people who resemble them. But frankly I am not here for the propertied elite that he represents, though I have respect for the business community and commit to appropriate support for their endeavours. First and foremost, I am here for those who deserve a larger share of society's justice. It has never seemed to me that I would advance that cause by preoccupying myself with the accumulation of assets. I make no apology for not fulfilling the member for Callide's stereotype. But, when you think about it, his suggestion that austerity is actually a sign of hidden opulence is really, really bizarre.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (12.16 pm): I rise to participate in the debate. At the outset I want to put on the parliamentary record the reason why the Independents and One Nation members voted against the earlier motion for the Premier to be further heard. The reason was simple: within 45 minutes of that proposed motion we were going to have a debate about the very issues that were raised in question time. That was the reason we chose not to allow the Premier to be further heard, because he could raise those very issues during this debate we are having now.

I want to take a few moments to remind members of the motion that we are debating. It states—

That this House notes the misuse of parliamentary privilege by the member for Callide and Leader of the Opposition, and censures him for his lack of commitment to upholding the high standards expected of his office and as a member of this House.

I also want to take members to some of the actual words that the member actually used that are recorded in the official Hansard record. He said—

It is simply ridiculous to suggest that any former minister had no other assets besides a half share in his family home. What did he do? Did he give the money away, hide it under the bed or, the more plausible of answers, fudge the entries in the pecuniary interests register? That is the only explanation. There is no way in the world that anyone could be expected to believe that people who have been in this place for that length of time have nothing to declare, yet that is what we are being asked to believe.

Whether one is a politician or a member of the community, I believe the issue of one's integrity, one's credibility and one's reputation is more important than the assets that they might own or more important than the assets that they want to tell the world about.

Since the matter was raised yesterday and during this debate I have not heard one skerrick of evidence brought forward in this chamber or in the media to substantiate the allegations of corruption that have been raised this morning and about debating issues of accountability. There has not been one skerrick of evidence to corroborate the perception that unless members have a significant asset register they are all suspect of being corrupt or that a smell hangs around. My challenge to the Leader of the Opposition is to produce the evidence. Every member of this House would have an instance that they can recall where a member of the community has come to see them and raised serious allegations against another member of the community. Every member has considered those issues. But there is a dividing line in our community as to what is simply an unfounded allegation or an allegation that has some semblance of substance and credibility.

I stand here today as an elected member of this parliament and say that I have not heard one credible piece of evidence to support the allegations that were made yesterday by the Leader of the Opposition. It is disappointing that this debate is happening in the last sitting week of the year when we have so many other more important issues to raise!

I note that the Leader of the Liberal Party said that they have been ambushed. How the heck can they say that they were ambushed? When I heard those comments yesterday, I checked the parliamentary record. I spoke with my colleagues about the ambit of parliamentary privilege. This very morning in this place we spoke about the limits of what we can say in this House and get away with but if we step outside we cannot get away with. I honestly think it is a disgrace that we are able to come into this chamber and intentionally attempt to discredit people who are not here and who can rely only on a citizen's right of reply to respond.

I think it is a jolly disgrace that we are having this debate today. I urge the Leader of the Opposition to not treat it as a joke and to produce some evidence. I listened to his comments yesterday. I thought, 'Okay, there must be something here,' because members do not come into the House and raise a significant issue about a person's reputation—whether they are in this place today or out in the community—unless there is some evidence to substantiate it. Today, I have not heard one credible piece of evidence to substantiate the allegation—not one. I think that reflects on the Leader of the Opposition. It reflects on everyone who is going to support the opposition's stance.

I urge members to vote in support of the motion, because there is no credible evidence before us today to do otherwise. I do not believe that it is the role of the opposition to come into this House and to say, 'We want to debate issues of accountability and our role is to challenge the government without evidence to support that allegation.'

Hon. RJ MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (Minister for State Development, Employment and Industrial Relations) (12.21 pm): We all enter this House with different backgrounds. One of the great things about our parliamentary system is that people can enter this place regardless of their race, their gender, their religion, their age and their income. Yesterday, my honourable friend the former member for Inala was mentioned because he was light on in his entry in the pecuniary interests register. There was no evidence of corruption on the part of my honourable friend raised in this debate and there was none raised in the debate yesterday—none at all. There was just the great defamation. My honourable friend from Inala can greatly enlarge his wealth immediately if the Leader of the Opposition does just one thing: walk out of that chamber and say it outside, because my friend the former honourable member for Inala will take legal action against that.

Mr Wallace: Go outside and say it.

Mr MICKEL: The Leader of the Opposition should go outside and say it.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr MICKEL: The honourable member for Warrego interjects. He was born stupid and has been going backwards ever since. The essential point is that if a member's contribution to public life is measured by what they have when they leave it and if a member is a crook if they have no assets when they leave public life, then the greatest crook of them all was Sir Robert Menzies. When Menzies left the federal parliament, having served as Prime Minister for 16 years and having served the electorate of Kooyong for 30-odd years, what happened? He had no assets whatsoever. The Liberal Party had to set up a trust fund to buy him a house.

Mr Schwarten: Winston Churchill was the same.

Mr MICKEL: I take that interjection, because my honourable friend is a great historian. The point is that if the Leader of the Opposition is going to judge people by their assets, I will return to the circumstances of the former honourable member for Inala. He raised four daughters. Anybody who has raised four daughters is not going to have a great number of assets to list in the pecuniary interests register. One of the greatest contributions the former member has made is to put one of those four daughters into this place with the help of the people of Inala.

There is no evidence at all from the Leader of the Opposition. That is why he should be condemned utterly. I am not serving in public life because of some envy I have of people who have assets. In fact, in the previous parliament I stood up and defended a Liberal Party candidate for Ryan when the *Courier-Mail* attacked him and photographed his house at Sunshine Beach. I asked then and I ask it again today: what has that got to do with his ability to serve in public life? In relation to my friend from Inala, who had no assets to list, what has that got to do with his ability to serve the people of Inala and to serve the people of this state?

We are committing a great travesty in this House if we besmire the integrity of people in this place without producing one scintilla of evidence. Some members opposite who I know have integrity—and I count among those my friend from Southern Downs—know what I am talking about. The highest standard is required because the public thinks we are crooks. Why do the members opposite allow people, such as the temporary Leader of the Opposition, to come into this place and besmire people? The public, who think we are crooks, gain some pleasure from that. The Leader of the Opposition needs to have a higher standard than that. He is not fit to be the Premier of this state. But worse, he is not fit to be the Leader of the Opposition.

The Leader of the Opposition should be censured because he has not produced one skerrick of evidence against Dean Wells, against Henry Palaszczuk, against Lesley Clark—against all of the other people he vilified, defamed and slandered in this House yesterday. The Leader of the Opposition is a disgrace to the high office he holds, because he could be one of the people who are chosen by the people to lead this state. He has no standards, because he waves away the truth all the time.

Time expired.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (12.26 pm): This motion would have some credibility if it was based on consistency, this motion would have some credibility if it was based on parliamentary precedent and this motion would have some credibility if it was not muddled by the external factors that have clouded this government over the past few days. In five minutes time we will see this government use its numbers to score a political goal and reach a political end in this place.

When it comes to affecting the privileges of members of this parliament and the way members vote in this parliament which could impugn the reputation of a member of this place or could be used as a precedent not only in this place but also somewhere else, anything that we do in this place should be done very, very cautiously.

Government members interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Those members opposite who squeal have not sat in this place like I have for the past 17 years and heard some of the things that have been said. I did not like those comments. They may be regarded by the members opposite as being akin to the comments that the Leader of the Opposition made about government members. But I also regarded comments that have been made in the past as a reflection on coalition members. Yet the coalition did not move a motion in this parliament such as this one.

Today, the Premier proffers the notion of parliamentary integrity and parliamentary standards. This is the man who, as opposition leader, walked into this place with a dummy tied around his neck. Yet he carries on about parliamentary standards. This is the man who, on 15 February 1994 as the member for Brisbane Central, came into this place and besmirched the reputation of the now member for Robina. He accused the member of all sorts of nefarious and corrupt activities in the time that he was a member of the Gold Coast City Council. The member for Robina was able to demonstrate clearly to the member for Brisbane Central that what he said had no basis in fact. It took him almost six months to do that—from 15 February to 18 October 1994. What did the member for Brisbane Central—the now Premier—do in this place? He stood up from where the honourable member for Keppel now sits and would not recant and would not apologise for something that was clearly wrong. All he did was say, 'I give some additional information that has been supplied to me.' If anyone read that additional information, they would know quite clearly that the member for Brisbane Central was caught red-handed. The Premier is inconsistent and completely hypocritical.

What about the absolutely appalling allegations that were made in this parliament in 1996 or 1997 by Jim Elder, the then member for Capalaba and Deputy Leader of the Opposition, about the making of snuff movies on the banks of the Brisbane River. Despite the calls not only from the government but also from the Police Service and the crime fighting bodies for the presentation of evidence, it was never, ever brought forward. But they never recanted. They kept the lie going on. The government of the day did not move to censure the opposition for the abuse of the privileges of this place.

The Premier's motion would have some credibility, some basis in fact, if it were actually built on consistency. But it is not built on consistency in any way; it is built on hypocrisy and a blind desire to create a smokescreen out there to cover the government, whose credibility is being questioned at the moment because of the actions of one of its former members. We only have to look at what has been said by government members in the last 12 months. They stood there vowing and declaring the integrity and credibility of their then colleagues—now former colleagues—only to see them now walking away and jettisoning those former colleagues when it suits them because they are affecting the credibility and the perception of the government of the day.

Mr Speaker, you can rest assured that when this government is in trouble you will get not only a red herring but also a school of them. Today we have a school of red herrings from this government as it is seeking to use the pretence of the abuse of parliamentary privilege to construct some sort of virtuous argument, and in no way can it do it. If this motion were based on credibility and consistency I could support it. But, quite frankly, based on what I have seen from members opposite who are in very high positions in this place, I cannot support it. The precedent that this will set, through the use of this government's extraordinary majority, to seek a political end against the opposition will be sadly used in all jurisdictions.

Division: Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

AYES, 58—Barry, Beattie, Bligh, Bombolas, Boyle, Choi, Croft, Cunningham, Darling, English, Fenlon, Foley, Fraser, Gray, Hayward, Hinchliffe, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Jones, Keech, Kiernan, Lawlor, Lee Long, McNamara, Mickel, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, O'Brien, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Pratt, Purcell, Reilly, Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Struthers, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Weightman, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Male, Finn

NOES, 25—Copeland, Cripps, Dempsey, Elmes, Flegg, Gibson, Hobbs, Hopper, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, Lingard, McArdle, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Nicholls, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey. Tellers: Rickuss, Dickson

Question resolved in the **affirmative**.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Gardasil

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure) (12.38 pm), by leave: I am pleased to advise the House that common sense has prevailed and the cervical cancer vaccine Gardasil is to go on the National Immunisation Program Schedule. It will be available in April next year for girls aged 12 to 13. There will be a catch-up program for girls aged 13 to 18. For women aged 18 to 26 the vaccine will be available for two years through their GPs. I think this is a great outcome for Queensland and Australian women and a very good outcome for the breakthrough science by the Australian of the Year, Ian Frazer.

EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 31 October (see p. 274).

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (12.39 pm): I rise on behalf of the opposition to contribute to the debate on the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2006. At the outset let me say that the coalition will be supporting the passage of this legislation. It has been widely consulted, over some time I think it is fair to say, with the major interest groups in the education sector. In my consultations with those interest groups there has certainly been no major concerns highlighted. It has the support of those interest groups. There are a couple of minor issues that have been raised that I will refer to throughout this debate, but they are certainly not of any magnitude to warrant any concern with the entire bill.

The Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2006 was introduced on 31 October 2006. The main objectives of this bill are to facilitate the introduction of the new Queensland Certificate of Education, or the QCE as it is widely known, and the administration of student accounts that are required to support the QCE arrangements. This bill amends the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005 so that if a person has been convicted of an indictable offence and the conviction is not a spent conviction that person cannot continue as, or become a member of, the Teachers Disciplinary Committee. The bill also amends the Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 2003 so that the procedure for the collection and provision of course survey data to the minister by a non-university provider offering an accredited course is aligned with national practice.

I start my contribution with the first of those objectives, which is the QCE and the student accounts. The Queensland Studies Authority was established under the Education Act 2002. It is currently authorised to issue Senior Certificates and Certificates of Post-Compulsory School Education.

With recent reforms to education and training in Queensland—those reforms have also been supported by the coalition and we continue to support those changes to our system—it has been necessary that changes be made to current certification arrangements so that the broader range of students' achievements and their vocational training can be recognised. The new QCE, which will replace the Senior Certificate from 2008, is an achievement based qualification awarded to students who have satisfied a set standard of learning, including literacy and numeracy.

It is fair to say that there has been some debate about the standards that are being achieved in our Queensland schools. In fact, there has been a national debate regarding the standards in our schools around the country. We should continue to have that debate to ensure that what we are doing in our schools and what we are teaching our students will deliver the outcomes that we want. It is also fair to say that it is a great improvement to see the increase in the number of students undertaking vocational training while they are still at school.

The QCE allows a broad range of learning to be taken into account when certifying a student's education than that allowed by the current Senior Certificate. For example, the new arrangement permits a student's learning achievements from vocational education and training, university, workplaces and the community to count towards the QCE. That is essential because growing numbers of students are undertaking vocational education while they are still at school. We need to recognise that there is a broad range of opportunities available, including some students participating in the university sector and learning subjects from university.

At this point, I recognise the announcement made this morning by the minister regarding Hendra school specialising in the airspace industry. That will be a valuable development for that school and, indeed, for education state-wide.

A learning account will be maintained for all senior students. Those accounts will operate like a bank account of students' achievements. Students will achieve credit for their senior learning and a QCE will be awarded once the student attains at least 20 credits. Some students may complete year 12 without receiving a QCE. Their learning accounts will remain open and they can continue to attract credit by undertaking additional learning. Once those young people achieve 20 credits, they will then be awarded the QCE. The QCE commenced operation in all Queensland senior schools this year for students currently in year 10. The new certificate will officially replace the Senior Certificate from 2008.

One of the concerns that has been expressed relates to the practicality of the implementation of the QCE and whether or not the software to be used for recording information for the QCEs will be ready on time. My understanding—and I stand to be corrected because it is not something that has been widely discussed—is that the software will not be ready until some time in the middle of next year. If that is the case, could the minister explain how the information will be recorded, how it will be transferred to the package, and the workload that will be put onto supervising staff.

The bill provides the legislative basis for the introduction of the QCE. The bill amends the QSA Act authorising the issue of QCEs and statements of results by the QSA. The rules of eligibility and procedures for issuing the QCE and statements will be prescribed in the QSA regulation. The bill also

consolidates the student account provisions from earlier legislation and incorporates new provisions to enable the use of student accounts to be extended for the purposes of certification generally and to enable the QSA to obtain enrolment and results information for all students striving for a senior school certificate in Queensland.

As I said, stakeholder groups have been widely consulted in relation to this bill. Obviously, as the shadow minister I am in contact with all relevant industry groups whenever legislation is introduced. The groups that we have been in contact with have largely been supportive of the bill.

The Association of Independent Schools has provided us with some information. The association states that its members do not have any major comments to make about the bill, as they were involved in consultations during the drafting process. The main concerns at the drafting stage—and continuing concerns—relate to confidentiality of information held by the QSA. Part of its original submission states that section 21ZB places a confidentiality requirement on a range of Public Service employees in the department, or the employees of a provider or an authorised agent of an employee of an authorised agent or an employee of the authority. This implies that a large number of people will potentially have access to data held about independent schools, including aggregated data. The ISQ has no concerns with the disclosure of aggregated data across the state but does have concerns if sector data is to be disclosed to large numbers of people, particularly if there are no guidelines in place regarding how that data might be used.

The association states that this does not appear to have been addressed in the final bill. I ask the minister to comment on that and tell the House why the concern was not addressed once it was raised. The minister may be able to provide to the House an explanation that will allay those concerns and explain why changes were not made at the drafting stage.

The association also expressed concerns with regard to the way that the bill deals with visa students. Division 5 of the amendment relates to the fact that schools must not open a student account for a student visa holder without the holder's written agreement. What is the rationale for treating visa students differently from domestic students? Will this mean that schools will have to keep two separate sets of information and follow two different processes for certification? The AISQ's preferred option is for all students to be treated equally. It states that it did not receive any response to the questions regarding how visa students will be treated with regard to senior certification. Again, I ask the minister to cover that in his summing-up and explain why that difference exists.

The AISQ said that schools made some general comments which may be of interest. The changes have increased workload and time implications for staff in the processes involved in tracking students. That is a legitimate concern. There have been wide-ranging changes within the education sector. Not only the independent or non-government schools but also the government schools are struggling with some of that increased workload. That is a legitimate concern that we need to be cognisant of when we make these changes.

While it is clear that young people can continue to accrue points and attain a QCE after they have finished school, the schools raised the question of whether it is possible for a student to achieve a QCE before they complete year 12. Another point was that the record-keeping processes are reliant on internet access and concerns were expressed about the inequities of some students having more available access than others. The schools feel that there is a risk of disenfranchising some students. The schools also said that the public reporting of the number of QCEs achieved within a school's cohort has the potential to carry more importance than perhaps it ought to when some schools experience large numbers of students successfully engaging in apprenticeships and traineeships or even full-time work. Care needs to be taken that these successes are celebrated on an equal footing.

I ask for the minister's response to those points. The concern regarding the internet is a legitimate one, because there is no equality of access or access speed across different parts of the state. It has only been within the last month that I have been able to get either ISDN or ADSL at my own home within the Toowoomba City boundaries, and that is hardly a remote location. So there are people across the state who are severely disadvantaged. While there have been advances in access to broadband and upgraded speeds, that is not necessarily the case in all locations.

There are really no major issues from the independent schools. The two most critical concerns for those schools are, firstly, that there is confidentiality of sector data and, secondly, that schools do not have to bear the extra costs in administering QSA requirements. Those extra costs are not just a problem for the non-government schools; they are a very major problem for the government schools as well.

Representatives of the Catholic Education Parents and Friends Federation raised only one point with me. They do not have any problems at all with the three objectives stated, but they do want parents, whether custodial or not, to have the right to access the concerned student's accounts, as they have the principal responsibility for the student's progress. This raises a really important point. We need to reinforce the fact that parents do have a role to play in the education of our students. It is not the sole

responsibility of the schools to ensure that what students are doing is correct. We need to have a partnership with our parents within the school community to make sure that the results we are getting are what we would hope to achieve.

It is a difficult area though, because there are circumstances—and I acknowledge this quite clearly—when there may be privacy issues or family issues. We have to address this with caution, but we have to make sure that when there are legitimate concerns parents are able to access information as required.

The second part of the bill regards the Teachers Disciplinary Committee. The Teachers Disciplinary Committee, or the TDC, is established under the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005. The QCT act empowers the Queensland College of Teachers to oversee the registration, monitoring and professional regulation of Queensland teachers. As the disciplinary arm of the QCT, the TDC's principal functions are as follows: conduct hearings and make decisions about disciplinary matters referred to the committee by the college or PP&C committee; authorise an investigation if it believes further information is required before it can decide a disciplinary matter; consider on a show cause basis whether a teacher who has been convicted of a serious offence should have their registration or permission to teach cancelled or some other disciplinary sanction imposed; and review on a submission basis the continuation of instances of immediate suspension or registration or permission to teach.

Currently, the QCT act does not permit the disqualification of members of the committee if they have been convicted of an indictable offence that is not a spent conviction under the Criminal Law (Rehabilitation of Offenders) Act 1986. The bill will now disqualify a person from becoming or continuing as a member of the committee if convicted of an indictable offence and the offence is not spent.

The explanatory notes to the bill explain that this amendment is consistent with the level of criminal history that the minister may seek on a proposed or existing member of the QCT board. To support the implementation of this amendment, the bill also provides, firstly, a specific power for the minister to seek from the Commissioner of Police a written report about a person's criminal history and a brief description of the circumstances of a conviction mentioned in the criminal history; secondly, that consent from a proposed member is required before a criminal history is sought; and, thirdly, that if there is a change in the criminal history of a member of the committee the member must, unless the member has a reasonable excuse, immediately disclose the change to the minister. The explanatory notes provide that a person cannot become a member of the TDC if the person refuses to consent to the minister requesting a report about the person's criminal history.

With regard to the amendments related to the Queensland College of Teachers, the AISQ stated that it supports any matters which protect children and reinforce the integrity of teachers and of those who make decisions about teachers. I think we would all agree with that statement. We want to make sure we have a bulletproof system in place so that only those people who the community would accept as legitimate people to be taking those positions are in fact there. I certainly support the amendment within the bill.

The final objective of the bill regards course survey data provided to the minister. Currently, part 4 of the Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 2003 sets out the requirements for the accreditation of courses by non-university providers. I believe there are 23 of those non-university providers around Queensland. Section 59 of the HEGP Act requires a non-university provider offering an accredited course to give the minister course survey data for the course relating to the day prescribed under a regulation. The bill will require a non-university provider offering an accredited course to give the minister course survey data for the course relating to the most recently ended year—that is, the previous calendar year—by the date prescribed under a regulation.

It is important to note that the amendment seeks to align the collection procedure with national practice, and I think that makes sense. As far as I understand, the information that will be required is in fact information that is already collected for provision to the federal government. As I said, the coalition supports the passage of this bill. I think by and large the amendments are sensible.

There was a concern raised in the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee report that was tabled in the House yesterday. The normal procedure is for the report to be tabled and if there are any concerns highlighted within that report the relevant minister would then respond. That normally happens before the bill is debated. In this case, that has not happened. I would ask the minister to address those concerns raised by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee *Alert Digest* regarding clause 50, which is the proposed new section 95, regarding the provision of transition arrangements. Specifically, point 5 on page 1 of the *Alert Digest* states—

The committee has found that transitional regulation-making provisions can give rise to a range of issues, and has commented adversely on many such provisions. The committee notes that the s.95 regulation-making power is broadly framed, and authorises the making of regulations which are retrospective. However, the committee also notes that any transitional regulations made under s.95 expire, together with s.95 itself, 1 year after commencement of the bill's provisions.

The *Alert Digest* goes on to state at point 7—

The committee notes that proposed s.95 ... confers broad transitional regulation-making powers, and that regulations made under the clause may be retrospective. However, the committee also notes that it does not constitute a "Henry VIII clause", and further notes that express "sunsetting" provisions are included in it.

The opposition has consistently raised concerns with retrospective legislation or regulation, and we will continue to highlight that principle and continue to be concerned about it. In the time that I have been in the parliament, which is not as long as others but it is now approaching six years—

Ms Struthers: You would have a lot of assets now then.

Mr COPELAND: I have got a couple.

Ms Struthers: Six years, six houses.

Mr COPELAND: No, not six houses unfortunately. In my six years in parliament, there has been a growing tendency for the government to include some retrospectivity in legislation that is brought before this parliament, and I think we should be wary of that. The opposition has raised it time and time again as an issue of concern, but it continues to happen. Because of the time frames involved in the tabling of this report and the debate that we are now having with this bill, I would ask the minister to address those issues raised by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee.

Sitting suspended from 12.59 pm to 2.30 pm.

Debate, on motion of Mr Copeland, adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Currumbin Valley, Hideaway Development

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport) (2.30 pm), by leave: I wish to add to a response I made to a question from the member for Moggill earlier today. I referred to a meeting in my office that occurred on 3 October attended by representatives of Devine, Friends of Currumbin and the Gold Coast City Council. In the response I gave this morning I said that Devine was represented at the meeting by its legal representatives. To be clear, its legal representative from the law firm Deacons did put the case on behalf of the proponent. There was also present on behalf of Devine Ms Kerri Hruza, who I am advised is in fact an employee of Devine. Ms Hruza did not make a substantive contribution at the meeting and it is in the interests of completeness that I advise the House of her attendance.

EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed.

Mr COPELAND, continuing: Before the lunch break I was starting to make some general comments about the bill, the effects of the bill and the education system in general. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of students undertaking vocational training, for example, at schools, and I think that is very valuable. That has happened during the time of a number of governments in Queensland from both sides of the chamber. It will continue to happen because we in the coalition certainly support that. We have supported it in the past and we have supported government moves to encourage students to stay in school earning or learning, as it has been called, as part of the Education and Training Reforms for the Future that were passed some years ago.

We have supported those all the way. They have been sensible changes. We have always had some concerns about how that is implemented, especially the delivery of the learning or earning provisions to students in some of the more remote locations or socially disadvantaged areas. It is fair to say that in the last 12 months or so there have been some growing concerns from people in the sector that the focus has shifted away from the delivery of those education and training reforms. We need to make sure that the government does not drop the ball and that we do, in fact, continue to ensure that those students do have access to all of the possibilities so they do not slip through the net. They need to have access to further schooling or further training regardless of where they live and what is available to them. Travelling costs, for example, are a significant issue for some students in my own electorate. This may result in the opportunities for those students in P-10 state schools to access a range of training options being restricted. We need to make sure that those students are not left behind.

It has been a worthwhile development. Members of my own family—nieces and nephews—have been undertaking school based apprenticeships or vocational training while still at school. One niece and nephew finished year 12 this year. One has been studying welding and he is going to do that as an apprenticeship now that he has left school. One of my nieces has been doing a lot of work in the

hospitality area at different locations around Toowoomba. I think that is terrific. We need to recognise that we do have to get the balance right and that offering purely academic strains of learning is not appropriate for all students. This bill certainly puts in place a way of recognising that.

It has been suggested to me that some of the aspects of the QCE may be a little bit too broad. That is something that we will have to keep under watch to ensure that the information that is being included is relevant and is of a particular standard so that the criteria is not too broad for inclusion in the QCE.

Everyone recognises that there is a severe skill shortage right around Australia, particularly in a couple of states—and Queensland happens to be one of those—both in the professions and in the trades. All of us recognise that we have to address that. It is good that we as a parliament overwhelmingly have recognised that the trades are a valuable thing to study or take up as a future career. University is obviously appropriate for some students but not for others. We need to value all of those equally.

It is commendable that in this term of parliament the government has brought education and training under the one department and minister. In the past, I certainly have argued that that should be done. We need to have very close cooperation between education and training to ensure that the streams are available to students and to ensure that we do not get a sort of silo mentality between the two. That will allow us to deliver the best possible education and training to all students and to make sure that the most appropriate stream is available to different students.

There is provision in the bill regarding the syllabus and how it is delivered. There has been a debate about the quality of the syllabus and the curriculum here in Queensland, and I think that is a debate we need to have. I think there are some legitimate concerns regarding the quality of our syllabus and curriculum here and we need to continue to have that debate. I know that national leaders are having a debate regarding the teaching of history in schools, and the Premier made a statement this morning regarding that. The front page of today's *Courier-Mail* has a huge story on it, but the Queensland government will not be introducing history as a stand-alone subject. I personally think—and the coalition thinks—that is a mistake. We said at the last state election that we would be implementing it as a stand-alone subject. I still think that is the appropriate way to go. The Premier delivered a ministerial statement this morning saying that having a stand-alone subject is all about rote learning, and that is just rubbish. The former New South Wales Premier, Bob Carr—

A government member: Julie Bishop's prescription.

Mr COPELAND: It is not Julie Bishop's prescription. I have sat down and spoken with Julie Bishop about this. It is also not a prescription for absolute rote learning. That is not what she or the federal government, as I understand it, are prescribing. No-one is saying that it should be all about rote learning. In my view there should be a recognition that the teaching of history and Australian history is important to who we are, where we have come from, some of the mistakes we have made and where we will go in the future. There is certainly an argument for that to be taught. I understand that we differ on that. The government does not believe that that is the case. It believes that it should stay within the SOSE curriculum. There is no doubt that some schools are doing it very well. I have no argument with that at all. Some schools obviously deliver that curriculum very well and teach history as a part of SOSE very well, but some schools do not. We need to be honest enough to recognise that that is the case.

We are trying to get a standard across-the-board that can be delivered in every school regardless of where it is and regardless of the students, so every school can have access to that sort of subject. That is a debate that will continue. There are people on both sides of the political divide who sit on both sides of the argument, and that will continue as well. It is a debate that is valuable to have and it is something that will continue. The partnership between Julie Bishop and Bob Carr to make it an issue shows that there is an agreement across the political divide, but there is also disagreement across the political divide.

It goes further than Australian history. There are other areas in which we need to ensure that the quality we are delivering is the best possible. There is a debate as to whether we need more defined outcomes in the syllabus and curriculum. I think that is a legitimate argument that we need to have. There is a growing concern in the community that we are not achieving the required targets. I know the QCE is to report that students have met an agreed level of numeracy and literacy. We need to make sure that is being delivered. If honourable members look at some of the stories that have been around in recent weeks and months, they will see that literacy and numeracy standards—how effectively we are equipping our students with those skills—are a concern in the community. There is no question about that.

I honestly believe that we need to improve those skills. School by school there will be different results. Some schools are doing very well, but, to be brutally honest, some schools are not doing as well. We need to lift the standard right across the board. That is a debate that the coalition will continue

to engage in. We think it is too important not to debate those issues. The federal government has come into the debate regarding Australian history. Personally I think the debate needs to go far further than that. In recent times there have been a lot of articles regarding those issues. These issues are of legitimate concern to people, particularly parents.

The coalition has certainly supported the reforms that we have seen in the education system in Queensland in recent years. We will continue to support good reforms, but we will also continue to outline concerns where we have them. For example, we have done that with regard to the prep year. We will continue to do that. As far as the bill before the House goes, I think there has been a lot of consultation. There is broad support for it. The coalition will certainly be supporting its passage through the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Copeland, adjourned.

TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (2.40 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend particular acts administered by the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads, and for other purposes. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Second Reading

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (2.40 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

This bill makes a number of changes to transport legislation. The most important and noteworthy amendments are amendments which will introduce a number of initiatives aimed at improving road safety in Queensland. Members will recall that the Queensland Road Safety Summit was held earlier this year. A broad range of government and community groups were represented at the summit and explored key aspects of road safety in relation to the Queensland road toll. Following the summit a comprehensive program of initiatives to improve road safety in Queensland was announced. I am very proud to be able to introduce this bill today as it contains legislation relating to a number of those initiatives.

The first of these initiatives relates to the introduction of random roadside drug testing. The use of drugs can significantly impair the skills and functions required for safe driving. In 2005, alcohol and other drug use were identified as a contributing factor in 114 deaths on Queensland roads, or almost 35 per cent of the Queensland road toll. Victoria introduced a saliva based random drug testing scheme in December 2004. The latest Victorian figures indicate that in excess of 21,000 tests have been carried out with one positive tested driver for every 49 tests conducted.

The Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety—Queensland, CARRS-Q, is also undertaking research into the incidence of drug driving in Queensland. The first part of the CARRS-Q study conducted in Townsville found that 27 drivers tested positive to one or more illicit drugs out of 752 saliva samples supplied by drivers at RBT locations. This is 3.5 per cent of drivers or almost one in 28 drivers. The second part of the CARRS-Q study was conducted in Brisbane and on the Gold Coast. Of the 2,000 specimens taken during this research, 1,152 samples have been analysed to date. Of those samples analysed to date, approximately one in 23 drivers have tested positive to an illicit drug.

Currently, a police officer must suspect that a driver is under the influence of a drug by observing behaviour that is inconsistent with the result of a breath test. The police officer will then arrest the driver so a blood specimen can be taken for analysis. The bill amends existing provisions of the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 to allow for the introduction of a random drug testing scheme based on a relatively quick collection and analysis of a specimen of saliva. It also amends the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 to provide police with the power to stop a vehicle and administer a saliva test.

Drivers who take illicit drugs and drive will essentially be detected and penalised in a similar way drink drivers are currently detected and penalised. Drivers will be screened at the roadside. In the event that a positive test result is returned, indicating the presence of the active ingredient of a drug, the driver will undergo a second screening test. The roadside screening test will take between three and five minutes to achieve a result. If that result is positive the second test will be undertaken and this test will

take about five minutes to administer. The time periods needed to undertake the two saliva tests may vary depending on how long it takes the person to provide a sufficient amount of saliva for the test. If they are unable to supply a saliva sample for the second test a specimen of blood may be required.

The devices will only detect the active ingredient of the drugs when they are active as an impairing influence. They will not detect drugs taken days or weeks earlier. Drivers who refuse to comply with the request for a saliva specimen may be charged with failing to supply the specimen in the same way that a driver who refuses a breath test can be charged with failure to supply breath. All positive tests identified will be confirmed by laboratory analysis. Drivers will only be charged on the basis of laboratory analysis confirming the presence of an active drug.

The bill proposes that it will be an offence to drive with the presence of any drug prescribed by a regulation. Initially it is proposed that a regulation will prescribe the following drugs: cannabis, or THC; methylamphetamine, or speed; and MDMA, or ecstasy. The introduction of the random drug testing program will provide another effective tool for police to use in the detection of those people who are driving on Queensland's roads with illicit drugs in their bodies and putting the safety of others at risk.

The second group of amendments focus on young drivers on Queensland's roads. The government's road safety efforts have resulted in the Queensland fatality rate declining by over 40 per cent in the period 1993 to 2004. This is a significant decrease and the government is working hard to continue this trend. During this same time period there was a 26 per cent decrease in young road user fatalities. However, young drivers aged 17 to 24 years are still 2½ times more likely to be killed in crashes compared to drivers over 25 years. In 2005 alone there were no fewer than 106 fatalities in Queensland as a result of young driver crashes. This figure amounted to 32 per cent of the state's road toll in that year.

To further address the road safety concerns associated with this age group, over the last 12 months the government has been seeking community views in a number of ways. These include:

- launching a discussion paper titled 'Queensland youth—on the road and in control' inviting comment on 22 young driver safety initiatives;
- convening forums made up of expert panel members in 10 communities around the state;
- conducting market research with the community; and
- carrying out an online e-forum for driver trainers using expert panel members.

There was overwhelming interest received from the community, which included, 13,000 downloads of the discussion paper, the receipt of about 2,000 submissions, 550 people attending the forums and more than 20,000 hits to the dedicated web site. As a result of this extensive statewide consultation a package of young driver safety initiatives was announced in August this year.

The current bill proposes an amendment to the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 to enable regulations to prescribe rules about driver behaviour and licensing of young drivers. For learner drivers, it is proposed that regulations will:

- reduce the learner licence age to 16 and extend the minimum learner licence period to 12 months;
- require learner drivers to record 100 hours of certified supervised on-road driving experience—to facilitate this, learner licences will be valid for 3 years; and
- require motorbike learners to hold a provisional car licence for 12 months prior to gaining a motorbike learner licence.

The bill will also provide for regulations to be made implementing a range of positive measures for provisional licence holders. It is not proposed to change the minimum period in which young drivers must drive on a provisional licence, namely three years in the majority of cases. However, the legislation will provide the basis for a two-stage provisional licensing system under which those in the first stage, P1, will be subject to tighter restrictions. It is proposed that the following measures will apply to provisional licence holders:

- the compulsory display of P plates;
- peer passenger restrictions between 11 pm and 5 am for holders of a first stage provisional licence who are under the age of 25. This initiative means the driver will only be able to carry one non-family member passenger aged under 21 during these times;
- high-powered vehicle restrictions for first and second stage provisional drivers under 25;
- restricting all mobile phone use—including hands-free, bluetooth accessories and loud speaker functions—for first stage provisional licence holders under 25. This restriction will also apply to learner licence holders;
- restricting mobile loud speaker functions for supervisors and passengers of learner drivers and for passengers of first stage provisional licence holders under 25;

- late night driving restrictions for young drivers returning from a licence suspension or disqualification or driving under a good driving behaviour licence;
- requiring drivers holding a first stage provisional licence for 12 months to pass a hazard perception test to progress to a second stage provisional licence; and
- requiring provisional and open licence holders under 25 who have been disqualified to recommence at the first stage provisional licence.

The amendment also ensures that regulations providing for these young driver initiatives can be declared to not be unlawful discrimination on the basis of age for Queensland's Anti-Discrimination Act 1991. As members can appreciate, these are comprehensive and significant reforms directed at young drivers in Queensland. The reforms are nevertheless appropriate, balanced and necessary given the overrepresentation of these road user groups in road fatalities and crash statistics.

