



RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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THURSDAY, 8 FEBRUARY 2007

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

PRIVILEGE

Comments by Member for Burnett

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.31 am): Mr Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege. Last night the member for Burnett said in his contribution to a debate—

I watched the Premier, dressed up in his dinner suit, talk about whistleblowing legislation. It was similar to watching a prostitute dressed in a ballgown talking about celibacy.

I have an obligation to this parliament to attend when matters relate to my portfolio. The Leader of the Opposition introduced legislation and it was my obligation to respond to it.

Last night the Governor invited me, the American ambassador and his wife, the chairman of Theiss, the Chief Justice of Queensland, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Queensland, the Chief of the Australian Army and a number of other guests to Government House. I do not set the dress standards for Government House. They are set by Her Excellency the Governor. If Her Excellency says to me that the standard of dress is a dinner suit then I will attend in a dinner suit. As I say, it is not for me to set the dress standard, nor is it for the member for Burnett.

I want this on the parliamentary record because this is about standards. Frankly, I believe that the member for Burnett should lift his standards. He owes an apology. I think that sort of behaviour is demeaning to this parliament and is not worthy of any member of parliament.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Members' Daily Travelling Allowance Claims

Mr SPEAKER: I lay upon the table of the House the annual report of daily travelling allowance claims by members of the Legislative Assembly for 2005 and 2006.

Tabled paper: Annual Report of Daily Travelling Allowance Claims by Members of the Legislative Assembly for 2005-2006.

PETITION

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

Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme

Mr Cripps from 287 petitioners requesting the House to increase Patient Transfer Subsidy Scheme payments in line with the increase in transport and accommodation costs, and thereafter index the subsidies in line with inflation.

TABLED PAPER

PAPER TABLED BY THE CLERK—EXEMPT STATUTORY INSTRUMENT

The following statutory instrument was tabled by the Clerk—

Central Queensland University Act 1998—

- Central Queensland University Statute No. 3 (Admission and Enrolment) Repeal Statute 2006

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Queensland 150th Anniversary Celebrations

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.34 am): I want to announce today the successful projects for the 150th anniversary of Queensland, the sesquicentennial of Queensland. In 2009 we celebrate the 150th anniversary of Queensland becoming a state and separating from New South Wales. What a great day that was. This is an important milestone for our state.

My government has established the \$100 million Legacy Infrastructure Fund to ensure that there are lasting reminders of this landmark event but also as an opportunity to advance Queensland. Today I am delighted to announce funding worth more than \$70 million to fund a further 79 celebratory projects. The funding is distributed to local councils which undertake the projects in partnership with the state government.

The Gold Coast City Council has received the largest single allocation of \$16 million towards the redevelopment of the Southport Broadwater Parklands. I acknowledge the contribution of Gold Coast members, particularly the member for Southport. The project aims to create one of Australia's greatest foreshore parks incorporating public arts, events precincts, water and children's play area.

This government has been in partnership with the Cairns City Council, the Townsville City Council, now the Gold Coast City Council and a string of other councils all the way up and down the coast.

Mr Wallace: Thuringowa.

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, Thuringowa. The list goes on. There is Mackay—

Mr Schwarten: Rocky.

Mr BEATTIE: Rocky, Burnett and Gladstone. They are all there.

Ms Jarratt: Bowen.

Mr BEATTIE: Absolutely. We have worked in partnership with all of those councils to rebuild the face of Queensland. That is what my government has done.

Mr Reeves: What about the little one, Brisbane?

Mr BEATTIE: This shows how much we have been the builders of modern Queensland. Other significant projects are \$6 million for Mackay's sesquicentennial wharf project, \$5 million for an indoor sport and recreation facility at Logan city, \$3 million to help build an angler's paradise at Redcliffe, \$4 million to the Hinchinbrook Shire Council for the development of a regional gallery, theatre, community spaces and agricultural history interpretation displays in Ingham, \$1.2 million to help the Longreach Airport develop into a high-quality jet standard facility, and \$1 million towards the cost of an interpretive centre in Barcaldine to preserve the heritage of the Tree of Knowledge. I think everyone would understand that that is about Queensland's history.

Smaller projects include: the establishment of a dingo barrier fence tourist and educational drive in Wambo shire, the relocation and restoration of the Blenheim Baptist Church to the Laidley Pioneer Village, and a beautification project along the Warrego River at Charleville. Aboriginal councils will receive a total of \$7.8 million for eight projects in their council areas. The 79 projects announced today are in addition to a number of previously announced initiatives worth \$22 million.

A number of other projects under consideration are presently being discussed with local councils. The projects are located right across Queensland. Well over half the projects I am announcing today are in non-government electorates. I want to make that clear. This is done in the interest of Queensland. I promised we would govern on behalf of all Queenslanders regardless of how they vote, and that is exactly what we have done.

Councils are now required to submit a project plan confirming a 2008 completion date and that demonstrates their ability to secure any additional funds required to undertake the project. I have only mentioned a handful of projects on the list. In the Bowen Shire Council, for example, there is the construction of the historical foreshore plaza, the Catalina commemorative area and the Sinclair soundshell.

Ms Jarratt: Hear, hear!

Mr BEATTIE: I knew that the member for Whitsunday would be delighted about all of that.

Ms Jarratt: That's great news, Premier.

Mr BEATTIE: I take that interjection and thank the member. The Mount Isa City Council will do work in the Leichhardt River community and recreation precinct. We will see the development of a weir system, river edge rehabilitation, the placement of interpretive signs, art work and so on worth \$3 million. The Pine Rivers Shire Council has \$1 million. The Caboolture Shire Council and the Rockhampton City Council have money. The list goes on.

This shows the importance of these projects and their importance for the celebration of our 150 years as a state. We will not be calling it the sesquicentennial celebration. I know some people like to use the term. I would rather call it the 150-year celebration. Maryborough got some money too. I seek leave to incorporate this list in *Hansard* so everyone can see the list and it is on public record.

Leave granted.

QUEENSLAND'S 150 TH LEGACY INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM (Q150 LIP)		
FUNDING ANNOUNCED ON 8 FEBRUARY 2007		
Name of Council	Project Description	Funding Amount
Indigenous Councils		
Aurukun Shire Council	The construction of a community, business and government centre to house the following; Bendigo Bank, Post Office, Centrelink Office, Financial management services office, internet centre, Cape York digital network office, conference room, video conferencing.	\$400,000
Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council	Design and construction of Corroboree Ring Facility to provide a centre at which educational programs for students will be delivered.	\$590,000
Hope Vale Aboriginal Shire Council	Restoration of Community Church. The church building is of timber construction and over 50 years old. Whilst the building has been maintained in good order throughout its life, it is looking tired and needs some major structural work to repair termite damage.	\$150,000
Kowanyama Aboriginal Shire Council	Art and Heritage Cultural Centre and Tourist Facility. The Arts and Heritage Centre will provide the following services – museum for material culture and community historical collection, arts and craft centre, education centre and visitors centre.	\$1,890,000
Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council	Construction of Stage 1 of Community Multi Purpose Centre. The project will benefit all age groups and genders within the community. It will provide a place to showcase the community's activities and its history.	\$1,049,190
Poruma Island Council	New community building to house all of the agencies that are required to deliver the day to day services to an island community. Currently the community services are delivered from several sub-standard buildings.	\$500,000

Torres Shire Council	Beautification of Victoria Parade on Thursday Island. The area provides access to the Torres Strait Culture Centre. Will create tourism opportunities.	\$2,200,000
Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council	Building for art/craft/workshop/hospitality centre in Degarra to include a workshop area for local and traditional arts and craft. The centre would deliver training for hospitality and retail.	\$1,000,000
Total Projects	8	Total
		\$7,779,190

Name of Council	Project Description	Funding Amount
Regional Projects		
Aramac Shire Council	The Aramac Council is applying for funds to develop the "Harry Redford Sporting and Community Centre".	\$375,000
Balonne Shire Council	Construction of an eco-lookout on the Blondie Codrington River bend Parkland in St George. The lookout will be elevated at the level of St George Terrace, and extend out to the embankment towards the water. The lookout will be fully accessible for wheelchairs. Seating will be provided for groups and individuals to view and appreciate the aspect and environment of the natural parklands along Balonne River. Interpretive information on the shire including historical developments to the present day will be provided for visitors to the shire.	\$100,000
Barcardine Shire Council	Permanent memorial to the Tree of Knowledge	\$1,000,000
Barcoo Shire Council	Construction of a new Community Centre in Windorah to replace the aged hall.	\$490,000
Beautesert Shire Council	Jubilee Park Recreational Precinct includes the redevelopment of a mechanics shed in the PCYC Community Centre and the redevelopment of the Beautesert Pool to include a hydrotherapy pool.	\$500,000
Boonah Shire Council	The construction of a significant multi-purpose community facility in Aratula to meet current and future community needs.	\$50,000
Booringa Shire Council	The hall revitalization project is an initiative of Booringa Shire Council to preserve and enhance the Mitchell, Amby and Mungallala Halls.	\$163,960
Bowen Shire Council	Construction of Historical Foreshore Plaza, Catalina Commemorative Area and the Sinclair soundshell.	\$936,000

Brisbane City Council	Connecting Brisbane is a cultural trail that will be developed in consultation with local communities and artists and feature creative forms of interpretation including sculpture, street art, sound installations, signage, multimedia, projection and other forms of expression. The aim is to physically connect the CBD to inner city precincts, key attractions, transport hubs and metropolitan centres through a service of unique "emotional" culture trails experience.	\$1,000,000
Broadsound Shire Council	Middlemount/Tieri and Peak Downs. Creation of a large directional map and self contained unmanned brochure/information facility at two rest stops which are deemed entry point for tourists of the hinterland district which includes the shires of Broadsound, Belanydo and Nebo.	\$25,000
Bulloo Shire Council	The Dowling Track (approximately 500km long) is a four-wheel drive journey of discovery and adventure into the real Australian Outback, tracing the footsteps of Vincent James Dowling and the early pioneers. The project will take place at Thargomindah, Quilpie and Bourke with Council funding assisting in the development of the gateway and interpretive signage along the track.	\$29,320
Bungil Shire Council	To create a community park area in Injune with unique art, trees and shrubs native to the area, water features and an area on history and culture.	\$74,565
Burkekin Shire Council	Transporting and restoring the Burkekin Tractor in Brandon which will include interpretive displays and a gallery that will create a focal point for an existing collection of historical agricultural equipment. Its historical significance as the first internal combustion tractor in the Burkekin district, having been imported in 1913 by the Drysdale Brothers.	\$50,000
Burnett Shire Council	Construction of Burnett Cultural Centre in Bargarra.	\$1,500,000
Caboolture Shire Council	To create the Caboolture Centre Project integrated hub - art gallery, innovative learning centre, auditorium, open space outdoor areas.	\$2,000,000