The bill also contains amendments to cater for technology related to fixed speed cameras. Fixed speed cameras will expand the existing mobile program to enable effective enforcement and deterrence of speeding, which is one of the principal causes of fatalities and casualties on Queensland roads. I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of my speech in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Specifically, the bill will amend the evidentiary provisions in the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 to allow for the potential use of technologies such as induction loops and piezo strips to be used in association with fixed speed cameras.

Since its inception in 1997, the Mobile Speed Camera Program has delivered significant road safety benefits. Specifically, the program has been evaluated independently by the Monash University Accident Research Centre. The latest evaluation results indicate that during 2005, the Mobile Speed Camera Program prevented 3,095 serious casualty crashes within two kilometres of the centre of speed camera zones.

The introduction of fixed speed cameras will build on the proven success of our Mobile Speed Camera Program and will help in preventing speeding on Queensland roads.

The bill also contains a number of amendments not related to road safety which I will now turn to.

The Transport Infrastructure Act 1994 is to be amended to improve the administration of railway corridors when a rail sublease is surrendered by a railway manager. A rail sublease is surrendered by a railway manager (such as Queensland Rail) in situations such as when the rail corridor is being transferred to another rail operator or the railway is being converted into a tourist attraction and control is transferred to a tourist operator.

At present, when a railway manager surrenders a sublease and a new sublease is entered into by the new railway manager, any existing registered leases will rank in priority to the new lease to the railway manager. Most other existing registered and unregistered agreements and rights for access by adjoining property owners, public utility companies and owners of infrastructure across the railway will lapse and need to be renegotiated.

The new provisions enable agreements and rights under a rail sublease to continue automatically when the sublease is surrendered. This will reduce the need for both the State and the adjoining property owners, public utility companies and owners of infrastructure to renegotiate these rights, which have often been in place for long periods of time.

The new provisions also ensure the appropriate priority of interests are retained where a new railway sublease is subsequently registered, but there are existing registered interests and unregistered rights in relation to the land.

The Transport Infrastructure Act 1994 is also to be amended to require the Registrar of Titles to record on the title any new permission granted to a local government to build and operate a local road on rail corridor land. This will introduce consistency with State-controlled roads built on rail corridors, which are already recorded on title.

The Transport Infrastructure Act 1994 will also be amended to remove any doubt that Queensland Transport (representing the State) is the owner of rail land for certain provisions in the Integrated Planning Act 1997.

The Transport Planning and Co-ordination Act 1994 is to be amended to clarify Queensland Transport's guideline making power as a referral agency under the Integrated Development Assessment System.

The Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994 is to be amended to clarify that a driver authorisation can be amended immediately by the imposition of a condition in circumstances such as where a taxi driver or bus driver has committed driving offences or has been charged or convicted of a disqualifying offence.

The Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994 is also to be amended to clarify that medical fitness requirements apply to existing holders of driver authorisation, as well as applicants. This clarification removes any doubt that Queensland Transport can require current holders of driver authorisations to provide evidence of their medical fitness to continue to hold that authorisation.

A number of minor administrative changes are also being made to the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994. These changes:

- provide that the amendment or renumbering of driver disqualifying offences is immaterial, so as to ensure that serious child-related offences continue to be considered disqualifying offences;
- provide that the chief executive of Queensland Transport may approve forms for use under the Act; and
- replace the terms "school children" and "pupils" with "school students" to reflect the terminology used in the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 and provide whole of government consistency.

The Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 is to be amended to broaden the definition of "disqualifying offence" to include similar offences committed outside Queensland. At present, there is no specific ground in the legislation to refuse an application or to discipline the holder of an existing accreditation or registration where the person is convicted of an offence outside Queensland. In cases where an offence has been committed outside Queensland, the department currently relies on the general ground that the refusal to grant accreditation or registration is in the public interest.

Although the 'public interest' ground can currently be relied on, the amendment will make the process clearer for applicants and accredited persons, as well as making it easier for the department to take action where a disqualifying offence was committed outside Queensland.

Minor changes are being made to the Tow Truck Act 1973 in relation to disqualifying offences to make the terminology consistent with the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 and to correct a cross-referencing error.

The bill includes amendments to the Tow Truck Act 1973, Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994, Transport Operations (Passenger Transport Act) 1994 and Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 to allow the Commissioner of Police to monitor changes in criminal history information on a daily basis for persons authorised, approved or accredited under those Acts, and to enable the Commissioner to provide that information to the chief executive of Queensland Transport.

The provisions are modelled on similar provisions in the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000. At present, Queensland Transport conducts checks on those persons that it authorises, approves or accredits in relation to their criminal history to ensure they have not been charged with or committed any offences that would disqualify them from holding positions of trust in the community (for example, bus drivers, taxi drivers, marine licence examiners and tow truck operators). Those checks are currently done at the time of application and through regular manual follow-up checks with the Queensland Police Service. These new provisions will allow an electronic exchange of information on a daily basis so that the police can provide the Department with the latest information on all new charges and convictions. This new regime of daily checks will ensure that all persons authorised, approved or accredited under transport legislation continue to be suitable to do their jobs. It will significantly increase the department's ability to ensure greater security and protection for the community, especially in cases that involve children and other vulnerable members of the community.

The Transport Infrastructure Act 1994, Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act 1995, Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994, Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994 and Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 are to be amended to assist the prosecution of transport offences by facilitating proof of the date when an alleged offence came to the complainant's knowledge. This change will not prevent a defendant from challenging the evidence in the complaint, in which case the prosecution may need to call further evidence to prove the point.

Finally, the Maritime and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2006 is to be amended to correct a cross-reference.

Mr Speaker, the introduction of this bill, along with other work arising from the Road Safety Summit, continues this Government's commitment to making a significant impact on the road toll in Queensland. Earlier in the year the Premier announced 'campaign 300' to signal our intent to reduce the road toll. This bill is a key plank in this campaign and I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Johnson, adjourned.

NUCLEAR FACILITIES PROHIBITION BILL

First Reading

Hon. GJ WILSON (Ferry Grove—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy) (2.50 pm): I present a bill for an act to prohibit in Queensland particular nuclear facilities, and for other purposes. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Second Reading

Hon. GJ WILSON (Ferry Grove—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy) (2.50 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

This bill is aimed at protecting the health, safety and welfare of the people of Queensland by banning nuclear facilities including uranium enrichment plants, nuclear power stations and nuclear waste sites in Queensland. There are no sound economic or environmental reasons to be considering nuclear power or nuclear waste dumps in this state. The Queensland government has been very clear in expressing strong opposition to nuclear power stations and waste dumps, preferring to pursue clean coal technologies and renewable energy and gas as a more strategic and economically sensible option for Queensland. The state government passed a motion on 7 June 2006 opposing any nuclear reactor or nuclear waste dump in Queensland and maintains the current policy position as it applies to nuclear enrichment, energy generation and waste disposal in Queensland. The current policy reflects community concerns about potential environmental and human health impacts and weapons proliferation.

On 9 June 2006 the Premier wrote to the Prime Minister seeking an assurance that the Commonwealth would not use its powers to impose nuclear power stations or nuclear waste dumps on Queensland. However, on 21 November 2006 the Commonwealth released its draft report titled *Uranium mining, processing and nuclear energy—opportunities for Australia?* This report maps a path forward for the introduction of a nuclear industry in Australia. Under the Howard government, Queensland communities now face the very real threat of becoming home to nuclear reactors and a dumping ground for dangerous nuclear waste. The Commonwealth government has made it clear that it intends to push ahead with a plan for nuclear power despite community concerns about dangers to the environment and the overall safety of the community. The Nuclear Facilities Prohibition Bill 2006 reflects community angst about the potential environmental and human health impacts of nuclear facilities, the association with weapons proliferation and the risks posed by waste transportation and disposal.

The proposed legislation sends a clear message to the Howard government that Queensland does not support a nuclear industry. The bill prohibits the construction or operation of nuclear reactors and other major facilities in the nuclear cycle other than uranium mining and exploration. Specific exemptions to the prohibition apply to nuclear materials used for research and medical purposes and for the operation of nuclear powered vessels. The bill specifies that a generating authority under the Electricity Act 1994 does not authorise the connection of a generating plant to a transmission grid or supply network if a nuclear reactor is used for or in connection with the plant. New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia have or are proposing to introduce legislation having similar effect. I seek leave to have the remainder of my second reading speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

To enhance the objectives of the bill, third parties have standing to bring proceedings for enforcement and restoration of land where an offence is committed, similar to the Nature Conservation Act 1992.

Nuclear installations and uranium enrichment are currently prohibited under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth). However, in its response to the Report, the Commonwealth Government seems to be positioning itself to introduce a nuclear industry as a mechanism of responding to climate change.

While the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 currently empowers the Commonwealth environment minister to approve nuclear dumping, it currently bans uranium enrichment and nuclear generation. Accordingly, the Commonwealth Government would first need to amend the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 if it was to permit uranium enrichment and nuclear generation.

If the Howard Government wants to use its Commonwealth Government power to override the strong position of Queenslanders, in the way that it did in relation to its industrial relations reforms, this Government will make sure Queenslanders have a chance to have their say.

If the Commonwealth Government adopts a position in support of allowing the generation of nuclear power, uranium enrichment or the creation of nuclear dumping facilities, then we will put a plebiscite to the people of Queensland to ask them whether they support the location of such facilities in their state.

The Howard Government may not want to listen, but we want to make sure Queenslanders are given the chance to be heard.

We will let the people of Queensland decide.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Copeland, adjourned.

EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from p. 728.

Mr HINCHLIFFE (Stafford—ALP) (2.54 pm): I rise in support of the Education Legislation Amendment Bill. Most significantly, the bill provides for the introduction of the Queensland Certificate of Education or, as I am sure it will become known, the QCE. Those of my colleagues who share my interests in the internal history of the ALP will understand a reservation about using this abbreviation for anything associated with broadening educational opportunities.

Some casual observers might suggest that the QCE will replace the old Senior Certificate, but this would be a gross misreading of the legislation. When it is first issued in 2008, this new senior secondary qualification will be much more than a record of schooling achievement. As the minister put it in his second reading speech, it is a passport to work, training and further learning. These changes and these student accounts that are created by the legislation provide the regulatory environment for the government's commitment to earning or learning, and in recognising the importance of the policy I commend the bill to the House.

While on my feet speaking to this legislation, which supports the further enhancement of the tremendous education system enjoyed by Queenslanders, I would like to comment on the debate surrounding the teaching of history. I do so from the point of view of being a failed history teacher. While I originally trained as a secondary school history teacher in the late 1980s, I went on to avoid putting that training into use in the classroom. The media debate over the teaching of history has been a creation of the federal government and its ideological bedfellows. These history wars appear to be more about attacking classroom teachers and the teaching profession generally than about a genuine discussion about curriculum. The federal education minister appears to be contemplating riding roughshod over the states in relation to the proposal to mandate history as a compulsory stand-alone subject for years 9 and 10. I strongly support our minister for education and my electorate neighbour, the member for Everton, in his resistance of this push. The proposal, like many incursions by this federal coalition government into the states' public policy areas, appears to be shoddily done and driven by an ideological commentariat and the Sydney morning talkback callers and hosts.

The Premier was quite right to reject this approach during his ministerial statement this morning. History is not a collection of dates. It is not indeed the simple or simplistic narrative that Julie Bishop might hope it is. I do not want to be part of cobbling together a so-called history curriculum which might meet the requirements of the federal minister. I can imagine a couple of lessons a week for the year 9s and 10s in our schools where the coherent curriculum—the course work where our history, the world's history and the societies and environments which created them are dissected and discussed—is put on ice or perhaps just thrown out in favour of this Aussie quiz show mentality. I am proud that I got 25 out of 25 on page 2 of today's *Courier-Mail*, but I am much prouder that my rounded, thematically based historical lessons and genuine understanding of issues in Australia's history will allow me to discuss the context and impact of each of the events, people and places mentioned in the quiz that we saw on page 2. Sound positive educators share my opinion.

During the last sitting week I had cause when discussing World Teachers Day to quote from the Mount Alvernia College principal Vicki Ward and her comments in the college newsletter. I have cause to do so again. Ms Ward wrote in reference to the federal minister's proposal—

Julie Bishop, the current federal Education Minister, wants Australian history taught as a narrative. This implies a story. Whose story? For example, 26 January 1788 is the date on which white settlers arrived on our fair shores. What would a student be required to do with this bit of information? Take it at face value and learn it off so that she could reproduce it in a test of facts, or examine this event from many points of view? Were they invaders, migrants or even refugees? One cannot go very far before running into a multitude of narratives. What were the narratives of the English authorities off-loading their society's problems onto unsuspecting Aboriginal society or of the 'problems' themselves, or the people sent to guard them, or the Aboriginal people whose land and resources they commandeered? What were the consequences of this event for everyone concerned right down to the present day? Whose narrative is the definitive story of our national beginnings?

This reflection on how history teaching would need to address the original question of this nation's European history underlines the inadequacy of the ideological attack on teachers and teaching in our schools. Ms Ward went on to comment—

The other thing that irks me is the big stick approach—funding will be cut off if schools don't comply. To my mind, the threat to cut off funding if the government line is not toed is hardly the way to operate in the democracy supposedly celebrated in our history!

I join the Premier, the minister for education and, I hope, the whole of this parliament in warning the federal government to back off from this childish and fundamentally flawed approach of bullying the states to roll out an ill-considered history curriculum change just because Andrew Bolt or Alan Jones are worried about a few future quizmasters. I prefer better future citizens with a more rounded understanding of our history, society and culture.

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (3.00 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2006 as a member of this parliament who has completed their senior schooling within the last decade. As such, I can readily appreciate the importance of secondary schooling in the development of young people.

The provisions of this bill facilitate the introduction and administration of new education and training certification arrangements in Queensland, namely, the introduction of the Queensland Certificate of Education—or QCE—to replace the Queensland Senior Certificate or the Queensland Certificate of Post-Compulsory School Education. The QCE is described as a broad based school qualification awarded to young people, usually at the completion of year 12, who have achieved a significant amount of learning at a set standard and meet certain literacy and numeracy requirements.

As I understand it, the intention of setting down these broad sets of standards of competency is to provide prospective employers and higher education institutions, such as universities and colleges of technical and further education, with a clear indication of the type of skills and the knowledge base that each student has achieved. The proposed legislation providing for the QCE will establish the quality and quantity of education and training that students must achieve in order to receive a senior qualification, including learning that takes place outside school. The QCE will record achievement in a broad range of learning environments, including learning in a traditional classroom and vocational education and training that will contribute towards the final level of achievement of a student's senior qualification.

The rationale behind introducing the QCE is an attempt to increase the percentage of young people completing year 12. Thus, students will be required to be actively learning or earning until they turn 17. The QCE will recognise a much wider range of learning options, which will include academic subjects, vocational education and training, employment, community learning and even introductory university subjects.

The implementation of the QCE is a soundly conceived proposal. That there is an emphasis from educational authorities and governments across Australia for students to remain in formal education beyond year 10, or turning 16 years of age, is also a positive step as long as those learning outcomes of students will be enhanced by spending that time at school. If a student's capabilities are more suited to commencing vocational education programs or another type of practically orientated training, these opportunities need to be facilitated and the students supported to pursue these opportunities.

After students complete year 10 or turn 16, they have several options to meet their obligation to be earning or learning. They can stay in formal education or training for two more years, get a Queensland Certificate of Education, get a Certificate III in vocational education or higher, or turn 17, whichever comes first. There is an exemption available for young people who are working at least 25 hours a week.

In order to achieve a QCE, a year 12 student needs to have earned themselves a total of 20 credit points prior to leaving school. The QCE recognises a student's learning at school, TAFE, in the workplace and, importantly I think, in the community. This realises that not all learning occurs in the formal school classroom. Each area of learning attracts different credit points. However, a minimum of 12 credit points must be achieved through successfully completing core courses of study that include minimum literacy and numeracy requirements. Another eight credit points can be achieved from a combination of core and other types of learning, including VET courses, extension subjects and diplomas.

Until recently, the QSA maintained that a student must achieve at least a sound level of achievement in order to gain the required credit points towards the QCE. A number of educators in my electorate felt that that was appropriate, as students had to earn their QCE by passing each of their senior courses. However, at some time towards the end of term 1 this year, the QSA appears to have changed its intention with regard to this requirement and, as I understand it, now allows a year 12 student who does not achieve the required 20 points on their QCE permission to use some limited achievement results to count towards their QCE. This is a regrettable development. I understand that this arrangement has been questioned by some educators in Queensland who feel that the positive opportunity that the QCE presents to the education system in Queensland will not realise its full potential as a record of achievement for Queensland students if it is compromised by the inclusion of this provision for limited achievements to be included as part of that record.

Some educators in my electorate have described the inclusion of limited achievements on the QCE as a dumbing down of that record of education. As educators, they express the view that if a QCE were to be awarded as a record of learning and achievement, then students must pass their respective and chosen courses of study at least at the sound level of achievement. Good QCEs have to be earned and ought not be given away lightly by the QSA in the same way that vocational education certificates must be earned through demonstrated competencies.

I would like to acknowledge that there has been a high level of consultation by the QSA with school administrators and teachers. That means that there will be a smooth implementation of the QCE in Queensland. The QSA has been able to do this because it made an effort to consult stakeholders at the grassroots level—from classroom teachers, to heads of departments, to administrators and executive directors of schools. These are the people who know what is happening in our schools.

One of the most positive aspects of the QCE is that it is not a one-size-fits-all approach to learning. The QCE provides young people with an opportunity to tailor their learning experiences to suit their interests, their needs and their capabilities. At its core, the QCE is designed to represent a record of learning that will prove that the holder of that certificate has achieved a significant amount of learning at a set standard of achievement with a set benchmark in literacy and numeracy whilst still providing flexibility about what learning is undertaken, where that learning occurs and when that learning takes place. Meeting these set standards and benchmarks will generally deliver that student 20 credit points, thus qualifying them for the QCE. However, I understand that turning 17, leaving school before the completion of year 12, or a failure to earn 20 credit points before finishing year 12 will not mean that that young person will not have the opportunity to obtain a QCE. The credits earned can be banked and the student will have the ability to complete further learning in the future. A QCE can be issued when the required 20 credit points are eventually obtained.

I would like to talk about how the QCE will give schools in my electorate the opportunity to build on their already strong achievements in the area of innovation and relevant education for their students and highlight some of their areas of excellence. Tully State High School is my old alma mater and I am very proud of what that school has been able to achieve. Over 600 students are enrolled in that school. It operates commercially productive sugar cane plantations, banana plantations, cattle fattening yards and aquaculture facilities. The school of excellence project is a federally funded project. Schools from around Australia apply for funding and Tully State High School was successful in doing that. The funding received was used to develop several projects, including the aquaculture centre as part of that program's spotlight on science. The centre was created for the purpose of growing barramundi for the students to study. When the fish reach a length of about 300 millimetres, they are tagged and released into the local rivers to increase fish stocks, with the hope that information about the tagged fish will one day come back to the students for further study. Throughout the year, the fish are the centre of study of growth rates of fish under various conditions, such as different protein concentrations, different quantities of food, different frequencies of feeding and different stocking densities.

Gilroy Santa Maria College in Ingham is a Catholic co-educational institution where a great deal of emphasis is placed on the individual, with a concerted focus on academic excellence.

Mr Lucas: What an amazing name for a college, to pair Cardinal Gilroy with BA Santa Maria. They were opponents in philosophy.

Mr CRIPPS: Yes, it is. They are nice compliments, Minister. If I remember correctly, it was a merging of an all-boys Catholic school and an all-girls Catholic school. The school also offers a range of vocational education subjects. Gilroy Santa Maria College has demonstrated a commitment to academic excellence by producing a TJ Ryan medallist in both 2005 and 2006.

Abergowrie College is a Catholic boys secondary school situated in the Herbert River valley, west of Ingham. The college has been operating since 1933. The current enrolment is about 240 boys who come from centres all around Queensland and, in particular, from Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory, Western Australia, as well as Papua New Guinea and other overseas countries. The college provides a unique environment where boys participate in a structured education program. It is a full boarding school and the college provides sporting and cultural opportunities along with the curriculum.

Ingham State High School has an interesting way of motivating its students in partnership with the Beacon Foundation, the Hinchinbrook Shire Council, industry representatives and parents when it asks year 10 students to sign the 'no dole' charter during Education Week each year. The productive partnership established between Ingham State High School and the Beacon Foundation provides a focus on problems associated with youth unemployment with a series of strategies designed to assist young people with making good decisions and choices about their future. These strategies have an emphasis on the local community taking an active role in providing opportunities for young people to pursue employment and further learning in their home town.

The vocational education program at Ingham State High School is an important contributor to this goal, giving students opportunities to learn skills and enhance their employability. In the last school year, Ingham State High School offered certificate I and II level qualifications from nine different training areas. It had 231 work placement applications approved, resulting in 1,260 days of work placement completed, as well as facilitating 50 school based trainees and apprentices covering 13 different qualifications.

Four secondary schools exist outside the boundaries of my electorate but they service the communities inside the Hinchinbrook electorate. Good Counsel College in Innisfail has increased its student body population by 200 in the past 10 years and now has approximately 600 enrolments. The college has a strong record of academic subjects and has a good relationship with its local communities. It facilitates apprenticeships and traineeships for students while they are at school. Highlights for the college in recent years were four OP 1 scores in 2004, which was up there with the best in far-north Queensland.

Mr Lucas: Hear, hear! It was named after the patron saint of the Augustinian province in Australia, Our Lady of Good Counsel.

Mr CRIPPS: That is probably right, Minister. St Anthony's Catholic College is a Catholic co-educational school, situated in the rapidly expanding area of Thuringowa to the north of Townsville. The school was established to provide a Catholic education for families in that area. St Anthony's Catholic College aims to provide a curriculum that promotes the potential of all students and caters for individual difference while providing students with skills and knowledge to understand and manage themselves in their local and global community.

Enrolments of over 500 students mean that the Northern Beaches State High School is another major educational facility servicing my electorate. Students with special needs are catered for through a special education class, and that is a particularly good aspect of this school. A vocational education program at the Northern Beaches State High School is extensive and meets the changing needs of the wider community, where there is a strong demand for these skills. Interestingly, the Northern Beaches State High School also offers an Army cadet unit program.

Mr Pearce: Go the Army.

Mr CRIPPS: It is good for them. Innisfail State High School is very active in its local community and is a member of the Innisfail Chamber of Commerce. The school generally has about 750 students enrolled, although that is down a bit at the moment for obvious reasons. Innisfail State High School earlier this year was a high-profile victim of Cyclone Larry. Its buildings were very badly damaged—indeed, several were eventually demolished. I would like to thank the Minister for Education and Training and the government for responding quickly and rushing a fleet of modular classrooms into the cyclone affected area to get schools fitted and their doors open as soon as possible after that cyclone occurred so that some semblance of normalcy and routine could be reintroduced to the lives of the young people in that area.

All students at Innisfail State High School from year 12 to year 8 were able to return to school by Monday, 3 April—only two weeks to the day after Cyclone Larry hit far-north Queensland. For anyone who was in the cyclone affected area during that time and understands the scale of the destruction and the enormous logistical issues that were faced by the communities in that area at that time, it was indeed a great effort to have the doors of the Innisfail State High School open so quickly after Cyclone Larry.

While I support the bill, I would appreciate it if the minister would address the one concern that I raised in relation to the inclusion of 'limited levels of achievement' contributing to the eligibility of a student for a QCE. Other than that issue, I see the QCE as a positive step forward for education in Queensland.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Darling): Order! Before I call the member for Bundamba, I welcome to the gallery lecturers and students from the North Point College of TAFE at Bracken Ridge in the electorate of Sandgate, represented in this House by me.

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (3.15 pm): I rise in support of the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2006. I would like to talk about a new state school in my area called Springfield Lakes State School. It has a new principal, Tom Byrne; a new deputy principal, Wendy Hoskin; and the head of department—curriculum is Wendy Davis. The classrooms of this new school will be handed over mid next week to the principal. Already there have been over 350 enrolments from prep to grade 7 for next year. There has been extraordinarily strong interest in this school and the local community should be advised to enrol their children urgently to ensure a place for next year. There are 14 classroom teachers—13 teachers have already been appointed. A HPE teacher, a classroom music teacher and instrumental music teachers have all been appointed to date. There was a P&C meeting last night at the Springfield Lakes State School and 35 parents and citizens of the Springfield Lakes community attended the meeting—what wonderful support from the local community.

There is also a school garden which is terraced and has been built. I understand that they are going to call that Jo-Ann's Garden because I insisted that it be included in the school. I think it is absolutely wonderful that it will encourage the students in science and nutrition.

Mr Welford: What about 'Rod's Garden'?

Mrs MILLER: Minister, we might even call it 'Rod's school'. I think it is very good that a school garden is already in place. Our school is very grateful to the minister for providing \$15 million for a state-of-the-art Queensland government state school. The uniforms are currently being made. They are going to be in navy, jade and silver colours. Our government's commitment to the people of Springfield Lakes, Brookwater and also Augustine Heights has been very well received in our community.

Schools in the Bundamba electorate have never been in better shape—thank God for the Beattie Labor government being in power. There has been the completion of the secondary school renewal program at Bundamba State Secondary College; new and improved facilities at the Goodna Special School; completion of the science block at the Redbank Plains State School; new facilities such as an oval and a special needs unit at Redbank Plains State High School; \$500,000 spent on a new prep building at Kruger State School; and over \$200,000 spent on the new prep facilities at Collingwood Park State School.

Recently we had a fire at Goodna State School. I would like to thank the minister for public works and housing for the speedy demolition of the administration block. I would also like to thank the minister for education for his commitment in designing the new administration building in the heritage style which is in keeping with the historic nature of the school. There have also been new sports facilities at Blackstone State School; new prep facilities at Dinmore State School, which also has a new school garden; and Riverview State School has received a new oval, courtesy of the Department of Housing's Community Renewal Program.

In relation to history being taught in our schools, a partnership has been formed between the CFMEU mining division, our retired coalminers, the Ipswich Historical Society and Redbank Plains State High School to produce a kit on the coalmining history of Ipswich. These kits will be launched around Queensland soon. I thank the minister for education, who is also the Minister for the Arts, for that. We have had wonderful support from our museum in relation to this project. Each year the CFMEU and its Mineworkers Trust are solid supporters in our community of teaching local history in our schools.

Mr Pearce interjected.

Mrs MILLER: The miners have a wonderful history in Ipswich and we are determined that no matter what we will have that history remembered in our local community. We need to put something in place in relation to the Bowen Basin area as well. The Ipswich Historical Society should be commended for its leadership role in relation to our local history. Our local history teachers are doing a wonderful job in ensuring that our local students understand the great and rich history within the city of Ipswich. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (3.20 pm): I rise to speak to the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2006. This bill is primarily about facilitating the introduction of new certification arrangements in Queensland and administration of the student accounts that support those certifications—in plain English, new student report cards and how those students' school records are handled. Eligible year 10 students of 2006 will be the first to qualify at the end of 2008. This bill also amends the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005 to preclude a person from becoming or continuing as a member of the Teachers Disciplinary Committee if that person is, or has been, convicted of an indictable offence and the conviction is not a spent conviction.

Finally, it also amends the Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 2003 to align the procedure for the collection and provision of course survey data to the minister by a non-university provider offering an accredited course with national practice. Again, in plain English, it simply means nonuniversities offering accredited courses will have to adopt national practice in how they give course data to the minister.

I have mentioned the plain English translations to highlight what I believe is an underlying issue in this bill. That issue is the bureaucratisation of our children's education. My concern is that more and more resources, staff and money are disappearing into the bureaucracy while at the coalface teachers and school support staff are being asked to do more and more with less and less.

Our support workers, teachers, teachers aides and so on are having even greater tasks placed on their shoulders but given little or no extra resources with which to handle the higher workloads. The issue is highlighted by the controversy over allocation of insufficient teacher aide hours to support the Beattie government's introduction of the prep year. Recently we have seen the dedicated and compassionate professionals that make up school support staff driven to the extreme of industrial campaigning in an effort to get recognition of the impossible tasks now being demanded of them by Education Queensland.

The hands-on people directly responsible for our education, our children, and therefore securing the future of our state are struggling under tougher and tougher conditions, yet at the same time the higher echelons of the department have come up with 'student accounts' and 'facilitation of introduction of certification arrangements' and other doublespeak and gobbledegook.

There is a real need for the department to keep its focus on delivering the best possible education to our children. Of course, this needs overall administration, direction, research and so on. But it also needs to ensure that the needs of all children are properly met. I recognise the introduction of the prep year and the learning or earning drive. However, I firmly believe that for a significant number of our children the schoolyard is not always the best answer. Those children who are more suited to starting a trade or other vocational careers should be given every encouragement to do so at an early age. Times have changed, that is true, but there are, nonetheless, generations of successful tradespeople who have left school after year 10 to take up an apprenticeship with the support of block training. I believe there also needs to be much more encouragement given to employers, especially in small business, to take on these young Queenslanders and help give them a good start in life. By starting early, males in particular get in a few good years and mature a little before that silly age sets in.

I conclude by recognising the extensive consultation undertaken in the development of this bill which includes many independent school organisations, P&Cs and so on. That is very welcome. I support the bill.

Ms CROFT (Broadwater—ALP) (3.24 pm): It is my pleasure this afternoon to rise to speak in support of the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2006. This bill proposes to make amendments to introduce the new Queensland Certificate of Education. To achieve the Queensland Certificate of Education students will be required to bank 20 credit points in their individual student accounts. Of those 20 credits students must achieve, at least 12 must come from core courses of study such as senior secondary subjects traditionally taught at schools, for example English and maths. The remaining eight credits can come from a combination of core and other courses such as vocational education, work experience, university subjects or recognised certificates in areas such as music, sport and drama.

As the Queensland Certificate of Education is a school based certificate, at least one of the credits must be from core studies while the person is enrolled in school. Students who do not achieve sufficient credit points to be awarded the QCE at the end of year 12 will still be able to gain a certificate at a later date. The banking system operated by the QSA will keep a student's learning account open until they have participated in enough courses of study, training or work to receive the QCE. Only studies that are quality assured by the QSA will count towards a certificate and the QSA will continually monitor the credit allocation process to ensure that credit points are allocated in a fair and equitable way and reflect the amount of work involved and the minimum standards required.

Students will continue to receive a record of studies in year 11 and 12, now to be called the senior statement, even if they do not qualify for the QCE. The aim is to have more young people stay on and complete year 12 or its equivalent, to stay engaged in our schooling system or to be earning or learning. The system is created to be flexible, catering to the needs and aspirations of all students.

I wish to briefly comment on the fantastic work that my local high school does in building relationships with local businesses in the area to enable students to carry out their studies and also gain credit points towards a certificate in hospitality or other industry. The Coombabah High School this year signed up 55 school based trainees all completing their certificate II or higher in their chosen field. There are quite a number of students enrolled in certificate courses at school. In year 12 this year there were 113 students and 225 year 11 students completing some kind of certificate course with two students attending TAFE one day per week.

This new system that has been introduced for students is a lot different to the way it was when I went to school but it is certainly going a long way to ensuring that students are a step ahead when they are finishing school and that they get a feel for what they would like to do later in life. From all reports and from speaking with parents and students at the school, it is working very well. I am pleased to support this bill today.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (3.28 pm): It is with great pleasure that I speak to this Education Legislation Amendment Bill this afternoon. This legislation is very important and the greater majority of Queenslanders, if they have any sanity at all, will support it.

I always like to quote from my first speech in this place. One of the things that I mentioned was the importance of quality education for all Queensland students regardless of where they live, their social status or background in life or their parents' background. When one represents an electorate such as I do, there are certainly many diverse and remote situations in relation to education. I see improvement all the time in this area and we must continue with that improvement.

The main factor in this legislation is the Queensland Certificate of Education. I think this is a wonderful initiative, and it will certainly give purpose to the students as they progress from grade 10 this year into grades 11 and 12 in 2007 and 2008. The important function here is the student account, and the explanatory notes detail what this student account will entail. I think it will give students an extra understanding that this is about each particular student as they progress through these formative years of their education. More importantly, the real function is that parents and teachers will know what is going on, and further down the track when this student enters into a workplace the employers can also look at that account and find out precisely how that person performed.

Again, it comes back to individualism and the important fact that all students are different. The previous speaker spoke about the 12 core subject points, and this will also give students an opportunity to receive the Queensland Certificate of Education. They will be able to do other functions in the make-up of the other eight points. This is something that for a long time has deterred a lot of students from carrying on with their education. I cannot stress enough how important it is that students—and I mean all students—in this modern day and age complete their year 12 education. It gives them an extra opportunity in the workplace, whether they want to continue on with a tertiary education or just enter into the workforce in a different vein—maybe as a clerk, a truck driver or whatever. We are talking about equality and equality of opportunity today, and that is an important function of this legislation.

Another aspect of education that I want to touch on today is the prep year. There has been a lot of talk about the prep year over the past two or three years. It is of particular concern in my electorate in some of the smaller schools. I say here today—and I trust the minister is aware of this—that many students who go into prep next year in schools in small country towns will be in composite classes, and the teachers who will be in control of those composite classes will be in control of two new classes. That is because there will be a new grade 1 class starting next year as well as a new prep class starting next year.

It is, therefore, important that we have adequate teacher aide hours to be able to complement that teacher as he or she goes about passing on their skills to these students at this important time in the child's learning. A child starts to learn from the time it is born virtually in a family of care, and it is very important that there are no impediments to that child's education when that child starts prep in 2007. I cannot stress that enough, because there will definitely be cutbacks to teacher aide hours in some of my schools. Not only is this of great concern to the communities and the parents themselves; I know of teachers who do not want to be a part of this process in 2007 because they fear the workload will be too enormous and they will find themselves stumbling and erring on the side of professionalism so as to teach those children in a proper manner. This concerns me and I hope the department of education will address this issue.

Another area of interest today is the membership of the Teachers Disciplinary Committee. This is a very good aspect of this legislation. I have to say here today that I am not in the business of denigrating people or putting people down, but I have certainly had some very grave complaints coming to me about certain teachers within my electorate. I believe that has to be addressed by the local district officers to make certain that those people are brought to heel and made responsible for their actions in the workplace environment.

While some people like to run to the media and destroy those people before they get an opportunity to correct their behaviour, I am not in the business of doing that. But I do want to put on the record today—and I know the minister is in the House—that there are parents in my electorate who will

not tolerate it anymore. I call on some of those district officers of education within my electorate to take control of this agenda, because I assure them that if they do not I will, and that will not be a pleasant situation. I really believe that the losers here are the children in the schools. We do not want to see students move from one school to another because of the poor performance of teachers or the poor management of those classes in question. This is a pretty serious allegation that I make here today, but it is one that has become almost intolerable in a couple of schools in western Queensland.

Another issue I want to address today is acting principals. At the start of every school year, we have acting principals. Why can't principals be put into those schools at the start of the year in a permanent position? Having acting principals creates an environment of uneasiness in the school. We have a teacher who does not know whether he or she will be the principal in that school for 12 months, six months, three months or whatever. All of a sudden, we have another panel constructed to review that teacher, and after three months that teacher is pushed off somewhere else, probably in an acting capacity again.

This is a great way to destabilise education, especially in some of our one-teacher, remote schools. Those teachers want to be there, and when they do apply for the job they fall two or three down the list. It comes again to the people who understand the local environment and who know the families, the history and the culture. This is a very important aspect of remote education. On the subject of remote education, many of our one-teacher schools in western Queensland have Indigenous and non-Indigenous children, and it is very important that we have teachers in those schools, with the satisfactory backup of teacher aides, who can make certain that those children get the advantages they need as they progress through their primary school years. I do not raise this subject lightly because, at the end of the day, we are talking about the most important thing in a child's life—that is, education. The next most important thing is a good health service, and I know there will be opportunities to talk about that later.

The issue I have raised about acting principals is an important one, and I trust the departmental people will take notes for the minister on this. The schools in question—and it is not just the one-teacher schools but some of the major primary and high schools as well—go through the throes of having acting principals for 12 months sometimes, and this is destabilising for those schools because of the uncertainty factor. Acting principals cannot get involved in a passionate way with the P&C and the parents at the school, and this has a destabilising effect on the school and creates an unhealthy environment in which to educate our children.