Cairns City Council	The Cattana Wetlands area represents an integral component of the low forests of Far North Queensland with key features such as the rare feather palm forest. Key infrastructure such as access roads, car parking facilities, walking tracks and toilet amenities will be constructed in Smithfields to complement extensive revegetation, weed removal and interpretive opportunities.	\$1,500,000
Cardwell Shire Council	Construction of new Cardwell Library – Museum complex adjacent to Cardwell Post Office and Telegraph Heritage Centre and Former Shire Hall (which currently houses the library).	\$100,000
Carpentaria Shire Council	Construction of tourist, historical and information signage throughout Normanton at 15 historical points throughout the town.	\$38,600
Clifton Shire Council	Construction of a colour bond building for Clifton to house an extensive collection of items held by Clifton and District Historical Society, to be known as the Clifton and District Museum	\$100,000
Cloncurry Shire Council	The original QANTAS hanger situated at the Cloncurry Airport will be restored to its former glory and will house the story of Cloncurry's long and distinguished association with QANTAS and aviation including war history and RFDS. The hanger will feature an open display of aircraft equipment and mobile displays.	\$187,763
Cook Shire Council	Restoration of the Powder Magazine that was built in 1873-76 to store gunpowder destined for use on the Palmer gold fields. It stands at the far end of what was once the busy port of Cooktown.	\$150,000
Coolooloolo Shire Council	Carlton Hill Park (Gympie) renovation to its original state. The additional plaques, interpretive displays and miners' memorial will commemorate the creation of the park which was built in the 1920s by unemployed miners.	\$15,000
Crows Nest Shire Council	Upgrade and beautification of Centenary Park, Crows Nest. An upgrade of the children's playground, picnic facilities and toilet facilities would enhance the park.	\$160,000

Croydon Shire Council	Construction of a tourist attraction in the township of Croydon, North Queensland, which will deliver stories, displays and exhibitions via electronic mediums and hard copy displays. The facility will be used to highlight the political, sporting, agriculture, multicultural and mining heritage of the shire and region.	\$250,000
Dalrymple Shire Council	To implement stage 2 of the Ludwig Leichhardt Trail through Dalrymple Shire region. This will provide further infrastructure related to the development of a tourist self drive trail of 6 actual Ludwig Leichhardt historic camp sites along the Burkekin River.	\$50,000
Diamantina Shire Council	Upgrade to Birdsville Visitors Centre and Information centre to landmark status – in a similar vein to the Longreach Stockman's Hall of Fame and to complement the status of the nearby Birdsville Hotel.	\$580,000
Eacham Shire Council	The project aims to contribute to the preservation of the Majestic Theatre, a heritage icon in Malanda, for the benefit of the community and the thousands of tourists who visit the area and seek out the special experience of watching a movie in its colonial old-style surrounds.	\$25,000
Eidsvold Shire Council	Development and construction of regional tourist destination entitled the Reginald Murray Williams (R.M Williams) Australian Bush Centre. Will include an interpretive centre, historical information, gallery, outdoor activities, outdoor bush games, bush cooking and an amphitheatre	\$600,000
Esk Shire Council	Construction of library in Esk would house historical memorabilia designed to evoke recollections of Esk's railway era.	\$490,000
Etheridge Shire Council	Construct a medical centre for the Einasleigh community to facilitate visits by the Royal Flying Doctor Service and allied health professionals. Currently medical services are provided in the community hall with makeshift dividers.	\$63,560

Fitzroy Shire Council	The project involves the upgrade of the existing council's community centre in Gracemere into a multi-purpose facility. It will build an extension to the existing hall and refurbish the amenities and entry hall.	\$500,000
Flinders Shire Council	Eco Walk on Flinders will be a living monument to the unique natural environment. It will incorporate education, training, art and exercise facilities. The project will replicate flora and distinguish features from 3 to 13 bio-regions in Queensland on the banks of Queensland's longest river in Hughenden.	\$200,000
Gatton Shire Council	Construction of an Arts and Cultural Centre incorporating a library, art gallery and the Queensland Transport Museum.	\$3000,000
Gayndah Shire Council	The redesign of the clock tower, an icon, located in the centre of the main street, will feature the present historical clock tower, embellished with a sculpture of steel and permanently lit stained glass panels. The project will also include workshops that will involve community artists in the embellishment works and increase their artistic abilities.	\$22,400
Gold Coast City Council	The project will address the redevelopment of Southport Broadwater Parklands to become a Gold Coast icon and one of Australia's greatest foreshore parks. It is intended that the redevelopment will blend aspects of art and culture, events precincts, water, children's play areas.	\$16,000,000
Goondiwindi Town Council	Civic Centre Refurbishment to provide a multipurpose theatre incorporating tiered theatre and cinema.	\$300,000
Hinchinbrook Shire Council	The project involves the development of a regional gallery, theatre, community meeting spaces, agricultural history interpretation displays and technology services.	\$4,000,000

Ipswich City Council	Queens Park Environmental Education Centre. This centre is to provide opportunities for educating children, students and the general community on the environmentally significant issues such as development and maintenance of natural areas, improvement of public and private places, gardens etc and techniques for reducing water consumption.	\$1,250,000
Isis Shire Council	Childers AIF- ANZAC Interactive Forum. The council chamber incorporates a soldier's memorial room, which includes photographs of soldiers from the district who lost their lives in various wars. Proposed to provide an interactive multimedia experience of Australia's military history, particularly with regard to Queensland.	\$225,000
Ifracombe Shire Council	The "Jackson Collections" project will establish a purpose built facility that contains the two collections: one is renowned as Australia's largest bottle collection, the second is a unique collection of over 120 firearms, plus a range of national flags from WWI and II, knives, uniforms, helmets.	\$90,000
Kilkivan Shire Council	The project recognises the strong association that the town of Kilkivan has with horse sports, horse riding, and all things equine. It is proposed to erect a bronze-cast life-size statue of a horse alongside existing signage and landscaping commemorating the Kilkivan Great Horse Ride. The Kilkivan Great Horse Ride is an event enjoyed by thousands of riders and their families from south east Queensland.	\$70,000
Laidley Shire Council	Relocation of the Blenheim Baptist Church to the Laidley Pioneer Village and then restoring it and making it available for weddings, etc at the village.	\$25,000
Logan City Council	To create a multi-purpose indoor sport and recreation centre. The centre will provide a range of sports, recreation and community facilities including four court international standard sports stadium, multipurpose hall and ancillary facilities.	\$5,000,000

Longreach Shire Council	To evolve the Longreach airport into a high-quality jet-standard facility to serve as a regional transport hub for surrounding communities. The project will deliver one of the few jet-capable airports in Outback Queensland and continue Longreach's proud aviation history.	\$1,200,000
Mackay City Council	Mackay Sesquicentennial Wharf. This will be an iconic structure edging the southern bank of the Pioneer River in the historical Wharf Precinct providing a lasting reminder of Mackay's deep rooted links with the sea. The precinct is the centre point of the current revitalisation of the urban fabric of the city centre and provides a pointer to Mackay's future as a major seaport and coastal destination.	\$6,000,000
Maryborough City Council	Relocation of former Croydon Foundry office building, development of Arts Centre and Display Space Kanaka Memorial and installation of Public Art space. Project components include: development of public open space that connects the CBD with the Mary River and the heritage precinct in Wharf Street and includes the installation of public arts; refurbishment of a heritage listed warehouse into an Arts Centre and Display Centre; relocation of historic Croydon Foundry office and its contents into the precinct; construction of a Kanaka Tribute Memorial.	\$499,869
Millmerran Shire Council	Redevelopment of the Factory Dam, Millmerran. Works including walking tracks, a fishing pontoon, BBQ shelter area and skate park. This project was initiated by the Millmerran Youth Council and has been supported by Millmerran Shire Council.	\$172,725
Mirani Shire Council	Eungella Memorial Hall repair and refurbishment. Project will consist of restumping, removing and replacing sections of damaged floorboards, rewiring of building, plumbing repairs, repairs to ceiling, kitchen and toilet refurbishment, purchase of rainwater tank and pipes.	\$34,000

Miriam Vale Shire Council	The project is the redevelopment of the 1770 Foreshore located at the historical second landing site of Captain James Cook and the crew of the Endeavour to restock and repair the ship in May 1770. The project intends to deliver a rejuvenated foreshore comprising interconnecting pathways, decks and viewing platforms, amenities and play equipment with public art and signage to convey the historic value of the area in a manner which is openly accessible to the community and visitors to the area.	\$495,000
Mount Isa City Council	Leichhardt River Community and Recreation Precinct – development of weir system, river edge rehabilitation, placement of interpretative signs, artwork and totems that relate the heritage of the environment, human settlement and cultural value of the river and its surrounds.	\$3,000,000
Mundubbera Shire Council	Construction of a multi-purpose community arts venue in the form of an amphitheatre which will be the only amphitheatre in the Central and North Burnett Regions.	\$122,700
Murgon Shire Council	Museum complex upgrade. Visitors to the museum are able to experience many hands on activities ranging from milking cows, butter making and operating a manual telephone exchange. The museum hosts approx 2,000 American students from the People and People programs who visit the museum as part of their country experience.	\$25,000
Murweh Shire Council	Charleville Warrego River Beautification Project, incorporating a river walk, picnic areas and sports/ recreation facilities	\$200,000
Nanango Shire Council	Nanango Shire Energy Precinct will reflect on the historical significance of energy technology to Nanango Shire and showcase future energy inventions as they unfold. Redevelop the power supply network of the town centre precinct of Nanango to underground power.	\$400,000