The real issue here is that the Queensland department of education needs to look at this and make certain that those people who are responsible in district offices do their jobs properly. We have had plenty of them in acting capacities in recent times too, and I am fed up to the back teeth with it.

Mr Wallace: I lost my back teeth.

Mr JOHNSON: I have not got any either, but I will not go into why I lost mine. I know why I look like I do, but I am not too sure why you look like you do, Minister—and that is no reflection on the honourable minister either.

This is a very important and contentious issue I am speaking about this afternoon, and I hope Education Queensland from the director-general down will take control of this and make certain that we address those anomalies as the 2007 school year arrives. They need to ensure that we have teachers in those places and management structures in those district offices that will help education in remote areas of Queensland.

The other issue I want to touch on this afternoon is the absolute stupidity of restructuring the zones in Queensland Education. Looking at the Longreach district office, the Central Highlands district office and the Mount Isa and the north-west district office, it is absolute lunacy to think that those districts will run east-west. They do not run east-west. There are five schools over the range from the Longreach district that are within 10 or 50 kilometres of Emerald but come under the Longreach office. I do not know who the clown was who devised this. They must have dreamed it up one night and they did not even do their geography in coming up with that structure. I have asked the district officer in Longreach why we have this situation and they say that that is the way it has to be because this is the way it has been drawn up by central office. I say to the people in central office that if this is the best they can do they should move over and let somebody else who can fix the problem do it.

We have good people in Mount Isa. The sporting events for the north-west and central west go hand in hand with the Mount Isa and Longreach district. The operations should run north-south—Mount Isa through the central west, not from Mount Isa to Townsville or Longreach to Rockhampton. This is a ludicrous situation and one that is causing a lot of concern not only to the students in question but also to the teachers who want to be professional and work in that environment. How can a teacher at Lochington be fixed to the district office of Longreach—some 400 kilometres away—when Emerald is only about 70 or 80 kilometres up the road? The issue in question is ensuring that the schools are conforming with the districts and the regions are conforming with the regions. It is so very important for

interschool sporting activities. Those regions should revert back to what they were in the best interests of rural education, rural academia and rural sport. A lot of those children are now deprived because of the structures that currently exist at Education Queensland.

I trust that the minister's advisers will advise him accordingly on some of the issues I have raised this afternoon. I am adamant that some corrections to the attitude of some teachers in some of those schools must occur, otherwise they will be reading about it where they would not want to.

Mr CHOI (Capalaba—ALP) (3.42 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2006, a bill which I believe will improve the certification standards available to our young people attending formal schooling or entering into other vocational pursuits such as TAFE or university. I thank the honourable Minister for Education and Training and Minister for the Arts for introducing such an important piece of legislation in one of the areas I am most passionate about: education. As a parent and father of a daughter who graduated year 12 a couple of weeks ago, I am proud to give my support to the amendments that I believe will strengthen the educational framework already in place.

The Labor government has a long traditional record of education in this country. In my maiden speech I mentioned that when I was young I was brought up in the city of Hong Kong. I say to members of the House that Hong Kong is a wonderful place to visit but not to receive a fine education. Unless they are rich they will not receive a proper education.

In the year 1976 when I migrated to the fine city of Sydney my father brought me to a local state high school. I would not go in there because, considering the stunning playing field and wonderful buildings, I thought that school would be very expensive and it would not be affordable for my father at the time. Little did I know that because that school was a state school it was totally free. A few weeks after I entered that school I was injured in a soccer game and was taken to hospital. Again, I refused to go into the hospital at the time because medical services were very expensive where I was born. Again, little did I know that health services were also free. On another occasion I was spending Saturday morning doing what most Australians would do on the weekend: lawn mowing. Two of my neighbours came to have a chat with me. I asked them, 'How is this nation able to render education and health totally free to its residents?' These two elderly gentlemen—and I will never forget that conversation—said that is the legacy of Labor policy, that education and health services must be free regardless of a person's income level.

Education is important to us. Education is important to our young children. Education is important to people who are perhaps in the lower socioeconomic bracket at the moment. Education is the only way they can improve themselves and change their particular circumstances.

I take this opportunity to thank the teachers, teachers aides, administration staff and all of the many support staff working at our schools who have devoted their life and many hours of their private time as well to provide the best opportunities for our children to learn and to expand their knowledge on a daily basis. Education in Queensland schools enables our young children to adjust to the ever-changing world we live in and contribute to it. The world is changing very rapidly. I will borrow a phrase from the Premier, who usually refers to the world as a very ugly place. It is a very ugly place out there because it is changing so rapidly. At times I am not so sure how my children can follow.

When I was young children would go to their local school. They would probably get a part-time job in the local area to see themselves through college and then they might go to a local university. These days students might go to a local school, but they will go on excursions interstate. Sometimes they even take excursions to other places in the world. When they graduate they often go to a university interstate or maybe in other parts of the world. The world is shrinking and because of that we need a certification system which enables our students to go into any place in this country—or anywhere in the world for that matter—and demonstrate the education level that they have achieved. This legislation and this certification introduced by the Hon. Rod Welford will enable them to do that.

We all know that the state government is doing everything it can to assist our students. This year we introduced a \$1 billion budget to be spent over the next four years to improve the infrastructure and education standards of our schools. Out of that \$1 billion we gave \$100 million to non-state schools. We also allocated \$50 million over the next two years to improve the infrastructure of our state schools based on community expectation and to be spent on projects they would like to see happen in their school. Unfortunately, the federal government is failing our higher education sector by providing inadequate funding.

I read an article in the *Australian* dated 24 November—only a few days ago—by Verity Edwards. The article quoted Vice-Chancellor Denise Bradley of the University of South Australia. It states—

The nation's universities risk becoming academic backwaters if the federal Government fails to boost funding to the higher education sector.

University of South Australia Vice-Chancellor Denise Bradley said that, while inadequate funding for universities had been a persistent issue for 30 years, the system was getting much worse and was now threatening their credibility overseas.

She further stated that Australia was unusual in that because it is the only OECD country where per capita expenditure on higher education was decreasing. Every single other OECD country realises the importance of educating our young people, realises the importance of free education to all their citizens and so increased their funding to tertiary education. However, this federal government reduces funding to our universities.

Can I suggest to the members opposite that if they want a bright future for the young people in this state and they are really serious about education for our young people then they should pick up the phone and call their colleagues in Canberra and tell them to stop doing what they have been doing over the last eight years. The federal government has to increase the funding to our universities so that they do not have to keep relying on overseas students paying full fees to prop up our university system. I am not saying that we do not welcome overseas students; we do welcome them. I am saying that they should not be used as the means for propping up our university system.

With the indulgence of the House, can I mention the achievement of one of my local state schools. I congratulate the students in year 3 at Capalaba State College on their fantastic win at the Australian Primary School Film Festival for their three-minute conservation awareness film called *What about trees*. These students have achieved an outcome for a project that just started with an idea.

The young children had the idea to try to emphasise the importance of trees in our community. As the parliamentary secretary to the minister for environment I am extremely pleased with what they have achieved. Eight-year-old Caitlin Barbe said that the movie titled *What about trees* was all about trees. She said—

They make homes for animals, they give us shelter and they make air for us ...

I could not put it better myself. The environment is extremely important. It is pleasing to see people as young as eight years old realising the importance of our environment to our future. I am very pleased with this legislation. I once again congratulate the minister and his team on putting this legislation before the House. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (3.51 pm): I think one of the good aspects of the Education Legislation Amendment Bill is the Queensland Certificate of Education. I think it is essential that all children have the opportunity to go through to grade 12 regardless of whether they want to go to university, TAFE or into employment. It is most important that they experience secondary school right through to grade 12.

There are a lot of important aspects to secondary education. Young people learn to mix with their peers, learn to accept the discipline and rules of the school and learn to participate in the culture, music or sport offered by the school. They graduate to being school leaders in grade 12. All the grade 12s have to be leaders for the school. They may have the opportunity to be elected leaders if that is the situation at the school. They are given the opportunity not only to participate in sport and culture but also to maybe get selected in a local or regional team or state or Australian team. It is a real smorgasbord of life experience and preparation.

The most important thing is the core and basic elements of education within the school system so that young people can go into careers. Along the way it is essential that our young people are able to understand the basics. Whilst I recognise that so much is done electronically via computers it is quite amazing how many young people do not seem able to add up or quickly ascertain what something or a number of things is going to cost. Those things are important if they are going to move into business but are important for life in general.

I have always felt that a school based apprenticeships system is marvellous. It is important. It is essential that we develop a culture in our schools that each and every student is important—whether they are the dux of the school, someone doing a school based apprenticeship or someone trying their best to get through to the end of grade 12 and go out and be an achiever. It is about everybody being able to reach their potential while at the same time enjoying themselves and learning to work in a community. The young people help out with some of things that their school communities do. It may be being part of a Rotaract club or a fundraising drive on the weekend or going to visit people who are less well off than them. That is what school is about.

I think the Queensland Certificate of Education will be very good. At one of the schools where our boys went there were some fellows who just wanted to get back to the farm. It was a boarding school and they wanted to get out and get back to the farm. I think it is important that so many schools have been able to cater for those young people by providing cattle clubs and rural activities and providing those people with the skills that they might need if that is what they want to do. Along the way they could become interested in moving on to doing some form of diploma, certificate or degree that may assist them in doing things better given the challenging circumstances they will face when they go back to the farm.

I believe strongly in school based apprenticeships and spoke about them in this parliament two or three years ago. I could see a worrying trend. After that, everyone jumped on the bandwagon. I could see a worrying trend of kids being almost forced to go to uni because that was the only thing to do. They would get a degree and end up working in the drive-in bottle shop because there was no work for all those with business or arts degrees.

Some of these people would have been better off had they had an electrical or carpentry apprenticeship. With the building trade the way it is today and the mining boom it has become far more fashionable to do a trade. I was just mentioning to some of my colleagues at lunch time that 10 years ago we saw tradesmen driving around in old two-wheel drive Datsuns. Now they are all in Landcruisers and F250s. In a way it has a certain appeal for young people. There is an opportunity for them not to just become tradesmen but to actually become businesspeople.

We have seen some girls in Toowoomba win world gold medals for their refrigeration skills at the world skill olympics. For boys and girls there are wonderful opportunities in the trades and other occupations. There are also wonderful opportunities for those who want to go on to university.

In Toowoomba we have some 15 high schools. Members might say that that is a disproportionate number for the population, but it is one of the real education centres of Australia. Of those 15 high schools I think eight of them are boarding schools. Three are state high schools. Toowoomba State High School is in the Toowoomba North electorate. In my electorate there is Centenary Heights State High School and Harristown State High school, both outstanding high schools.

There was a wonderful development in the city led by Professor Frank Crowther from the University of Southern Queensland. He put together the Education Coalition. Where there is such a diversity of education—15 high schools ranging from state high school to Catholic schools to independent schools to grammar schools to church schools, the TAFE college system and the University of Southern Queensland—there is a great pool of talent amongst the teachers and school administrators. The great thing about our city is the way that they so openly and willingly share their knowledge and talents and thereby lift the overall standards within schools. The Education Coalition is a great model for other districts to look at self-improvement within their districts.

I want to pay a compliment to Wayne Beaston who is in charge of sport and recreation in our area. One of the great things for schools has been the regional sport program. There is such an array of people. So many young people in our primary and secondary schools go on to participate. For example, there is a Darling Downs athletics, squash, cross country, Rugby League, netball and cricket programs. There is a whole range of sports. The young people have the opportunity to go to state championships and then some of them to go on to the Australian championships. That sporting development within our primary and secondary schools is quite outstanding.

The thing that always impresses me is the number of physical education teachers and other teachers who give their time. Often it involves many hours after school. Often times it involves getting on the bus and going away for hours and hours to take teams to play at different venues. Often times it involves fundraising to help to get those teams away. It involves a lot of extra work for those people. The commitment is wonderful. It is great to see so many young people enjoy their sport or if they have a particular ability to achieve at a regional, state or national level. I think that is an excellent part of the education system right throughout Queensland. It really goes back to what I said about the QCEs. It is about the total experience at school. For that reason I am supportive.

I also want to mention the prep year, and many members have already spoken about this issue. In many cases parents work and therefore young people are involved in child care. There are definite ratios of one adult to a certain number of children required under legislation in order to care for them, because they are little people. At kindergarten a great amount of time is required for care and supervision of children, yet when these children go into the prep year there is only a part-time position for a teacher aide of up to 15 hours per week. That is a really serious shortcoming. If there is one group that needs the maximum support and assistance it is these littlies in the prep year. For many kids it is a difficult time. I know that they have wonderful classrooms and that the program they are going through is a play based program, so it should be an enjoyable year for them. However, it is important and one of the shortcomings is the lack of teacher aides, particularly when these children are coming from an environment where they have had the necessary number of people to look after them, and that should continue.

I want to pay a compliment to Mike Ludwig, the regional director in the area. The assistance that we get from him is just outstanding. It is the same with all of the other staff at the district office as well. We are very lucky to have those people. Phil Cook, who was the principal of Harristown State High School, is looking after the Toowoomba district now. We get great support from those people. Any little issues that we have are attended to immediately. I thank them sincerely for what they do in that regard.

I want to quickly mention a couple of issues, because I am limited in time. The Rangeville State School needs a new hall. I attend its functions at the beginning and the end of the year and it is only able to get the grade 6s and 7s into the hall. I know that it is difficult to cater for all schools, but schools like

that do need an assembly hall which can get the majority of the school population into the hall. Another school that has a small hall is Newtown State School. I want to put on the record that Newtown State School has one of the most unique and special Anzac Day services that I have ever seen. It has been continued on as a tradition by the teachers. I give great credit and accolades to the teachers who have been able to maintain this. The little kids from Newtown school sing World War II songs and make little speeches, and the way they do it is just a wonderful thing. I know that the returned servicemen and women of Toowoomba all make a special effort to get to Newtown school because it is such a very special ceremony. Ceremonies like this make us realise and understand how important schools are in our community and how important they are to young people because at the same time those young people are getting a good understanding of what Anzac Day is all about.

Most members who have contributed to this debate today have had something to say about this issue of history teaching. I strongly believe in it. Whether it is one's family, whether it is their town or whether it is their church, we all should know where we came from, how we developed, what the traditions are, what the hurdles were, what the successes were and how we can make things better. Australia has had such a short history but achieved so much in that short time when compared to other parts of the world that are thousands of years old. Look at what we have achieved since the first settlement in 1788 to become one of the leaders in the world.

There is nothing wrong with knowing the facts of our history. The facts are the truth, and that is what made us. We should know the facts of the pioneers and the facts of the discoveries of the great explorers. People today should drive over Cunningham's Gap and think about how on earth earlier generations got over there with horses through that jungle and bush to find what was west of the Great Dividing Range. How did people discover the north? Then there is the isolation of some of the early families and the difficulties that people faced. We should learn to understand about the different people who have come to Australia—the early days of the Irish making their way in Australia, the early days of the brothers and nuns who came out from Ireland and other parts to provide education to people and to develop the great Catholic education system that we have today. We should learn about the Greeks and the Italians who came here and built things like the Snowy Mountains scheme. We should learn about the Vietnamese who came here after the Vietnam War and all of that.

All of those things are what people should know. We should know our political history. It is so important that everybody who grows up knows and fully understands what happened in our nation in the 1700s, the 1800s, the 1900s and now so that they know who we are, what we are and what went before us and the great responsibilities and the great traditions and the great democracy and peace that we have—things which we should hold precious forever. We need to know and understand our history and know how different people came together, including our Indigenous people and the difficulties that they had with people taking over their land, if you like. That was how the world operated in those days. All of us should understand our history as much as we can, and that way we can continue to maintain and improve the precious values that we have.

The time that I have today is limited because of a meeting that I have to attend, but I do support the many issues that have been brought up by our shadow minister. In particular, this secondary qualification of the QCE will allow our secondary students to feel comfortable at school, to enjoy school and to be able to succeed and reach their potential.

Ms BARRY (Aspley—ALP) (4.05 pm): It gives me great pleasure to speak briefly given that my voice is disappearing to support the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2006. Of course the education legislation bill provides for the introduction of the Queensland Certificate of Education, or the QCE, which of course is a new secondary qualification that will be issued in 2008. In addition, there are a number of complementary amendments that give effect to the bill, and one of them is to enable the QSA to maintain student accounts for the purposes of certification. In addition, the bill also amends the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005 to preclude a person from becoming or continuing as a member of the Teachers Disciplinary Committee if a person has been or is convicted of an indictable offence and the conviction is not a spent conviction.

One of the issues that everyone is talking about across the most important part of the Education Legislation Amendment Bill is the introduction of the QCE. The QCE represents a significant change to the way achievements in the senior phase of learnings are certified. It strengthens the overall standards of student achievement and attainment in a wide range of learning options. Students will have a broad base from which to move into further education or training and this will be able to better signal the range of their capabilities to potential employers. This is particularly in contrast to the existing Senior Certificate, which simply records a student's level of achievement—whether it is high or low—in the recognised subjects. As the minister quite rightly said in his second reading speech, the QCE is more than a record of achievement; it is a passport to work, training and further learning. There is nothing more despairing than witnessing young people in grades 11 and 12 who battle on for the next two years who may be very good with their hands, who might be great cooks, who might be good on computers and who might be good in building getting continual failed results. You see their faces when you go to a

senior graduation ceremony at the end of every year. You can always tell the kids who have laboured in whatever it is that they have tried to do, stuck with it until grade 12 and ended up with a whole lot of Es and Fs on their Senior Certificate when in actual fact they are quite good in kitchens and good in computers.

This gives those young people an opportunity to be able to shine in those subjects and those activities in the careers that they want to eventually end up in. For employers it enables them to be able to see them at their best potential. That being said, to be awarded a QCE, a student has to have achieved a significant amount of learning to set standards, and that includes core studies either at secondary school subjects or recognised VET qualifications. Make no mistake: literacy and numeracy standards must also be met. What this means is that potential employers will have the confidence that students who have been awarded a QCE will have achieved a solid secondary senior education and are well prepared to take the next step into employment, training or further study. It may also be that any training undertaken while employed may count towards their QCE. I am a parent of a grade 10 student. Grade 10 students this year are pioneers. I have a young fellow who wants to be a builder. He just does not imagine that he will go and work for somebody one day. He undertakes business, and the member for Toowoomba South spoke about that earlier. My young Phil sees Philip Ginakis Constructions. I just hope that he has time to be able to do a lot of cheap work for his mother's houses! My son envisages not just working for somebody but being the next big construction company. I think he wants to rival Devine and all of those other people who are like that.

This is an exciting time. The minister announced an aviation high school that will open next year. Who would have thought that in good old downtown Brisbane we would be having the first Australian aviation high school? That is a very exciting project. Not only can those young people who go to the aviation high school have an interesting time at school; but when they look just down the road to the Brisbane airport they can see where their education will lead them. I think it is an incredibly exciting time. It is also a complex time for students and parents. Those of us who have young children heading towards getting the new QCE and who have attended these night-time sessions will know that things are a bit complicated. Luckily, our young people catch on to things a lot quicker than we do. All I can say to parents and caregivers is to talk to teachers, heads of departments and particularly guidance officers.

I would like to conclude by saying that guidance officers have done an incredibly good job in our public high schools in assisting parents and students in working towards the implementation of the new QCE. I would like to thank them very much. I want to finish by saying that it is a fair and sound system that gives students time to explore and find their own pathways to learning and earning. It also gives employers a profile of student achievement. I would like to congratulate the minister and the department on all their hard work, and I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs MENKENS (Burdekin—NPA) (4.11 pm): Education of our youth should be one of the highest priorities of any administration as our children are our future. Certainly, from this perspective I have no hesitation in fully supporting the intent of this legislation. This legislation has three main objectives. It introduces the new Queensland Certificate of Education—the QCE—and facilitates the new system that will require student accounts, which will be the method of supporting the QCE's arrangements. The legislation also amends the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005 so that a person who has been convicted of an indictable offence, and that offence is not a spent conviction, cannot continue as, or become, a member of the Teachers Disciplinary Committee. The legislation also amends the Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 2003 so that the procedure for collecting course survey data by a non-university provider offering an accredited course and providing the data to the minister is aligned with national practice.

The Queensland Studies Authority—or the QSA—was been established under the Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act 2002. Currently, this authority is authorised to issue the Senior Certificate and the Certificate of Post-Compulsory School Education. Recently, there have been reforms in education and training across the state and on a national level owing to the major skills shortage in vocational as well as professional areas. The changes that will be made as a result of this legislation are necessary so that a broader range of students' achievements and their vocational training can be recognised.

Criticism is sometimes levelled at the ever-changing educational structures and systems that students and teachers are regularly confronted with and must endure. But I would like to say that education is a living culture. Students are often seen as pawns in educationalists' experiments, particularly when we consider the many changes that have been made in primary and secondary education over the previous few decades—and I can stand here today and say that I have seen quite a few of those changes. But schools and other educational institutions must move with the challenges of changing community expectations. As well, there are new and emerging industry needs, particularly as technology and science progress.

So, as a result, from 2008 the Senior Certificate will be replaced by the QCE. The Queensland Certificate of Education is an achievement based qualification that will be awarded to students who have satisfied a set standard of learning, including numeracy and literacy, which I think we all agree is desperately important. The changes proposed by this bill allow for the QCE to offer a broader range of achievement based qualifications than those offered by the current Senior Certificate. The new arrangements, which permit a student's learning achievements to count towards the QCE, may come from vocational training and education, university, workplaces and the community as well as the traditional formal schooling. I welcome these modifications, because I believe that that reflects the changing needs of industry in terms of the skills that are required. I hope that the Queensland Studies Authority exercises a certain amount of caution and puts in place a system of checks and balances because, although completing senior has always been classified as achieving a high academic level, softer options by which to achieve that academic level could become available.

The new Australian technical colleges are just one of the initiatives that will be accommodated by this bill. A technical college in north Queensland will be opened in the new year. I would like to share with members its progress to date. The Australian Technical College—North Queensland will open in 2007 as a non-government school and registered training organisation in a new purpose-built facility that is currently under construction in Townsville. This college is for students in years 11 and 12. It provides a vocational based education that is recognised by the Queensland Studies Authority. Students can receive a Queensland Certificate of Education as a result of those studies and training. Students learn a trade while they are studying for their QCE. If they choose, they can also study subjects that will give them the option to go to university. The aims of the college are to provide students with further incentives to stay at school and to provide greater opportunities for trade training. This provides another pathway for students and apprentices.

This morning I read the background information on the federal government's technical colleges web site. It stated—

Australian businesses report that their greatest challenge is finding people to take up skilled jobs. Industry has also been saying for some time that training is not always responsive to their needs.

It is vital that the teaching of skills is relevant to the future needs of industry. One of the fundamental elements of technical colleges, and a key difference from existing institutions, is the leadership role that local industry and business play in the operation and governance of those colleges. The district involvement of industry may ensure that what is learned at the college will match what is really needed in the local region. Of course, the success of these colleges is going to be entirely dependent upon the support of industry. I understand that in Townsville the new technical college is being given tremendous support. I understand also that industry groups and employers have been ringing the college expressing keen interest to take students and have also been fully supportive at a corporate and board level.

North Queensland is the powerhouse of Queensland industry and nowhere else is there more need of skills. The credit for this initial success of industry involvement—which has involved a great deal of effort, enthusiasm and work—must be due to the chairman of the board, Mr John Bearne, and his various board members. The CEO of the college, Mr Geoff Riddell, and the Head of School, Mr Bob Knight, are the driving forces of the college. Its initial success speaks for itself. I understand that there have been at least 400 inquiries since about June about student placements for next year. There have been approximately 190 actual applicants. On enrolment day last Saturday, approximately 150 school based apprentice students were enrolled. I would like to sincerely offer my very best wishes to the board members, staff and students for their inaugural year in 2007. I have no doubt that the Australian Technical College—North Queensland has an exciting future. As I understand it, the Commonwealth government will fund these colleges for the first five years and after that these colleges are expected to become self-funding from industry and stakeholders.

Ms Struthers: I bet they're expecting us to pick up the tab. I bet you.

Mrs MENKENS: Time will tell. The Townsville college will be able to provide high-quality training facilities for these students and is offering an Australian school based certificate III in metal and engineering, automotive, building and construction, and electrotechnology. As well as this, the college offers academic courses, business studies, student support services and trade training. Student support mechanisms are being developed with a particular focus on Indigenous support.

When I met with college staff at a recent chamber of commerce meeting, I was particularly impressed when they focused on the need for life skills and social skills for students. As they said, industry leaders put employees' attitudes and values at the top of their priority list, and I was very pleased to see that this is to be an important area of learning for all students.

As a former communications teacher in the vocational field, I am passionate about this area. Earlier vocational curricula in the Queensland TAFE system—and I am going back quite some years here—allowed for genuine focus on these areas, but I have been very critical of the national training framework which in more recent years has almost totally ignored these vital subject areas which have been dismissed as being of lesser importance. There are some excellent programs of study that will

help young people develop self-esteem, a sense of values, responsibility, assertive skills and the very valuable customer service skills. These I believe are as important, if not more important, than the actual trade training skills area, and I am delighted to hear that this college will really focus on this area.

We want to keep our young people in north Queensland. For too many years the major export from northern communities has been our educated youth. Now, with the excellent James Cook University, this new college, the Barrier Reef Institute of TAFE, as well as our excellent schools, skills training in Townsville and its environs should be very well catered for. When these technical colleges get off the ground, they may cause a drain on enrolments at TAFE, and no doubt time will tell if this is to be the case. However, competition is often very productive, and I have no doubt that there is room for both facilities to operate fully.

I hold a great deal of loyalty towards TAFE—being an ex-TAFE teacher and a later member of the community council and as such I have a very strong allegiance to the TAFE system. I believe these technical colleges across the state will offer a real challenge to the state education and training department. The real challenge will be to ensure that the TAFE colleges remain at the leading edge of vocational training. Of course, what the majority of TAFE courses offer does differ quite significantly—in fact, they are totally different—from what the technical colleges offer, but there will have to be a certain amount of real competition for places for students in the 15 years and over age groups.

Another of the objectives of this legislation being debated today is the introduction of student accounts, which are required to support the QCE. I find this is a new and rather unique way of aggregating points towards the Queensland Certificate of Education. As I understand it, students will operate an account—I suppose similar to a bank account—of their achievements, and these will be measured by a series of credit points derived from the successful outcome of their various academic and vocational studies. A QCE will then be awarded once a student attains at least 20 credit points. I find it particularly interesting that students may now complete year 12 without receiving a QCE but that their accounts may remain open and they may continue their studies at a later date to attract further credit points. As with all new systems, no doubt there may be some difficulties in the initial implementation, and it will put additional stress on staff. However, at face value it seems to be a user-friendly process, and I will certainly be very interested to monitor its initial rollout and how it functions.

The ability of the QCT to not admit or to disqualify persons from the Teachers Disciplinary Committee on the grounds of certain convictions is common sense and is a realistic addition to this legislation. The TDC is the disciplinary arm of the Queensland College of Teachers and it does have some very important and necessary functions. It has powers to conduct hearings and make decisions about matters referred to it. It can also authorise further investigations if it believes there is a requirement to examine further evidence. These changes do make sense.

As I said earlier, education is an ever-changing culture and I will be looking with very great interest to see how this much broader approach to the accreditation process of final year educational achievements rolls out. I commend the bill to the House.

Hon. DM WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (4.25 pm): The Education Legislation Amendment Bill is a significant advance from a minister for whom significant advances are commonplace events. The bill is about, in part, the certificates given to students, the labels they acquire and the registers—which in the bill are called accounts—we keep on them. There is one label that most people would not want on their account and that is the label that something is wrong with them when there is not.

Two years and five months ago I drew the attention of honourable members to a paper that was delivered to the Royal Australian College of Physicians by Brisbane doctor Catherine Skellern. I now table two additional papers by the same doctor.

Tabled paper: Paper titled 'Diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorders in Queensland: Variations in practice'.

Tabled paper: Paper titled 'From complexity to category: Responding to diagnosis uncertainties of autistic spectrum disorders'.

The paper I tabled in 2004 contained a survey by Dr Skellern, the key result of which was that 58 per cent of all clinicians—paediatricians, child psychologists and clinicians—surveyed admitted to having at some time deliberately exaggerated a child's symptoms to make a diagnosis of autism for the purposes of triggering additional resources for the child in the context of the Queensland education system. These false diagnoses undoubtedly are determined by those medical practitioners with the very best of intentions.

The consequences of these 'white lies' by these well-intentioned practitioners are devastating. Large numbers of children are growing up in Queensland with an autistic label when they are not autistic. Though they are not autistic, throughout their lives they will be treated as though they are. They will bear the cross of a negative self-fulfilling prophecy throughout their lives. They will be perceived differently by their peers. They will be expected to behave in certain ways and those expectations will encourage behaviours that actually should be discouraged. They will suffer self-esteem problems that they would not have suffered had they not been given that false diagnosis.

Diagnosing autism is not like diagnosing a broken leg. It is a matter of judgement, not of concrete facts. Quoting from the web site of the Melbourne based Behavioural Neurotherapy Clinic—

Autism is not diagnosed through any specific diagnostic laboratory or psychological tests. The diagnosis of autism is based entirely on observation and classification of behaviours.

In other words, a person is autistic if the relevant practitioner says that they are. This is why one can have different levels of diagnosis of autism in different states of Australia. A local culture gets established. In America the practice of false diagnosis to attract a financial or other benefit to the patient is called alternate coding. In Queensland alternate coding has become an industry.

The catalyst for the establishment of this industry of alternate coding is the fact that a child who is diagnosed as having a disability is entitled to be considered for additional resources by Education Queensland. In 2004 I made the point in this place that whether a child was especially difficult to teach was one question and whether they had a disability was another question. For example, a child with impaired mobility might actually be a superior student and require less of the teacher's time than a child who is not impaired but who merely has their mind on something else. To make a medical diagnosis a precondition for the delivery of additional teaching resources is about as logical as requiring people to pass a dictation test before they could be admitted to hospital. The question of whether a child needs additional teaching resources is not one that should be determined by the single criterion of whether they have a medical diagnosis of a disability.

I would like to thank the Minister for Education and Training for responding positively to my 2004 suggestion in this respect. The department has moved part of the way in the direction of acknowledging and amending the illogicality of the system. The minister wrote to me recently explaining that, instead of getting a diagnosis and ascertaining the student's level of disability and then delivering the resources on the basis of the level of disability, the department now uses a process known as the education adjustment profile, which focuses on the level of education adjustments made by schools to facilitate a student's progress once the child has been diagnosed with a disability.

The minister wrote to me that this move was consistent with my budget speech of June 2004. That is true and I thank the minister and the department for that. But it only went a fraction of the way. It would have been more consistent with my speech of 2004 if a different change had been made. The change should have been to remove diagnoses as a precondition for the making of educational adjustments. In other words, I am urging that the motive for the alternate coding, the false diagnoses of autism which are being made, should be removed. If diagnosing a child as autistic is no longer going to deliver a teaching benefit and if that teaching benefit for the child can be delivered by simply having additional teaching resources then the false autism industry will wind down.

This is why there is no false autism industry in Victoria or South Australia. In those states the rate of diagnosis of autism is only a fraction of that in Queensland. Those states have an additional disability category called 'communication language', which is not the same as 'hard to teach', but it covers many of the children who are. As a result, those students in those states get extra help without getting a label which will be a millstone around their necks forever. It would be so easy to do that here. It would take just one logical decision by one administrator.

The fact is that the Queensland numbers are getting worse not better. In 2004, 3,858 students were diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. As a proportion of students with disabilities, that was 24.9 per cent. In 2005, the number leapt to 4,509—or 27 per cent of students with disabilities. In 2006 the number was 5,463, which was 32.2 per cent of students with disabilities. Thus this spurious autism industry is attracting an increasing proportion of the funds available for students with disabilities. While the amount of money available for disabilities increases from time to time, it is not arithmetically tied to the number of students classed as disabled but to other factors. So an increase in the ascertainment rate for a particular category does not increase the amount of money available for disabilities; it just decreases the amount available per student. This is just another consequence of basing an education system on medically diagnosed categories.

The situation in other states is somewhat different. To quote Dr Skellern, she stated—

A possible solution for Queensland may involve objective assessment of the functional needs of the child, which is not restricted through specific disability diagnoses. Other states within Australia have moved towards an educational ascertainment model that is based on the functional impairment and hence specific needs of the child, rather than based solely on the presence of a medically definable disease/disorder.

Obviously this is what we should do here. I never cease to be amazed how extremely clever people can become victims of their own group's propaganda. I met a doctor recently who told me that he had just came back from a conference. I asked what the conference was about and he said that they were trying to find some solutions to the epidemic of autism that has hit Queensland. I told him that the epidemic was caused by the fact that more than half of his members admitted to falsely diagnosing autism. I told him that it was actually an epidemic of disingenuousness among his own members rather than something endemic in our juvenile population. I told him that tragically scarce human and medical resources were being misdirected by defining as autistic large numbers of students who had quite other problems. I told him that those students were now being treated for a problem that they did not have and

were not being treated for the problems that they did have. He looked at me aghast, walked away and promptly relapsed into the delusional framework of the false autism industry he had just been participating in. But it is a bad and antisocial industry that he is a part of.

This year alone I have had three families in my electorate office where a child has been given what any informed person, medical practitioner or not, would recognise as a highly dubious diagnosis of autism. One little girl had been diagnosed by a doctor who is absolutely notorious for baseless diagnoses of autism. She looked me steadily in the eye and told me very congruently that she had Asperger's syndrome and that her best friend was also autistic and that she felt sorry for her best friend because her best friend was more autistic than she was.

Anybody who has read the diagnostic criteria for Asperger's syndrome in the DSM4—the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders—will know that this behaviour pattern completely negates a diagnosis of autism. I guessed that the child had a hearing related disability and arranged for her family to take her to the appropriate specialist who diagnosed that that was indeed the problem with the girl. However, she still has the label of Asperger's syndrome and presumably that will burden her for the rest of her life.

The pity of it is that a false diagnosis changes a child's path through life. To quote Dr Skellern again, she stated—

Child development is a dynamic process and categorical neurodevelopmental diagnoses do not acknowledge the capacity for children to change over time, particularly if they are young, their symptoms are milder and they receive good quality early intervention. Under these circumstances it may be preferable to provide treatment services based on a current functional profile rather than a categorical diagnosis with long-term prognostic implications that may not occur.

In other words, labelling makes a long-term patient out of children whose symptoms might otherwise be transitory. It is better to treat the symptoms than presume, without any basis, that they derive from a particular disease. This odious practice of diagnosing people with a disability that they do not have has to stop. It is defamatory. A medical practitioner who falsely labels children is liable to be sued for impairing their life chances by this false attribution of a label. When these children grow up there may well be a spate of these defamation actions and richly will some of these practitioners deserve the judgement of the law. Already hundreds and perhaps thousands of these false labels have been applied. Steps need to be taken to arrange for the medical records of those who have had autism falsely attributed to them to be cleansed of the defamatory material. I will be asking the Minister for Health to consider such a process.

In the context of this bill we need to be scrupulously sure that the false diagnoses of autism do not find their way to the accounts referred to in part 2A of the bill. Autism does exist. Those who suffer from it are entitled to our fullest support. Those who treat it and those families who live with it are people who have my highest respect and deserve genuine support. But autism is not the same thing as a learning difficulty. Specifically, not all persons who have learning difficulties are autistic and not all autistic persons have learning difficulties. The sooner our education system is premised on an understanding of this simple fact, the better educated a growing group of Queensland's children will be.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (4.39 pm): I would like to thank the minister and the deputy speakers for allowing members the opportunity to digress from the material that is in the second reading speech and speak about matters which are totally irrelevant to the Education Legislation Amendment Bill. I listened to the contribution by the member for Murrumba and I thought that it is great that we can have that liberty to digress and I thank the minister and the deputy speakers for their tolerance.

Mr Welford: Not for too long.