Paroo Shire Council	Artesian Waters Visitors Centre in Cunnamulla will function essentially as a natural history interpretative centre. The project includes interpretative displays, short documentary films, and a theatre.	\$150,000
Perry Shire Council	The erection of a cast image of a miner and associated information boards outlining the history of mining in Mount Perry is proposed to be erected adjacent to the town's cultural centre. The project intends to recognize the contribution of the miners and the mining industry to the town and to Queensland.	\$10,000
Pittsworth Shire Council	Community and Technology Centre. Design and construction of a community and technology centre incorporating conference and seminar rooms and facilities to enable community access to a range of technology advanced training facilities. The facility will allow 24 hour access to public internet sites and on the spot training facilities. The facility will allow 24 hours access to public internet sites and on the spot training for our constituents.	\$410,000
Pine Rivers Shire	Outdoor Performing Arts Venue in Strathpine. The project will consist of an outdoor stage, seating for 15,000 people, and a multifunction facility to service not only the performance area and the surrounding recreation and festival spaces.	\$1,000,000
Quilpie Shire Council	An Object Theatre at the Eromanga Living History Centre which is situated in the Opal Opolis Complex in Eromanga. With the use of light, sounds effects, film, oral histories, object, documents and movement, the Object theatre goes far beyond the text panel interpretation or the single oral history tape recording or film.	\$60,000

Redcliffe City Council	Woody Point Jetty and Foreshore Renewal Project- historic recreational and tourist precinct celebrating Redcliffe as Queensland "First Settlement" site and its rich maritime history. The replacement of the existing outmoded Woody Point Jetty with a new structure and enhancement of surrounding foreshore area constructing a symbolic tribute. This is to be achieved through the use of decorative lighting, interactive storyboards, stimulating local landscaping, the enhancement of recreational boating and fishing facilities and the creation of a bayside focal point whose design would be based on the cities maritime theme and historic traditions.	\$3,000,000
Redland Shire Council	Upgrade the Cleveland multi-purpose show grounds precinct that will include a new central plaza area and with the capacity to host festivals and events, trade shows, art exhibitions and other cultural activities and family-focused recreation.	\$486,825
Richmond Shire Council	Reconstruction of Cambridge Downs Store in Richmond close to Kronosaurus Korner. The stone building will be constructed to its original design. Stables and a holding area for horses will be built at the complex along with a working blacksmith's shop.	\$50,000
Rockhampton City Council	Air conditioning and refurbish Customs House. The greater use of Customs House for higher order activities ranging from functions to exhibitions.	\$400,000
Rosalie Shire Council	Muntapa Tunnel is of historic significance as it is the longest bore tunnel in Australia. The project incorporates signage, improved access to view the tunnel, enhanced picnic facilities, reconstruct original workers campsites and public amenities.	\$75,000
Tambo Shire Council	Restoration of the old general store as cultural centre. The project will assist to establish a community education and cultural centre. This will include a small historical interpretative display, art gallery, arts training room, arts and craft retail area and community education and internet centre.	\$150,000

Tara Shire Council	Stage 1 construction of Meandarra ANZAC Memorial Museum to house the collection of military artifacts. The museum aims to commemorate the ANZAC traditions through the collection and preservation of military artifacts to form a museum of national significance.	\$70,000	
Tiaro Shire council	Bauple Sport and Recreation club – construction of a club house and facilities.	\$125,000	
Wambo Shire Council	Establishment of a Dingo Barrier Fence Tourist and Educational Drive. The Dingo Barrier Fence is the longest man structure in the world and it starts/finishes close to Jandowae the principle town of the Wambo Shire. The project will provide great historical and tourism benefits for the region and will include traffic signage, rest stop facilities and interpretative signage.	\$38,201	
Warroo Shire Council	Restoration of the historic Warroo Shire Hall in Surat. The hall is an icon in the town of Surat with its unusual design of castle-like tower. It is a drawcard for tourists and is one of the most photographed buildings in the district.	\$500,000	
Whitsunday Shire Council	Development of a themed, interpretative, directional and locality signage throughout the Whitsunday Shire.	\$200,000	
Winton Shire Council	World Class Natural History Museum (project proponent is Australian Age of Dinosaurs Inc.). It will focus on the Australian continent with an emphasis on the Mesozoic Era (aka the age of dinosaurs). This will include a 'back through time' experience, life size walk through Cretaceous environment dioramas, dinosaur discovery and excavation display, comprehensive fossil displays and a unique educational experience on Australia's evolution, from when life first evolved over 500 million years ago to the Australia we know today.	\$500,000	
Total Projects	71	FUNDING TO NON-INDIGENOUS PROJECTS	\$62,660,488
TOTAL NUMBER OF PROJECTS	79	TOTAL FUNDING RELEASED 8 FEB	\$70,439,678

Road Safety

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.38 am): Too many Queenslanders have lost their lives in drink-driving accidents. Between 1 August 2005 and 31 July 2006 83 people died in crashes where alcohol was a factor. In reality this is just the tip of the iceberg with thousands more people hospitalised every year or left with devastating injuries. In the past 12 months my government has introduced a wide range of measures to improve road safety, including double demerit points for high-speed hoons and immediate licence suspension for high-risk and repeat drink drivers.

Over the next few months we are also bringing in demerit points for heavy vehicle fatigue offences and introducing young driver measures. We believe these young driver measures will be significant; we will not see the benefit of those measures for a little while because they have not come in yet but we believe that they will work. This government is serious about road safety. As part of our multifaceted approach, there will also be advertisements to raise awareness about this terrible community problem. From Sunday night Queensland Transport will run an ad telling the real-life story of Rockhampton's Nick Benjamin. Nick became a T4 paraplegic after failing to negotiate a bend after having consumed too much alcohol. Nick speaks frankly about what he did and his lifelong injuries. I want to thank Nick for sharing his experience in the hope that it may save other young Queenslanders from making the same mistakes on the road. The minister for transport will be releasing that ad later today, and I hope it has the shock effect.

Mr Lucas: Real people.

Mr BEATTIE: Exactly. It is about real people, and I hope it has the shock effect of getting young people to think about how they drive to save their lives.

World Athletics Championships

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.40 am): There are a number of matters that I wish to report to the House on. Mr Speaker, I seek your approval to deal briefly with them but incorporate all of the major details in *Hansard*. I will go through them quickly if I could.

Leave granted.

Mr BEATTIE: Last month I informed the House that I met with the President of the International Association of Athletics Federations, Mr Lamine Diack, in Monaco to confirm this government's full support of Brisbane's bid for the 2011 world championships in athletics. The IAAF evaluation team will be in Brisbane on 20 and 21 February to visit the stadium, training venues, hotels, the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre and the city. I will travel to Mombasa with the lord mayor before the final vote on 27 March to present Brisbane's bid. The lord mayor and I will lead the outstanding bid team, including John Coates AC, President of the Australian Olympic Committee, International Olympic Committee member and a key member of Sydney's successful bid for the 2000 Olympics. Herb Elliott, Robert de Castella and Craig Mottram will join the bid as athletic champions past and present who are known and respected by the IAAF council members.

Whilst the bid process is competitive and rarely does a city win first time around, Brisbane has produced an impressive bid document that positions us strongly against other bidding cities.

Of the nine cities that initially expressed interest in bidding for the 2011 Championships, only three cities remain in the race—Brisbane, Moscow and Daegu (South Korea).

These cities are formidable competitors as both Russia and South Korea have international event experience in hosting Olympic Games, and South Korea also co-hosted the 2002 FIFA World Cup.

The Deputy Premier and the Minister for Sport will also host a dinner for the Team at the Gallery of Modern Art, allowing our visitors to experience Brisbane's thriving cultural life as well.

The week prior to the Evaluation Team visit, the Oceania Athletic Association Congress will be held on the Gold Coast.

It is quite a coup for Brisbane's bid that the IAAF President, Lamine Diack and the IAAF General Secretary will attend the congress and experience this great part of the State first-hand.

I will take the opportunity to return Mr Diack's hospitality in Monaco and meet with him during his stay to again confirm our commitment to the bid.

It is also appropriate at this time to acknowledge the great support of Mr Bill Bailey, the IAAF Council Member for Oceania. He has been a great source of information and assistance to the bid team.

Mr Speaker, I know all Members join with me in congratulating the bid team for their hard work and in wishing them the best of luck in Mombasa.

Queensland Cultural Centre

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.41 am): In terms of the redevelopment of the Queensland Cultural Centre, I am delighted to say that since the opening of the redevelopment of the Cultural Centre in Brisbane at the end of last year, hundreds of thousands of Queenslanders and tourists have flowed through our new Gallery of Modern Art, the State Library and the refurbished Queensland Art Gallery. In fact, the precinct has won rave reviews from the public and the media. During the December opening weekend alone, there were in excess of 60,000 visitors. Since the people's day weekend, more than 600,443 visitors have shown their support with their feet. As of Monday this week, there were 201,048 to GoMA, 198,462 to the Queensland Art Gallery and 200,897 through the State Library. There is an example of my government building the modern Queensland.

Mr Speaker, the Smart State's status in culture and learning has soared to new heights.

The Courier-Mail (December 4, 2006) reported: "In a nutshell, all the hype is justified. The 5th Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art and the new Gallery of Modern Art are true events in the history of Australian Art, which suddenly leave every other exhibition space and every other art show in Australia back in the 20th century."

On top of that, exit surveys show nine out of ten visitors strongly support my Government's \$291 million investment in this showpiece site which will deliver long-term benefits to the cultural and intellectual life of Brisbane and Queensland.

The figures speak for themselves. Almost 22% of visitors came from outside the State which highlights the very real economic benefits that our cultural facilities deliver.

Visitors were also from a wide variety of backgrounds, with about 25% speaking a language other than English at home, and 4% identifying themselves as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.

On top of all of this, what is personally pleasing to me, is the reports of the precinct's sense of community.

As the The Weekend Australian said on December 2: "In one bold move, Queensland has changed the face of Australian art," and "Brisbane has staked its claim to be the nation's contemporary art capital".

Indeed we have.

Federalism

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.42 am): With regard to federalism and the Constitutional Convention, at the Council of the Australian Federation meeting tomorrow I will be proposing that a Constitutional Convention on federalism be held in early 2008. To set the parameters, I will table at that meeting a discussion paper called 'Reclaiming the Vision: Restoring Australia's Federal Balance' at tomorrow's council meeting of the Australian federation. I table a copy for the information of members of the House.