Mr WELLINGTON: I will not be too long. I would like to make a small digression and talk about some of our school gardening programs in our primary schools which are having such a wonderful impact on our students. Recently, I visited the Palmwoods State School in the Sunshine Coast hinterland where a kitchen garden and associated learning opportunities has grabbed the attention of students and our whole community. During my short visit, I heard from a group of year 1 students who shared with me all of their knowledge about food groups and healthy eating. I got my hands dirty with a group of year 5 students who were picking, stripping and comparing their organically grown corn with market bought corn—testing it, cooking it and having further taste tests.

I also witnessed two young students who were pointed out as having behaviour issues in class. These two students were working away in a content fashion in the school's kitchen garden. They were digging and planting and were both totally, happily absorbed in their work.

The Palmwoods school has employed a part-time permaculture expert over the past two years to help plan, develop, plant and maintain the kitchen garden in a very small space at the school. Passionate from day 1 of this project after two years of developing the garden, Palmwoods school's Clare Cox now has proof that this program provides students with information on growing and eating healthy vegetables and herbs, growing their own mulch, making their own soil, using water wisely and planning a very simple, sustainable garden.

While the school community is excited by this great learning opportunity, I was most impressed by the unexpected bonus of the behaviour management possibilities that emerged from this project. For some children who become restless and disruptive in class, the school's kitchen garden has provided a welcome outlet. These students have found something to focus their attention on, something that appeals to them, and they are learning so much in this very important process.

The team of staff and volunteers who have been driving this project have carried out extensive research and have learnt much from models in other parts of Australia and overseas. Palmwoods school's part-time permaculture expert, Leonie Shanahan, has been part of the project from the planning stage and has tapped into a wide range of sources. Stephanie Alexander's kitchen garden project used in Victoria's Collingwood College has served as a guide. This pilot project has received Victorian government support and funding. It is great that our state minister is here listening to this contribution on this very important issue that is happening in our Palmwoods school as well as other schools, including Montville.

Local herb expert, Isabel Shippard, has provided the gardeners with a list of edible herbs and their benefits, including some which help stimulate the brain. Successful English primary school gardening activities are also under scrutiny. Local community businesspeople are being drawn into the three-year garden plan with a view to marketing the produce in the community in the future.

Palmwoods State School teachers were also quick to recognise the school garden as a viable outdoor learning opportunity, and they are not alone. I know of five other Sunshine Coast schools which feature similar learning gardens, and all are struggling to fund these important programs. Let us put this pilot project firmly on the agenda for schools in Queensland and teach our students, our children, how to grow their own food, how to recycle and sustain gardens, how to use water wisely, how to eat healthily and—another important fact—how to respond to some of the behaviour issues that are occurring in some of our classrooms.

I believe it is time for the government to support gardening and sustainable issues through our children's learning programs. We are currently trying to educate adults about recycling, sustainability, water conservation and reducing obesity, yet here is a working model which could tackle all of these educational areas. Whoever thought from a simple garden and compost heap could grow a proven behaviour management program.

With the view to seeing this type of garden project being offered through our state education curriculum, I would like to table for the benefit of our minister further information from our gardening schools and a CD of photos from these school garden programs.

Tabled paper: Paper titled 'Proposal for Palmwoods State School for consideration of funds to support outdoor learning project—permaculture kitchen garden'.

Tabled paper: CDROM labelled 'Permaculture gardens in school—Leonie Shanahan'.

Before I resume my seat, I would like to read into the record a letter I received from a dedicated parent from Montville State School, Mrs Frith Duggan. She said—

I'm writing this email to support your intention to recommend to the Government that the building and maintenance of Food Gardens in schools should be included in the state curriculum.

At Montville State School, we have had a fantastic time relocating our old permaculture garden and setting up a larger, productive food garden on the eastern side of the historic Razorback House residence this fourth term. We were able to commence this project by receiving a \$1500 Green and Healthy Food Grant which allowed us to contract Leonie Shanahan's expertise in creating a productive permaculture garden with the students. Had there not been a considerable input by the school community through donating materials or providing labour, costs would have been in the vicinity of \$6000 for this project.

The Montville State School P&C applied for next year's Green and Healthy Grant of \$1500 in an attempt to continue this program but our application was declined. We have a garden that is being maintained by the P&C volunteers. The students are very excited with the "hands on" learning that has taken place to date, however, we would be very keen to receive funding to allow for maintenance, growth and a future place in the curriculum for all students at Montville.

We're looking to taste just a few foods before school ends for Summer and have a "Harvest Celebration" in 2007.

Peter, this email is written from me as an individual and is my personal opinion and it is also supported by the Montville P&C executive. However, as Mary Hynes—

the principal—

is away this week, she will only be aware of this email on her return to school on Thursday 30 November.

Minister, can I say thank you for the liberty of sharing this important information with you and other school communities. I think it is a wonderful project.

I want to emphasise the issue of responding to the behaviour management problems of some of our students in class. It just blew me away when I saw how they were focused and were really applying themselves in the garden. The parents and some of the teachers could not believe the success of the garden program. I commend the bill to the House and I thank the minister again for his liberties.

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (4.47 pm): It is with pleasure that I rise to support the Education Legislation Amendment Bill in the House today. The primary objective of the bill is to facilitate the introduction of the new certificate arrangements and the administration of student's accounts to support the certification arrangements. Certification requires literacy, and literacy is one thing that is dear to my

heart. Literacy is one of the important aspects of education, and it enables our children to progress through primary and secondary schooling and on to tertiary education and into traineeships, apprenticeships and ultimately the general workforce.

I am very proud to say there are several excellent and highly successful programs running in schools in the Mirani electorate. The first one I want to speak about is Kickstart to Literacy in Mirani High School which has gained high achievements not only in Queensland but across Australia. It was part of a federally funded lighthouse project, and I have spoken about it many times in the House previously.

I am pleased also to advise the House that next Friday, 8 December, as the patron of the project I will be attending the graduation of the 2006 students and they will have the official opening of the program's new workshop. They have gained funding from the community gaming machines fund and also from community organisations to actually build the shed. There was sponsorship from Caterpillar and Hastings Deering et cetera to fit out the workshop, which is very encouraging. The program has led to a high number of certifications, traineeships and apprenticeships. It is surprising to see the number of successful students come out of that program.

I would also like to place on record my appreciation and special congratulations to the project coordinators. They are Cath Jeffrey, who is the deputy principal of Mirani State High School, Lyn Egan and Yvonne Lee, and the many businesses—I think something like 25 businesses throughout the Mackay district are sponsors for the organisation—community organisations and community members who donate and assist in any way possible in this wonderful project.

The other centre that I want to speak about today is the Sarina skills centre based at the Sarina State High School. It is a community based project run by a committee obviously with great support from the principal and teachers of the Sarina State High School. It is really a true partnership between the community and the school. The actual setting-up of the skills centre has required a huge amount of effort from the community, sponsorship throughout the community and volunteers who have worked tirelessly to put it together.

Through the state government's School Renewal Program there was an acquisition of around 12 acres of land which was ultimately security fenced. A house was also acquired which was on the site and it was stripped to become a teaching centre for the unit. The teaching centre and the rest of the accommodation and reception areas were air-conditioned. The multimedia set-up was put in the teaching area with remote access to a server at the high school. A toilet block was built and included showers and toilets for both male and female students as well as staff and a handicapped toilet and shower was also built. Under any estimation it would probably have cost the department in the vicinity of \$350,000 or \$400,000. However, it was actually built by the community for something like \$50,000 or \$60,000.

I am pleased to advise that the centre is up and running now. A huge shed/workshop has been built on the site and they are accommodating students there this year. It will be bigger and better next year with a full complement of students for every lesson and for every day of school.

As I said, government, community and business partnerships and sponsorship and other involvement by the community continues to grow. Last week I was at the skills centre when the federal member for Dawson, De-Anne Kelly, announced on behalf of Gary Hardgrave, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister and Minister for Vocational and Technical Education, the Australian government funding of \$425,000 from the National Training and Infrastructure Program. That money will enable the skills centre to purchase tools, which includes lathes and welders, vehicles, tractors and equipment for the provision of certificates I and II Rural Operations—certificate III will initially be offered by the Australian Agricultural College, Emerald campus—certificates I and II Engineering, short vocational and technical education courses and Australian school based apprenticeships. That really will make that skill centre a well-rounded project and will place in our community students who will come out of that high school with the ability to walk straight into apprenticeships and other jobs right throughout the community in an area of central Queensland that has such a huge skill shortage that we are bringing people in from overseas to try to meet that skill shortage.

There have been recent sponsorships to the skills centre. I recently picked up from the Dalrymple Bay Coal Terminal and delivered back to the college ex-fire hoses which will be used for the transfer of water and the irrigation of some of the crops they have there. Another sponsor was the Shardale Droughtmaster Stud. Cass and Graham Westhead have a property out on West Plane Creek Road. Students have been working out there inoculating and testing cattle. The Westheads will be donating cattle for the students to work with at the school and to actually show at the Sarina show in August next year.

Frank Langfield, who works at the skills centre, has his entire goat herd agisted there currently for the students to work with. Marlene Gordon and the Gordon family from Rocky Dam Road have donated a buck for the school stud. Wayne Born, who runs a goat stud in the Sarina area, has been working with the students so that they may be able to show the stud goats at next year's shows. The judges from this year's Sarina show were so impressed with the students and the program at the school that they will be

visiting the students early next year to promote and assist with the breeding and showing of goats and poultry at the local show. Currently the students are working with the local Landcare group in respect of some of the wetland area within the complex. This coming weekend Wayne Davis, who is the chairman of the Mackay Rural Producers association, is taking a tour through the centre to promote the interests and involvement with the local rural producers in the area. Of course graziers and farmers are part of that rural producers association.

The Sarina State High School is also running the Motorworks program at a different location. It came about in 2005 when teachers from the Sarina State High School identified a need for an alternative program to help a group of students who were experiencing difficulties and may have been at risk of dropping out of school early. In 2006 they instituted the small motors repair program which they called Motorworks. Embedded in the program is working and learning in an individual and team environment. They take on board work ethics and practices. They acquire the skills of motor trades and small motor repair. They do courses on workplace health and safety practices and procedures. They have to follow supervised instructions. They have to fill out forms, for example, time cards, job cards and order forms for parts et cetera. The great asset in this program is communication skills, such as communicating with other persons who are working on motors, indicating what is wrong with the motor and indicating what is needed to fix it. So it is a real team effort amongst the group. Spatial reasoning and diagram reading are also part of it. Students develop the ability to read an exploded assembly drawing and to identify and correctly describe the components. So far—and this program has been in place for only one year—these young people have grown in confidence. I have visited the school a number of times. I can see the young students growing in self-confidence. They are able to speak in front of guests and sponsors at the program. They improve their communication skills and concentration and improve their literacy and numeracy skills. They are actually tested with specific indicators. They develop hand skills with tools and the ability to select the right tool for the right job and actually take care of the tools as well. They develop environmental awareness in the cleaning of parts, recycling, disposal of oils and contaminated products, and develop a genuine interest to learn in other areas of the curriculum. These students become very motivated as opposed to the students who do not enter the program. I view the program as very realistic and very similar to real life working and learning in an industry.

In the future Sarina State High School will duplicate the program with another eight people entering the program in 2007. They will roll the current year 8 into the year 9 program in 2007, improving their skills and developing the possibility of actually moving into an engine reconditioning phase so that there is a real outcome to their learning. Eventually the school will investigate the purchase of such items as a line borer, which is very specific to engine rebuilding, and synchro valve seating equipment as part of the engine reconditioning program in the higher grades. I would also like to commend the project coordinator, the deputy principal, Ralph Johnson, and the teaching staff, Rolf Muller and Alison Cliffe.

Another program that is running at Sarina State High School is Reading, a Raging Success program. It is a community based literacy intervention program initially targeted at poor readers in year 8 who were either disengaging or at risk of disengaging from mainstream schooling.

The program is fully supported by parents, students, teachers and tutors. The program allows students from years 8 to 12 who wish to improve their literacy and numeracy competency to participate. Their attendance is voluntary from 8.20 am to 8.50 am. It does not interfere with the curriculum timetable. It is based on one-on-one assistance with reading, spelling, comprehension, vocabulary and numeracy. The partnerships with community groups and local businesses is one of the hallmarks of the program. As I said, those in years 8 to 12 have access to the program.

Behaviour and subject specific improvements are very evident. I have actually been with those students on a number of occasions to award certificates et cetera. Parents, teachers, students, tutors and local businesses and the community are all working together to ensure that the project is viable and sustainable in the long term. In actual fact, something like 35 tutors work with students on a one-to-one basis. Most of those are volunteers, community members and mums and dads.

This program was a state finalist in the 2006 Showcase Awards for Excellence in Schools. I commend the project coordinator, Miss Alison Cliffe, and the many dedicated volunteer tutors for the success of this program. With those few words I commend the bill to the House.

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (5.01 pm): I rise to speak briefly to the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2006. Much is said about what education in our state and, indeed, our nation should be. What forms part of our children's curriculum is often a subject of hot debate. We have noted that in the last few days.

Some say our children should be studying more logic grounding subjects like mathematics. Others say that they should be engaged in the visual and performing arts to encourage creative and out-of-the-box thinking and analysis, they should be learning a certain type of Australian history, they should be learning more than one religious teaching and, of increasing importance, they should be involved in vocational training to address the skills shortage in Australia.

If they want to enter the trades we need to provide avenues for that. If they want to go to university we need to provide avenues for that. We need to be not forcing our young people down one path or the other but merely equipping them with the ability to do whichever they please and equipping them with the thought processes to make that decision.

Irrespective of which side of politics we associate with, the need to find a healthy balance between what our nation needs our young people to be and what young people want themselves to be is an exercise we need to address collectively. As a result—and the shadow minister for education has already asserted the opposition's position—I have no issue with offering my support for this bill.

I note that this legislation has had wide consultation. I enjoyed the Queensland Catholic Education Commission function last night. I acknowledge the important part that it plays in educating our Queensland children. About 20 per cent of Queensland children go to Catholic schools. My three kids have been to the local Catholic school—St Vincent's on the Gold Coast. It is a great school.

I feel the bill does well in addressing the need to incorporate vocational subjects and recognise their worth in contributing to the overall education of a young Queenslanders. Currently, the existing Senior Certificate simply records a student's level of achievement, whether it be high or low, in recognised subjects. With these changes, a wider range of learning will be able to contribute to the new QCE, including new options of workplace learning projects, self-directed learning projects and university subjects. Literacy and numeracy standards must also be met.

I know that lots of members have spoken about the training that kids can do. Benowa State High School in my electorate certainly has a very active program where kids get to go and learn in the workplace. This program is for those who are not necessarily going to go on to more academic pursuits.

This is the educational balance that we need to be providing. Achievements such as participation and leadership in community or sporting programs or a student's research of topics of their own interest may count towards a senior qualification. This can only encourage young Queenslanders to get involved and spearhead their own development. We need to be planting the seed in our children for their desire to pursue lifelong learning to grow. They will have a range of attributes that they can offer future employers—core generic skills that can be employed in any future endeavour as well as specific skills or areas of interest that they have had the opportunity to focus on.

Students who are currently in grade 10 this year are the first group to begin studying towards the new certificate, which will be issued for the first time in 2008. The bill achieves these changes to the certification in Queensland by giving the authority the functions to issue the QCE and statement of results. The bill also extends the use of student accounts for the purposes of certification generally. It will enable the authority to obtain enrolment and results information for all students striving for a senior schooling certificate in Queensland whether or not they are in the compulsory participation phase.

The bill also changes the eligibility for membership to the Teachers Disciplinary Committee. I welcome that the bill will disqualify a person from becoming or continuing as a member of the committee if convicted of an indictable offence. The bill provides this through granting a specific power for the minister to seek from the commissioner of police a written report about a person's criminal history and a brief description of the circumstances of a conviction mentioned in the criminal history. I note that a request by the minister for the criminal history of a potential member requires the consent of the person. Therefore, a person who does not wish their history to be checked can opt out of the process. I think that is quite fair. These changes will have obvious benefits in the pursuit of keeping our young people safe, and I have no qualms with the scope of this new power.

Mr NICHOLLS (Clayfield—Lib) (5.06 pm): It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak to the Education Legislation Amendment Bill. I am pleased to be able to support a bill that enhances educational outcomes in Queensland. For many years I have heard complaints from people often with little or no knowledge of the current education system that the standard of education is often not as good as it was in the old days. It is not as good as it was. It is, in my view, far better.

I have no hesitation in saying to those people who say those things to me and question how well our children are doing at school how proud I am when I see them. Like many members in this place, I am sure, I have been attending school ceremonies and graduation ceremonies for many years at both the primary and secondary level in the state, independent and Catholic systems.

In my electorate I have a single-teacher school, which may seem odd for an electorate like Clayfield, as well as a school with over 1,000 students. Without hesitation I can say that the students are doing a great job. I am constantly astounded at the skills and the capacity of the students at those schools. They are doing things that I suspect many of us even today would struggle to accomplish. They are public speaking and reciting poetry in front of adults, classes and groups of up to 500 or 600 people. I note their computer skills. I was recently at Ascot State School, which has just had the benefit of a new resource centre comprising 30 new computers. The kids are designing computer games, as one would expect of kids between the ages of eight and 13, in their lunch times. They are putting it all together. It is a sure sign of their competency, their education and their confidence.

I would like to pay tribute to the students and their parents, carers, teachers and staff who achieve the great outcomes that they do. I would like to mention the schools in my electorate. Bear with me because there are quite a few. They are: Ascot, Eagle Junction—where my own children attend—Hamilton, Hendra, Nundah, Woolloowin and the one-teacher school at Pinkenba, which has a grand total of 11 students, and Kedron State High School. I recently attend the graduation at Kedron. This is a school that never fails to send at least two or three students to the Queensland Conservatorium.

The local independent and Catholic schools include St Margaret's Anglican Girls School, which from my perspective has a very proud history—I spent a fair bit of time just across the road from St Margaret's and spent a lot of time being kept out of it as well during my school years—Clayfield College, Corpus Christi at Nundah, St Agatha's and St Rita's at Clayfield, Our Lady Help of Christians at Hendra and St Joseph's at Nundah. They are all great schools.

In relation to the introduction of the prep year, which will be of great benefit to students, I wish to add my voice to those calling out for full-time teacher aides for the prep year. Certainly in the lead-up to the election I was approached by parents—particularly mothers—who were very concerned about the absence of a full-time teacher aide in prep year. We have provided teacher aides in preschools this year but we are not going to provide them for the prep school next year. It simply defies logic. One can only assume that it is penny pinching. I would urge the minister to consider this question and to provide those full-time teacher aides in the prep year. The results, I am sure, will be worth the extra investment now.

I also want to make particular mention of Hendra Secondary College. As the minister indicated this morning, it is soon to be known as Aviation High—the new top gun of aviation schooling in Queensland and only the third Aviation High that I am aware of, the other two being in New York and Seattle. I understand that it is hoped that a partnering arrangement with Aviation High in Seattle which is linked to Boeing industries can be achieved when the school syllabus and curriculum are finally established. I welcome the creation of Aviation High as it moves to resolve the question of the future of Hendra Secondary College, a college which has a proud history but which in recent years has suffered from declining enrolments and really a problem of not knowing what type of college or school it wanted to be. In the last couple of years principal Roslyn Parkes has done a tremendous job in forging links with the aviation industry and creating the forerunner for Aviation High, and I particularly pay tribute to Roslyn Parkes and her deputies Rob Buckner and Alan Head for the work that they have done so far in transforming Hendra Secondary College and forging the links that I mentioned with the aviation precinct and providing opportunities to students in aviation related industries.

I just want to recount the story of a parent of a student at this school who is completing grade 12 this year—in fact, has completed grade 12—who came up to me at the beginning of the year when I was at the school delivering a speech on leadership and said to me how proud and pleased he was that his son had been accepted and in fact awarded a very high position in the school body. His son had come from Brisbane Grammar School and had moved to Hendra Secondary College, which I think probably astounded a few people. But this parent said that his son was falling between the gaps at Brisbane Grammar and that the opportunity to learn about aviation at Hendra Secondary College was the thing that had put him back on the rails and reignited his enthusiasm for education. He subsequently went on to achieve very high results at Hendra Secondary College and also, as I say, to be elected by his peers to a high position in the school council. I hope and trust that Aviation High will deliver on the aims and opportunities that we seek for it, and it should be given every opportunity to succeed.

I notice the minister in his speech this morning in relation to Aviation High referred to the \$18 million that will be spent over the next four years. I should just point out that that is not all new funding, as I am sure the minister is aware. In fact, of that \$18 million only \$4.1 million is going to capital works spending over the next four years to create the new Aviation High. The balance of the money is the ongoing operational funding for the development of curriculum, employment of staff, wages, a new principal and those sorts of things. That money is welcome nonetheless in the development of it, and I guess I would just say, Minister, that if it is a new venture and it needs more money we will be coming back like the member for Nicklin is and asking for more funding to make sure that it continues to develop. I understand the school hall is going to be renamed 'The Hangar' and there may be some more names coming through as they develop the Aviation High theme.

In the context of those schools and the achievements of the students, their parents and carers and the teachers at those schools, I welcome the introduction of the Queensland Certificate of Education which I think, from my understanding of it, more prosaically is defined in the bill as the certificate of achievement. It is a welcome certificate for students, employers and trainers. It allows employers and trainers to clearly understand the qualification of students and, in understanding that, to be better equipped to assess that achievement and make judgements and decisions about the suitability of that student for future employment, training and learning. The certificate's relevance is wider than the traditional Senior Certificate and its application for vocational training is welcome as it proves the value of school based vocational training. I also note that it allows students who engage in studies related to workplace, community and self-directed learning projects to gain credit for their work and to include that on the basis of the QCE, which I think is a welcome thing.

I left school and went straight to a job as an articled clerk. I remember the value of learning while you earn, and I think that is a very worthwhile prospect that was sometimes overlooked in the eighties with our fascination with university based education. Certainly to some extent today we are paying the price for having a singularly university-focused educational system rather than one which was more broadly based to include trades and other vocations, and that is the shortage that is occurring at the moment. I have been a great supporter of school based vocational training. I can only claim to have jumped on the bandwagon recently because I have only become interested in it recently, but for a long time I have certainly felt that an overemphasis on university based education can be a detriment. That is not to say that those who do seek that higher learning should be denied it, but certainly there is value and relevance in things that perhaps 20 years ago we thought were not going to be so valuable. I hope that the legislation's—legislation which everyone has commended to the House in the debate today—outcomes and experience after 2008 when the first group of recipients of the QCE receive their QCE bear out the optimism that we have all placed in this legislation today.

Hon. RJ WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Education and Training and Minister for the Arts) (5.14 pm), in reply: I want to thank all honourable members for their contributions to the debate and thank the opposition for its support of this bill. As a number of members have indicated, it gives effect to the ongoing reforms as part of the ETRF—Education and Training Reforms for the Future—initiatives that the government has been introducing in terms of setting up systems to ensure that we maintain our education system at the forefront of education in the country. There will always be debate about the quality of education that is delivered, and that debate is healthy. Indeed, I welcome that debate. But I am concerned that some of the contributions by federal politicians in recent times have been more about the federal government trying to find its place in the debate on education rather than actually adding to the quality of it, because ultimately we know that it is the states that run our schools and our education facilities. The Commonwealth actually does nothing, but it does have a lot of money to contribute and we do not deny it the right to be able to contribute that money and expect some results. But contributing money and simply complaining about what the states are doing seems to me to be an entirely counterproductive exercise to engage in. I call on the federal education minister to act upon what I am sure is her better judgement and work cooperatively with us rather than engage in the facile buck-passing of responsibility for what is happening in education and whether it is of sufficient quality or whether subjects are adequately covered.

Going quickly to some of the issues raised by the opposition spokesperson, one of the issues he raised was whether the IT system for the introduction of the new Queensland Certificate of Education and the student accounts will be ready in time. There is certainly significant work being done on this. The Queensland Studies Authority is resourced to manage this workload. It will be available to schools to enter student results for the Queensland Certificate of Education by the end of January next year, and the first upload of student data is required by the end of March. So by the time schools are required to put the first data into that system, it should be well and truly established. The initial registration of students for the senior phase of learning has already been completed, so the system is ready to have information loaded into it in time for when that will be required.

Issues of confidentiality are covered in proposed new section 21ZB of the bill. I should draw members' attention to the protection of personal information about a person's student account and the penalty imposed for any unauthorised disclosure. I am satisfied that this statutory protection is adequate. The QSA provides aggregate data on all schools only for national reporting purposes to the Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, the MCEETYA ministerial council, which I currently chair. The provision of this information is governed by national guidelines which also protect privacy and confidentiality. It has not been determined if aggregate data, including data from non-state schools, is required for education reporting services, but in any event guidelines will be developed to ensure confidentiality. An issue was raised about how visa students are treated in relation to the account. Student visa holders are exempted from compulsory participation requirements and do not automatically have a student account opened for this purpose. The way in which their results are dealt with provides them with an OP equivalent so that they are not specifically part of the general student population when it comes to reporting final results.

The QCE is available on request, even to visa-holding students if they want to participate in that. Limiting the opening of student accounts to visa-holding students who genuinely aspire to attain a QCE relieves schools and the Queensland Studies Authority of the burden of opening and maintaining unnecessary student accounts where the students, whilst studying here, are not necessarily looking for any final completion certificates or formal result notification other than those that are provided by their school. Similarly, we do not want to impose on schools the burden of providing two separate sets of information as the only difference in the records of non-participating visa-holding students and other senior secondary students would be the presence or absence in the records of a student account number. The student account system was introduced originally under the Youth Participation in Education and Training Act 2003. These amendments extend the use of the accounts for the purpose of the Certificate of Education. We do not expect that the burden on schools would materially exceed their current responsibilities in respect of student accounts that already exist.

If a student meets all of the requirements of the QCE before they complete year 12, they will qualify for the QCE. That does not mean that a certificate will be issued to them before December in year 12 at the earliest, because in order to issue the certificate, I have required that a student has to finish their year 12 year. In other words, the students are eligible for a QCE once they complete all of the requirements in terms of credits to the account, but they are not eligible to have it issued unless they stay at school and finish year 12, as indeed we expect them to. If a student leaves school before finishing year 12, they will have to request that a certificate be issued. They can only receive it at the earliest in the July of the year after they finish year 12. Students who wish to demonstrate their achievements to employers may request a record of results, which lists all of the results in their student account and indicates that they will be eligible for a QCE in due course.

Students or their parents who access the student account via the internet can do so at any internet point. All schools with the exception of one non-state school, which is philosophically opposed to student exposure to technology—why we accredit that school is beyond me—have internet connections. The student account is available to students. Many schools also make these student accounts available to parents so that if those parents do not have an internet connection at home they can access it through their local school. In addition, a student or a student's parent can request a record of a student's results at any time from the QSA at no cost to the student.

In relation to access to student records, except in exceptional circumstances, I believe that a student's parents should have access to a student's account. I agree with Queensland Catholic Education in relation to that. In the normal course I believe that a parent should be able to monitor and support their student's progress through senior education. However, the bill allows in special circumstances for access to be denied where it is not in the student's best interests. If a student is alienated from their parents, living independently with extended family or by some other means and the circumstances of providing student information to the parent might exacerbate an already strained relationship, it seems to me not to be in the student's interest for that information to be disclosed. For those reasons I have allowed the statute to provide for some protection of information in those circumstances.

Members raised a range of other matters. I took note of the matters raised by the member for Murrumba, the member for Nicklin and the member for Gregory in relation to issues in their respective electorates. I will certainly follow those up and I thank them for their contributions. I think one of the things that all members of this House are sincerely concerned about is the operation of schools in their areas. We all know that education is the foundation of the future for young people in our state. Indeed, it is the foundation for the future prosperity of our state. I thank members for their contributions to this debate.

Question put—That the bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 22, as read, agreed to.

Clause 23—

Mr COPELAND (5.25 pm): This clause is the first of a number that amend the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act to proceed with the disqualification of members of the Teachers Disciplinary Committee in a range of circumstances. Is this as a result of an incident or was it a pre-emptive strike? This amendment does not relate to anyone who is sitting on that committee now or has done so in the past? I assume it is a safety mechanism for the future.

Mr WELFORD: In terms of criminal offences, there has been no case that has given rise to this amendment. The department was alerted to this matter when we looked at other legislation for other committees and boards that are in existence across the department. It is a standard provision in these circumstances.

Clause 23, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 24 to 30, as read, agreed to.

Clause 31—

Mr COPELAND (5.26 pm): This amendment provides for the authority to purchase 1-12 syllabuses and preschool guidelines. Can the minister advise the House in what circumstances he thinks that would happen? Does the QSA have any current plans to do so?

Mr WELFORD: I am not aware of any current plans to do so, but we want to retain the flexibility to be able to obtain syllabuses or guidelines from other sources if we identify quality materials from those other sources. For example, in the circumstance of the syllabus for the International Baccalaureate and in similar circumstances there may be syllabus materials that need to be purchased rather than developed in-house.

Clause 31, as read, agreed to.

Clause 32—

Mr COPELAND (5.27 pm): There is a series of clauses in the bill regarding the QSA and how the statement of results will be reported—all of those sorts of things. I refer broadly to the quality of the information that will be able to be included in the student accounts. In his contribution the member for Hinchinbrook stated that limited levels of achievement are now being used by the QSA to count towards credit points in the student accounts, which he said was a change from previous statements where only sound levels of achievement or higher were approved. Can the minister advise the House whether it is the case that limited levels of achievement are being counted towards the QCE and whether that is appropriate?

Mr WELFORD: There is a limit on the number of concessional credits a student can accumulate for the QCE. Concessional credit can be given only for limited achievement obtained in year 11 and can apply only to two subjects. So it will occur only in exceptional circumstances.

Clause 32, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 33 to 52, as read, agreed.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

Question put—That the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Long Title

Question put—That the long title of the bill be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT ACT

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (5.30 pm): I move—

That this House calls upon the government to repeal the Criminal Code Amendment Act 2006 and reinstate previous sections 56 to 58 of the Criminal Code so that members of this House who provide false information to this House or its committees are subject to the criminal law as they were for over 100 years.

This motion seeks to reverse one of the most outrageous pieces of legislation that has ever been seen in the history of the Queensland Parliament. Twelve months after that legislation was passed by this House, this motion now seeks to reverse that scandalous legislation. It is an appropriate time to do this. The reason that this legislation was put through the House has apparently been forgotten. There has been a complete change of heart by the government. This morning the Premier said that he is moving to ensure that the former minister—who was the reason for this legislation being introduced in the first place—is going to be expelled from the Labor Party. Therefore, the reason this legislation was introduced into this House in the first place no longer exists.

Members who were here a year ago will remember that parliament was recalled during the Christmas break for one reason and at huge expense. All members and all staff had to come back for one simple reason: to provide clearance for a minister who was found to have lied to the House, who was found to have provided false information in evidence to the estimates committee. That was a very serious charge. It was a provision that had been in the Criminal Code for hundreds of years for very good reasons.

Those members who have an interest in this area should read the address that was made at that time by the then Leader of the Opposition, the member for Southern Downs. His address set out the reasons why that provision was included in the Criminal Code and had been so included for so many hundreds of years. Because of the Labor government's need to protect one of its own, this House was subjected to a scandalous piece of legislation that was forced through parliament at very short notice. The standing orders were put aside to force the legislation through in one day to protect one of its own—to protect a minister who had been found to have lied.

Now it has become apparent that that former minister is no longer one of the government's own. The Labor Party is moving to expel him from the party, so it is now time to correct this scandalous piece of legislation and revert to the Criminal Code that existed for hundreds of years. It is time to right the wrong that was done 12 months ago because the reason for that wrong being done no longer exists. In fact, the government itself recognises where the wrong lay. From the comments that the Premier made this morning, the Labor Party is moving to expel that former minister from the party and to put an end to the matter. The matter cannot be finalised until this legislation is repealed because this legislation is a stain on the record of this House.

I will briefly recount the history of the situation for current members who were not members of the previous parliament. On Friday, 8 July 2005, the member for Cunningham asked the then Minister for Health, Gordon Nuttall, in Estimates Committee D questions about his knowledge relating to problems with foreign trained doctors. The minister consistently denied being advised of any problems—a claim that was directly refuted by the then deputy director-general of Health following further questioning.

Reading the *Hansard* record of that particular estimates hearing should be compulsory for students of politics. To read the parliamentary record and see the number of times the member for Cunningham put the question in different ways and the number of times the question was quite clearly answered falsely, as it turned out, is a glimpse into the level of dishonesty that was displayed by the minister at the time. That level of dishonesty constituted what we believed to be a potential breach of the then section 57 of the Queensland Criminal Code, which made it an offence for any person to give false evidence to the parliament. The opposition then referred the matter to the Queensland Police Service and then to the Crime and Misconduct Commission for investigation.

On 7 December 2005, the report of the CMC was tabled in the Queensland Parliament. In that report the CMC indicated that insufficient evidence existed to refer Minister Nuttall to the Director of Public Prosecutions for consideration for prosecution. On 9 December 2005, rather than refer Minister Nuttall to the Director of Public Prosecutions for consideration as to whether he should be criminally charged, as would happen to any other Queenslanders, parliament was specifically recalled from its Christmas break, and the Beattie government used its massive majority to accept the minister's resignation, to accept his apology to the House and to accept that that was sufficient punishment for lying to the estimates committee.

In addition, the government repealed the Criminal Code provisions that have existed since Sir Samuel Griffith drafted the code—provisions which made it a criminal offence for any person, including a minister, to give false evidence to the parliament or to a committee. Instead, the Premier argued that lying to the committee should be treated merely as an issue of potential contempt to be dealt with by the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee, on which the government always has the numbers and therefore control. Effectively, as the Criminal Code stands now, ministers of this government can lie with impunity when giving evidence to the parliament because they know that any consideration of their behaviour will be by their peers and not by an outside court.

I well remember the arguments that were put forward in the debate when we considered that legislation. Comparisons were made by a number of speakers in the debate between speeches made in this parliament and evidence given before a committee. It is quite erroneous to make those comparisons. It is quite erroneous to claim that members could be charged under the Criminal Code for something they said in parliament. That was never possible, and I hope we do not hear a repeat of that sort of nonsense tonight.

The Criminal Code was specific in its reference to giving evidence to a parliamentary committee. The giving of false evidence to a committee has always been considered to be the equivalent of giving false evidence to a court. It is that provision in the Criminal Code that has been removed. Imagine a situation where the giving of evidence to a court was suddenly no longer part of the Criminal Code—somebody could give evidence to a court with impunity and not face retribution under the Criminal Code. Of course no-one would be prepared to accept that situation as right and proper; nor should any member of this House be prepared to accept the situation that we have been left with following this whole debacle. We should put this right.

This legislation has served its purpose for the Labor government. It has protected one of its own by resolving the sticky issue that it found itself in when then Minister Nuttall was found by the CMC to have lied before the estimates committee. However, now it is time to put the legislation right because the Labor government is in the process of jettisoning Gordon Nuttall. The government no longer wants anything to do with him. The Premier quite clearly said this morning that the Labor Party is moving to expel him for a whole range of reasons which, with deference to you, Mr Speaker, I will not go into but we all know what they are. Since then the situation has become a lot clearer in relation to the type of character this minister has proven to be.

It is interesting to look back at that debate to see some of the glowing references that were given by members of this parliament in relation to former Minister Nuttall and the reason why the parliament should pass that outrageous legislation to provide him with a clearance. With the benefit of much more wisdom and information, perhaps some of those ministers—

A government member: Hindsight.

Mr SEENEY: No, it was not hindsight; it is information that has come to light since. Perhaps ministers on that side may well take the opportunity to reflect on some of the comments that they made. I will be interested to see if people like the Deputy Premier repeat some of the comments that they made back in that original debate. It is an outrage that this piece of legislation went through this parliament at all. It needs to be fixed and tonight is the night to fix it.

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—Lib) (5.40 pm): It is a privilege to rise tonight to second the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. The Beattie Labor government has clearly written itself into the annals of history as being bereft of any moral right to govern this state. Members do not have to go any further than the disgraceful action of amending the Criminal Code which removed the crime of giving false testimony from the statute books of Queensland. Members need to take the time to think about what this portrays to the people of Queensland.

This House should and must be held in the highest possible regard by every Queenslanders. That requires members imposing on themselves the highest possible standards. We are elected by the people of Queensland to govern on their behalf and in that capacity we have very strict and onerous obligations. To say that we as parliamentarians are above the Criminal Code is a nonsense. Yet that is exactly the message that the Beattie Labor government sent to the people of Queensland when it removed these sections of the Criminal Code.

Every member in this House has received letters and read reports in which Queenslanders have made very clear that by taking this step we have reduced the esteem in which parliamentarians are held even further. To put it bluntly, the real reason for the amendment was purely political and in no way reflected the true intention of the people of Queensland; nor was it for the protection of the parliament as an institution. If we are going to hold the offices that we do, our obligation is to do the job effectively and correctly. If a government is conducting itself in a correct and proper manner there should not be a concern that a minister or, for that matter, any other member will be guilty of a crime in executing his role as a member of this parliament.

However, if a government believes it cannot trust or rely on its own parliamentary members, the only way it can protect itself is to remove legislation that places those members at risk. The argument put forward by this government that because the law had not been used and the real reason as to why it was enacted could not be established and it should therefore be removed is a ridiculous one. Clearly, behind those mealy-mouthed words is the reality that they were concerned at what could be established in a criminal court and what could be established through the criminal justice system. It was a paranoid reaction driven by fear: fear of being found out, fear of being charged, fear of being convicted. Once that process is in train paranoia becomes overwhelming. Once that paranoia takes hold the irrational actions follow.

In addition, by taking the action it did, one clear result is a further enormous loss of faith by the public in parliamentarians and the process of government. Whether the government admits it or not, the Beattie government, in amending the Criminal Code in the way it did, further reinforced in the public's mind the low perceptions that they have of us. If we are going to regain respectability, putting the code back into the state it was is one step in that process.

Earlier today we had a significant debate on the question of credibility—though on different matters. However, the question tonight is still one of credibility. If we do not have credibility as parliamentarians we have very little else. When we are stripped of that it means that the institution of parliament itself cannot be sustained. Parliament's credibility rests on the very credibility of its members and we need to rebuild that with the public.

The removal of sections 56, 57 and 58 of the code was dictated by motives other than enhancing parliament. These sections must be reinstated to help rebuild that trust with our fellow Queenslanders. The question tonight is not simply one about the Criminal Code; it goes much deeper. It goes to the very essence of the existence of this House. This was an event that should never have occurred and was dictated, as I said earlier, by political motives. It was wrong. The government now understands that the man that it was passed to protect was also wrong and that man is now to be drummed out of the Labor Party. It was wrong to do it then and it is wrong to sustain it at this point in time. It is time for this House to take back the credibility it took away from itself and support the motion here tonight.

Hon. KG SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Premier in Western Queensland) (5.45 pm): I move—

That all words after 'House' be deleted and the following words inserted—

'notes that the amendments to the Criminal Code Amendment Act 2006 ensured the Queensland Parliament operates in the same way as the Federal houses of parliament, Australian States and Territories and the House of Commons'.

The Criminal Code Amendment Bill 2006 was guided through this parliament by my predecessor as Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, the esteemed member for Kurwongbah. I am pleased to repeat some of the comments she made in her second reading speech.

The former Attorney-General made it very clear that section 57 of the Criminal Code was—

... inconsistent with a fundamental tenet of the Westminster system... This tenet is that debates or proceedings in parliament cannot be impeached or questioned in any court or place out of the parliament.

The former Attorney-General made it clear that by amending the Criminal Code to repeal section 57 meant—

Queensland's parliament operates in the same way as the House of Commons, the federal houses of parliament and other Australian states and territories.

She also stated—

In every parliament in Australia, the sanction for misleading the parliament by members of parliament is a political penalty, not a criminal penalty.

The government's actions earlier this year to bring amendments to the Criminal Code aligned the Queensland parliament with other parliaments across the country. Such actions should be reaffirmed, not overturned as the opposition proposes tonight. Criminal sanctions should apply to criminal activity. The parliament should be—and it must be—a forum for free and robust debate. Members should be able to raise matters of public importance without the fear of facing criminal or civil charges. Nevertheless, the matters raised should be honest and members should not seek to mislead or deceive. The amendments to the Criminal Code did not give members a green light to mislead or deceive. Nor do members sitting in other parliaments around Australia or in the House of Commons already have the green light to mislead or deceive. The same onus on members to be honest in activities inside and outside parliament applies.

I repeat that what has been done brings the Queensland parliament into line with other parliaments around the country and in other parts of the world. Repealing section 57 of the Criminal Code has meant that members of parliament and nonmembers have continued to be liable to be dealt with for contempt of parliament under the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001. Sections 56 and 58 of the code were repealed for the same reason as section 57. Offences under these sections are more properly dealt with as contempt under the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001.

I remind honourable members that the Parliament of Queensland Bill 2001 was passed by the parliament on 27 November 2001—five years ago this week—without amendment and without division. I also remind honourable members that section 8 of the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 is titled 'Assembly proceedings cannot be impeached or questioned'. It states—

- (1) The freedom of speech and debates or proceedings in the Assembly cannot be impeached or questioned in any court or place out of the Assembly.
- (2) To remove doubt, it is declared that subsection (1) is intended to have the same effect as article 9 of the Bill of Rights (1688) had in relation to the Assembly immediately before the commencement of the subsection.

I remind honourable members that article 9 of the UK Bill of Rights states that the freedom of speech and debates or proceedings in parliament ought not to be impeached or questioned in any court or place out of parliament.

It is also important for the House to consider the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's report on the Criminal Code Amendment Bill 2006 in *Alert Digest No. 6 of 2006*. As honourable members know, the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee is a bipartisan committee. The committee report on the Criminal Code Amendment Bill stated—

The effect of the bill on fundamental legislative principles may be viewed positively. In terms of respect for individual rights, it means members and non-members are no longer subject to the additional possibility of prosecution through the courts for contempt of Parliament. While s.47 of the *Parliament of Queensland Act* precluded double punishment, there remained the possibility that a person could be acquitted in one forum but found guilty in the other. Now, members and non-members are subject only to the jurisdiction of the Assembly for contempt of Parliament.

The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's report was a unanimous report. The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's report on the bill continued by saying—

In terms of respect for the institution of Parliament, the Legislative Assembly now has exclusive power to deal with these forms of misconduct as contempt. This is consistent with Article 9 of the *Bill of Rights 1689*, now enshrined in s.8 of the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*, which provides that the debates or proceedings of Parliament cannot be impeached or questioned in any court or place out of Parliament.

The Assembly is empowered by ss.39 and 40 of the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001* to deal with contempt—

Time expired.

Hon. DM WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (5.51 pm): I second the motion. If Gordon Nuttall took large sums of money from businesses and did not declare it, then he betrayed his colleagues and subverted the cause that he was supposed to be serving.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Murrumba, I remind you that the matter you are raising is before the House and the parliamentary ethics committee so you should not be raising that matter in this debate.

Mr WELLS: I take your point, Mr Speaker, and I said 'if'. If he lied to parliament, he deserved the exit that he had from it, but that is not the issue that we have today. The position that the government takes on this issue is not dictated by any wish to defend Gordon Nuttall in any way, shape or form. The question is whether we should reinstitute in our statutory framework a provision that says any person who lies to the parliament—that is any person, not just any member of parliament but any person. That is what the statute said. If we have a provision like that, it means that any person who comes as a witness to a committee, anybody who gives evidence before any kind of parliamentary committee, will be liable to a penal sanction if somebody can argue with any plausibility at all that they told a lie. If, for example, the Public Accounts Committee toured around Queensland trying to find the best way to build

certain infrastructure and somebody from one company said it could be done that way and their rivals could put together a case—confected as it might be—that he was lying, then that person, that individual, that private citizen would be subject to the possibility of a penal sanction.

In the history of these kinds of sanctions where events in parliament have given rise to penal provisions it has not been members of parliament who have gone to jail. As a general rule in the history of Australia and the history of other jurisdictions, most of them have actually been private citizens. What the opposition is proposing is to put back into the statute a provision that talks about any person, any citizen of Queensland. It would make a mockery of our participatory democracy. It would make a mockery of our panoply of community cabinet meetings, of our consultative government and of our inclusive democracy in Queensland if we were to do that. I would ask honourable members who are proposing to put into our statute a provision that makes it a penal sentence to say certain things in this House this question: where do you think in a democracy the sanction for lying to parliament should be? Should it in a democracy be with the people or should it be with somebody else? If they answer that it should be with somebody else other than the people, then they are not a democrat, and they should think very, very carefully before they vote on this or go mouthing off into the sticks or the suburbs about what is required in Queensland.

If they are arguing that it should be somebody other than the people who should be the ultimate arbiters of truth in a democracy, then they are not arguing for democracy. If they want to make somebody else—whether it be the High Court or the grand inquisitor—the ultimate arbiter of truth and not the people at an election, then they are on a slippery slope that leads away from democracy. Governments have been known in the past to stack courts when those courts had the power to determine what was true and what was false. The correct way in a democracy to deal with somebody who lies to parliament is to have them cashiered at an election. If somebody stands up here and says something which is untrue, then their voters can vote them out, and we have had recent instances of that occurring. The people of a constituency can remove a member of parliament who lies.

There are other significant sanctions that remain for people who lie to parliament. A minister who lies to parliament must forfeit his or her position. A member of parliament who lies to parliament can be taken to the privileges committee and various sanctions can be applied. It is not true to say that this is a removal of sanctions or permission for members of parliament to lie. The proposal that is being put before us tonight does not make it compulsory for politicians to tell the truth. It already is. What is being put before us at the moment is a proposal to subvert democracy by taking the power to determine what is regarded as true and false in a society away from the voters, away from the people, and putting it in the hands of an expert tribunal. There is no tribunal that is more expert in the truth than the people. If members do not believe that, they do not believe in democracy.

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (5.55 pm): If I listened to the Labor member who just spoke, he would have us believe that Sir Samuel Griffith did not believe in democracy when he inserted into the Criminal Code provisions to make it illegal to lie to the parliament or its committees. So I think we could sum up the previous speaker's legal qualities against Sir Samuel Griffith and realise that they fall far short.

Lying to parliament was made legal under changes pushed through by the Beattie Labor government in December 2005, moves which were strenuously opposed by the state National-Liberal coalition. We objected to the abuse of the parliament by the Labor majority when, under Premier Beattie's leadership, parliament was recalled for a special sitting to wipe clean the sins of former health minister Gordon Nuttall, a Beattie government minister who received an adverse finding from the CMC. That extraordinary special sitting also passed legislation which repealed a provision which had existed on the state's criminal statutes since their drafting in the 1800s by Australian constitutional author Sir Samuel Griffith. This eminent legal mind believed provisions outlawing lying to parliament had a place in Queensland's legal system and no-one should strip those laws from the Criminal Code until Gordon Nuttall—that close mate of Peter Beattie's—was caught out and the Premier had to fix things up for his mate.

What I find so amazing is that Premier Beattie believes it is a greater crime to lie to him than it is to lie to the parliament. If one of Premier Beattie's ministers is found to have lied to the parliament or its committees, they can have a special sitting of parliament where other Labor ministers and friends line up to pat them on the back and say nice things. However, if a Labor mate lies to the Premier, then they potentially can be cast out of the Labor Party into the darkness, into a life without the gravy train of post-parliamentary political consultancies and board memberships, which retiring Labor politicians seem to have made an art form of. What we see is a Labor Party that has a parliamentary standard which is less than acceptable with regard to the highest standards which were set down initially under our Constitution. It was good enough for our founding fathers, and it has stood the test of time. It was only taken out of the Criminal Code when this Labor Party—this government—with its majority had a political problem.

Let us look at the glowing comments that some Labor members and ministers used when endorsing the former health minister, Gordon Nuttall, when trying to wring their hands and say why they believed it was necessary to do what they were doing in that sitting last year. Let us start with Anna Bligh, the Deputy Premier. She said—

For those of us who are colleagues of the member for Sandgate, for those of us who have worked with him, for those of us who have sat with him around a cabinet table and know him to be a decent man—a man of integrity—this will not be easy.

She thought he was a man of integrity. Warren Pitt also attested to the ‘good character of the member for Sandgate, a character which those opposite have sought to tarnish’. Quite frankly, Minister Pitt, I think Gordon Nuttall did that for himself.

Let us look at other prominent Labor ministers who spoke out in favour of the member for Sandgate. Remember, this was after an adverse finding was made by the CMC, which was the reason behind the special sitting to change the Criminal Code and wipe Gordon Nuttall’s slate clean. Paul Lucas said—

I know the member for Sandgate well and I believe that he is a good and honest man.

Let us look at what Tom Barton said. He said—

I want to express my beliefs on the honesty of a member, the member for Sandgate, whom I have known for almost 30 years.

He goes on in extraordinary detail about what he believes. The contribution of Gary Fenlon really takes the cake. He said—

... the member for Sandgate is one of the greatest members who has ever entered this parliament.

I do not think he could walk on water, but the government could certainly change the Criminal Code for him, and that is the problem. This legislation was changed unnecessarily. It stood the test of time and it should have continued to stand the test of time. That whiff of corruption that this government has had about it, which we see now with the turn of events, is showing that we cannot trust it when it takes these very important statutes out of legislation. All those new members who are going to vote in favour of the Labor Party tonight have their fingerprints on this unforgettable scene.

Ms PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (6.00 pm): I rise to support the amended motion moved by the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. It is interesting that the opposition wants to cover old ground. Over the past two days we have witnessed an extraordinary event in this parliament where the Leader of the Opposition has made comments in this House that he would dare not utter outside the chamber. As the member for Nicklin stated earlier this morning—and I have the greatest respect for him—

Today, I have not heard one credible piece of evidence to substantiate the allegation—not one.

Parliamentary privilege should be used wisely. It should not be used recklessly or with the intention to mislead. All members should be treated with the utmost respect. If a member is to use this House to make statements, that member needs to be able to back them up with evidence. In any court of law evidence is produced to put a case with a judge making a decision as to whether or not that evidence is admissible. Over the past two days we have witnessed an extraordinary situation in which the Leader of the Opposition has produced not one single piece of evidence and has decided that he alone should be judge and jury. In relation to the matters that he raised in this House, let me repeat this: there is not one shred of evidence, and for that reason alone the Leader of the Opposition should be ashamed.

I turn to the matter in question, the amendments to the Criminal Code. The Members’ Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee Report No. 78, which was tabled in this House on 11 August, clearly stated—

The Criminal Code Amendment Act 2006 repealed s 57, which had provided that false evidence before a parliamentary committee was a criminal offence.

Let me also add from the same record. It states—

Section 57 of the Criminal Code provided that a person is liable to imprisonment for 7 years for knowingly giving a false answer to any lawful and relevant question put to the person in the course of an examination before the Legislative Assembly or one of its committees. The Criminal Code Amendment Act 2006, assented to on 1 June 2006, repealed s 57. False evidence before a parliamentary committee is now no longer a criminal offence, but remains liable to be dealt with as a contempt of parliament.

This is the correct decision and brings Queensland in line with the rest of the states. For the benefit of members, I point out that it has brought Queensland into line with the position of the House of Commons and the federal houses of parliament and other states and territories. It would be useful at this stage to go through the other relevant jurisdictions and detail their positions in relation to contempt of parliament and criminal offences in this regard. In the Commonwealth parliament the giving of false or misleading evidence by members and nonmembers can be punished as contempt of the Senate or the House of Representatives, but there is no legislation making it a criminal offence. The Leader of the Opposition may wish to apply the kinds of statements that he and his colleagues have made in this place to his federal government colleagues. I will wait to see his media release.

Article 9 of the United Kingdom Bill of Rights will protect a member of the House of Commons or House of Lords with regard to the criminal law in respect of anything said in parliament. The giving of false evidence can be treated in the relevant house as a contempt.

A Privy Council decision in 1886 held that powers of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly did not extend to the punishment of contempt or the unconditional suspension of a member. New South Wales never enacted general powers for the punishment of contempt of its parliament. There are no provisions which purport to make members of the New South Wales parliament subject to criminal sanctions for knowingly giving false evidence.

In Victoria the Constitution Act 1975 provides for a penalty of perjury where evidence is given under oath. However, that act protects members from criminal sanction in this regard. In South Australia the Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935 specifically provides that nothing in it derogates from parliamentary privilege. In Western Australia criminal prosecution does not apply to members of the House.

Under the Tasmanian Parliamentary Privileges Act, each house has the power to punish certain incidents of contempt in a summary way. However, section 12 of that act states that the privileges of either house will protect members in relation to an offence if the conduct concerns a proceeding of the House. As the former Attorney-General stated in her speech on the original bill—

This bill is not about giving the green light to lying. Misleading the parliament or a committee of the parliament is wrong—pure and simple. What this bill is about is the appropriate sanction for misleading the parliament and the appropriate body to deal with issues surrounding the running of parliament and parliamentary procedures.

In Queensland today members and nonmembers are liable to be dealt with for contempt of parliament under the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001. The repeal of sections of the Criminal Code remove an anomaly that existed in this House and had no foundation in the Westminster system. It is interesting that, if we followed what the member for Maroochydore and the member for Caloundra were arguing today, we would never amend any section of the Criminal Code; we would keep it as it was in the late 19th century. I thoroughly support the amendment proposed by the Attorney-General.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (6.05 pm): We really have to wonder what members opposite have to fear about telling the truth. If those new members opposite who are here today were here last year when this parliament was recalled on a dark day to use the massive majority of this government to exonerate one of its own from potential criminality, they would understand what this is all about.

We heard some extraordinary contentions earlier on. There was one from the member for Murrumba, who said by way of response to one of his colleagues that Sir Samuel Griffith was not a democrat. Sir Samuel Griffith was recognised as one of the great liberal democrats of the 1800s and is recognised very much as a great liberal democrat even today. He believed very much in democracy. He believed very much in the rights and liberties of the individual. If honourable members look at what Sir Samuel Griffith did they will see that it was extremely significant. He was the architect of the world's first real Criminal Code. That is the mark of this man. He was also Chief Justice, Attorney-General and Premier of Queensland. In many ways he was the architect of Australia's modern Constitution.

As was acknowledged by those who attended the Constitutional Convention in the late 1890s and the processes that flowed on from there, Sir Samuel Griffith took it upon himself to actually write that Constitution. Of course there was involvement from others, but the majority of work was undertaken by Sir Samuel Griffith, and what a magnificent document that is because it has stood the test of time. There have been only a handful of changes to the Australian Constitution in the past 100 years or more, such is the depth of brilliance of this great legal mind who drafted the world's first Criminal Code and who was also Attorney-General, Chief Justice and Premier of Queensland. Let anyone in this place hang their head in shame who believes that Sir Samuel Griffith was in no way a democrat. He was a great liberal democrat and an extraordinary liberal thinker in his own time.

What we are seeing from members opposite is the construction of some sort of puerile argument that sections 56 to 58 of the Criminal Code have no standing in a modern time. That is like saying that the Constitution, which was drafted by Sir Samuel Griffith, has no standing in our modern era. The people of Queensland are much smarter than members opposite. If the honourable member for Murrumba wants to take his contention to its obvious extrapolation and conclusion, then he should go and ask the people of Queensland if they want sections 56 to 58 of the Queensland Criminal Code reinstated. We know what they would say if he put it to a referendum. They would say, 'My oath! Politicians should not be given a licence to lie.' That is what we saw last year.

What we saw here was one of the most despicable acts by any government. We had a minister of the Crown who was facing criminal sanction for deliberately providing false testimony to a parliamentary committee. It was recommended by the CMC that that person be considered for potential criminal charges. This government would not let due process be properly followed. It came in here and used its majority to exonerate that member.

What did we actually see? We saw the Deputy Premier waxing lyrical about the integrity and honesty of this person. She said, 'He is a decent man and a man of integrity and it is hard to do what we will have to do.' We know what Commissioner Davies said about him on page 495 of his report at 6.619. He said—

The statements made by Minister Nuttall at the meeting show a disposition to conceal adverse information. Concealment of Dr Fitzgerald's report was not in the public interest.

Further he went on to conclude—

Such conduct was misleading, unreasonable and careless.

The old eyeball test must have been done with eye patches. The eyeball test was not working very well. Those opposite all peered into his eyes and they saw undying love and loyalty. They came into this place and felt that there was a need to exonerate him using their extraordinary parliamentary majority. Not only that, but they circumvented the appropriate processes of contempt of parliament. They actually accepted an apology from the member in this place before the matter could be referred to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee, where undoubtedly there would have been a substantiated case of contempt.

He was cleared all round. Then the government repealed sections of the Criminal Code. Those opposite cannot trust themselves to tell the truth so they legalised lying. That is what they did. They could not trust themselves to tell the truth so they legalised lying. We had in Queensland what was a very forward and far-reaching piece of legislation which stood the test of time for 110 years. In a shameful way those opposite are not going to reintroduce those sections of the Criminal Code.

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (6.11 pm): I rise this evening to oppose the motion brought to the House by the Leader of the Opposition and to support the Attorney-General's amendment. There are two reasons for my taking this position. The first is that it is entirely right and proper that the matter of law to which we refer should not be a part of the Criminal Code. I will detail that matter in a moment. The second is that the Leader of the Opposition's actions in bringing this motion before the House tonight—he did not even have the guts or the energy to bring a private member's bill before the House, just a motion—is yet another example of his seemingly endless commitment to bringing this whole place into disrepute.

First, let us look at the matter of law itself. In the century before last when the Criminal Code was first drafted there was legitimate debate regarding the parliament's ability to deal with matters of privilege that came before it. As such, the Criminal Code was deliberately and expressly drafted to include provisions to allow contempts before the parliament to be dealt with as matters of criminal law. The intent at the time was clearly that these criminal provisions would apply to strangers appearing before the House. Why do I know that? We know that because at the time there was no such practice of members of parliament appearing before parliamentary committees. There were not parliamentary committees like estimates committees or other parliamentary committees that had some kind of investigative role. Those parliamentary subcommittees simply did not exist. Indeed, we know that they did not exist because right up until the 1980s the parliament had just a handful of committees that dealt with its own matters. For instance, there was a library committee and a cafeteria committee. There were no investigative committees at the time.

In 1983 the coalition split when the Liberal Party, which at the time had some gumption about it, tried to introduce the first investigative committee to this place—that was the Public Accounts Committee. The coalition at the time split over that matter because the Nationals were so appalled by the idea that there would be parliamentary committees which would call ministers before them.

So we know for sure that when that provision was drafted it was drafted for two reasons: one, there was doubt as to the parliament's ability to deal with contempts before the parliament and, two, we know for sure it was about strangers because there was no such practice as members of parliament appearing before parliamentary committees. The modern practice of ministers and members of parliament appearing before committees is purely a practice of modern accountability which has emerged in Australian jurisdictions since the 1970s and in this jurisdiction since the election of the Goss government in 1989.

So when the whole Gordon Nuttall affair erupted the matter of law was seen not as some central criminal provision as those guys want to make out it was; it was seen as some obscure and arcane matter of law discovered by some nerd in the opposition office. It was seen as rather like the provision that up until recently existed in the vagrants act whereby one could be arrested and imprisoned if one did not have a comb in one's pocket. It was a bizarre, arcane, historical provision that existed for a good reason 100 years ago but which had subsequently been forgotten. Let us have a look at why it is that the opposition wants to talk about this today. This is just another example—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Can I say to members of the opposition that I am not too sure why there has been so much disrespect shown to this member. I ask you to listen to the member in silence. Most members have been listened to in silence. I ask you do that now.

Ms NOLAN: I have to say that being lectured about trust, integrity and accountability by this opposition is a bit like the Seinfeld episode where the characters found themselves in Bizarro World. How very strange it is. So we had the member for Caloundra, the bloke who said we should bring back Patel on a deal and then break the deal, talking to us about trust. These are the people who have come

in here over the last couple of days and slurred a range of former and current members with nothing to back them up. This Leader of the Opposition, when brought to account on this, has simply done it again. Do not talk to us about trust and accountability.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (6.16 pm): I am pleased to speak to the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. We have reached a new low in Queensland. The motion before the House calls on the government to repeal the Criminal Code Amendment Act and reinstate the previous sections 56 to 58 of the Criminal Code so that members of the House who provide false evidence to this House or its committees are subject to the criminal law that they were subject to for over 100 years. Some speakers have forgotten what the motion is really about.

What those opposite are saying is that it is okay to give false evidence and lie to the parliament. This came about because a former member of this parliament actually made false statements to an estimates committee. It is quite clear that that is what happened. I personally do not want to see any of our members go to jail, but I do not want to see them lie either. Those opposite have legalised that. This is the problem that we are facing today. The community has to have confidence in its parliamentarians. It does not want this particular legislation that was put through by this government. We could count on one hand the number of members who spoke to the legislation, but they all voted for it. He might mention some of those members who voted for it later on.

The former member for Sandgate made some false statements. A major display of corruption is evolving through this government. It is evolving all of the time. It changes legislation and abuses the process. Let me quote some of what was said that very famous night. This is what former member Tom Barton said—

Secondly, I want to express my beliefs on the honesty of a member, the member for Sandgate, whom I have known for almost 30 years. Before I take my seat I also want to say that I have absolutely no reservations about standing here today and asserting that the member for Sandgate is a man of honesty and integrity. He is a man who made a mistake and has paid a very, very high price for that mistake.

What price did he pay? At the end of the day he was let off and allowed to lie.

Mr Springborg: He got a \$300,000 reward.

Mr HOBBS: All those sorts of things happened. Tom Barton went on to say—

I have had the privilege of knowing the member for almost 30 years. I worked with him when he was a young union delegate in north Queensland—

I wonder what happened in those days—

for the Australian Bank Employees Union in the days when it was known as the Australian Bank Officials Association. I worked with him when he rose to be a vice-president of that union.

This is the man with honesty and integrity. He continued—

I worked with him and in conjunction with him when he was a training officer with the Trade Union Training Authority. I worked with the member for Sandgate for a number of years when he was a state organiser of the Electrical Trades Union before being elected to this parliament. He also worked for me as a training officer of the Occupational Health and Safety Training Unit of the Queensland Trades and Labor Council when I was the assistant secretary of that body.

He goes on to say, and this is a little gem—

You get to know a person very well when they work for you. I got to know his values even better than when I had known him during the many years previous to that. As everybody is aware, we were elected to this parliament on the same day ... We were backbenchers together and we have been ministerial colleagues for the past five years. I have seen him firsthand right across that whole range of activity for some 27 or 28 years. I know the man's love for the Australian Labor Party.

Tom Barton said—

I know this man very well, possibly better than anybody else in this parliament today. I want to vouch for his honesty and integrity and his values.

This is what we have.

I will run through the people who actually voted that night, when the ayes had it: Attwood, Barry, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Briskey, Choi, Clark, Clark, Croft, Cummins, Cunningham, Fenlon, Finn, Fouras, Fraser, Hayward, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Keech, Lavarch, Lee, Livingstone, Lucas, Male, McNamara, Mickel, Molloy—I wonder where she is these days—Mulherin, Nolan, O'Brien, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Purcell, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten—Robbie voted for it too, isn't that good?—Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Sullivan, Wallace, Wells and Wilson.

Time expired.

Mr LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (6.22 pm): I strongly support the amended motion moved by the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. The amendments to the Criminal Code have ensured that the Queensland parliament operates in the way that it does in every other parliament in this country. Our

system of parliamentary democracy, the Westminster system, is based upon a history of long and sometimes violent struggles between the king and the parliament in England. Our democratic principles are based on the 1688 Bill of Rights, which was enacted a century before European settlement in Australia.

One of the most important principles is that parliamentary proceedings cannot be questioned in any court or other venue outside of parliament. In other words, all Westminster type parliaments are in control of their own destinies. This parliament is in control of all that occurs in this chamber.

Of course, all members are expected to act and speak honestly, but in the event that a member misleads the House, he or she should be dealt with by this House or a committee of the House. In this case it is the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee. In other words, the old section 57 of the Criminal Code, which lay dormant for 100 years, was an anachronism. In effect, section 57 conflicted with the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001, which states—

The freedom of speech and debates or proceedings of the Assembly cannot be impeached or questioned in any court or place out of the Assembly.

It is that simple. In fact, it was so simple that the opposition supported that act without amendment.

If the opposition were honest or consistent—and those are two words that one will not hear used in the same sentence as 'the Queensland opposition'—it would be asking John Howard to introduce criminal sanctions for lying in the federal parliament. But is he? Of course he is not! Can members imagine the work that that would create for some poor prosecutor? Members will remember the children overboard and the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq stories. This demonstrates the dishonesty of the opposition's argument.

Another irony is that we are actually protecting the Leader of the Opposition from himself. He is the self-confessed tactical liar of the National Party. Yesterday he came in here and defamed present and past members of this parliament. He has not produced a shred of evidence to support his disgraceful allegations and insinuations. Yesterday he lied in this parliament. Today the Premier pointed out that the Leader of the Opposition claimed that he did not say that the leader of the coalition would be elected before the election when, in fact, we all know now that he did say that. Should he be charged criminally for lying? Unfortunately, but correctly, the answer must be no.

The opposition has worked itself into a lather and consistently misrepresented the situation. Opposition members have used expressions like 'licences to lie' and so on. My question to the Leader of the Opposition is: where is your licence? If Queensland had a lying team, the Leader of the Opposition would be the captain and coach. The opposition's motive for bringing on this debate today reflects the parlous situation that the Leader of the Opposition now finds himself in.

Mr SEENEY: I rise to a point of order. That is obviously offensive. I find it so and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

Mr LAWLOR: I withdraw. The Leader of the Opposition made a serious—

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Southport, I am asking you to respond. Are you withdrawing?

Mr LAWLOR: I did.

Mr SPEAKER: I did not hear you.

An opposition member: It's a long way back.

Mr LAWLOR: The member should not talk about sitting positions. What a joke. They got rid of the member pretty quickly.

Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition made a series of outrageous slurs against a number of former members of this parliament. The Leader of the Opposition cannot back up his outrageous claims, so he brings on a debate—most of which he was not even here for—about contempt of parliament as a distraction from his own abuse of parliamentary privilege yesterday. I support the amendment moved by the Attorney-General.

Division: Question put—That the amendment be agreed to.

AYES, 48—Attwood, Barry, Beattie, Bligh, Bombolas, Boyle, Choi, Croft, Darling, English, Finn, Gray, Hayward, Hinchliffe, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Jones, Keech, Kiernan, Lawlor, Lucas, McNamara, Miller, Moorhead, Nelson-Carr, O'Brien, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Purcell, Reilly, Robertson, Schwartz, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Struthers, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Weightman, Wells, Wendt, Wetenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Male, Nolan

NOES, 29—Copeland, Cripps, Cunningham, Dempsey, Elmes, Flegg, Foley, Gibson, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, Lee Long, Lingard, McArdle, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Nicholls, Pratt, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Dickson, Hopper

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Division: Question put—That the motion, as amended, be agreed to, viz—

That this House notes that the amendments to the Criminal Code Amendment Act 2006 ensured the Queensland Parliament operates in the same way as the Federal houses of parliament, Australian States and Territories and the House of Commons.

AYES, 48—Attwood, Barry, Beattie, Bligh, Bombolas, Boyle, Choi, Croft, Darling, English, Finn, Gray, Hayward, Hinchliffe, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Jones, Keech, Kiernan, Lawlor, Lucas, McNamara, Miller, Moorhead, Nelson-Carr, O'Brien, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Purcell, Reilly, Robertson, Schwarten, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Struthers, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Weightman, Wells, Wendt, Wetenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Male, Nolan

NOES, 29—Copeland, Cripps, Cunningham, Dempsey, Elmes, Flegg, Foley, Gibson, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, Lee Long, Lingard, McArdle, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Nicholls, Pratt, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Dickson, Hopper

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Sitting suspended from 6.40 pm to 7.40 pm.

MEDICAL BOARD (ADMINISTRATION) BILL HEALTH SERVICES AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

Resumed from 28 November (see p. 586).

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (7.40 pm): I rise to speak to the Medical Board (Administration) Bill 2006 and the Health Services Amendment Bill 2006. I would like to thank the departmental staff for their briefing on the bills in the last sitting week. The Office of the Health Practitioner Registration Boards provides administrative support to health practitioner registration boards to assist them in discharging their statutory functions. The office also assists the boards in processing a professional's application for registration.

This bill will establish a new and specific Office of the Medical Board. In the same way the Office of the Health Practitioner Registration Boards supports the health practitioner registration boards, the Office of the Medical Board will support the Medical Board of Queensland in its process of registering medical practitioners. As such, the Medical Board (Administration) Bill essentially replicates the Health Practitioners Registration Boards (Administration) Act 1999. Hopefully, the new office will lead to a more timely and thorough processing of medical practitioners seeking registration. This move recognises that the processing of medical practitioners seeking registration often requires more resources than other health practitioners and, of course, acts to avoid another Patel scandal.

We know, too, that previous measures brought in this year with regard to quality and timeliness put the onus on the Medical Board to get medical practitioner registrations right. The coalition has concerns that the Premier's promise to create a new Office of the Medical Board came out of questions arising from problems that arose during the election campaign with regard to the registration of a doctor in Rockhampton. The coalition also has concerns about the cost of implementing this legislation and how much creating the Office of the Medical Board will cost. That amount has not been disclosed.

The minister stated in his second reading speech that the new Office of the Medical Board will have the following benefits—

It will provide more effective scrutiny of persons seeking registration as doctors in Queensland thereby avoiding inappropriate registrations, and the new office will have a dedicated focus on the quality and timeliness of registrations and to ensure a thorough check of each candidate's credentials;

It will facilitate improvement in administrative arrangements and promote more efficient service delivery to the board; and

It will allow the Office of the Health Practitioner Registration Boards to concentrate on less complex registration processes associated with the other 12 health practitioner registration boards.

This is nuts and bolts legislation. The Queensland coalition has no problems with its provisions and accepts its objective. This side of the House notes the consultation undertaken to compile the Medical Board (Administration) Bill.

As this bill relates directly to the processing of registration applications of medical practitioners, I would like to use this opportunity to inform the House of recent developments in the United States that I believe would be worthy of consideration. Part of the registration processing includes reference checks in order to confirm the good or suspect standing of applicants.

Recently, the US court has dealt with the issue of when negligent representations are provided in references—an issue that came to light during the Patel issue. In layman's terms, the court held that a hospital has a duty to disclose and to supply correct information in its referral letter arising from the special relationship between a practitioner and their employer hospital. The court's decision is not directly applicable under Australian law as it is a US decision and the law of negligent misrepresentation also differs between jurisdictions. However, the 2005 US case is indicative of judicial approaches to a

hospital's duty to disclose all information relevant to a medical practitioner's competency to practise. A finding of liability in negligence for failure in credentialing processes which led directly or indirectly to patient harm, both of which were illustrated during the Bundaberg commission of inquiry, is also possible in Australia. Strengthening the power of the Medical Board and the new office in screening references may be something that the government would care to legislate.

I would particularly like to note the extensive transitional provisions of the Medical Board (Administration) Bill. Part 5 of the legislation sets out procedures and time frames for negotiating the first service agreement entered into between the executive officer and the board after the commencement of the act. These procedures and associated time frames are designed to facilitate the prompt implementation of the administrative arrangements established by the act and to minimise any potential disruption to board services that could arise if negotiations between the executive officer and the board become protracted during the implementation phase. These transitional provisions are worthy of note and support.

I turn to the Health Services Amendment Bill. This bill amends the Health Services Act 1991. The bill will implement structural changes to the administration of Queensland Health following the announcement that Queensland's 37 health districts are to be reduced to 20. The bill does not reduce the number of health districts from 37 to 20 yet, as one may be led to believe; it just effects changes to the administration. The minister effectively noted this in his second reading speech when he stated—

I intend to initially establish 37 Health Community Councils to reflect existing communities represented by current district health councils.