It will have federal involvement and support, but there is a precedent for the states and territories to take the lead. After all, this is how our Constitution was born.

I will recommend to Premiers and Territory leaders that the Constitutional Convention be held under their banner, and be a wide-ranging debate on the state of federalism in Australia.

It will consider issues such as reforming the Senate along the lines of the German Bundesrat; redrafting the division of powers, and; creating an Interstate Commission to improve how state, territory and the federal governments work together.

Also taking part in the Convention should be participants from a cross-section of the Australian community.

It's outcomes would form the proposals to be presented at a referendum to amend the Constitution.

It aims to generate debate about what is wrong with the Australian Federation today, as well as changes for the better.

Australian Federation faces unprecedented challenges in the 21st century, including those brought on by climate change.

The Federation also faces other problems including:

- Fiscal imbalance, which allows the Commonwealth to dictate how states spend their money;
- Confusion over which level of government is responsible for what services; and, critically
- Failure of the Senate to act as it was constituted—as the States' House.

The original intent of the founding fathers was to achieve a balance of power between the national, state and territory governments.

The Howard Government's dismantling of the hard-won industrial rights show just how far federation has diverged from its original intent.

As I said in this House last October, cooperative engagement between law-makers offers the greatest prospect of delivering the society of the future.

It is time now to work together to restore the vision, and Australia's federal balance.

Tabled paper: Report by Queensland Government titled 'Reclaiming the vision: Restoring Australia's federal balance' dated February 2007.

Community Cabinet, Atherton

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.43 am): This weekend the community cabinet will meet in Atherton, my old home town. It will host my government's 100th community cabinet meeting. This will be our 100th. It is estimated that more than 50,000 Queenslanders have attended the 99 community cabinets that have been held since July 1998.

Mr Speaker,

This weekend will mark a historic occasion.

These meetings are one of our most popular initiatives.

They have given thousands of Queenslanders unique access to our wonderful democratic system in their own backyard.

Over a friendly cup of tea in a relaxed atmosphere, issues have been nussed out and workable solutions found to a myriad of problems.

There have been many memorable moments from traditional dances on Thursday Island to meetings on a train headed for Barcaldine.

Last year the normal agenda was dropped in Mackay as we met with emergency service officials to help urgently prepare for the worst cyclone ever to hit the Queensland coast.

On that note I am also pleased to table the latest report of the Operation Recovery Taskforce led by General Peter Cosgrove.

General Cosgrove notes the visible signs of recovery in the region including many new roofs, buildings and external works.

With the majority of homes requiring weatherproofing now complete, the emphasis on rebuilding is now turning to the internal fit outs of homes requiring repair.

We will be keeping a close eye on the weather this weekend with our emergency service teams working at the local level to help communities affected by the recent flooding.

Mr Speaker

A century of Community Cabinets across the State has attracted almost 8,000 formal deputations.

The record number was 208 at Noosa in August 2003.

I understand there are already more than 150 formal deputations planned for the meeting this weekend.

The relaxed no ties, coats off tone of Community cabinets have allowed people to voice their concerns direct to the relevant Minister.

The face to face meetings have resulted in countless problems being solved and led to a new level of community consultation.

Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee, Government Response to Report

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.43 am): On 10 August last year the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee of the parliament presented report No. 55 entitled *Voices and votes: a parliamentary inquiry into young people engaging in democracy*, and I table the government response.

I commend the Committee for producing this informative report, with its 26 recommendations with regard to active learning about democracy; electoral reform; and ways for representative government to engage better with young people.

The Government has considered the report and supports 12 of the Committee's recommendations in full; and a further 11 recommendations are supported in principle, subject to further consideration by Government departments and agencies.

We share the committee's desire to better engage young people in the democratic process and believe there is merit in trialling new polling booths at major tertiary education institutions and other locations where young people live and congregate.

The Government supports an expanded role for the electoral commission in promoting our democratic institutions and processes to high school students.

We also support a number of the Committee's recommendations aimed at improving the relationship between representative government and young people, including re-badging the Queensland Youth Charter and the development of interactive and electronic youth engagement strategies.

Only three Committee recommendations are not supported on the basis that the Government already has initiatives in place to address each recommendation.

To ensure that the recommendations supported by the Government are implemented, I will request a six monthly report on the activities undertaken by each relevant agency, until all activities are completed.

Acknowledging the important role young people play in our democracy, increasing their knowledge and passion for engaging in democratic processes and improving the response of democratic institutions towards them is important for Queensland's future.

I thank committee members for their efforts and now table the Government's response to the Report.

Tabled paper: Government Response to the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee Report No.55—Voices and Votes—A Parliamentary Committee Inquiry into Young People Engaging in Democracy.

Export Workshops

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.43 am): With regard to export workshops, exporting offers incredible opportunities for Queensland companies regardless of size. In 2005-06 Queensland was one of the country's fastest growing exporters, achieving record goods and service exports of \$42.5 billion. We will be running a series of workshops, and I will incorporate further details in *Hansard*.

Mr Speaker,

Queensland firms are achieving success with exports of not only natural resources and primary production, but also Smart State goods and services.

This includes mining equipment and services, information and communications technology, biotechnology, aviation, education, and business services.

As part of the Mid Year Review earlier this year the Treasurer indicated growth in overall exports was expected to accelerate again this financial year.

There's no doubt our international reputation as a producer of quality goods and services is growing—it's the perfect time for local firms to take advantage of Queensland's profile and get exporting.

Our Government is doing everything we can to help businesses make the most of these opportunities.

We have put in place a comprehensive five year export strategy, Driving Export Growth for Queensland 2006-2011.

As part of this strategy we will host a series of workshops next month throughout Queensland.

Entitled 'Getting Export Smart' the workshops are designed to give business owners the "know how" and access to expertise to begin and sustain a successful export venture.

The workshops will be delivered across the State via our network of 20 State Development Centres and put businesses in touch with local export advisers who can help them establish a sustainable export operation.

Mr Speaker,

These workshops are a smart move in the Smart State.

This month workshops will be held in Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Mackay, Cairns, Toowoomba and Rockhampton.

Next month further workshops will be held in Bundaberg, Gympie, Ipswich, Kingaroy, the Sunshine Coast and Townsville.

Taking smart goods and services across Australia and around the world contributes to the growth of our economy and creates more jobs for Queenslanders.

Coal Communities, Assistance

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.44 am): I want to talk about assistance to coal communities. Members would be aware that the resources boom is providing a wide range of jobs and communities for Queenslanders, but not without its challenges, particularly in regional areas. During the election I gave a commitment to send a delegation of directors-general to central Queensland. Since their visit in October, a number of immediate measures have been put in place, and I of course will incorporate those details in *Hansard*.

During the election, I gave a commitment to send a delegation of Directors-General to central Queensland coal communities to assess how the Government could best assist the region to overcome these challenges.

Since their visit in October, a number of immediate measures have been put in place.

More land has been released to meet the growing housing demands; we are working with local councils to accelerate regional plans for the area; new minimum standards for accommodation are being examined; and on-the-ground support has been provided for disability and other community services.

Today, senior officers from the Coordinator-General's office and the Natural Resources and Local Government and Planning departments are meeting with Belyando Shire Council at Clermont to finalise the package for the provision of adequate water supply to Moranbah.

The Directors-General are also finalising a long-term regional strategy that will go to Cabinet before the end of the month, which will address the pressures currently faced within the shires. This strategy will be implemented in conjunction with local agencies, councils and the mining industry.

Following Cabinet's consideration of the strategy, the DG delegation will return to the region to personally report back to councils.

Mr Speaker, the Government will continue to work with the affected local councils to assist them in addressing the challenges they face as a result of rapid growth.

Purified Recycled Water

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure) (9.44 am): In recent days we have heard some unfortunately ill-informed and unhelpful comments about the use of purified recycled water. We expect debate on our decision to make purified recycled water an ongoing part of south-east Queensland's water supply, but I think that debate must be informed by evidence and fact that has been sadly lacking from some of the commentators opposite. The people of south-east Queensland deserve nothing less in this debate.

The facts are that recycled water has been used safely around the world in both planned and unplanned schemes for many years. Purified recycled water has been added to drinking water supplies in California for the last 45 years. Studies of the direct effect on human health carried out as part of the various schemes confirm that water containing purified recycled water is safe to consume. Research has found the rigorous treatment processes applied to purified recycled water reduces the compounds of most concern to people—that is, hormones; endocrine disruptors, which are the by-products of manufactured chemicals such as pharmaceuticals and natural hormones; viruses; and medical waste—to safe or non-detectable levels. These are lower levels than what the public are generally exposed to in everyday life. Some 10 years of testing at the recycled water plant in Orange County in California found that no endocrine disrupters were detected in the recycled water produced.

The project that will deliver purified recycled water to south-east Queensland—that is, the western corridor recycled water pipeline—is being designed to meet or exceed world's best practice in relation to treatment processes and water quality standards. To assure the quality of the water being produced, the advanced water treatment process that will be employed by the western corridor project will use a multibarrier approach involving the following treatment stages. Step 1: water discharged by hospitals, industry and businesses must first meet standards set by councils before it enters our water sewer system. Step 2: the wastewater treatment plant, where wastewater that will supply the advanced water treatment plants, has already undergone physical and biological processes to provide water that is treated to EPA standards. These processes are already effective in removing the majority of man-made chemicals. Step 3: microfiltration and ultrafiltration. These membranes remove particulate matter with turbidity and suspended solids, protozoa and some viruses that are left. Step 4: reverse osmosis. This process blocks contaminants such as dissolved salts, viruses, pesticides and most organic compounds that are left.

Step 5: advanced oxidation—importantly, this process is used to destroy endocrine disrupters which are by-products, as I have said, of manufactured chemicals such as pharmaceuticals. The oxidation reacts with any remaining endocrine disrupters in the water and results in normal organic compounds being formed. Because the treated water is so soft, it must be stabilised through the addition of controlled amounts of hardness—that is, calcium and bicarbonate. It will also be disinfected with chlorine just like ordinary tap water is. Step 6: the water will then be added to the natural water catchment where it will be subject to sunlight and other natural elements. Step 7: the water will then be treated again through the existing drinking water treatment process at Mount Crosby before it is piped to our households.