I will address the issue of health community councils in due course. It is appropriate to note that I have received conflicting advice regarding the plan to reduce the current number of health districts from 37 to 20. But it is undeniable that, to date, the number of levels in the organisational structure of Queensland Health has promoted fragmentation between policy development, governance and, most importantly, service delivery. The Beattie government has left its 37 health districts insufficiently integrated to provide a comprehensive health service for Queensland. Therefore, the restructuring of the health districts is something that the Queensland coalition will ultimately support. We on this side of the House will not continue to allow the diminution of health services to the community, which has been happening over the last number of years, to continue to occur.

The Forster review stated—

If any restructuring is contemplated, it should take place for the right reasons and strive to achieve a demonstrated enhancement to health service delivery, the services received by consumers and patients, and ultimately improved health outcomes.

Labor's spin doctors weaved this theme into the minister's second reading speech for this bill. In his second reading speech the minister stated—

The benefits of these changes will flow through to improved health service delivery.

He went on to state in relation to this transition phase—

There is no intention to reduce services, particularly to rural and regional Queenslanders.

Whenever the minister says that he has no intention of something bad happening, warning bells go off in Queensland coalition ranks. We cannot help speculating that the minister knows that things are just about to get worse. However, the minister knows that he can point to the *Hansard* and say, 'I only said that I had no intention and intentions are not actualities when health service outcomes fall short.'

Despite what the explanatory notes refer to as the 'continued implementation of the current health reform agenda' of the Beattie government, in actuality the reduction of services is still happening. The most glaring illustration of that this past month has been at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital—the state's largest hospital. Almost 20 per cent of operations scheduled were cancelled for the remainder of the year, despite earlier claims by the Beattie government that the closures were caused by maintenance for three months from the beginning of the year. One hundred and fifty-three operating lists affecting over 500 patients have been cancelled in the lead-up to Christmas. During the first nine months of the year, the number of people waiting for the most urgent category 1 operations has increased by more than 60 per cent.

What hope do our rural and regional friends have when we have mass cancellations at the RBWH in Brisbane? The government did not intend to have delays past three months at the RBWH but this month has proved that intentions are not reflected in a Queensland Labor government's reality.

This bill relates to changes to the administration of Queensland Health in anticipation of the state's 37 districts being reduced to 20. It is worth recalling what features Forster noted would be in an improved structure of Queensland Health. He stated—

While arguments could be made for major changes to both district and zonal boundaries, it is considered that a major restructuring of the districts would result in minimal savings and would divert attention away from patient-centred improvement and the effort required for the implementation of the major reform agenda to change the direction of Queensland Health.

The recent episode of cancellations at the RBWH have proven that statement to be true. In looking through the Forster report, I was drawn to page 73 and recommendation 5.1, which states—

The current 37 Health Service Districts are retained.

Yet we see that the minister is planning to reduce these 37 districts to 20. It seems to me that the government is pleased to cloak itself in some aspects of the Forster and Davies reports, but then in other cases chooses not to. The Beattie government's reform agenda should not be accepted as following the recommendations arising out of the Forster review or the recommendations that came out of the inquiry into Bundaberg Base Hospital, which it often tries to blanket itself in. The government has just taken from those reports some of the bits that it likes and left others behind.

One point the government has picked up is aligning the Health Services Act's organisational provisions to Queensland Health's new structure as proposed by the Forster review. The bill sets out the respective roles of the chief executive being statewide strategic direction and leadership, area general managers as leadership within their respective health service areas and district managers who manage public sector health services within their respective districts. These role explanations are welcomed. The recent damning report on Health by the Auditor-General noted that, since the adoption of some of the Forster recommendations, which have led to organisational restructuring and recruitment drives, the department should give priority to clearly redefining and documenting roles and responsibilities. This is a move in recognition of this failing.

This bill also creates a Health Executive Service, a model taken from the Public Service Act's Senior Executive Service, incorporating area general managers, district managers and other senior Health executives who are not part of the Public Service. The new Health Executive Service is intended to promote effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of public sector health services by attracting, developing and retaining a core group of health executives. One has to accept this as part of the reform agenda that the government has decided it is going to implement. However, what makes these provisions hard to swallow is that the Beattie government has not stopped the growth of bureaucrats in Queensland Health elsewhere. One year ago Forster recommended that Queensland Health slash central office bureaucracy. However, in an answer to a question on notice this month, the health minister presented data that showed the recruitment of bureaucrats was keeping pace with the recruitment of medical staff. This is what I mean by the Beattie government picking up some things in Forster's report and not others.

The government has attempted to develop Queensland Health's leadership and management capacity by creating a health executive board as suggested by Forster and Davies but has not cut down on bureaucrats elsewhere, as was also suggested by Forster and Davies. This haphazard adoption of the reviews' recommendations makes the good things the government decides to follow through with not as good as they could be. It is the Beattie government's haphazard and shotgun adoption of Forster's recommendations that led to the recent damning report by the Auditor-General. The Auditor-General's 2006 report found overall workforce planning systems and processes were only partially implemented and that data integrity issues, paramount to any sort of proper planning, were identifiable. The Beattie government has jumped on recruitment as the be-all and end-all solution to the workforce crisis in Queensland, but the government has forgotten about the importance of workforce planning.

The report found that the processes currently in place were more in line with workforce management as opposed to workforce planning. The Auditor-General's report recommended a shift from its current focus on short-term recruitment and training issues to a greater focus on longer-term workforce issues, including analysis of future workforce gaps and strategic planning. The report also noted how Health conducts short- and long-term forecasting, which is supported by documented assumptions. However, this forecasting is conducted on a reactive rather than systematic basis. Responsibility for workforce planning should be allocated to these new bureaucrats to rectify the report's findings. I look forward to clarification and/or the expansion of the responsibilities provided in this bill in the near future from the minister.

The bill will replace district health councils with health community councils. The explanatory notes state that health community councils will focus on community and consumer engagement and monitoring quality and safety in hospitals. This is a welcomed move, although we have concerns about the fact that there are going to be 37 health community councils reporting to only 20 health districts, which seems to raise concerns as to the relevance of the health community councils in some of these areas where they are a long way from where the district central office is based. The move is quite ironic in terms of recognising that health services belong to the community when we realise that Queensland Health has not engaged in any consultation with the medical community over this bill. The lack of consultation is justified in the explanatory notes where it is stated that because this bill focuses on the organisational arrangements of Queensland Health there has been no consultation with the community in relation to the bill. I thought that this irony was worthy of being pointed out.

The health community councils will act as community based advisory bodies and should make the health service more responsive to the local communities' needs. This move is welcomed in light of the latest report from the Centre for Rural and Remote Area Health. This joint research centre of the University of Southern Queensland and the University of Queensland recently sent me its report *Key issues in rural health: Perspective of health service providers in rural Queensland*, which states—

There was a view among participants that community perceptions and expectations are not in alignment with the model of care that is provided. There is a constant lack of consultation between policy makers and consumers.

The report continues—

Also the criticism was levelled that even where there are consultations they result in either no outcomes or unsatisfactory outcomes.

That reminds me of the feedback that Forster received at, for example, the forum I attended when Forster came to the Gold Coast last year. That is what consumers were saying anecdotally about their experiences when dealing with health outcomes. This is what the Beattie government has made an art form of. The government consults the people to make them think that the government is listening, make everyone watching think that we are doing the right thing but not actually follow through with anything. That is what I find so tragic about the announcement of yet another task force to look at the use of the deadly drug ice while at the same time rejecting, in our last sitting and before schoolies, a coalition proposal to ban the public display, sale and promotion of ice pipes and other illegal drug utensils to the public and our children. The Queensland coalition thinks that the notion of health community councils is a good idea. In fact, we believe that their proper use is the only way a reduction in services in rural areas will not occur. The Queensland coalition believes wholeheartedly that consultation lies at the heart of good government, but whether that will be achieved under the Beattie government is another question.

The bill enables the creation of statewide health services by Executive Council approval to operate across districts and areas. It is this sort of flexibility across districts and boundaries that lies at the heart of what Forster suggested we do to improve the structure of Queensland Health, not necessarily by reducing the number of districts to 20. Statewide health services might be employed to address high-profile issues such as statewide chronic disease or cancer services or in the provision of initiatives in Indigenous health, which needs a concerted effort to ensure Indigenous communities take up the services that are made available to them.

I suggest that the Executive Council uses its new scope to help address the workforce crisis that the Beattie government does not seem to fully grasp. I believe there is a real opportunity here, through statewide projects, to offer attractive and stimulating work to health professionals just as the Commonwealth government did in January this year. Then Minister Abbott announced the development of a new Medicare item for antenatal services provided by appropriately trained and qualified midwives, nurses and Aboriginal health workers on behalf of medical practitioners in rural and remote areas. This is one of a number of measures developed by the Australian government to improve access to medical services for people living in rural and remote communities. It is just one example of an innovative strategy to maximise the skills and availability of the clinical workforce that Forster proposed would assist to reform the workforce. The harnessing of the scope of the Executive Council will be something I will be watching with much interest.

The bill also inserts a set of guiding principles into the act that reflect recommendations from the Forster and Bundaberg Hospital reviews. The principles include making the best interests of users of public sector health services the main consideration of and for decision making; a commitment to quality and safety; being responsive to the needs of users of public sector health services and service delivery; being open and transparent in the provision of information to the community in relation to public sector health services; a commitment to creating workplaces that are free from bullying, harassment and discrimination where staff are respected and diversity is embraced; openness to complaints; collaborating with clinicians in the planning, developing and delivering of public sector health services; and promoting opportunities for training and development that are real. The bill also expands the objects of the act to include health promotion and protection.

The Queensland coalition supports these changes and supports these bills. However, the opposition remains wary of the impact on services the transition to the new structure will have, especially in the light of compelling new evidence showing that more Queenslanders are waiting on the waiting lists than ever before, that more Queenslanders are waiting longer on these waiting lists than recommended and that the workforce crisis is only being addressed by the Beattie government through recruitment drives without complementing workforce planning to manage the very health organisation it is restructuring. I ask the minister to stop blanketing himself with the Forster review as justification for the government when the impacts of those recommendations will only be achieved if recommendations are implemented at the same time as others and not on a haphazard basis. I accept that the minister does not intend for there to be a negative impact on health services. However, I also accept that intentions are often not health actualities under the Beattie government.

Ms STRUTHERS (Algeria—ALP) (8.00 pm): I rise to support these two bills, the Medical Board (Administration) Bill and the Health Services Amendment Bill, as they make a very important step towards improving the Queensland health system. I want to speak briefly on the Health Services Amendment Bill 2006 and, in particular, clause 21, which provides for structural changes to Queensland Health that will create new district health councils.

To restore confidence in the public health system—and that is really what is needed at the moment—we must have high standards of care but, as well, patients, families and staff must be confident that complaints and problems in the system can be voiced and will be acted upon by health management. Also, we need strong and effective consumer input into decision making. That is essential to restore public confidence in our system.

The new district health council model represents a revamp of the old model that we have had and in many areas it has been working well. I know in my own QEII district we have had great people contributing to the district health council in our area. But the new revamp really re-focuses the district health councils to be community based advisory bodies with a sharp focus on quality and safety within health services. I support the minister and the efforts he is making in this area.

I also want to take this opportunity to commend the health minister and cabinet for the decisive action and unprecedented funding through the \$10 billion Health Action Plan that we are seeing being implemented in Queensland. There are a lot of initiatives to attract and retain more health professionals, and that is critical to maintaining the high standards of health care. We are also very determined to establish a very effective system of consumer input and complaints management, and that is critical to making sure that all of these reforms work well.

The public want action; they want solutions. They do not want the sort of scaremongering the opposition has been going on with for the past couple of years. For example, take the irresponsible comment made in May by the former opposition leader, Lawrence Springborg, that it is a very real possibility if you are sick that you are safer at home than in hospital. The last thing that the many thousands of sick people who go into hospitals each day want to feel is anxiety and worry. That sort of commentary is totally irresponsible. People in Queensland can be very confident that we have a world-class health system.

There is no doubt that problems such as those that occurred at Bundaberg Base Hospital in relation to Dr Patel have caused horrendous circumstances for people, but it is totally irresponsible for members of the opposition to keep harping on about if you are sick then the worst place you can be is in hospital. It is an incredibly irresponsible position, and I urge the opposition members to give up on that and to focus and work with us on solutions and to create a greater sense of public confidence in what are wonderful systems around the state with compassionate and very committed health professionals, allied health professionals, medical staff, nursing staff, administration officers and support staff.

September figures for the quarter show that over 324,000 people were treated in accident emergency and 108,525 people were admitted to hospital for more than one day. The demand on the system is great. People in the health system are facing up to that demand and bearing with it. They are dealing with it extremely well. It bothers me and I know it bothers many members in this House. We need the people on the other side of the House to work with and support us to solve these issues and to restore public confidence so that when people are sick their anxiety is reduced by knowing that they can go into a world-class system and get the care that they need.

I have certainly witnessed that in the last five weeks. My own mother has been in the Gold Coast Hospital. She was in intensive care, she went to an acute ward and she then went into a rehabilitation ward. My mother and I have nothing but praise for the tremendous nursing staff, health care professionals and physios. Everyone played a significant part in her recovery from a very serious illness.

When people are sick we want them to feel confident. The new structures proposed in this bill will allow us to have greater and more effective consumer input into the system. Residents in local areas, people who know the health system, people who can bring great perspectives—and sometimes non-medical perspectives which need to bring a balance to decision making—can be very effectively introduced through the system.

I commend the initiatives that are being introduced in clause 21 in relation to the new district health councils. I believe that those people will need to be recruited and supported well in those roles so that we can have a very effective system of consumer input. In general I believe we are on track.

I am thoroughly enjoying my role as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health. I have been very impressed with not only the minister and his grasp of his portfolio but also his wonderful executive team working in Queensland Health and the tremendous staff around the state. Tonight it is simply all praise for the system. I know it has been difficult. I pay full tribute to the Bundaberg Hospital Patients Support Group. Those people have shown tremendous courage in the face of extreme difficulty to group together to try to deal with the issues that have been problematic in the system. Full marks to them. They have worked well together. They have been very cooperative. They have sorted through a number of issues. In meeting and speaking with them I was very, very impressed with the way in which they want to work well into the future to support a better health system. Beryl Crosby and the others deserve great praise.

I really liked the comment Beryl Crosby made a few months ago that she is voting for health. That is the issue. These people really want a better health system. They want to work with us. I urge members of the opposition to join with us and be part of the solution, not part of the problem, and help us restore confidence in the health system. Let us have people go into the health system feeling confident that they will be treated well. Let us not have them feeling the anxiety that some of them are feeling because of fearmongering from opposition members.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (8.06 pm): I am pleased to rise to speak in this cognate debate on the Health Services Amendment Bill and the Medical Board (Administration) Bill. I am also pleased to follow the member for Algeester. I want to be positive about where we are going with Queensland Health, but I also want to explain to the member—who perhaps is looking at this legislation through rose-coloured glasses to a certain degree—that, while many of the provisions contained in the Health Services Amendment Bill will be quite good for progressing Queensland Health, there are some issues that are important, and I am genuine in saying this. For instance, the districts will be reduced from 37 to 20. Let me explain to the honourable member what happens out in our areas when that occurs. This was supposed to happen when Wayne Goss came in, but it just did not work and it was subsequently changed. The number of health districts in fact increased. Presently we have a district based in Roma, one in Charleville—

Ms Struthers: You will now have health councils.

Mr HOBBS: I am talking about districts. There will be health councils, and I will deal with them. But first I am dealing with districts. Those two districts will be amalgamated. Roma, Injune, Surat and St George are the main hospitals in the Roma district. Then in the Charleville district we have Augathella, Morven, Cunnamulla and Thargomindah. Those two districts will be amalgamated. Those two district managers are currently absolutely flat out doing what they are doing now. We are talking about hundreds and hundreds of kilometres. It is a 14-hour drive from Roma out to Thargomindah and back. That is what amalgamation will mean for these managers. And for what? An extra \$5,000 a year?

Presently the managers in those districts are desperately trying to find doctors, dentists and health specialists. Each district advertises everywhere to try to find someone. They get someone to come out, they drive them around, take them to dinner and look after them. We have had some great success in Roma. Stuart Gordon has done a great job of attracting doctors. I have spoken to the minister about this; he is a great operator. He is away twice a week as it is doing what he is doing now. He has had a real battle to try to keep the doctors and dentists in those areas alone. If he has to drive an extra 14 hours just for one job, it will be impossible. He cannot do it. My area of Warrego is the same size as Victoria. That is the way it is.

Not only that, the government will also amalgamate three other districts into one. There will be Toowoomba, Northern Downs and Southern Downs. We can imagine what will happen. If the district manager out there has to drive from Toowoomba out to Tara and down to Wandoan or Miles, he will do it for the first few months, but eventually there will be issues at home, and we know what that is like. The kids are playing up and mum is kicking up a fuss, and he gets asked, 'Are you going away again?' 'Yeah, I'm sorry, dear. I've got to go.' Eventually, that officer will not go.

Ms Struthers: It's not one person in the system.

Mr HOBBS: It is. It is basically one person.

Ms Struthers: You are talking about one person.

Mr HOBBS: It is basically one person who is doing this. He is the district manager, and we only have a few of them out there in that sense. Sure, some other staff can be added on but, at the end of the day, it will be one person who will make a decision in relation to salary, conditions and housing. They are always trying to upgrade housing and so forth. We have been through this and, at the end of the day, it just does not work. It has not worked in the past and it will not work again.

What I am saying in summary is that the government is going to amalgamate the whole south-west of Queensland into one district, and then three districts will be amalgamated into one based on Toowoomba. After the first few months, we will not see the person who runs the show out there anyway because he will get sick of that. It happens. We have been through it so many times. How many more times have we got to do it before we finally realise it does not work that way. Once those district managers get into that comfort zone, they just do not do it.

The government is keeping the district councils for each area, and that is fine. Basically, all the government is doing is improving what is there with the health councils, and that is fine. The GP will be allowed to have more input, which should have happened anyway and could have happened under the old legislation. I am not sure whether that will really be all that much of a help in so far as it puts more pressure on that district manager to go out and do another job to meet with those health councils as well. Instead of having one, he has got two district councils to work with. I guarantee that it will not work and that it will be changed down the track sometime. It is just like God made little apples; it just will not work. It did not work before, it will not work again.

Let me say also that we are all trying to get doctors and professional health people to our districts as best we can. There is a real problem in Cunnamulla still. I know the department is trying as best it can, but we have to try harder to find someone there. A medical officer with a right to private practice is required in Tara, and dental services are required in St George. We have a willing dentist who was given a short contract which will expire early next year, and it appears to me that she probably will not be around if she does not receive an appropriate contract which will attract her to stay there. I guess it is up

to the department to work out what the rate is at the end of the day to keep those people. What price do we have to pay? At the end of the day, we have to have somebody out there. We need to have somebody who is prepared to provide those services. She is prepared to base herself in St George and work there and at Dirranbandi and Mungindi as well. At the end of the day, she is prepared to provide that service, and the government is going to have to negotiate some sort of deal to keep her there.

There are some good aspects in this legislation and I wish the government well with it. Let me say quite clearly that amalgamating the districts will not work, and I certainly would counsel the government to leave them as long as it can and if possible keep them there. Why would these people bother for an extra \$5,000? The amount of work those people are doing now is just extraordinary. The government expects them to go out and travel to try to cover those districts, but the workload will be far too much and it will not be of benefit to us.

Ms BARRY (Aspley—ALP) (8.13 pm): I too would like to contribute to the debate on the Medical Board (Administration) Bill and the Health Services Amendment Bill. I would like to deal, first of all, with the Medical Board (Administration) Bill. The primary objective of the bill is to facilitate the provision of responsive, administrative and operational support to the Medical Board of Queensland. It will do this by establishing an independent statutory body known as the Office of the Medical Board. The business of that office will be to provide support services exclusively to the board in accordance with an agreement. That gives effect to the government's 100-day commitment to introduce legislation that would create a new Office of the Medical Board.

Everyone would know that the Office of the Health Practitioner Registration Boards currently provides administrative support to all 12 health practitioner registration boards, and it provides a whole range of services including interpreting the criminal histories of those people who are applying for registration and processing their approvals so we can get down to the business of working as healthcare professionals.

The bill establishes a new Office of the Medical Board and assists it by enabling that particular board to provide quality and timeliness of medical registration. The new office will provide effective scrutiny of persons seeking registration as doctors in Queensland, therefore avoiding the problems that we have had in the past—that is, the inappropriate registration of people who, for instance, lie about their qualifications and their previous records.

The new office will have a dedicated focus on quality and timeliness. It will also facilitate improvement in the administration arrangements and basically move those services through quickly. It will allow the Office of the Health Practitioner Registration Boards to concentrate on the less complex registration processes that are associated with the other 12 but equally important health registration practitioner boards.

In essence, it enables Queensland Health to attract quality doctors and makes them undergo a rigorous quality control, but it ensures that that quality control does not result in unnecessary delays in getting those doctors where we want them to be—and that is out working and caring for the people of Queensland. That is particularly important when you consider that the Beattie government's action plan is proving to be exceptionally successful. Since the implementation of the action plan, 448 extra doctors have started work within Queensland Health.

Also, the bill complements Queensland's ongoing commitment to COAG, which is to establish a national registration scheme for health practitioners by July 2008. We are very actively involved in this new scheme which will raise the professional standards across the country and improve quality and timeliness across the country. It shows that this government is committed to ensuring that quality care is delivered by Queensland Health doctors who are efficiently and effectively registered and are deemed safe to practise in this state.

The Health Services Amendment Bill basically gives effect to structural changes to the administration of Queensland Health. An important amendment is the inclusion of a set of guiding principles which reflect the government's health reform agenda. These are the kinds of guiding principles that have always been at the heart of Queensland Health workers. These guiding principles include: making the best interests of users of public sector health services the main consideration for decision-making; a commitment to quality and safety; a commitment to openness and transparency; a commitment to creating workplaces that are free from bullying and harassment; an openness to complaints; collaboration between clinicians; the promotion of research relevant to the delivery of public sector health services; and the promotion of opportunities for training and development. This ensures that there is a focus on what is really important—that is, delivering good quality healthcare services.

The Health Services Amendment Bill creates very specific functions for chief executive officers and general health managers of services, now that we have these combined 20 health services. The Forster review and the Davies commission very much highlighted the critical need to develop Queensland Health's leadership and management capacity, and this bill addresses that by creating a health executive service that is modelled on a Senior Executive Service under the Public Service Act. That means we are working really hard towards attracting and developing quality health professionals.

I have to comment on the member for Warrego's speech. Whilst it was good to hear a positive contribution, I do not think he has advanced his cause any by progressing as an issue the fact that it is a long way to drive between particular districts. I think it is really important that we take note and are very considerate of those issues for people who work in rural communities, and I know the minister would have done that. But the new CEO of the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital cares for something like 8,000 staff. That is a huge job; it is probably more than most of western Queensland.

It is the provision of good quality leaders that will make the difference when providing services. Everybody has worries about whether their husband will be able to feed their kids at night and that sort of thing. I have been around Queensland Health since 1977 and I have never, ever seen such attention to detail in its leadership structure. If we do not get the top right nothing else works. Everybody who sits at the clinical level labours on. We have to get the strategic leadership right. I commend the minister for taking the time for the first time ever to make sure that we have good quality people who have their eye firmly on the ball ensuring they are delivering good quality health care. Yes, it is important to have budgets. Yes, it is important to do a whole range of things, but if you do not deliver good quality health care and have the courage to say yes and no for those very reasons, you are not a good leader and you will never, ever improve things.

I want to say congratulations to the minister from a person who has lived in Queensland Health for too long, I am afraid—nearly 30 years. I think this is the most significant attention to leadership that I have ever seen. I could not help but agree with the member for Algeester that it is important for the opposition to stop dragging and living in the past. Make no mistake: nobody is hiding. It is out there. We went to an election. We said to the people of Queensland, 'This is our plan.' They re-elected us and we are getting on with the job. I can tell honourable members right now that people who work in Queensland Health are sick to death of being flogged. They want us to be positive. They want us to support them. They do a great job for most people most of the time. We need to get on with the job. I want to commend the minister and the department for the changes. I support the bill and say, 'Congratulations!'.

Mr GIBSON (Gympie—NPA) (8.21 pm): I rise to speak to the Health Services Amendment Bill. I wish to speak on one area that is of concern to the people in my electorate, and that is the changes to the health districts. I do so in the knowledge that the current Gympie health district has been performing exceptionally well. Indeed, the district has experienced 13 per cent growth in activity and has exceeded surgical targets over the past three years. The question that is being asked in Gympie is: why would the government want to fix something that clearly is not broken? Previously we were part of the Sunshine Coast health district under the Goss government, and it did not work. When the announcement was made, the Gympie health district acting chairman, Mr Peter Hennessy, was reported as saying that the changes would be detrimental to the Gympie Hospital. Mr Hennessy's view that placing Gympie under the control of the Sunshine Coast was taking a step back to a time when the hospital had previously been under this type of regime and suffered greatly is one that is shared by many people in my electorate. Indeed, the editorial in the *Gympie Times* referred to these old Gympie arrangements as a 'disaster of monumental proportions' and went on to assert that there can be little doubt that the repercussions will be similar this time. Why then would the government ignore local history?

We have heard much from the government today about history education. I would encourage the minister to look into the history of what did not work the last time Gympie was merged into the Sunshine Coast health district. The Goss Labor government had only 13 health districts and it was recognised that they were an abject failure. Why then, when the Forster review recommended keeping all of the 37 current health service districts, is this recommendation being ignored? Of course, if this government believes it knows better than Forster, it ignores those recommendations at its own peril. If we believe the spin from this government, the consolidation of districts will improve the delivery of health services by, firstly, providing a better platform for Queensland Health to work with general practitioners on health promotion and primary prevention in the community. But what local consultation has occurred with local GPs when deciding that this model was best for Gympie? Has there been any local consultation at all in determining these amendments? Secondly, we read about consolidating Queensland Health's corporate support services to more effectively support doctors, nurses and allied health workers. The consolidation of corporate support services may be of benefit. However, this does not require the altering of health districts.

Anything to cut bureaucracy has to be a good thing and the centralising of policy and administration is sensible, especially when the savings are directed towards clinical services. But when it comes to imposing a management structure that has no real community of interest or idea about anything outside of its own major hospital, then we face real concerns. I fear it will have a massive impact on smaller hospitals like Gympie. We will lose the local decision making and its connection with the Gympie area. Under the current health district arrangements, the senior health management members are living and working in the community and, as a result, they take a keen interest in keeping their community with the highest level of health care possible. These changes would require us to argue

our case in the Sunshine Coast health district. Indeed, how could we be expecting the existing Gympie health district with a population of only about 40,000 to argue its case against one with a population of over a quarter of a million? Of course, without proper checks and balances our voices will be lost.

The President of the Rural Doctors Association of Queensland, Dr Christian Rowan, summed it up best when he said—

Consolidating rural communities into enormous super-Districts with urban-dominated populations carries risks for those who don't live close to the major hospitals ... There's also the risk some Districts will look for so-called efficiencies by centralising their services and forgetting the costs and dangers that more distant patients will have to bear by themselves.

RDAQ members are concerned that country communities could be left behind like runts of the healthcare litter when resources are squeezed. We have been told that the restructure will occur in stages between now and June next year and it has not been designed to save money or to reduce the number of Queensland Health employees; rather, it is about reshaping a massive organisation, and for that I commend the minister. But other areas also need to be looked at. The minister tries to tell us that it is, in part, to do with attracting talented and experienced clinicians to regional areas. Local sources have advised me that, as a result of these proposed changes, we are seeing nursing staff depart the Gympie Hospital of their own accord. They do this because they do not wish to be a part of the new system being forced on them. So much for these changes attracting staff!

Gympie has been well served in the past by being an autonomous health district, and special mention must be made of the excellent work undertaken by our current district health service manager, Pattie Scott. Indeed, under Pattie's leadership we have seen what has been referred to as the 'Cooloola spirit', where everyone is working together to achieve great things in our health district. A good example of this spirit is the new cancer care and renal centre in ward 7, a building that was earmarked for destruction by this state government. This refurbishment was made possible by the support of numerous community groups including such diverse groups as the Parsons Road Uniting Church, the Gympie RSL, the Gympie Hospital Auxiliary, Supporting Chemotherapy in Cooloola, Corbet Timbers—a local business—the Apex Club of Gympie, of which I am proudly a member, the Queensland Cancer Fund and the Chemotherapy Trust Fund. This is a broad cross-section of the community in Gympie. The support was possible because everyone felt included in the process. If the request had come from an office in Nambour, the outcome may have been quite different.

I note that, while we lose our health district board, we will have a new health community council to reflect the existing community. Why is it that it is deemed appropriate for a health community council to reflect the community but this is not considered necessary for the health district? If the new district boundaries have been designed to be as consistent as possible with the general practice division boundaries, surely there should have been consultation with local GPs to determine what benefits they see from a mirroring of boundaries in the Gympie area. The Gympie health district has had great leadership and direction under Pattie Scott. We have seen significant improvements in service deliveries and in new facilities. Local rumour has it, though, that Pattie's employment as the district health manager will cease on 27 January 2007. If this is true it will be a great loss to health services in our region.

We have heard the importance of leadership. Pattie has provided that leadership and the Gympie health district has flourished under it. My concerns lie firmly in wanting the best for the people of my electorate. My concern is that there has been no local community consultation on these changes, they are in contradiction to recommendation 5.1 of the Forster review and they show no signs of being patient focused with regard to the changes in the health districts.

I would encourage the minister to acknowledge that there are unique characteristics of the Gympie health district that will not be served well by these changes. I am elected to this House to represent the people of Gympie and if I am to be true to these fine people I cannot in any conscience support this bill.

Mr BOMBOLAS (Chatsworth—ALP) (8.30 pm): I rise in the House to contribute to the debate on the Health Services Amendment Bill 2006. The Beattie government has committed to reforming the Queensland public health system through the *Action Plan—Building a better health service for Queensland*. The Health Action Plan is the government's response to the Queensland Health systems review, the Forster review, and the Queensland public hospitals commission of inquiry, the Davies inquiry, which highlighted the critical need to further develop Queensland's health leadership and management capacity.

Currently the appointment arrangements of managers for health service districts have reduced Queensland Health's flexibility in managing this critical leadership group. To overcome this problem, to address the needs identified by the Forster review and the Davies inquiry and to provide greater legislative backing to contractual arrangements the bill creates a Health Executive Service. That Health Executive Service is modelled on the Senior Executive Service which is established under the Public Service Act 1996.

The new Health Executive Service will promote effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of public sector health services by attracting, developing and retaining a core of mobile, highly skilled health executives. The inclusion of identified health executives in the new Health Executive Service will occur over time. Currently employed executives will not be forced to join the new Health Executive Service.

All existing employees engaged on contract at the current district executive services level 2 and above will have the option of retaining their existing contract until expiry or moving to the new contract under the Health Executive Service. All those employees engaged at the DES level 1, which will not exist in the new HES, will remain on their current contracts until its completion date and other options for their ongoing employment if applicable will then be canvassed. The new health executives will be engaged under the new provisions of the HES under the amended Health Services Act 1991.

I bring to attention of this place a devastating recent accident in my electorate involving one of my constituents—Matthew James Astor Zemek. Matt was born on 31 October 1984 and is the youngest of three sons to Peter and Karen Zemek of Carindale in Brisbane, part of my electorate. Matthew is employed by All Trades Queensland. Matthew had approximately three to four weeks of TAFE remaining and would have been eligible to apply for his qualification as a carpenter when he was involved in a motor vehicle accident.

On Tuesday, 4 July 2006 Matthew was en route from his work to his rental home in Cannon Hill when he was involved in a collision with a bus at the intersection of Old Cleveland Road and Creek Road at Carindale. Matthew sustained multiple fractures, including a severe and extensive brain injury. He remains in the neurological ward of the Princess Alexandra Hospital with a diffuse axonal brain injury.

From the attention Matthew received at the scene of the accident up to the present day his family believes Matthew has been in the care of wonderful and dedicated people. They have tracked a member of the firefighter crew that attended the scene and were fortunate enough to be able to personally thank him. To date, unfortunately, they have not been able to personally thank those ambulance officers and paramedics who attended the scene. We believe these people never get the accolades they really deserve and would rarely get feedback on those they have saved. I quote Peter Zemek, the father of Matthew—

We wish to once again express high regard for all members of the accident response team and to the full spectrum of health professionals and social workers within the PA who have shown wonderful care and dedication in their dealings with our Son Matthew and our Family.

I would like to put on record my thanks to the public system for keeping my father, Con, alive. The Mater and PA hospitals and the staff in those two fine establishments have been fantastic in treating my father. A dozen operations such as heart bypass, a capped aneurism and the inclusion of a defibrillator have certainly kept him alive over the last decade.

I urge the minister, who is here with us this evening, and his team to continue to implement the improvements under the government's \$9.7 billion Health Action Plan. The Health Services Amendment Bill will allow the Beattie government to continue to reform the public health system through the Health Action Plan. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr FOLEY (Maryborough—Ind) (8.35 pm): I rise to participate briefly in the cognate debate on the Health Services Amendment Bill and Medical Board (Administration) Bill. One of the major issues in our area is that under the current regime of inquiry when there is a particular problem people have the sense that the Queensland government is investigating Queensland Health. Even though that may not be the case it somehow creates a lot of difficulties.

I guess in some respects we are talking about back to the future. The Health Services Amendment Bill seeks to align the organisational provisions of the Health Services Act with the new structure of Queensland Health, including articulating clearly the respective roles of the chief executives statewide strategic direction and leadership; area general managers—leadership within their respective health service areas; and also district managers.

If we go back a long time and look at Queensland Health we find that everything was run from head office. I think the decentralisation over a period of time has been good. It has allowed much more local content and input. However, one of the problems is that the bureaucracy can get bigger than Ben Hur if one is not careful. I commend the minister for the reduction in those districts, which is going to lead to very significant savings in terms of employee costs and administration. That is not without pain, of course; no-one wants to reduce job numbers, because the people in those jobs have families to feed.

One of my concerns—and this is something that I will be raising further this week—relates to a number of people on the Fraser Coast who have had adverse health outcomes or injuries and have sought compensation. Compensation has been paid to the Patel victims in Bundaberg so in people's minds it sets a precedent. People feel that the Premier has not really lived up to the promises that he made, which were reasonably ad hoc when he was meeting with people in the street.

One of the things I would like to see is the Health Quality and Complaints Commission being allowed to determine, as an independent arbiter, whether any compensation or recommendations can be made. At the moment it simply does not have the teeth to be able to say that there have been adverse health findings and therefore we need full cooperation with hospital management in investigating a complaint. It needs the power to pursue compensation until agreement is reached either with the consumer or with the consumer in concert with the health service provider. My concern is that the Health Quality and Complaints Commission really needs a lot more teeth and independence and there needs to be clarification of what it can order in terms of restitution. That is all I wanted to add.

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (8.38 pm): I rise to speak in this cognate debate on the Health Services Amendment Bill and the Medical Board (Administration) Bill. Today we are debating yet another part in a long drawn out effort to renew Queensland Health's long, painful and even lethal collapse which was brought to a head by the Jayant Patel crisis. The Health Services Amendment Bill does in the main deal with administrative changes aligning the Health Services Act with the new structure of Queensland Health, for example. However, among the amendments are those dealing with the scrapping of district health councils and their replacement with health community councils.

It appears that this is not much more than a change in name only. Let us hope that it is more than that, as the district health council for the Tablelands has had a surprisingly low profile for an organisation dedicated to providing a link between the community and its public hospitals. Clearly, the recent focus on the flaws in Queensland Health identified as a major problem its arrogant and dismissive treatment of public concerns. Therefore, one might understandably think that ensuring that the public's lines of communication were open and free flowing would be a major issue for the department's planners. Who knows? Perhaps the department might have thought to ask the public what it wants in this regard. After all, when drawing up legislation that is about setting up a process for the public to have input, it seems logical to take the public's opinion into account.