At each of the main barrier steps water quality is monitored. If there is an issue with the water, it will be ejected into the waste stream. It will not enter the pipeline supplying drinking water. The advanced water treatment plants are designed to be fail safe—that is, if there is a critical failure of any individual piece of plant or the entire plant through something like a power outage, it will automatically shut down the piece of plant or the whole advanced water treatment plant to stop production and isolate the plant from the grid. The government is currently undertaking detailed development of the recycled water regulatory framework. Water quality standards and monitoring requirements for purified recycled water will be set to achieve world's best practice and will meet or exceed the Australian drinking water guidelines. Specific standards are being finalised in consultation with the Queensland Water Commission's expert advisory panel.

I would implore the backbench member for Southern Downs—the Google king of the Queensland parliament—to just be a little careful about the scaremongering that he is engaging in and I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to identify who is the coalition's spokesperson on this issue.

Electricity Supply

Hon. GJ WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy) (9.49 am): Our drought, the worst in living memory, has put pressure on Queensland's most vital commodities: water and power. Having said that, I am advised that there are more than enough electricity reserves to meet the peak demands this summer and the next, with a capacity of around 10,500 megawatts. When the new Kogan Creek Power Station comes on line later this year, add a further 750 megawatts. That is more than 11,000 megawatts—well in excess of the record demand recorded last month. There are more than 4,500 megawatts of generating capacity in central Queensland. The lines linking central and southern Queensland can also transfer up to 1,900 megawatts to Brisbane.

Queensland is in a strong position to meet future electricity demand. This is reflected in a report by the independent market operator, NEMMCO. It highlights our strong growth, the highest in the national electricity market, and it recognises the level of committed investment in the Queensland electricity sector. For instance, the 450 megawatt Braemar Power Station near Dalby was opened only last year by the Premier. In addition to our existing capacity, we have a significant number of new projects on the drawing board. These include the 1,000 megawatt Spring Gully proposal by Origin Energy, the Australian Gas Light company's 370 megawatt proposal near Townsville and Origin Energy announced yesterday a second 500 megawatt gas-fired power station at Braemar. There are a number of other projects which, if found to be commercially viable, will deliver an additional 2,000 megawatts of generating power.

If these are approved, they will provide more than enough electricity to meet the expected growth in demand. This translates to a total of more than 3,000 megawatts on the drawing board—well in excess of the projected growth in demand of up to four per cent per year. Powerlink is also boosting our electricity supply through new investments, including the Middle Ridge to Greenbank transmission line, which is expected to be up and running by next summer.

We are building now to meet future electricity needs. The \$1.7 billion western corridor recycled water pipeline will also provide recycled water to the Tarong and Swanbank power stations when it is completed. Tarong Energy has modified output at Tarong Power Station during periods of low demand until the delivery of the recycled water pipeline by June next year. What we are putting in place now is our investment in the long-term future of each and every Queenslanders.

North Queensland Floods; Moggill Electorate, First Responder Group

Hon. PD PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (9.52 am): I am pleased to advise the House that ex-Tropical Cyclone Nelson was yesterday downgraded to a tropical low and has now dissipated and that the new tropical low that has formed off Cairns is expected to track away from the coast. Predictions for its intensity have diminished overnight and the cyclone watch between Cardwell and Mackay has been cancelled. Further heavy rain is not anticipated to impact on east coast communities and no further tropical cyclone advice will be issued for this system. I can hear a collective sigh of relief from the people in the north, thankful that the rain is going to dissipate.

Over the past week we have seen localised flooding in many areas, including Ingham, Giru, Mackay, Bowen, Mornington Island, Innisfail and many other smaller communities. There has been a significant amount of work done by our emergency services and I commend them for their efforts. Over 320 SES volunteers working within communities north of Mackay have been activated in support of the flooding operations lasting over the past week and 20 Emergency Services personnel have also been deployed into communities to help coordinate the response and relief efforts. I would also like to thank local councils across the affected areas for their close cooperation with my department. Local and district disaster management groups have been active in flood-affected areas protecting their communities.

I also note that western Queensland and some gulf communities have already been dealing with flooding over recent weeks. In the far west, communities such as Boulia, Bedourie and Birdsville are used to being cut off and take these floods in their stride. Many of those communities, in addition to other remote towns in the gulf region, such as Burketown, have already been resupplied and they will continue to be while they remain isolated. Burketown has been isolated for five or six weeks.

I would also like to touch on another issue. I was a little surprised to read an article in this week's *Westside News* in which the member for Moggill calls for a first responder group to be established in his electorate. It is not that I disagree with the idea. In fact, I suggested it to him when we had a one-on-one briefing on ambulance services in his electorate late last year. At that time the member for Moggill expressed his support for the idea and agreed to work with me and the Queensland Ambulance Service to progress it further in coming months.

I can also put an end to the mystery behind the 'exclusive' figures that Dr Flegg had somehow obtained and released to the *Westside News* last week. They are figures that were specially prepared for my meeting with the member for Moggill and given to him late last year, which is why I was disappointed to see them misconstrued in the way in which they have been. As I have said consistently, response times for individual suburbs are not an accurate indicator of performance when viewed in isolation. Other factors such as case load numbers also need to be taken into account.

The Moggill electorate includes large semirural suburbs with relatively low population densities and case loads and it poses its own challenges for QAS service delivery. However, it is an area that could be well suited to a first responder group, which is why the QAS is currently moving towards establishing one. This first stage in setting up a group includes putting funding in place—and that has already been approved—and meeting with key stakeholders, such as the local police and the nearest local ambulance committee, which happens to be in Centenary. That process is underway.

Members of the House know that response times across Queensland are constantly monitored by our operational experts—the Queensland Ambulance Service—and it is the operational experts who take that information into account when allocating resources across the state. I would also like to take the opportunity to commend the member for Ashgrove for her representations on this issue. She is a strong advocate on behalf of the people of Brisbane's west. She gets on with the job without the grandstanding. I would like to continue to work with both the member for Ashgrove and the member for Moggill on this important issue.

Smart Academies

Hon. RJ WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Education and Training and Minister for the Arts) (9.56 am): Innovation, creativity and knowledge are cornerstones of our Smart State philosophy. There are no better examples of that than our new Queensland Academy for Science, Mathematics and Technology at Toowong and the Queensland Academy for Creative Industries at Kelvin Grove. These innovative new academies are breaking new ground and providing opportunities for our best and brightest students to accelerate their learning opportunities.

Last week, I joined the Premier for the opening of the Queensland Academy for Science, Mathematics and Technology at Toowong. The academy has an internationally recognised curriculum, industry partnerships and links with the University of Queensland. In this, the first year of its operations, the academy has 238 students taking subjects for years 10 and 11. There will be a bigger student population in 2008 when year 12 commences for the first time.

The academy incorporates an array of technological innovations. This is the only state school in Queensland with a wireless campus. Students can use online technologies wherever they are on the campus. Computer and power outlets have been carved into sandstone boulders in the school courtyard to enable students to work on computer packages while outside. Students will be using a graphic Tablet PC—a special notebook computer—instead of traditional notebooks for all their subjects. There are purpose-built, state-of-the-art science laboratories designed in collaboration with the University of Queensland. There are smart cards which allow students access to the laboratories and other academy facilities after hours. Close links to the University of Queensland will enable students to work on robotics, biomedical, forensic science and gene technology. It is an innovative learning environment and it will give students every opportunity to achieve their potential.

By undertaking the International Baccalaureate diploma—an internationally recognised accreditation for senior schooling—students will have a senior schooling qualification recognised that will give them access to universities throughout the world. Similarly, our Queensland Academy for Creative Industries at Kelvin Grove will be commencing operations with students in years 10 and 11. This year, the academy is operating out of temporary accommodation at the Kelvin Grove campus of the Queensland University of Technology while permanent accommodation is under construction. As members are aware, we are also in the process of developing a Gold Coast based academy focusing on health sciences, which will commence for years 10 and 11 in 2008 and for year 12 in 2009. These academies are great examples of innovation in education and truly reflect what our Smart State is all about.

Emergency Departments

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Health) (9.59 am): Our public health system is treating more Queenslanders every quarter. Last week's Queensland Health performance report was further proof that our hospitals are busier than ever before. Nowhere are the unprecedented challenges of a growing and ageing population more pronounced than in our emergency departments. New figures show that Queensland public hospital emergency departments treated a record 854,266 people during 2006. That is over 14,000 more emergency department patients than during 2005, and it is over 168,000 more patients than during 2000, representing a 24.5 per cent increase in attendances. On current trends, I would expect our emergency departments to be treating over a million people every year by the end of the decade.

Two of our busiest hospitals last year were in the north, with Townsville's ED attending to more than 54,000 patients, 7.8 per cent up on the previous year, and Cairns treating more than 35,000, a 6.8 per cent increase. The biggest jump was recorded in Redcliffe, up eight per cent on 2005, with over 45,000 patients, which was caused in part by the temporary reduction in ED services in Caboolture. Bundaberg and Rockhampton also recorded solid increases as did both children's hospitals in Brisbane. Most other EDs in south-east Queensland were also up on 2005.

We are also finding that our EDs are generally treating more serious and complex cases which require more hospital resources and specialist staff. Overall, our EDs recorded an 8.9 per cent jump in category 1 cases. These cases are mostly life threatening and almost always require immediate resuscitation. They often require emergency surgery which puts pressure on hospitals' capacity to perform elective surgery. Category 2 and 3 cases increased by 6.1 per cent and seven per cent respectively, while the less urgent categories—categories 4 and 5—actually fell.

The dedicated staff in our public hospitals deserve our utmost praise for dealing with the extraordinary number of people flowing through our emergency departments. This demand will only continue to grow in future years, which is why our government has already commenced a massive capital works program in our health sector. Emergency departments from Cairns to the Gold Coast are being upgraded as part of the program. The final touches are being put on the Prince Charles Hospital's new general emergency department, which will open in a matter of weeks as part of a \$108 million redevelopment.

Child Protection

Hon. D BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety) (10.02 am): We are building a world-class child protection system and our staff are crucial in that process. To widen the skills base of the department we have offered scholarships, worth up to \$9,000 each, to study to become child safety officers. These scholarships are designed to attract people who want to change careers and have decided on a move into child protection. Those chosen have therefore life experience and workforce experience that will stand them in good stead.

I am pleased to inform the House that 15 people have been awarded scholarships. Many of those are teachers or nurses already used to working with children. This month they start a six-month bridging course at the University of Queensland to give them the specialised knowledge required by child safety officers. We are constantly trying to recruit more child safety officers for rural and remote areas, so it is great news that 13 of the 15 scholarships are going to people from the regions.

Scholarship winners are from Cairns, Herberton, Ravenshoe, Townsville, Rockhampton, Mackay, Bundaberg, Toowoomba, Roma and South Burnett. The two from Brisbane, I am told, are willing to work wherever they are most needed. I am pleased to say that one recipient is Indigenous and that two amongst them are men. Ideally the proportions of both would have been higher. Unfortunately, we have many Indigenous children in the child protection system and so we need more Indigenous officers to help in our work with these communities. We also need more men in the department to balance out our workforce which is presently 85 per cent women.

We have also given seven universities \$50,000 each to update courses for people seeking a career in child protection. It is so important that we have the best training for our workers. So, whether it is improved courses for the next wave of child safety workers or attracting people from other professions, we are diversifying and strengthening our workforce as we create a child protection system in which all Queenslanders can have confidence.

Banana Industry, Labour Shortage

Hon. RJ MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (Minister for State Development, Employment and Industrial Relations) (10.04 am): One of the many problems that followed in the wake of Cyclone Larry was a shortage of labour. Indeed, one of the key issues addressed in the Queensland government's response to the cyclone's devastation was the need to keep local workers in the region. The \$19 million Cyclone Larry employment assistance package has helped do that, but the huge disruption caused to the banana industry resulted in severe labour shortages when the crops began to ripen for market late last year.

In response to that problem my department coordinated a labour summit for the banana industry in Cairns early last month which I co-chaired. The focus was barriers affecting the supply of primary industry labour in the region, both in the immediate and longer term future. I am pleased to advise that following the summit my department has offered a \$120,000 grant to the Australian Banana Growers Council in partnership with Growcom to help plan for future labour requirements for the industry.

Initially, funding will provide for the employment of two labour coordinators for six months, with an option for extension for another six months if required. The coordinators will work with the banana industry and local employment service providers to address the immediate labour shortage. They will also develop strategies for the long term for the wider horticultural industry in north Queensland as well as banana growing.

I am also pleased to be able to report that the Cyclone Larry employment assistance package is continuing to help people get their lives back together. To date, more than 850 people have been directly assisted with jobs and training. As at the end of January some 40 people are still employed on Community Jobs Plan, or CJP, projects helping to rebuild the cyclone affected communities. I am told that large numbers of previous CJP participants have now gained work back in their local community, including back on the farms. In addition, the Mareeba Shire Job Training Association is currently recruiting 15 unemployed people for their Farm Force 2 project, while a number of Training in Communities projects will assist significant numbers of people this year.

Tropical Cyclone Larry, Update

Hon. FW PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Minister for Disability Services Queensland, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Seniors and Youth) (10.06 am): With Atherton due to host a community cabinet meeting this weekend, it is timely to provide the House with an update on the work being done by the Department of Communities in response to Tropical Cyclone Larry. It is also timely because the wet season has once again arrived in the far north, and communities such as Innisfail are experiencing significant downpours courtesy of the monsoon trough and Cyclone Nelson.

In relation to the recovery from Cyclone Larry, the Department of Communities has made almost 55,000 client contacts since the day it hit on 20 March last year. More than 40,000 of these client contacts have been face to face, including more than 2,300 referrals to counselling services and about 10,800 outreach visits to homes. Also, the 1800 number established to provide information and referral has taken 14,171 calls.

In total, grants worth more than \$9 million have been provided for emergency assistance and the repair or replacement of essential household contents immediately following the cyclone. There were 752 applications for repairs to dwellings received and \$2.3 million in payments has been made. Of the 14 outstanding eligible cases, most will be finalised in the near future.

Nine houses will be totally rebuilt using a combination of funds from the Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements, administered by the Department of Communities, and the Tropical Cyclone Larry Relief Appeal. Demolition of these homes has commenced and the Department of Communities, assisted by the Building Coordination Centre, is actively working with clients to progress their rebuilding as quickly as possible.

An assessment conducted in the early part of January 2007 by the Building Coordination Centre identified that of about 5,000 homes that were covered by tarpaulins following the cyclone only 57 remain under tarpaulins. In partnership with the Department of Communities, the Department of Housing is applying its 'priority housing list' assessment process to people with ongoing housing needs.

There have also been reports recently that some residents have encountered issues with the way their insurance cases have been handled. I urge residents to bring these issues to the attention of departmental staff, who can help refer these matters to the Insurance Ombudsman for advice and mediation.

Queensland Tourism in India

Hon. MM KEECH (Albert—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading, Wine Industry Development and Women) (10.09 am): When it comes to attracting more high yield international visitors to Queensland, India offers important opportunities. Last week I led a highly successful tourism trade mission to India. Accompanying me were Tourism Queensland CEO, Ian Mitchell, Gold Coast Tourism CEO, Pavan Bhatia, Tourism Tropical North Queensland CEO, Rob Giason, and 25 tourism operators from around Queensland.

In addition, I was accompanied by the Hon. Mike Ahern AO, the special trade representative for India. I support Premier Peter Beattie's comments yesterday in this House about the incredible work that Mike is doing not only in India but also in the Middle East. In addition, I was accompanied by David Belham, the Queensland trade commissioner, who added significantly to the success of the mission.

The Beattie government is serious about doing business in India. We are determined to grow India from an emerging market to a major international market. Queensland welcomed 23,300 Indians last year. We want to dramatically boost that figure. There is enormous potential, particularly in the student, honeymoon and business tourism segments. If the response from Indian travel agents is any indication, Queensland can become the Australian destination of choice for Indians.

To do that, we need to increase air capacity into Queensland. To that end, I met with Qantas, Indian, Jet and Singapore airlines while in India. While the talks went very well indeed, I have no illusions about the difficulty involved in getting the airlines to fly into Queensland. Typically, Indian tourists to Queensland fly through the Asian hubs of Singapore, Hong Kong, Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur. The challenge for the government is getting those airlines to continue to fly down to Queensland. In addition we have significant problems with the delay in delivery of A380 super jumbo jets.

Considering India has a population of well over one billion people and Queensland is experiencing unprecedented visitor growth from the market, the time is right to start working with airlines and the Indian tourism industry to increase direct access to and from Queensland.

Our trade mission was a big hit with local travel agents. They were very impressed by the number of operators there, by the quality of our product and by our diversity. Queensland now has a dedicated tourism office in Mumbai and our staff will be working closely with the local industry to grow the market.

More international visitors to Queensland mean more jobs. My Indian tourism trade mission made it very clear that the Beattie government realises the importance of the Indian market and that we are very serious about making inroads.

Public Housing Water Saving

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology) (10.12 am): Members of the House are well aware that south-east Queensland is in the midst of the worst drought on record. As a result, south-east Queensland residents and businesses are doing their bit to curb water use and reduce water consumption.

The Department of Housing has a long standing policy to reduce its water consumption in all its properties. All new constructions have AAA rated, water-efficient shower roses, taps and dual-flush toilet cisterns installed. These devices are also installed whenever modifications and upgrades are undertaken in existing housing.

As a part of the government's home water saving scheme, an additional \$5.2 million has been committed for water efficient shower roses and water flow restrictors to be installed in the nearly 38,000 social housing dwellings across the 22 local government areas in south-east Queensland. Low flow restrictors will be fitted to the cold water outlets of kitchen sinks, bathroom hand basins, bathroom showers and laundry tubs. The government's construction and maintenance agency, Q-Build, has been engaged to undertake the installations.

As at 23 January 2007, more than 9,200 installations have been performed since the program commenced in September 2006 at a cost of \$1.5 million. Work orders have been issued for installations in a further 5,798 households. All 37,882 households are expected to have these devices fitted by July 2007.

The government recently extended its Home WaterWise Rebate Scheme on rainwater tanks to include departmental tenants. Procedures have been implemented to enable tenants to claim a rebate from the Department of Natural Resources and Water after gaining approval from the Department of Housing for the installation.

All tenants have been actively encouraged to adopt further water-saving strategies through the department's *Tenant Newsletter* and the *Welcome to Your New Home* kits. The department will continue to look for ways that it can contribute to saving water and I will report further outcomes of our water-saving strategies already in place to the parliament in future.

Sunlander Award

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.14 am): Queensland Rail's Queensland Class service on the *Sunlander* has been voted Australia's best long-distance train by the American based Society of International Railway Travellers. As a result, the Queensland Class on the *Sunlander* has been included in the International Railway Traveller's *Best-Loved Railway Journeys* 2007 edition. To be included in the 2007 edition, trains had to meet stringent standards of service, accommodation, scenery, itinerary, off-train experiences and passenger enjoyment.

In the last 24 years International Railway Travellers members have evaluated trains all over the world and given their critique to travellers around the world. Queensland Rail pipped other long-distance passenger trains, including the *Ghan* and the *Indian Pacific*, to be voted the top long-distance train in Australia.

Traveltrain Holidays' premium Queensland Class was launched on the *Sunlander* in April 2003 and offers a glimpse at travel in a bygone era with dedicated staff, exclusive dining featuring fresh Queensland produce and entertainment. The Queensland Class carried 3,285 passengers in 2004-05 and 3,888 passengers in 2005-06, which represents an increase in patronage of 18 per cent over the past two years. The *Sunlander* with Queensland Class travels along the east coast from Brisbane to Cairns and back again with set down and pick up stops at nominated stations along the way, as one would expect, including Mackay, Proserpine and Townsville.

Passengers on the Queensland Class enjoy first class accommodation, fine dining in an exclusive restaurant car, entertainment, commentary and a host of special touches such as a dedicated Queensland Class team, complimentary bathrobes, slippers and toiletries and a turn-down service complete with chocolate. Queensland Class on the *Sunlander* was also awarded Queensland's most

unique accommodation provider at the 2006 Queensland Tourism Awards. Queenslander Class has been nominated in the 2006 Qantas Australian Tourism Awards in the category of unique accommodation. The announcement of the national winner will be in Sydney later this month.