However, the explanatory notes tell a different story. It announces quite simply that there has been no consultation with the community in relation to the bill. It tries to diffuse this by suggesting that no consultation was needed as the provisions draw from the Queensland health system's review, which did involve community consultation. This logic does not stand up to scrutiny. This bill has the detail, this bill will become law and this bill spells out how the new body will work. This bill will be the guiding document for health community councils, yet this bill escapes public consultation.

Unfortunately, public confidence in the system is still lacking. Of course, I am not referring to the hardworking staff who are largely a group of very dedicated professionals. Years of departmental and ministerial denials that anything was wrong, attacks on people who did speak out and the now documented bullying and intimidation have left a legacy that will be difficult to overcome.

I note the continued provisions that allow, in addition to the director-general, area general managers to employ health service employees. We need to see this happening more often at a local level. Over recent years a number of doctors have contacted my office about employment prospects in public hospitals on the Tablelands. They have included overseas trained doctors and recently an Australian trained eye surgeon from Sydney. I hope that the ability to deal with such people at a local level would lead to some improvement in the level and range of services available in public hospitals in rural and regional areas.

I believe that the people of Queensland deserve a responsive, caring and committed health department. We have heard about record budgets and a raft of changes, but many of the changes are little more than cosmetic and the record budgets are not putting extra beds into the Atherton or Mareeba hospitals, they are not returning ophthalmic surgery to Mareeba, they are not eliminating waiting times for public dental clinics and the list goes on. I believe that nothing less than a ground-up rebuilding is needed to overcome the deeply ingrained problems that continue to plague Queensland Health.

I now turn to the Medical Board (Administration) Bill 2006, which is intended to provide administrative and operational support to the Medical Board of Queensland and is expected to be fully operational by 1 July 2007. This goal is to be achieved by the creation of a new independent statutory body to be called the Office of the Medical Board, which will be funded through registration and like fees, which would be expected to flow through into the fees that GPs charge to the public. I note that these amendments are in line with the Queensland government's commitment to abide by the COAG goal of a single national registration scheme for health practitioners by 1 July 2008, which is just 19 months away.

The existing Medical Board of Queensland is currently charged with the registration of medical practitioners and their professional standards, and this new office will help fulfil those aims. The new office will essentially carry out the administrative requirements for the registration of medical professionals and will also assist the 12 other health practitioner registration boards operating in Queensland. It will maintain medical profession registers, collect and disburse moneys, manage accommodation and equipment, and source legal and other advice. It will also assist in interpreting criminal histories and processing applications for board approvals for registration.

Among the powers to be delegated to the new body is the power to declare areas of need, which is a very important responsibility. If this makes it simpler and easier to get doctors into rural areas, I welcome it. Quite clearly, these are very important duties not least because if the wrong doctor or other medical practitioner is allowed to practise or standards are not maintained then disaster awaits. The Jayant Patel saga is the worst kind of example of the risks that are taken when the wrong decisions are made.

However, there are wider issues especially in regard to the number of foreign trained doctors and other allied health professionals. Even in circumstances where their professional skills are up to scratch, there could be quite massive problems with the language barrier. Whilst there may be very many good foreign trained doctors, those who do face problems with language fluency at best leave their patients in a vulnerable position because of the potential for misunderstanding on either side. There can be other difficulties brought about when a foreign trained doctor may not completely understand the systems that are in place within Queensland Health.

Of course, foreign trained doctors are vital in the short term as for years federal and state governments have failed to ensure enough of our own youth are trained as doctors, radiologists, dentists and those in other medical fields in enough numbers to meet the growing health needs of an increasing population in this state. That shortage not only of doctors but also of beds, wards and so on continues to cause real problems. For example, recently a 99-year-old man was advised to go home after collapsing, even though no reason for that collapse had been identified. On another occasion, an elderly pensioner was brought to hospital with chest pains, sweating and shortness of breath and was discharged on the same day. She was told nothing about what was wrong with her, what to do about it or what follow-up care she needed.

We are in the midst of a health crisis and the state is experiencing budget surpluses, yet the Beattie government insists on providing scholarships for only 50 rural doctor training places per year when we need hundreds. We are also seeing the centralisation of public hospital management. The existing districts are being cut and administrative and other functions are going to Cairns, in the case of the far north, and Townsville, in the case of north Queensland. The argument is that this will free up resources for more clinical staff. That is a worthy goal, but the nature of the bureaucratic beast is often the opposite of that. More and more is drawn into the regional headquarters at the cost of rural centres. This centralisation will need close and careful monitoring to ensure that gains the government promises are not at the expense of outlying hospitals.

This bill is expected to expedite the registration of medical practitioners, which one can hope will address these shortages and that, in turn, should lead to the reopening of wards and beds and the spread of more services into regional areas. While Queensland Health was rightly at the centre of the blowtorch over the Bundaberg debacle, we need to remember that Patel was not caught by the Medical Registration Board. His overseas track record was not picked up by the organisation that was supposed to be monitoring professional standards. His clinical performance at Bundaberg did not raise any red flags. Indeed, a simple Google search told Queenslanders more about his professional standing than anything done by the Queensland Medical Board. One can only hope that among the staff to be attached to this new organisation there will be at least one person who knows how to Google.

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (8.48 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Health Services Amendment Bill 2006 and the Medical Board (Administration) Bill 2006 being debated today as cognate bills. The Health Services Amendment Bill seeks to expand the objects of the act to include health promotion and protection; insert a set of guiding principles into the act which reflect the key elements of the current health reform agenda; align the act's organisational provisions with Queensland Health's new structure including clearly articulating the respective roles of the chief executive area, general managers and district managers; authorise area general managers to employ health service employees in their health service areas in addition to the director-general as is currently the case; enable the creation of statewide health services by Executive Council approval to operate across districts and areas; replace district health councils and health community councils where health community councils will focus on community and consumer engagement and monitoring quality and safety in hospitals; and create a health executive service, incorporating area general managers, district managers and other health executives who are not part of the Public Service.

The primary objective of the Medical Board (Administration) Bill 2006 is to facilitate the provision of responsive administrative and operational support to the Medical Board of Queensland. It is proposed that this objective will be achieved principally by establishing an independent statutory body known as the Office of the Medical Board. The core business of that office will be to provide support services exclusively to the board in accordance with a service agreement negotiated with the board.

With respect to the provisions of the Health Services Amendment Bill 2006 and the replacement of district health councils with health community councils, in October I wrote to the Minister for Health with concerns about the large increases in the size of the health districts covering my electorate of Hinchinbrook provided for by this bill.

The northern section of my electorate, which was previously covered by the Innisfail Health Service District, will be amalgamated with two other health service districts—Tablelands and Cairns—to form a new Cairns regional health district. Similarly, the southern end of my electorate has been serviced as part of the Townsville Health Service District. It is now to be amalgamated with the Charters Towers and Bowen health service districts to create a new Townsville regional health district.

I am concerned that this change will increase the centralisation of decision-making processes in these health districts and remove local knowledge and understanding about local circumstances from the management of health services in these areas. The current district health councils will also be replaced by new health community councils. In the letter I wrote to the Minister for Health, I inquired about the autonomy and scope of jurisdiction of these community health councils and the membership of these councils, again from the perspective that it is important to maintain local knowledge about health service delivery. I note with interest that recommendation 5.1 of the *Queensland Health Systems Review* recommends that the current 37 health districts be retained. Although the government has chosen not to accept this advice, I hope that it will at least make a real effort to maintain considerable local representation on the community health councils to allow the community to have a real input into the delivery of health services at a local level.

Recently the minister replied to my letter and has assured me that the benefits of these changes will flow through to improved health service delivery and enhanced community participation. To the minister's credit, he says in his letter to me that, to guarantee against disenfranchising communities, a health service district will be able to have more than one health community council. Indeed, the minister advised that he intends to retain the existing 37 councils as well as establishing new councils should the need arise. Further, the minister advised that in rural and regional areas, rural and regional health coordinators will be appointed in each health service area to ensure local knowledge and interaction. As such, there appears to be some recognition that there needs to be local input into the delivery of health services to the community. We will have to be vigilant while this new framework is implemented to ensure that that occurs.

In my maiden speech in this place I raised my concern about the delivery of health services in the Hinchinbrook electorate. I specifically mentioned the long-awaited upgrade to the Ingham Hospital, which the Beattie government has been promising for a long time but has not yet built. Having said that, an active consultation and planning process has occurred. I believe that the construction of the new Ingham Hospital will happen sooner rather than later and I will welcome that facility when it is finally constructed.

Mr Robertson: As you should.

Mr CRIPPS: We are going to start before Christmas, are we not, Minister? That was the commitment, anyway. The local community was very concerned about the number of beds that will be provided in the new Ingham Hospital. The master planning study that was completed in 2003, based on the data from 2000-01, advised that the number of beds at the redeveloped hospital should be 28. There was a strong reaction against this suggestion. It was pointed out that the catchment area for the Ingham Hospital extends north to Cardwell and south to the Northern Beaches area in Thuringowa city. With the well-documented problems at the Townsville Hospital, this made sense. There certainly was an opportunity for a greater range of services to be delivered at Ingham Hospital to patients from that large catchment area. A subsequent review of that master planning process in 2005, using updated data from the 2002-03 year, confirmed that point of view and increased the number of beds to 32. A further review in February of this year revealed that this concept of an extended catchment for the new hospital was given greater validity and the number of beds was settled at 34, although the master plan for the upgraded hospital now includes the capacity to increase the number of beds in the hospital to 44 in an emergency situation.

Certainly, the redeveloped Ingham Hospital could have the capacity to deliver day surgery procedures to relieve the significant pressure on Townsville Hospital. People in the Ingham area, in the Northern Beaches area and up to Cardwell who are travelling to Townsville could receive their minor procedures in Ingham and reduce that pressure on Townsville Hospital. There is an increasing demand for a range of health services. Chemotherapy treatment is required by a very large number of Queenslanders, including those who live in the catchment area of Ingham Hospital. Perhaps this treatment could be offered at Ingham Hospital, at least in the initial stages of the treatment process.

The need for a dialysis unit at Ingham Hospital has also been discussed at length. It was an issue during the most recent election campaign. The dialysis unit at Innisfail Hospital was installed with six chairs after the local community worked very hard to raise the money and secure a commitment from Queensland Health. As I understand it, these chairs are always occupied. In Ingham, along with the catchment area that I have spoken about, there is a significant demand for dialysis. I request that the minister have a good look at the number of individuals requiring dialysis in the Ingham district and the catchment area to ascertain if a dialysis unit could be justified.

Certainly, my friend the minister for communities, who campaigned extensively in my electorate during the election campaign, was reported to have made an announcement in Ingham that Queensland Health planned to include a renal dialysis unit at the Ingham Hospital if sufficient patient numbers could be determined. On 26 August 2006 the minister for communities was quoted in the *Herbert River Express* as stating—

My understanding is that Queensland Health is refusing to budge... as of yesterday, that's not true anymore. I've spoken to the Health Minister who says the redevelopment plan of the Ingham Hospital will include provisions to establish a dialysis unit. The redevelopment would be such that there will be room in the future to be used for dialysis. The next thing will be to identify the need for dialysis. I would not be surprised that the full number of people needing dialysis has not been identified.

So that is the challenge that we have in front of us. The minister for communities went on to encourage the community and their local authority—and I think he was referring to the Hinchinbrook Shire Council—to continue pressuring Queensland Health so that it does not take its eye off the ball. I am happy to take the advice of the minister for communities on that point. So I am raising this matter with the minister here today, and I am sure the minister has his eye on the ball.

As I understand it, the commitment from the government is to spend \$30 million on the redevelopment of Ingham Hospital. Services such as ultrasound and diagnostic digital services, if they could be achieved, would complement the reopening of the maternity ward at Ingham Hospital. There have been a couple of instances where mothers have given birth on the side of the road between Ingham and Townsville. They are required to make a one hour and 15 minute dash when the time arises. For obvious reasons, that is unsatisfactory.

The Ingham district has a strong need for a well-equipped respite and rehabilitation centre at Ingham Hospital, especially as there are a large number of older residents in the area. For cultural reasons, many older residents in the area are not easily convinced to leave their family home to go to large centres such as Townsville to get support services and care. There are wonderful people—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wettenhall): Order! I ask the member for Hinchinbrook to direct his comments to the provisions of the bill and keep his remarks relevant.

Mr CRIPPS: Certainly. There are wonderful people in the local Blue Nurses organisation and other groups who provide great support for many people and their families who are under pressure to care for their elderly relatives.

Another thorn in the side of people who need to access health services in regional and rural areas is the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme. With the withdrawal of more and more health services from smaller hospitals, more and more patients are required to travel long distances to receive treatment. It is not just the amount of the subsidy that is inadequate; the accommodation subsidy is also inadequate. The process involved in applying for the subsidy is also very complicated. That creates difficulties for many people for whom this subsidy, while not enough, is necessary so that they can afford to receive their treatment. There has to be more effort made in this regard, as often the people who depend on the small subsidy that is offered under the PTSS are on low or fixed incomes. Many people in my electorate approach me about this issue. It is not a high-profile issue, but it is something that affects the lives of ordinary people. It bites into people's incomes when they have to make three round trips to Townsville from Ingham or to Cairns from Tully if they are very ill and need, for example, frequent dialysis treatment. It means that these people are on the road for at least seven or eight hours a week, and we all know that fuel is not cheap. With those concerns on the record and conveyed to the minister, I conclude my contribution.

Hon. KR LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (8.59 pm): I wish to confine my comments to the Health Services Amendment Bill. This legislation will enable the creation of statewide health services by Executive Council approval to operate across districts and areas and to replace district health councils with community health councils.

The structural changes this bill achieves follows the announcement that the 37 health districts will be reduced to 20. One considerable area of concern during the time I have represented the Beaudesert area is that I have seen virtually all of the operations of the structure of the Queensland health system. In place initially were the local boards which were within not only hospitals but also fire brigades and ambulance stations, and we saw how successfully they worked in areas such as Boonah and Beaudesert. I know that those areas are very specific areas and of course local people want to have those operations work successfully, and they did work successfully. The next change was the move into health districts which included South Brisbane, Logan and Beaudesert. When it comes to getting structural change within a hospital system and trying to upgrade the facilities within a hospital, especially as I have tried over 23 years to build a new hospital at Beaudesert, there was no doubt that South Brisbane and Logan had bigger demands than Beaudesert. As I fought for that during that time, I found that the Logan Hospital in Loganlea obviously had priority over Beaudesert, and I had to accept that. Even though people said, 'Beaudesert needs a new hospital and we need a complete new structure', obviously the government decided that it would build the new hospital at Loganlea. Then of course Beaudesert was put with Southport, and there was obviously the concern about Helensvale and the

growth in that area. There was no way that Beaudesert could compete with the demands of a growing area like Helensvale, so Helensvale got a new hospital. At present Beaudesert has gone back into the area of Logan; it is the Logan-Beaudesert Health Service District. Under this bill Beaudesert will go into a new area which will include QEII Hospital and Redlands.

It is all right to say that those councils and districts work extremely well and extremely efficiently, and maybe they do so within themselves. But the small areas like Boonah and Beaudesert are obviously at the end of the demands. Whilst everyone appreciates those demands—and when the minister comes to Beaudesert and says that, yes, the demand is relevant and necessary—of course the money is just not there.

A government member: You've got a new hospital.

Mr LINGARD: Yes, but the only way that new hospital was built was not from money within the region. It had to be special money out of consolidated revenue, and that is the difficulty that those particular councils and districts face. Similarly, with a brand-new hospital at Beaudesert we face the fact that Logan has demands on any new personnel coming in who might have specific areas of medical practice. So, yes, the government appreciates the demands of Beaudesert but then says that it cannot provide the quality of service that is necessary. What happens? Beaudesert loses out. As the minister has seen, there is a brand-new hospital with a brand-new maternity section which the minister visited. To be quite honest, it was slightly embarrassing for me to walk behind the minister because what we saw were 40 brand-new wards and areas that had been set aside for children's wards. The only reason they were set aside for children's wards is that they are not being used by anyone else. The minister saw two new birthing units and a beautiful conferencing area. They were the birthing sections where the children were held. The minister was shown two magnificent storerooms which were the old birthing areas for the maternity section, and we found a section that was completely devoid of any maternity services. It was embarrassing to see.

Obviously that was impressive to the minister, but he did not realise the history of the situation. A hospital such as the one at Beaudesert is for interim care of senior patients brought from other regions who are held there for a short time whilst they find a position in a nursing home. Because the services at Beaudesert have completely declined, there are virtually only three or four people who can use Beaudesert Hospital. There is absolutely no overnight care at Beaudesert Hospital, yet it is a brand-new hospital. Every time we talk to people at Logan, which is the area of main emphasis, they say, 'Yes, the demands are there. Beaudesert has the demands but we cannot provide a quality service so therefore we will provide it at Logan.' Therefore, everyone who wants to use the maternity services at Beaudesert Hospital is brought to Logan. We cannot complain about the service at Logan, but of course the public can complain because ladies, especially ladies who are having their first child, have the trauma of having to be brought to Logan. Yes, it is an hour and half to get to the services at Logan. Of course with that comes all of the demands on a young family which might have two or three children when the mother has to be brought to Logan, and therefore some of those mothers hardly stay in hospital for 24 hours after the birth. As a result, a service that is being provided at Beaudesert is in complete decline.

We continually ask whether the Beaudesert Hospital is being downgraded and the minister's officers continually say, 'No, it's not being downgraded,' but there is no doubt that it is being downgraded. The services are not being provided. If any person goes to hospital for any operation that needs overnight service, that service will not be provided at Beaudesert because there is no overnight care at Beaudesert. No surgery that needs bed service is provided at Beaudesert. If someone needs an X-ray and the service can be provided at Beaudesert, the hospital will bring someone in to take that X-ray; otherwise, the hospital will send you straight through to Logan and the service is provided at Logan. If any accidents happen at Beaudesert, then the medical teams are brought from Logan. As a result, none of that service is being provided at Beaudesert, and the whole community knows what is happening.

I say to the minister that, yes, on paper the councils might look as though they work, but there is no doubt that a local board—a board of people who understand what is happening—would be much more successful at both Boonah and Beaudesert. I ask the minister to once again come down and let me take him around the Beaudesert Hospital. I know that he has been there, but it was a trip that was completely covered. As I said, the minister was shown a children's ward. The only reason that children's ward was there is that it is a ward that is not used by anyone else. It had all of the play things in it but no children at all. There was not a person in the ward. There are 40 brand-new wards there that we need to do something with, because we certainly do not have any patients from the local area. The only patients we have are people who are brought in from outside areas who need interim care—aged care—whilst they are waiting for a position in a nursing home.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (9.07 pm): I rise to speak to the Health Services Amendment Bill and the Medical Board (Administration) Bill 2006. While I am conscious of time, there are a couple of matters that I want to raise in relation to health. As the minister knows, health has been an issue of ongoing concern in my electorate since I was elected. We have seen ward closures at the

hospital. Whilst I acknowledge that mechanisation and changed medical procedures are partly responsible for those changes, the people in my community continue to be concerned about what they perceive as a diminishing health service. The changes that are proposed to the health service districts have been—and I have already raised this in this parliament—of some concern to me, although I have met with the medical head based in Rocky, Dr Bill Beresford, and I have been quite impressed with his attitude towards the provision of services in the region. I am hoping that the actuality equates to the discussions that we have had and his aspirations for the general area. The specialist services to our region have been more difficult to access over time. I know that when our health district was under Rockhampton the last time we only received the dregs of the funding that was allocated to that district as a whole. I think there was Gladstone, Rockhampton and Biloela in the district at the time; there may have been one other hospital. But the bulk of the funding went to Rockhampton. With regions like Gladstone growing, the community certainly was frustrated at the diminution in services.

As I said, the meeting with Bill Beresford was productive in that he does not seem to have that intention. I will certainly rely on him to follow through with what he said. He also supports the retention of the Boyne Valley clinic. It is a newly opened clinic. Gordon Nuttall was the minister when it was opened. It has been a real boon for that community. That community is growing as a result of a lot of people shifting out of the coastal area because of cost and relocating to the Boyne Valley. The clinic does a wonderful job. I have already checked with the new regional structure to ensure ongoing support for the Boyne Valley clinic.

This legislation proposes to place within the legislative framework the reduction in districts from 37 to 20. I am hoping that, as the minister's speech and other public announcements have indicated, the intention of the reduction from 37 to 20 is to centralise some of the services—such as administration—which will result in cost savings, but I do hope that that comes without any diminution of services to the community.

We have a high level of need for radiologists in the Gladstone electorate. Some radiological services are not provided to patients on the weekends because of cost and a lack of radiologists, and when that service is subsequently provided during the week it is often found that the patient really did need radiological services earlier. We would like to see a number of specialties reintroduced into the area, and I am looking forward to this new structure and the new leadership that Bill Beresford will provide to achieve that.

We continue to have a high need for a full dialysis program in the Gladstone region. It is difficult for us to keep our statistics up simply because people move away and they find that the trip to Rockhampton three days a week, with a round trip of 110 kilometres, plus the time needed for the dialysis too wearing on both the dialysis patient and the carer. We would keep those communities together if we could access a full dialysis service. With a specialist now residing in Rockhampton I believe it is an important service to have extended.

I look forward to working with the minister to see improved services at the Gladstone Hospital. It is a region that has a lot of young families, a lot of problems in terms of mental health services—I know that we are not unique in that respect—a need to continue to protect paediatric services, gynaecological services and all of those things that are basic to the health and welfare of the community. There is a continuing concern, as the previous speaker, the member for Hinchinbrook, stated in relation to the level of PTS. I put a question on notice to the minister yesterday in relation to that matter. Whilst I know that there is not a bottomless bucket of money and that the PTS is not a full compensation payment for the cost of travelling to specialist services, I think everyone will acknowledge that the cost of travel has increased exponentially. The cost to families of overnight or weekly accommodation if they have to access specialist services out of town is rather large. I have always believed that providing specialist services to outpatients and general access to specialists would be much more financially economical if the patient list was bulked up and the specialist visited the Gladstone Hospital.

I am not sure whether the new structure the minister is putting in place will work. I do trust, however, that the minister will review the process after 12 months and ensure that the goals that he intended to achieve are being achieved and, if not, that he will have the foresight to change the structure so that those goals of providing better health services and accessible health services to the community—the rural and regional community as well as the south-east corner—can be achieved. With those comments I support the bills.

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (9.14 pm): It is a pleasure to rise to speak in this cognate debate on the Medical Board Administration Bill 2006 and the Health Services Amendment Bill 2006. It is important to note that, if it were not for the deaths and injuries suffered by the people of Bundaberg and Burnett—which are outlined in two royal commissions: the Queensland Public Hospitals Commission of Inquiry conducted by Commissioner Davies and the Bundaberg Hospital Commission of Inquiry conducted by Commissioner Tony Morris—and if it were not for the bravery shown by Australian of the Year awardee nurse whistleblower Toni Hoffman as well as the bravery of the victims of Queensland Health, the victims of Peter Beattie, for finding the will and the energy to come forward and

tell their story, we would not be in this place discussing this legislation that has been designed to so-called fix our state health system, a system that has been absolutely mismanaged, corrupted and run into the ground.

This Beattie Labor government has made our public health system a prime example of institutional dysfunction. Make no mistake: nothing much has changed since April Fools' Day 2006 last year when Peter Beattie paid for Patel's airfare to America—and has failed to bring him back, I might add. We only have better spin doctors and a minister who is more capable of delivering their propaganda and is marginally better looking on the TV.

The Medical Board Administration Bill 2006 is legislation which affects one of the most important health governing bodies, the Queensland Medical Board—an organisation which played a starring role in the Bundaberg Hospital crisis. It is a role that is often misunderstood, and during the course of this debate I intend to help highlight the functions of that board. At the very beginning of the Davies report, the commissions of inquiry order states—

The role and conduct of the Queensland Medical Board in relation to the assessment, registration and monitoring of overseas-trained medical practitioners, with particular reference to Dr Jayant Patel and persons claiming to be overseas-trained medical practitioners.

While I know that we conservatives will be supporting the overall general thrust of this legislation because it will help the Medical Board do its job better—and if it does its job better then perhaps it will weed out incompetent or sociopathic medical practitioners or both before they can weave their wicked ways with our constituents—I am still a little uneasy when I think about supporting legislation which will also employ more health bureaucrats. One of the fundamental problems with our public health system is that we have too many bureaucrats and not enough doctors and nurses. This government insists on wasting taxpayers' money on special project officers while our waiting lists get longer and, more importantly, while people die on those waiting lists. Tony Morris, the commissioner of the first Bundaberg Hospital Commission of Inquiry, has some very strong views on the make-up of the public medical workforce. He expressed those views in a speech he addressed to the Whistleblowers' Australian National Conference last weekend. I table the speech given by Tony Morris.

Tabled paper: Paper titled 'Whistleblowers Australia National Conference 2006, What have we learned about whistleblowing?' by Anthony J H Morris, dated 25 November 2006.

In that speech ex-Commissioner Morris talked about the size of the bureaucracy. He said—

Bureaucratic over-administration, and indeed mal-administration, is at the heart of the problem. It takes some 9,250 bureaucrats—9,250 bean-counters and pen-pushers—to run Queensland Health. That is more than double the number of hospital beds provided by Queensland Health, and more than two and a half times the number of medical practitioners employed by Queensland Health.

It is not simply the case that every dollar spent on administration is one dollar less that is available to spend on patient care. I have been told that as little as 20 per cent of Queensland Health's budget actually reaches the coalface of health treatment. Even then, I would be the first to accept that 9,250 bureaucrats serve a useful purpose, if their presence in the system had the effect of making the delivery of health services more efficient—the effect of relieving some of the burden on healthcare providers. But, frankly, every indication is to the contrary; every indication is that these 9,250 bureaucrats simply create more red tape to impede, and ultimately to strangle, the clinical staff who provide primary health care services.

It is a truism to say that decision-making, unlike almost every other form of human endeavour, is retarded rather than accelerated by the number of people involved. A hole may be dug more quickly if there are 10 workers involved rather than one; but the decision where to dig the hole will be made much more quickly if it is left to one person rather than a committee of 10.

Commissioner Morris also makes the point that there is a crisis in decision making, and I wholeheartedly agree with him. He said—

However, the problem is not simply that there is too much bureaucracy. If the bureaucracy were merely bloated, that would be a bad thing in itself, to the extent that a bloated bureaucracy soaks up resources which should be expended on health treatment. But the bureaucracy is not merely bloated—it is incapable of making decisions. The problem is not simply that there are too many people; the problem is also that they are the wrong people. They are the people who appear to lack either the intellectual capacity, or at least the self-confidence, to lead.

One clear manifestation of this is the committee system which exists within Queensland Health. No issue of any significance can be, or is, decided, unless it has been considered by a committee—or, as is more often the case, a myriad of different committees, examining the same issue from different viewpoints.

A cogent example of this emerged during the Inquiry. It involved a minor set of legislative amendments which the higher echelons of the bureaucracy regarded as essential. The evidence revealed that these amendments had been under consideration by the so-called 'legislative projects unit' for some eight months. As I commented at the time (and I stand by my comment) 'that project would take anyone—any competent lawyer—about half a day to finalise'.

Both the Medical Board (Administration) Bill 2006 and the Health Services Amendment Bill 2006 are crucial legislative agents of change in this government's policy of health reform agenda. This government thinks it has fixed the health problem with its plan, and I will read a passage from the health minister's speech. He said—

In the first instance, this Government implemented the Action Plan—building a better health service for Queensland, October 2005 to attract new health professionals, not only from within Queensland's existing pool of health practitioners but also from interstate and overseas, into the Queensland public hospital system. Early indications are that this initiative will significantly increase the number of health practitioners in Queensland. For example, since implementing the Action Plan, 448 extra doctors, 1,826 extra nurses and 636 extra allied health staff have been recruited.

After reading that and taking on board that wonderful good news, if one did not know better one would say, 'Gee, this Labor government has got it all under control. This action plan is really sexy stuff. We have 1,826 extra nurses, 448 extra doctors and 636 extra allied health staff. These National Party members must have it all wrong. What are these Liberal Party members saying? That people are actually dying while on waiting lists? That there are not enough hospital beds? That there are access blocks in the emergency rooms? That the dental waiting list in Bundaberg Hospital is six years? That there are people filling the aisles leading from casualty up to the wards? That there are not enough beds? I have heard that children are having to share the children's ward with adult patients. That does not happen, surely not in Queensland!' Well, think again. It is right, it is dead right.

Once again, I will quote Commissioner Tony Morris, whom I am sure members will agree is an eminently qualified professional to comment on the dysfunctional state of health in Queensland. Commissioner Morris compared the crisis in Queensland Health to the days of the pre-Fitzgerald inquiry. He said—

Let us compare the pre-Fitzgerald Queensland Police Force with Queensland Health before Jayant Patel. It has not been suggested that a single bureaucrat at Queensland Health was "on the take"; that a single bureaucrat misappropriated public funds or property; that a single bureaucrat abused his or her position for personal advantage, or to benefit family or friends. Yet the death-toll from corruption in the pre-Fitzgerald Queensland Police Force remains at nil; the death-toll from institutional dysfunction in Queensland Health, solely from the incompetence of a single surgeon, stands at seventeen.

Commissioner Morris said—

As I have said, even in the darkest days of pre-Fitzgerald—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Jones): Order! I will ask you to come back to the bill. I have given you a lot of latitude, but I think it is about time you started going back to the bill.

Mr MESSENGER: Thank you for your direction, Madam Deputy Speaker. I refer you to page 7, part 2, division 1(7)—the establishment of the office, looking at the Medical Board. I will continue on giving a snapshot—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am a very generous person and I have given you a lot of latitude, but I will ask you to come back more specifically to the purpose of the bill. I have read the aim of the bill and the purpose of the bill, and I will ask you to address that a little bit more specifically.

Mr MESSENGER: In speaking to the purposes of the bill, I would like to deliver a snapshot of what the reality is in Queensland Health. I am sure the minister would not mind because he would like the truth to get out there and he would like that truth spoken in this chamber. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Morris continued—

As I have said, even in the darkest days of the pre-Fitzgerald Queensland Police Force, the institution was still effective.

Contrast that with what is happening in Queensland Health right now. He said—

Contrast that with:

- a health system in which something like one-in-thirty of the Queensland population is currently on a waiting list for health treatment, and a significant proportion of those will die before they reach the top of the list;
- a health system in which more than 6,000 people, already approved for surgery, have been waiting more than 12 months for their operations;
- a health system in which, according to reports as recently as February of this year, the numbers of patients requiring semi-urgent surgery (known as "category two" patients), and who have been kept waiting for longer than the 3-month maximum recommended by their treating doctors, had increased by more than 2½ times, whilst there has been an increase of more than 500% in the numbers of patients requiring urgent surgery (known as "category one" patients), who have been kept waiting for longer than the 30-day maximum recommended by their treating doctors;
- a health system which, despite increasing waiting lists, actually performed less surgery following a budget increase of almost \$500 million in October last year, than in the corresponding period of the preceding year—

That is a doozy. That is \$500 million. All this money has been thrown at a problem and the system actually becomes less efficient. Who would have believed it? But it is Queensland governed by Labor. Commissioner Morris continued—

- a health system in which the number of hospital beds in virtually every major hospital—from Cairns and Townsville in the North, to Rockhampton and Bundaberg in the central region, to the Princess Alexandra, Royal, and Prince Charles Hospitals here in Brisbane—has actually been downgraded over the last two decades;
- a health system which, according to the 2006 Productivity Commission "Report on Government Services", had the lowest per capita recurrent health expenditure in the country—

I repeat: the lowest per capita recurrent health expenditure in the country. Commissioner Morris also said—

- ... the lowest number of employed medical practitioners per capita, and, behind Western Australia, the second lowest number of employed nurses per capita;
- a health system which has, historically, paid its doctors and nurses less than healthcare professionals at equivalent levels almost anywhere else in Australia;

... ..

- a health system which has become the subject of almost daily reports in the local media—genuine and real-life horror stories—of toddlers dying due to delayed transfers from regional hospitals; of patients left in the backs of ambulances because public hospital emergency departments are overcrowded; of road accident victims turned away from public hospitals because of inadequate staffing.

Commissioner Morris said—

A cynic might well say that, if these are the consequences of institutional dysfunction, give me good, old-fashioned individual corruption any day!

In his second reading speech the minister says—

To meet the medical needs of Queenslanders in areas where there are insufficient medical practitioners operating we have improved the administrative processes surrounding the declaration of areas of need through recent amendments introduced last year to the Medical Practitioners Registration Act 2001 and the Health Practitioner Registration Boards (Administration) Act 1999. Those amendments enable the Minister for Health to delegate the decision about areas of need to the Executive Officer of the OHPRB.

I have concerns about the manner in which areas of need are determined. It appears to me that this legislation is insulating the minister from the decision to declare an area of need. If that decision is wrong, then the minister can stand in this place and say, 'It was not my responsibility. It was the fault of an executive officer at the OHPRB. It was an independent authority's decision; it was not me.'

How can a simple little thing like an area of need declaration have such a profound effect on health service delivery? The fact is that prior to the Bundaberg Hospital crisis, Beattie's Queensland Health was hooked on overseas trained doctors employed under the conditions of areas of need like a junkie is hooked on heroin. Queensland Health chose overseas trained doctors for two reasons: they were cheap and they were compliant. Remember, an Australian trained doctor was available for the position that was given to Jayant Patel.

We need to understand the history that precedes those changes and how important that declaration of area of need is to the safety and wellbeing of patients. The best history can be found in the Davies royal commission. Commissioner Davies writes—

The Commission has been informed that, where Area of Need Registration was sought for a specialist position, it was the practice of the Board to apply the Australian Medical Council national guidelines and require the involvement of the relevant specialist college and the Australian Medical Council before granting registration.

That is a very important point. Commissioner Davies goes on—

The colleges, for their part, normally examined the applicant's history, required that the applicant work under supervision, and stipulated that the person undergo training towards obtaining a fellowship so that there was significant quality protection in the process. In effect, the overseas trained doctor would satisfy the Australian college that his or her qualifications were substantially equivalent to the Australian fellowship but would also agree to work for a time under supervision, and would take steps towards a full fellowship.

Unfortunately, the reality is that this path has not always been taken. Instead, even if Queensland Health anticipates that an overseas trained doctor will perform the role of a specialist in a department, it might seek an area of need declaration only for a Senior Medical Officer position or as a senior medical in a designated specialty. The then President of the Australian Medical Association in Queensland, Dr David Molloy, gave evidence, which was not contradicted, that Queensland Health 'mostly avoided' the two pathways for ensuring quality, namely fellowship or deemed specialisation. Mr O'Dempsey of the Medical Board lent some support for this view when he gave evidence that, in April 2005, of the 1,760 overseas trained doctors who had received special purpose registration, only 94 had obtained 'deemed specialist' positions.

In other words, Queensland Health saw a loophole in the system and exploited it. It established positions that would not require the more rigorous investigation and examination of qualifications of overseas trained doctors. The problem that I have is that we still have the same—

Time expired.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (9.33 pm): It gives me pleasure to rise to speak to these two pieces of legislation in this cognate debate in relation to medical services in Queensland. From the outset I want to spend a fair amount of my address tonight—and I will not be speaking for too long—on the Health Services Amendment Bill 2006. We can see that under this legislation the minister is going to replace health districts with health community councils and I think it is important that I do elaborate on that somewhat.

I have three health districts in my electorate of Gregory: one based in the Central Highlands at Emerald, one in the central west based at Longreach and the other one in the south-west based at Charleville. As a result of the Forster inquiry, the health districts are going to be consolidated from 37 down to 20 and the Charleville district is going to be merged with the Roma district. I say to the minister tonight—and I want to put this on record—that the district manager in Charleville, Ms Anita Hansen, has done a fantastic job for Queensland Health in Charleville. I hope her services will not be rendered useless in future. I believe that she has an integral role to play in managing a district somewhere else in the state. I thank her for the work that she has done, for the professionalism she has shown and for the way she has displayed fairness across the area in question.

I turn to two of the districts in the south-west, Paroo shire and Bulloo shire, which are in the electorate of my colleague the member for Warrego. As honourable members can appreciate, the south-west is a very complex area. We have a large Indigenous population. It is a remote population.