Queensland Rail anticipates that patronage on its Traveltrain service this financial year will be around 432,000. It has been difficult, with low-cost airfares and the like; however, I look forward to those passengers enjoying a relaxed, enjoyable and award-winning experience.

Pest Offensive Grants

Hon. CA WALLACE (Thuringowa—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Water and Minister Assisting the Premier in North Queensland) (10.16 am): Today heralds a new era for weed and pest animal management in Queensland. Pest animals and invasive weeds are a scourge in many areas of Queensland, costing the state an estimated \$700 million each year.

Today I am delighted to announce the approval of 47 projects across Queensland under the Beattie government's \$11 million Reclaim the bush—A pest offensive initiative. Successful recipients and their partner organisations will contribute a further \$17.9 million in cash and in-kind support, taking the pest offensive's total value to \$28.2 million.

Last year, in partnership with AgForce and the Local Government Association of Queensland, the Beattie government developed the Blueprint for the Bush to foster sustainable, liveable and prosperous rural communities. The Reclaim the bush—A pest offensive is a vital part of the blueprint. Some of the recipients and projects include: Desert Channels Queensland, which will receive \$1.36 million for several projects, including a ground mesquite project and expanding their weed spotter's network; the Condamine Alliance will receive \$263,000 for Caring for Country and pest control in the Condamine catchment; one that I especially like, the Paroo Shire Council will get \$183,000 for its Crack the Cactus initiative; the McKinlay Shire Council will receive \$640,000 for a multicouncil pest animal project on the Northern Mitchell Grass Downs; and the far-north Queensland NRM Group will get \$528,000 for pond apple management and preventing weed seed spread in the Wet Tropics. The member for Whitsunday will be pleased to know that her Mackay-Whitsunday NRM group will receive \$207,000 for mimosa pigra eradication; the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee will receive \$874,000 for feral pig management and AgForce Queensland will receive \$217,800 for localised wild dog control.

The Department of Natural Resources and Water already invests over \$10 million each year, in addition to special funding allocations, to manage weeds and pest animals in Queensland. I would like to thank all those who applied for pest offensive funding. Most applications were of a very high quality and I congratulate the successful recipients.

SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Amendments to Bills

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.19 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

The House confers upon the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee the function and discretion to examine and report to the House, if it so wishes, on the application of the Fundamental Legislative Principles to amendments to bills, whether or not the bill to which the amendments relate has received Royal Assent.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Standing Orders

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.19 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That Standing Orders be amended by the insertion of a new Chapter 38A to Standing Orders, regarding the absence of members, circulated in my name *viz*—

CHAPTER 38A ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

263A. Notification of absence of member for more than 12 consecutive sitting days

- (1) If a member is absent, or intends to be absent, from the Legislative Assembly for more than 12 consecutive sitting days, the member shall notify the Speaker in writing of their absence or intended absence. The notification must state the length of the absence.
- (2) Upon receipt of a written notification by a member in accordance with (1), the Speaker shall, on the next sitting day, report the member's absence, or intended absence, to the House.

263B. Leave of absence of member for more than 21 consecutive sitting days

- (1) The House may, by motion without notice, grant a member a leave of absence from attending the Legislative Assembly for 21 consecutive sitting days or more. The motion must state the length of leave of absence.
- (2) A member shall be excused from attending sittings of the House, or any committee, so long as they have a leave of absence in accordance with (1).
- (3) A leave of absence shall cease if the member attends a sitting of the House or any committee before the expiry of the period of leave.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS' ETHICS AND PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE

Report

Ms PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (10.20 am): I table report No. 80 of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee, titled *Matter referred under Schedule 2 of the Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly*.

Tabled paper: Report by the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee titled 'Report No. 80 Matter Referred under Schedule 2 of the Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly'.

On 1 December 2006, the committee received correspondence from the registrar seeking advice in relation to access to details from the registers of interest relating to previous parliaments. The committee met during the summer recess to consider the matter. The committee recommends that schedule 2 of the standing orders be amended to provide for keeping and inspection of details from registers relating to previous parliaments. These recommended changes are in keeping with both the original intent of the standing orders, the administrative practice for keeping details removed from the registers and precedent for inspection of details removed from the registers. I commend the report and the committee's recommendations to the House.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (CANDIDATES FOR STATE ELECTIONS) AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (10.21 am): I present a bill for an act to amend the Local Government Act 1993. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Second Reading

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (10.21 am): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The objective of this bill is to amend the Local Government Act 1993, with regard to removing the barrier to local government councillors standing for state parliament, as they are presently required to resign from their position on the council when standing for a seat.

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Warrego has the call and I would like him to be heard.

Mr HOBBS: This bill will enable councillors to stand aside from their council duties for the duration of the election campaign in which they stand as a nominated candidate for parliament.

To do that this bill seeks to omit the government's earlier inclusion of section 224A—councillor ceases to be councillor on becoming candidate for the Legislative Assembly—from the Local Government Act 1993.

Further, by amending section 298(3) 'Qualification for nomination' and inserting a new section 299A 'Councillor to take leave to contest State Election' this will provide for the councillor to officially become a candidate for the election at the time of the display of the names at the returning officer's office under the Electoral Act 1992, section 88(3).

In May 2001, the opposition opposed the passage of the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2001 with regard to the insertion into the Local Government Act 1993 of section 224A, under which a councillor ceases to be a councillor on becoming a candidate for the Legislative

Assembly. It is clear that local governments opposed that legislation, by unanimous rejections at annual state and regional conferences of the time and given the high proportion that made up the 61 submissions which opposed the original amendment forcing councillors to resign.

In view of the time, I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of my speech in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

This Bill also supports the Local Government Association of Queensland's policy statement issued in September 2006 before the last state election sought the following commitments from all political parties:

- Reinstatement of the right of councillors to stand for state election without effectively having to resign from office
- The state Government amended the Local Government Act so that if a councillor nominated for election at an upcoming state election, he/she automatically lost their position upon the close of nominations. Previously, councillors only lost their position if they successfully contested the state election. The current situation, which does not apply in other states, is considered inequitable as no other candidates for state election either lose or are required to resign their positions. It also imposes premature and potentially unnecessary by-election costs on council and the community.
- Local Government seeks the reinstatement of the right of councillors to become candidates for state election without effectively having to resign from the office of councillor.

The Beattie Government has continued to display its arrogance to the wishes of Local Governments in Queensland.

Even in light of demands by their own Team Beattie candidate for Gladstone in the 2006 election Mr Chris Trevor who was quoted on the AAP News Wire on 19 September 2006 as follows:

"The law has to be amended and amended quickly because it's not fair for councillors who want to represent their community on a higher level but have to sacrifice their seat"

"I've (Mr Trevor has) been a lawyer for 25 years and it's the old story—the law is an ass" Mr Speaker

This last election cost ratepayers in 8 Shires over a million dollars and what did it achieve? It achieved absolutely nothing. In one case, the Shire of Cook, the candidate who was forced to resign because of the Act was re-elected to his Council position.

Local Government has provided a number of fine Members to the State Legislative Assembly in the years past and the Local Government Act as it stands is being shown to deny this Parliament a group of people, already in a representative role to stand in State Elections, without penalty.

There are presently a number of former Councillors sitting in these chambers who came through general elections and by-elections to gain their position. However, since the Local Government Act was changed the numbers of councillors standing has dropped because they are unwilling to put their areas through the expense of a Council by-election.

In the 2006 State Election 8 candidates for the State Election were sitting Councillors and 2 were elected, causing 6 council by-elections for councils where a councillor had not been elected to Parliament including:

- Tim Nicholls
- Steve Dickson

In the 2004 State Election 9 candidates for the State Election were sitting Councillors and 1 was elected, causing 8 council by-elections for councils where a councillor had not been elected including:

- Jason O'Brien

In 1989 State Election 35 candidates for the State Election were sitting Councillors and 9 were elected including:

- Lesley Clark
- Jim Pearce
- Rob Schwarten

Mr Speaker, I doubt whether the members in this house who have held a Council position would dispute the excellent training ground that it provides for this place.

However, Queenslanders are denied from having experienced Council candidates from standing in State Elections without penalizing their Councils even if unsuccessful in the election.

Queensland is the only jurisdiction in the country that has these draconian barriers in place. The situation is completely different everywhere else in Australia.

Queensland is the only jurisdiction within Australia that forces a Councillor to resign in order to stand for election. The situation in other state and territory legislation is as follows:

New South Wales

In New South Wales there is nothing to prevent a member of a local government from nominating for election to State Parliament

Victoria

In Victoria Local Councillors are not prevented from nominating for election to State Parliament. It is unclear however if councillors are required to give up their position when elected to State Parliament

Tasmania

In Tasmania there is no bar to a local councillor running for Parliament or being both a member of a local council and a member of Parliament. The Mayor of Launceston is currently also a member of the Legislative Council

South Australia

In South Australia the office of a member of a council becomes vacant if the member becomes a member of the Australian Parliament which includes the Parliament of the State, the Commonwealth, any other State or the Legislative Assembly of a Territory. A member of a council may run for State Parliament without vacating their seat on council

Western Australia

In Western Australia if a member of a council is elected as a member of the Legislative Assembly, Legislative Council, House of Representatives or Senate, the office of the member becomes vacant on the next ordinary elections day.

Northern Territory

In the Northern Territory the Local Government Act (NT) s.13(1) provides that a member of a council, including a mayor who nominates for election to the Legislative Assembly, House of Representatives or Senate, can give written notice to the council CEO of the person's resignation from the Council.

The person who resigns may apply to be reinstated to the office from which they resigned and the council must reinstate the person if:

- The person withdraws their candidacy before the election; or
- The person ceases to be qualified to be a candidate before the election; or
- The person is not successful in the election and the person applies for reinstatement within 7 days after the declaration of the poll

The vacancy created by the resignation cannot be filled until the expiration of the period within which the person may apply to be reinstated.

The people of Queensland have a right to vote for their choice of candidate, just as a Local Government Councillor has a democratic right to stand for Parliament without resigning from His/ Her position.

The original legislation is morally wrong and was put in place to improve Labor's electoral opportunities.

It is against a fair and democratic system.

This Bill will put democracy back into Queensland after it has been denied by this Government. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Fraser, adjourned.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Beattie Labor Government

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.24 am): It is interesting to note that, if it were not for the opportunism of the Premier, this weekend would most likely have been an election weekend. This would be the normal weekend for this parliament to go to an election. It is interesting to note that, in the almost 4½ months that have transpired since the Premier took the opportunity to call an early election, a continual trail of sleaze and corruption has been exposed. What a different election it would have been if the election were held on time—that is, on this weekend. What a different election it would have been if the people of Queensland knew just how sleazy the Beattie government was when they went to the polls back in September.

Mr Speaker, before you start warning me, I appreciate that I cannot speak about so many things that have impacted on the government, because they are all before the courts. They are all before the courts so I will not talk about them.

Mr SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, can I just say that I am glad you are learning.

Mr SEENEY: And the people of Queensland are learning about the sleazy Beattie government. They are learning about the sleazy Beattie government—without me having to outline the parade of former ministers who are before the courts. They are learning about the sleazy Beattie government—without me outlining the corruption and the scandal that has dogged the Beattie Labor government since the election in September.

The election was all about political opportunism. It was all about going to the people, getting the election out of the way before all of this sleaze bubbled to the surface. You can be assured, Mr Speaker, that the people of Queensland will take note of the various court cases as they transpire. They will continue to take an interest in the scandals that beset this government. They will come to realise that the true measure of this government is reflected in the things it has tried to hide.

We are in a position now to offer the people of Queensland an alternative government. We will be building an alternative government because that is what the people of Queensland want. They want an alternative to the sleazy Beattie government that has let them down so badly.

School Crossings

Ms van LITSENBURG (Redcliffe—ALP) (10.26 am): At the end of last year, there was a tragic incident at Redcliffe State High School in which a young girl was killed by a speeding motorist in a stolen vehicle. She was crossing Oxley Avenue on a green light to get from one part of the school campus to the other between periods. I would like to express my sorrow and sympathy to her mother, father and sisters. Kaitlin was loved and respected in the community, and her family reacted with such courage and fortitude to this tragedy.

Despite the federal Liberal member's grandstanding over this issue, I have worked with the principal, Shona McKinlay, and the school community to listen to their needs. With the support of the Premier, the Minister for Transport and Main Roads and the minister for education, I was able to develop a plan that will reassure parents about the safety of their children. By the beginning of the school year,

we have been able to reduce the four-lane road to a two-lane road so that this area could become a school zone. I was also able to initiate the consultations into the most effective infrastructure to join the two campuses.

I welcomed the Premier's announcement on 10 December that our government would fund an overpass or an underpass at not only Redcliffe State High School but every similar school in the state that has a split campus. Currently, drawings are being developed as a result of options the community have seen as viable options. We have developed a comprehensive consultation process with the school and the Redcliffe community.

This is the cornerstone of how the Beattie Labor government works with the community. We listen to their needs and work with them to achieve solutions that are effective and that work for the community. I am proud to be part of a government that values our children enough to work effectively with local communities to address the safety of our children.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Water Infrastructure

Mr SEENEY (10.30 am): My first question without notice is to the Premier. I refer to the revelations this morning from the former member for Noosa that the Premier personally chose the Traveston Dam site not for any technical reasons but, as the member for Noosa, said—

Ms Male: Former member!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition is on his feet. I would like the Leader of the Opposition to be heard.

Mr SEENEY: As the former member for Noosa said, it was chosen in 'a morally corrupt move to victimise non-Labor electorates'. In her words, not mine, four more suitable sites were ignored because they impacted on Labor electorates. Does this confirm that for the Premier water infrastructure is all about politics and for him it is politics first and people last?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for his question. I want to make some quick reference, before I answer the question, to what the member said before about the election being due this Saturday. I deeply regret going to an election on 9 September last year because had we had an election now our majority would have been even bigger. To those members who lost their seats, I publicly apologise to them today. Frankly, based on the performance of those opposite in the last polls, the current Leader of the Opposition is doing even worse than the former Leader of the Opposition. As for some sort of unity, let me deal with that a little bit later. Let me answer this nonsense.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Member for Gregory, I am very happy to answer the question. The proposition from the former member for Noosa—and I saw it yesterday—is absolute nonsense. Every one of my caucus members here today knows it is absolute nonsense. I have never said—

Mr Gibson: Did you eyeball them?

Mr BEATTIE: One of the things that the member may learn is a bit of decency and some manners. The people of Gympie expect him to have some.

Mr SPEAKER: Do not get too excited, member for Gympie.

Mr BEATTIE: I ask the member for Gympie not to be rude. Let me come back to the issue. Every caucus member who is in this chamber today was in caucus when I made the contribution in relation to the Traveston Dam. Everyone in this room knows I never ever said it was based on politics and more to the point—

Mr Gibson: It's not based on science.

Mr BEATTIE: Please do not be rude. One of the things the member will learn is decency and manners. One day he will learn them.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! If you want the Premier to have his time extended to answer this question, you are going about it the right way. I suggest you let the Premier answer the question.

Mr BEATTIE: I want to make a second point. Cate Molloy's nonsense, which she put out and which the member referred to, was a media release. We all saw it. It is not as though it is some revelation. Everybody saw it yesterday.

Ms Bligh: No media outlet ran it.

Mr BEATTIE: No media outlet ran it because they knew it was nonsense. The second part about it that I found absolutely extraordinary is that she attacked the police minister for having said the same thing. I cannot recall the police minister making any such suggestion and I have checked with the police minister who says that she did not. It is not common for ministers in caucus to speak outside their portfolio because they do that in cabinet, where they can talk about whatever they like. Caucus is a time for nonministers to make a contribution. Normally ministers will sit there, unless there is something relevant, and deal with their own portfolios.

It is simply a lie. It is not true. I say to Cate, 'Cate, it is really sad that you are trying to mislead the people simply to win a federal seat.' I say this publicly. I have said to Cate before, 'Move on. This bitterness is not going to do you one bit of good.' The Traveston Crossing Dam is being built because we need water and I stand by that decision.

Water Infrastructure

Mr SEENEY: My second question without notice is to the Deputy Premier. Can the Deputy Premier confirm that the engineering advice provided to the government is that a project of the scale of the western corridor pipeline would normally have a construction timetable of five to six years? The government has decided to shorten that timetable to less than two years for political purposes. Can the minister advise the House what advice she has been given as to the additional cost that will be incurred because she did not commence this project five years earlier?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. It is a very good question. As members will be aware, the need for the western corridor pipeline to meet the Wivenhoe Dam and Tarong Power Station by December 2008 is absolutely critical. As part of my responsibilities, I have undertaken various audits of the project to ensure that it is proceeding on time and that it is proceeding as quickly as possible. If there are any other ways that we can accelerate it then I want to know about them.

The advice that I have received—and I am very pleased that the member for Callide has put this into the public arena—is that not only is the project meeting all of its time lines and meeting all of the targets but if it continues at this pace, and if it arrives on the day that we expect it to, it will set a new world benchmark for a project of this size and this complexity. I did in fact tell the House this the other day in a ministerial statement.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Moggill and the member for Callide, you have asked the question and the Deputy Premier has the floor.

Ms BLIGH: I did in fact advise the House of this the other day. But obviously the opposition spends too much time talking to itself and interjecting to find out what is going on. Yes, it is true that in the normal scheme of things if we had all the time in the world and if we could take into account the normal acquisition process and the normal scope of time that we need for the approvals for a project of this magnitude, we could expect to see a project of this size and complexity take between five and seven years.

Those opposite are right: we are going to do it in much less than that. We are going to do it in much better time than that. We are going to set a world record. The Leader of the Opposition will be the first person to get an invitation to the early opening, I am very happy to advise.

I do not make any apologies for getting this project going as quickly as it possibly can. As I advised the House yesterday, we will be seeing some 2,600 workers on this project over the two years. By July we see up to 1,000 in Bundamba alone. It is a very large and very complex project. We are doing everything at once rather than sequentially. Currently we are going through the process of negotiating contracts with suppliers. Again it is already in the arena—and I have already advised the federal government of this in writing—that it is possible that there may be some increases in costs, but if we need to meet them we will. Do members know why? The people of south-east Queensland need the water. The industry that this water will be provided to is absolutely necessary and critical.

This question comes from an opposition that does not support the Traveston Crossing Dam. It does not support the recycled water project. It does not support the desalination plant. It has no solutions, only criticisms.

National Water Reform

Mr FINN: My question without notice is to Premier. Can the Premier advise the House of the outcomes he expects from today's meeting with the Prime Minister on national water reform?

Mr BEATTIE: In a nutshell, the answer is very simple. What we want today is detail, detail and detail. The Howard government has provided nowhere near—

Mr Gibson interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: You really are ill-mannered. I would have thought in the Army they would have taught him a bit of decency. The Howard government has provided nowhere near enough detail on the proposals for water reform. Yesterday, the Deputy Premier, Anna Bligh, the Minister for Natural Resources and Water, Craig Wallace, and the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries, Tim Mulherin, and I met with a range of Queensland rural industry representatives. It is very clear that they share our concerns. The president of AgForce, Peter Kenny, put it best on ABC radio when he said—

Who knows what the federal government has in mind? We're not sure so we are punching at shadows here to some extent.

Mr Howard's proposals have already prompted splits in his own ranks with Queensland Nationals senator Senator Barnaby Joyce strongly opposed to the plan. It appears that this is part of the problem. They cannot reach agreement. The real problem I am concerned about is the future of the 15 per cent of Queensland that is the Murray-Darling.

We will work with the Prime Minister, but we are not going to sell out Queensland. We want a solution which is good for this state. The problem is that we cannot get any agreement from the National Party and the Liberal Party. They are fighting amongst themselves. We see it here in Queensland. They talk about the wonderful one-team approach. That is what they have got. What happened to the one-team approach? The Leader of the Liberal Party said it was my worst nightmare. Can I tell him that it is my best dream. Can I tell them that they are my dream team.

I want to make it really clear to the Leader