Charleville hosts one of the bases of the Queensland Royal Flying Doctor Service and so is a very integral part of the south-west community. I hope that the work that is done by Queensland Health professionals in Charleville is not going to be lost in the merger of the south-west and the Roma districts. Whilst Roma is only three hours up the road, three hours on top of another three or four hours that it takes to travel to a place like Thargomindah means it is a very remote area. The retention of the Royal Flying Doctor Service base in Charleville is very important.

The department of health has put in place an executive director in terms of the doctor at the hospital in conjunction with the two private doctors. We have to make sure we continue to monitor the importance of having good health professionals in Charleville. At the same time we need to see that hospital's maternity section fully operational again. This is very important to the whole of western Queensland. Along with representatives of shires from my western electorate, I have spoken to the minister on numerous occasions about trying to open the maternity sections again in places like Barcaldine, Blackall and even Winton further down in the electorate of the honourable member for Mount Isa. A hospital that boasts a maternity section is a hospital that is going to provide a stabilising effect on any community. The important point I make is that many young people do live in these areas. My first child was born in Quilpie but no children are born there now. Expectant mothers now have to travel to Roma, Toowoomba or further afield to wherever the expectant mother's family or friends reside. My other two children were born in Charleville.

They are regional centres and we should recognise the important role that those regional hospitals play. I know that times have changed in relation to the medical insurance indemnity problems with which doctors have been confronted in recent times. However, it is very important that we have a structure in place to have fully operational maternity sections in places like Charleville, Longreach, Mount Isa, Cloncurry and Emerald. Emerald has also been in the firing line for some time, even though it is a regional centre. Emerald has a catchment area for 600 births. Last year there were only 197 births there and the year before there were about 400. However, because of the problems in trying to attract obstetrics people to these places, those expectant mothers will have to go on to Rockhampton, Mackay or somewhere further afield where their loved ones or friends reside. This is not good for the family unit. It is not good for a lot of the families at the coalfields because a lot of them come from further afield and do not have any loved ones or friends around. It is a fragile time in a lady's life when she is about to give birth and after she gives birth.

Tonight I want to acknowledge on the record the work that Pat Castles has done as district manager in Emerald. I know that Pat has now been lost to the New South Wales administration. He has gone further afield to do good work. Pat Castles worked under some very difficult and trying circumstances at Emerald. He replaced Kerry Windsor when she was moved on to the Wide Bay area. We have had very good district managers in Emerald. They have been professional in what they were trying to achieve. When Kerry Windsor first came to Emerald she was under a cloud because she had to pick up the mantle and correct a not-so-good situation. She copped a lot of criticism from a lot of people who were not briefed accordingly on the problems facing the district manager's office in the Emerald and central highlands region. It is people like Kerry Windsor and later Pat Castles who make the difference. I know we had problems with the maternity section. The section is not fully operational at the moment, but I know the situation will improve. Hopefully it will be back to full capacity before too long.

The issue is having health professionals who will work in these regions. I thank the minister and the government for still allowing the fly-in, fly-out professionals who come into my electorate. They are an integral part of the medical services of western Queensland. Doctors come from Brisbane and other places to Longreach, Charleville and Emerald to provide professional services. Dr Bill Glasson, the ophthalmologist, does not have to go out to those places. I know he is a product of western Queensland. Dr Glasson and many of his colleagues here in Brisbane provide a wonderful service. I salute these people because they certainly take professional medical services to isolated and remote areas. It must be a terrific saving to the government that these doctors go out there. It would save a lot of people travelling to other places and thus needing patient transfers. I say to the minister this evening that an accurate cost analysis needs to be done of patient transfers. We talk about sending people away to larger centres such as Townsville, Rockhampton or Brisbane for specialist attention or major operations. It is very important that they are not out of pocket. People who live in the south east have medical services at their fingertips.

I know that the 10c a kilometre travel allowance has been revised, but the overnight accommodation allowance is \$30. People would get a pretty ordinary motel for \$30. I do not know of one. I stay at the 'Starlight Motel' a bit. It costs me nothing because I camp under the stars. That is certainly not appropriate for people who need to travel away from home to obtain medical attention. I believe this is something the government has to look at. It is no good sending some of these people on buses because it could be a 12-, 14- or 16-hour trip. It would be totally unfair to do that to sick people. We have to fly those people, so there is the cost of airfares. I know that the district manager in Longreach, June Lithgow, cannot budget for transport transfers because every year the costs blow out. She does not know from one day to the next what the situation is going to be. These are contentious issues.

The other thing I want to draw the minister's attention to this evening is the Flying Surgeon. A few years ago we lost the Longreach Flying Surgeon to Mount Isa. I ask the minister to return the Flying Surgeon to the central west. It plays a very integral role in looking after the hospitals of the central west from Winton down to Barcaldine and into Emerald if there is a need. If there is an overflow from Emerald, the Flying Surgeon from Roma fills the void. We have to be responsible and speak out and say what is right and wrong when it comes to getting the right deal with regard to medical services. The Forster inquiry was not done outside of Queensland Health; it was done inside Queensland Health by Queensland Health professionals in conjunction with Forster. Whilst I respect the professionalism of those involved with that inquiry, I hope that we are getting the right outcomes right across Queensland. Some communities are going to be affected because they will lose their district operations. I hope that the community councils will have the right people on them with the right voice. Forget about politics; we want the best.

I want to mention the issue of the Medical Board's registration of overseas doctors. In my electorate I have many overseas doctors. They come from various racial backgrounds and various countries of the world. We are very blessed to have doctors like Dr Vinny Joshi in Blackall. People like Dr Eric Lau and his wife Claire in Winton, who are in the electorate of the honourable member for Mount Isa, are doing fantastic work. I know that there has been criticism of some of our foreign doctors all along, but we are blessed to have these people. We have African doctors in Longreach along with Dr John Douyere and Dr Mark Marshall of the Longreach Family Medical Clinic. These people are very well qualified and very professional in the execution of their duties. The minister said in his second reading speech that this bill will expedite the process for medical practitioners coming into our country and allow them to get into work in some of our hospitals around the country.

I refer this evening to the Remote Area Planning Development Board in the central west. I attended the Remote Area Planning Development Board annual general meeting in Winton a few weeks ago. The issue came up of Barcaldine putting forward a model for trying to get doctors into the central west. I wrote to the minister about that. I support the Barcaldine concept. A lot of people have taken that out of context and said that Barcaldine wanted to base doctors in Barcaldine and have them go out and provide services to people in places like Aramac, Alpha, Blackall, Tambo, Isisford and maybe even into Winton and fill the void in Longreach from time to time. I applaud the words of Dr Denis Lennox the afternoon of that conference. He said precisely what was needed. He applauded the Barcaldine model. At the same time we have to look outside the square. We have to look at how we can manage the process, how we can put in place a process that is going to bring good medical services to the region. Longreach, Emerald and Charleville are regional centres, but it is very important that we recognise the services that medical practitioners and professionals provide in places like Barcaldine and Blackall. We are losing Dr Neil Chorley from Augathella about now and Dr John Loch from Springsure. Whilst those doctors have provided a great service over a long period of time, the void is going to be very difficult to fill. I hope that with the new Medical Board that the minister has put in place we will see that process expedited. June Lithgow informs me that in Longreach a few people are showing interest in some of these positions. I am pretty happy to know that we will see those voids filled.

The other issue I will touch on is the fear factor in Queensland Health. There is a fear factor there. A lot of people who work in Queensland Health are frightened to come to their local member who, like me, is a member of the opposition for fear of reprisal. I hear lots of stories about what goes on inside not only Queensland Health but other agencies. We have to remove that fear. We have to respect these people for who they are.

These people are professionals and they are working for the common good of not only the people in their local communities but also the visitors to those communities. Whether they are nurses, domestic staff, doctors and so on, they are genuine in their approach. They are an integral part of the operation of Queensland Health.

However, it is very important that we recognise that a problem still exists. The Forster inquiry has not ironed out all of the faults, and it is time that the minister and the director-general took control of the situation. They must make absolutely certain that they consult with the district health officers and the district managers.

When Gordon Nuttall was the health minister, one good thing that he did do was to put in place a three-monthly consultation process between district managers and local members, regardless of their political affiliations. That was a very healthy exercise. It gave us the opportunity to speak with district managers and, in conjunction with the district health councils, resolve issues relating to medical services. As local members, we hear about the problems. Many district managers do not hear firsthand of the problems being experienced. Together, we can resolve a lot of those issues. I believe that, if the Forster inquiry is to work to its true worth, we have to make certain that we look to its terms of reference and try to iron out some of the problems.

Tonight, my pet subject is the amount of money that the remote Diamantina Shire is still paying towards medical services. It is the only shire in Queensland that contributes to its medical services. Many other shires in Queensland simply would not wear that at all.

Mr Horan: What if the Brisbane City Council had to do that?

Mr JOHNSON: Yes, what if the Brisbane City Council had to finance its hospitals? The Diamantina Shire is located in the far south-west corner of Queensland and each year it is visited by approximately 30,000 or 40,000 people. The flying doctor visits the centres of Bedourie and Birdsville. Whilst the shire receives assistance from state and federal governments, it still has to put in its own dollars. There are only about 250 people living in the shire and they have to contribute to pay the nursing staff and to keep the hospital running. That is an indictment on the people of that remote settlement, but that situation cannot be further tolerated.

Tonight I ask the minister to take control of the agenda, because it is ludicrous to think that the shire has to shoulder that responsibility. That should not happen anywhere else in the world, and certainly not in a free state like Queensland. I urge the minister to make recompense to the Diamantina Shire and work out a strategy to relieve the shire of the burden of having to contribute to the costs of employing medical staff and running medical services.

It is important that we recognise that a lot of work still needs to be done to provide health services to western Queensland. For example, we are having difficulties attracting maternity staff to some of those hospitals. An advertising campaign aimed at people who may be thinking of going to live in those areas would let them know what great places they are and would tell people about the modern conveniences and quality-of-life infrastructures that are in place there. By doing that, we can attract people to our rural areas. We have to market Queensland. We have to market the concept of modern medicine in rural Queensland. When my colleague the member for Toowoomba South was health minister, he helped to create modern centres of rural medicine at centres like Longreach, Roma, Charleville, Emerald and Mount Isa. That is something that we can be fiercely proud of.

Time expired.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (9.54 pm): Tonight I shall address mainly the Health Services Amendment Bill, although I do know that this is a cognate debate. The Health Services Amendment Bill is before us tonight because of the absolute mess that the Beattie Labor government has made of the health system.

Looking more broadly at what the Beattie government has done since 2001, it mucked up the Department of Families, which cost hundreds of millions of dollars and many election promises. That department was such a mess because of mismanagement by incompetent ministers. At any one time, 2,000 to 3,000 kids were in need of urgent care and protection. Those kids were not taken into care and protection, despite all of the money that was available, because of the absolute sheer incompetence of a government that did not have ministers capable of doing the job. We then saw similar things happen within the electricity and health industries. My point is that we have been receiving extra money from the GST which should have been spent on new services and infrastructure around the state. Instead, it has been spent on fixing up these massive mistakes.

The bill before the House tonight has its origins in the Forster inquiry, which was designed to fix the problems that came to boil over the issue of Patel in Bundaberg. Queensland Health had degenerated because doctors simply did not want to work within the system. Staff were discontent and unhappy. They were frightened by the bullying culture that had developed. There are many in Queensland Health who want to work cooperatively and as a team. There are great people employed by Queensland Health who want to do a good job, and many of them do just that in the various sections and departments that they work in. However, those people were stymied and hamstrung by the culture of mismanagement that had grown out of the complacency and arrogance of a government that had a massive margin and was wasting money. The government wasted money on so many other aspects of government but did not put money into the hands-on front-line services so necessary in a system like health. That resulted in the Forster inquiry and other inquiries which made certain recommendations, and changes are now being made.

However, let us not forget the genesis of this issue. Let us not forget that this legislation is before the House tonight because of the government's mismanagement. The health system was dragged down from the top by a government that was arrogant and allowed this culture to develop. We saw it not only in Bundaberg but also throughout the state. People were discontent and they did not want to work within the health system anymore.

One of the great things about the Queensland Health system used to be that health professionals wanted to be a part of it. They wanted to develop the humanitarian side of their profession. They wanted to care for people. For that to happen, we must have an organisation where people believe in their managers, believe that they will not be crushed, believe that they will be valued, believe that they will be treated as a valuable part of a team and where they want to be a part of that team.

Because of the failure in the health system we have had to spend massive amounts of money bringing in from overseas doctors who are probably needed by their own communities. They are brought out here because our people are not prepared to go into the health system. For example, we have a particular need for visiting medical officers. The VMO system has been a major contributor to the health system. Specialists who trained in the public system can give back to that system by training young interns and training specialists, and by providing four or eight hours of surgery a week and so many hours of consultation a week.

A key aspect of the bill before the House tonight is the issue of health councils. When Labor came into government in 1989, it took over a system of local boards that were well regarded in some areas because people had direct communication and local management. However, in bigger city areas it is a challenge to run or manage a board system. What did the Goss Labor government bring in? From memory, it brought in 15 district health councils and nearly 300 extra bureaucrats. So we had the layer of the health department, then we had the layer of the regional health authorities—all with their offices, cars, meetings, salaries and everything else—then we had the layer of the equivalent of what is now known as the district health services, and then we had the people who actually did the work.

Debate, on motion of Mr Horan, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (10.00 pm): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Corrective Services, Rotational Roster

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (10.00 pm): I thank the Minister for Police and Corrective Services for the time that she gave yesterday to hear the concerns of the representatives of the correctional facilities in regard to the newly implemented rotational roster system. That meeting demonstrated to the minister the inaccuracy of the statement that she made in answer to my question without notice on 1 November in which she stated—

Obviously the member who asked the question has a message from one prison officer who is unhappy, but that is certainly not the message that I have been getting from the department.

That response to my question flew around the state and resulted in considerable angst being expressed via emails and letters, which I have in my possession, from prison officers and inmates alike. Unlike the minister, I have listened not only to the department but also to those affected staff who have, because of fear of retribution, asked that at this stage they not be named. Owing to a few brave individuals, the minister is now fully aware of the concerns and that folder, which is 1½ inches thick, of emails and correspondence in my possession outlining those concerns from staff at four correctional facilities in this state. Surely that eliminates the one disgruntled man theory.

Contrary to advice given to the minister, correctional facility staff, many of whom have worked rotational rosters prior to the implementation of the new roster, wholeheartedly endorse them, but—and there is a but, not an if—as has been stated ‘the roster results in the disintegration of the security dynamic of the facility’ and they believe that this one does.

These men and women are not uneducated buffoons who could not get a job somewhere else. They hold degrees in history and politics, psychology, sociology, education, theology, health—and I could go on and on. These are people who have degrees in correctional practices and I am talking about multiple numbers of staff who have in excess of 20 years experience. These people have the ability to evaluate a given situation.

As one person pleaded, please listen to the people affected, Minister, and not the man most responsible for the collapse of the partnership between QPSU and the department earlier this year. No-one can blame staff when they ask what academic qualifications in legal management or correctional studies do Mr Mullins or any of the minister’s advisers actually have. Where are those so-called interstate and International statistics so that we can compare them with Queensland correctional centres?

The Woodford Correctional Centre is the only correctional facility in Queensland that has received a rating 1. Believe it or not, at the time it received that rating it was the only facility that was not—and I repeat, was not—operating on this new rotational roster. It is very strongly believed that it is very unlikely that that facility would receive such a rating today.

The correctional facility staff across Queensland are waiting to know what course of action the minister is planning to take after realising that information she has received from her departmental staff is not necessarily accurate. I ask the minister to address this matter with some urgency, because there are 1,700 members of Corrective Services who are waiting to hear her response.

Social Infrastructure

Ms PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (10.03 pm): Yesterday, we heard about the money that the Beattie government is investing in infrastructure throughout the state. This government is also putting substantial dollars into social infrastructure. The Queensland government has continued its record spending to protect abused and neglected children, delivering a massive \$503 million operating budget to the Department of Child Safety in 2006-07. The provision of support for children, families, seniors, people with disabilities and those who are doing it tough says something about our society and something about this government.

The Beattie government is committed to strengthening local communities and empowering individuals to make ends meet. Only last week I had the opportunity to attend the opening of the prep playground area at Richlands East Primary School and met with the parents who, through Education Queensland, completed a positive parenting program. Through improved reading and literacy skills, these parents will now be able to be more involved in their children's education by reading to them. This is a great initiative to create positive parenting and to put kids on the path to lifelong learning and training.

It is in stark contrast to the heavy-handed approach of the federal government. Last week, the federal minister, Mal Brough, issued a press release titled 'Quarantining of welfare payments in the best interests of children'. One would think that the minister was about to embark on some kind of military campaign. The phrases 'quarantine', 'mandatory', 'silver bullet' and 'another weapon in the armoury' do not evoke any thoughts of compassion. If Mal Brough is serious about child welfare, he should put more money into early intervention programs.

The latest federal proposal was to give Centrelink officers search and seizure powers. That is right: Centrelink officers. Currently, these functions are performed by the Federal Police, but the Howard government apparently decided that it would be good if Centrelink officers could raid homes without police accompaniment. When I first heard about the proposals, I found them hard to believe, but I can assure members that they were there, hidden away in schedule 2 of the Commonwealth's Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs Bill 2006.

The type of fraud for which these powers were proposed to investigate included whether cohabiting welfare recipients were, in fact, in a relationship. It is hard to believe that such a ridiculous and offensive policy managed to make it through the Howard cabinet and the Liberal Party room seemingly without the slightest concern. Despite not having numbers in the Senate, the work of federal Labor ensured that these amendments did not go ahead.

I see the Leader of the Opposition in this place. The members opposite could learn from this example of constructive opposition. But the Liberal Party would rather spend its term in opposition fighting the Nationals or fighting the Liberal leader. While the alleged coalition squabbles and fights like two cats in a bag and while the federal government continues to plot its next grab for power, Queenslanders can have confidence that the Beattie government is getting on with the serious job of giving a helping hand to those most in need.

Special Olympics Gympie

Mr GIBSON (Gympie—NPA) (10.06 pm): I rise to speak about a very important group in my electorate and that is the athletes who are involved in Special Olympics. Recently, I attended the opening of the new clubhouse for the Special Olympics Gympie. This is a shared facility with the Gympie and District Sportsmen's Association and is located at the One-Mile Ovals of Gympie football. How wonderful it is to see that various groups can work together for the betterment of all. Indeed, at the official opening, we were told by the Special Olympics Queensland representative that Gympie is now the envy of the whole state because no other Special Olympics district has its own clubhouse.

At this formal opening, the major announcement was made that five Gympie athletes who have disabilities were selected to represent Australia in the Special Olympics national team to compete at the 2007 World Summer Games in Shanghai in October next year. Phillip King and Elijah Bond were selected for the Special Olympics Australian football team. Codey Rowe and Michelle Cotter were selected in the track and field team, and Molly Roadley was selected for gymnastics. They are outstanding achievements for all of these athletes. To be selected to represent your nation is a credit to them and their commitment to their respective sports.

Special Olympics Queensland Gympie chairperson, Janelle Westlake, was ecstatic with the athletes' selection, recognising that to get five people in the Australian team from a small town like Gympie is truly an amazing feat.

However, the athletes face an obstacle in making it to the games next October. The costs associated with the event total \$4,500 for each athlete. This is something that they will no doubt fundraise for. Already they have been given generous donations from various organisations within the Gympie community. However, it is unlikely that they will raise enough money within the time frame. I will be seeking the support of this government to recognise the achievement of these local athletes and help contribute towards their travel costs.

My commitment to the disabled comes from a very personal experience. It is essential that we provide all the support that we can to disabled athletes and to all members of the disabled community so that we ensure that they live lives that are full and complete in all aspects. I am inspired by what these athletes have printed on their uniforms. It is a simple but very powerful statement and one that has remained with me. It reads: 'Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.'

Helensvale Library

Mr GRAY (Gaven—ALP) (10.09 pm): I rise to bring to the attention of the House the recent planning decisions of the Gold Coast City Council that have been to the detriment of the residents of the Helensvale and Gaven communities. The first matter concerns the Gold Coast City Council library at Helensvale. This library was built over 10 years ago to service a much smaller population base. It was due to be expanded or replaced last year. This library, with a public space of 402 square metres, now serves the needs of residents from Helensvale, Gaven, Oxenford, Coomera, Upper Coomera and the fastest growing suburb in the state, Pacific Pines. The library is woefully inadequate. The space required to service this greatly expanded population is 2,400 square metres. Books are piled on the floor, long queues exist for service and access to computers and the staff, who do a marvellous job, show the strain.

In 2001, when the matter was considered by the council, the opportunity existed to have Westfield build a space within the Helensvale Town Centre to be leased by the Gold Coast City Council for the library. Council officers reviewed the proposal and supported it. The power faction in the council knocked this on the head, preferring to build, running an argument that it did not want to lease buildings for libraries, and therefore the opportunity was lost. It was noted shortly afterward by local residents that libraries at the southern end of the city were placed in leased premises. There have been numerous promises in Gold Coast City Council budgets over the years 2001 to 2006 to replace the library at Helensvale that serves, on the council's own figures, a population of 109,000 people.

We then looked forward to a rebuilding of the existing library only to see the council take the extraordinary decision that Helensvale would not have a new library until Coomera had one. This decision saw the loss of \$3 million in state government subsidies, and the dreadful conditions that exist at Helensvale continue. The Helensvale Residents Association is most concerned by this blatant act of discrimination against the people of Helensvale, Pacific Pines, Oxenford, Studio Village and Gaven. The association views with great angst the magnificent library structures that exist at Southport and Robina, the latter of which was replaced after five years.

I am called to ask: is this an act of retaliation against local residents for their support of Westfield against the Gold Coast City Council over many years, or is it an act of retaliation taken out by the bagman and the bloc to get square with local councillor Peter Young for pointing out their election improprieties to the CMC and government? Either way, it is not good enough. My local residents intend to fight the decision of the council.

I now turn to the Westfield town centre. This has been restricted to 34,600 square metres of retail floor space following a decision taken years ago that restricted the entire Helensvale retail floor space area to 38,000 square metres. This is woefully inadequate. The Gold Coast City Council will not hear of expansion. The city council imposed a 'no floor space (retail) bonus' clause on the development. It is the only shopping centre in the Gold Coast that has a 'no floor space (retail) bonus'. Of course, we will not get any expansion to the Helensvale Town Centre.

Time expired.

Whitley, Ms V

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (10.12 pm): Tonight I want to speak about an 18-year-old woman from Toowoomba who has an amazing passion for road safety and is a champion motor racing driver. Victoria Whitley finished grade 12 at Centenary Heights State High School about a year ago. During her teenage years she has been racing go-carts and, through many championships, finally became the Australian go-cart champion. It was a great feat for a young girl to achieve that against all comers. This year she is doing the TAFE motor sports course in Warwick. Her passion and desire is to be a V8 driver and a champion driver. I am sure she will achieve that. Her father was a great speedway driver, and her family give her every support. She works hard in Warwick to put herself through the TAFE course, maintaining her living costs and so forth. I hope she achieves her dream of driving and making a V8 team.

However, I want to tell the parliament about this young girl's amazing passion and commitment to road safety. She and her family have been devastated to read of so many fatal smashes where young people have been killed, maimed and injured in recent months. We are all appalled by this. Victoria has gone to various schools and spoken on radio, helping the police and talking to young people about how

they can drive safely. She is a good role model because she is 18, a good-looking young girl and has been successful at motor racing. She says that she races on a track at high speed but she goes in one direction. She has stewards, rules, an ambulance, a helmet, gloves, fire-proof boots and all the rest of the gear. She knows how dangerous it is for her, but she has all those things helping her. She talks about how dangerous it is for young people on the roads with people going in opposite directions. They do not have the protection—they do not have the ambulance and the stewards—and they do silly things such as speeding and so on. Young people listen to her. Victoria has become an ambassador for the protective driving course on the Gold Coast. A number of people from schools have signed up to do that course.

I have written to the Premier, the minister for transport, Jim Pearce at Travelsafe and Emergency Services, and I have made the suggestion that this young woman's talent should be used. She has no desire for money; she just has a passion to help. I thank Jim Pearce for the letter he sent me from Travelsafe. I look forward to getting a response from the Premier, Paul Lucas and Pat Purcell. I am sure they may be able to help. I have also written to Mark Vaile. I ask those honourable gentlemen to consider this young woman and the practical message she can provide. I think she could be one cog in the wheel to help save the lives of our young people. Young people will listen to people their own age. They will listen to champions their own age. They will certainly listen to Victoria Whitley. I call on the government to give her a hand in this project.

SOAR Program

Ms van LITSENBURG (Redcliffe—ALP) (10.15 pm): I rise to speak about the SOAR program at the Redcliffe Neighbourhood Centre, which was granted \$79,000 by the state government. This program comes under the YACCA umbrella, which is already funded to the tune of \$89,000. SOAR supports young people between the ages of 15 and 19 to continue their education. I would like to congratulate the neighbourhood centre's executive officer, Irena Morgan, and her staff on the research and community consultation they initiated that has targeted this program so effectively. Consequently, they have the support of local schools and community groups.

I have been a strong supporter of the neighbourhood centre over the past several years. The neighbourhood centre has a broad suite of programs including a breakfast program, family counselling, budgeting, domestic violence support groups and YACCA programs that have been extended by this SOAR funding. All of these programs are funded by our government. During the election an extra \$35,000 was allocated in recurrent funding to the Redcliffe Neighbourhood Centre to fund an administrator to coordinate these programs. Improving the lives of individuals and families is what this money is all about. That, in turn, strengthens and enriches the fabric of our society, and that is what we are here to do—to improve the lives of ordinary people.

I also draw the attention of this House to the \$2.5 million granted to the Redcliffe City Council by the state government for the streetscaping of Margate shopping village. This streetscaping is in an area that was badly in need of redevelopment due to years of neglect. I sought funding to transport this basic shopping precinct into a destination shopping area where people will want to shop, have coffee and go to lunch.

I would like to thank the ministers for Energy, Transport and Main Roads for their help in coordinating the undergrounding of power that is being undertaken in a timely manner. I could speak at length about the advantage of undergrounding power and the planting of shrubbery, the installation of furniture and artwork. However, the priorities are the social changes this money will bring about through the transformation in the landscape and aesthetics of the shopping village. This will lead to higher community use of the shopping centre and a corresponding increase in business. This infrastructure will also fulfil a social and recreational function that improves the lifestyle of the people of Redcliffe. Success builds success. These successful projects are typical of the state government's infrastructure program. I am proud—

Time expired.

Retirement Villages, Contracts; Domestic Violence

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—Lib) (10.19 pm): In October 2003 Muriel and Ernie Thompson signed a document in which they paid \$145,000 and obtained what the document refers to as 'a licence to reside' in a retirement village in Caloundra. Mr and Mrs Thompson are both retired and Mrs Thompson walks with the aid of a walker. In 2006 they sold their interest for, I understand, \$210,000. From that amount they are going to receive a net figure of \$125,625.93. The Thompsons have had a number of sums deducted from the sale price. Those sums are all capital gain as a consequence of the sale; \$13,050 for the yearly fee charged for occupying the dwelling based on three per cent of the initial purchase price—in this case a fee of \$4,350 per annum; and \$6,324.07 for the cost of what is termed 'outstanding fees and charges'. The contract that they signed allowed these amounts to be deducted.

Leaving aside the issue of the capital gain, the net result is a reduction in their initial capital by some \$24,500 with accompanying loss of future purchasing power. Whether or not they signed a legally enforceable document is now academic, but what is not academic is that the conditions contained in the contract were significantly biased against them. We need to understand that more of us will be living longer than ever before. Undoubtedly our ability to meet our day-to-day expenses will depend on the capacity to maintain a capital base. The Thompsons' capital base has been significantly and seriously eroded as a consequence of the terms of this contract.

Unfortunately, there are many varieties of this form of contract throughout Queensland and we need to do something about it. We need legislation to protect people who sign this type of document, including a simplified method of resolving disputes. Unfortunately, quite often people do not obtain legal advice on the terms of contracts before they sign as they feel that the fee they will be charged is too excessive. What people do not understand is that the fee may save them 10 times that amount and more. Irrespective, we need legislation to protect people such as the Thompsons and many other people now moving into retirement and entering into similar contracts. As I said, more people are living longer than ever before. Elder law is going to become a major area in the years to come and the process of protection needs to start today.

On a second unrelated issue, the issue of domestic violence continues to haunt our society and it is tending to break up more families, couples and children than at any other time in our society's history. The real concern with domestic violence is the long-term impact that it has upon the children who witness it or are subject to domestic violence themselves. Everybody in this House tonight is acutely aware of the impact of domestic violence and sees it on a regular basis. Domestic violence must be eradicated from our society.

Carina Leagues Club

Mr BOMBOLAS (Chatsworth—ALP) (10.21 pm): I want to pay tribute to the tremendous work that the Brisbane Broncos have done via the Carina Leagues Club to promote Rugby League in my electorate of Chatsworth. It is no secret that young kids needed to be enticed back to the game, with numbers well down at the Carina Junior Rugby League Club. By basing a member of their development team at the Carina Leagues Club, the NRL premiers provided a big boost to league in the area. After a huge sign-on drive and continuous campaigning throughout the season, junior Rugby League in the Carina area was the real winner. Children and families returned in their droves to the Carina Junior Rugby League Club. At the end of the 2004 season there were just 178 players registered at the club, but after Paul Green and his crew worked tirelessly in the area registrations skyrocketed to 496 this year. Coaching clinics and visits by star Broncos were a big hit and, while Paul Green is moving on, I am sure that his replacement, Michael Devere, will also do a fantastic job. At this point I must also pay tribute to the Carina Leagues Club for its support for not only providing the funds and a base for a Broncos development officer at its establishment but also its ongoing sponsorship of sport, community events and struggling local residents. Carina Leagues Club is well and truly a community-conscious club and Chairman Wade Core and his committee deserve recognition and thanks.

The list of achievements on the field this year is not only a credit to all of the players who participated but also to the coaches, officials, parents and support staff who work so hard to keep teams on the field. Six sides made the President's Trophy play-offs earlier in the year and five were victorious. At the end of the season, nine teams made the semis, six reached the grand finals and four won premierships. A number of players were also rewarded for their individual efforts on the field. Peter Pease was chosen by the second division as its Player of the Year and Russell Lockyer was runner up. Shane McIntyre received the Mark Fyfe Memorial Award from the Easts Club and James May and Brent Harvey were both awarded scholarships by the Brisbane Broncos. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Darren Lockyer on a fantastic 2006—captaining the Broncos to the NRL premiership, Queensland to Origin success and who will ever forget Australia's nail-biting win in the Tri-Nations final on Saturday. The fairytale season was completed when the recipient of league's highest honour, the Golden Boot, scored the match winner for the Kangaroos. I am sure both sides of the House agree that Lockyer is a legend worthy of recognition in this place.

Mooloolaba, Public Car Park Project

Mr DICKSON (Kawana—Lib) (10.24 pm): The people of the Sunshine Coast need to be reassured that no property developer from the Sunshine Coast is seen to have received favours from this government. Therefore, I raise the matter of a development in Mooloolaba which is in breach of both state and local government regulations. I have major concerns about the proposed Brisbane Road public car park project. Not the least is the fact that a proposed joint venture car parking project has morphed into a large and lofty high-rise building of 122 units. My concern is the lack of probity which continues to dog this joint venture, which is a marriage of public money with a private commercial development—a partnership which requires approval by Treasury, approval which has not been sought

or received. Maroochy Shire Council has called in the lawyers to advise if it has acted illegally in handing a publicly owned site to a private developer without state government approval. Did council exercise the enterprise powers under the Local Government Act or has it simply disposed of land under the Land Act? The answer is crystal clear. Council required state government approval for this joint venture enterprise and approval was not sought when contracts were being signed. This joint venture development is a first for Maroochy shire and there are no precedents to follow.

The lawyers advising the council and the developer present totally different points of view. We need clarification for everyone concerned, not just for the Brisbane Road car park but for all future local government joint venture projects. Therefore, I believe that it is imperative that the minister for local government conduct an investigation into two major aspects of this partnership. The original tender advertisement did not fulfil the most basic statutory requirements. The proposal was publicly advertised for just 16 days, not the required 21 days. This is a matter Maroochy Shire Council has acknowledged. Another major concern is the fact that Maroochy Shire Council's original intention was to retain ownership of the \$15 million site, delivering a public car park in partnership with a private developer. Under the resulting contract, the site is to be wholly controlled by the developer. Maroochy Shire Council became lost in a planning and legal mire because this joint venture partnership was a first for both planners and the legal team. Sunshine Coast residents now perceive that the clout of a developer far outweighs the powers of a local government authority and possibly the state government as well. I ask the minister for local government to seek clarification of this issue as a matter of urgency. I used to be planning chairman of Maroochy shire. The problem that I see is that this situation has gone on for a long time. Just breaking the Local Government Act under the tender process is something that should be investigated on its own, but it has taken far too long to go down this path and this matter needs to be urgently looked at.

AIDS Awareness Week

Mrs SMITH (Burleigh—ALP) (10.27 pm): As members know, this week is World AIDS Awareness Week and Friday, 1 December is World AIDS Day. In 2006 it is estimated that nearly 40 million people in the world are living with HIV, the highest level ever. This figure includes the more than four million people who were newly infected in the past year. Approximately 2.9 million people died from AIDS in 2006. In many regions of the world HIV infections are heavily concentrated among young people aged 15 to 24 years, accounting for 40 per cent of new infections in 2006. However, in Australia newly acquired HIV infections occur most commonly in men aged in their mid-30s and in women aged in their late 20s. There are 14,000 people infected with HIV, several hundred of those living on the Gold Coast. In October of this year Queensland Health announced that 150 people were newly diagnosed with HIV in Queensland in 2005. This represents a 10 per cent increase on the previous year and a 55 per cent increase since 2001. This recent increase is extremely worrying. Despite 20 years of warnings and education, people are still becoming infected. The Queensland government commits \$22 million annually to treat and care for Queenslanders diagnosed with HIV and other infections and to foster sexually healthy communities through more than 100 state government funded activities and initiatives. Unfortunately the federal government is not pulling its weight. It is at least five years since the federal government increased funding to this vital area. With the spread of the disease on the rise, it is time for the federal government to act.

Last Sunday I attended the third Hats Off BrizVegas concert at the Brisbane Powerhouse which was organised by members of Oz Showbiz Cares/Equity Fights AIDS. Actors and entertainers donated their time and performed for free. Our former parliamentary colleague Liddy Clark as the Queensland Patron of World AIDS Day 2006 spoke eloquently about the disease and how much work is yet to be done. Proceeds from this fantastic concert will go to the HOPE Fund which is a collaboration between Queensland Positive People and the Queensland AIDS Council and provides small grants of goods and services to people in need who are HIV positive. A problem that I see is that there is still too little education in schools on the subject of safe sex. We need to be educating our young people about the virus by introducing information into the school curriculum. Sex education without AIDS education is telling only half the story. This is a disease that is preventable, but only if people are given the facts. HIV/AIDS is not a moral or religious issue; it is a health and social issue. This year AIDS Awareness Week is celebrating the lives and recognising the many faces and stories of those living with HIV and AIDS. I encourage everyone to support World AIDS Day with an open heart and, equally importantly, an open mind.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 10.30 pm.

ATTENDANCE

Attwood, Barry, Beattie, Bligh, Bombolas, Boyle, Choi, Copeland, Cripps, Croft, Cunningham, Darling, Dempsey, Dickson, Elmes, English, Fenlon, Finn, Flegg, Foley, Fraser, Gibson, Gray, Hayward, Hinchliffe, Hobbs, Hoolihan, Hopper, Horan, Jarratt, Johnson, Jones, Keech, Kiernan, Knuth, Langbroek, Lawlor, Lee Long, Lingard, Lucas, McArdle, McNamara, Male, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Mickel, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nicholls, Nolan, O'Brien, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Pratt, Purcell, Reilly, Reynolds, Rickuss, Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, Scott, Seeney, Shine, Simpson, Smith, Spence, Springborg, Stevens, Stone, Struthers, Stuckey, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Weightman, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson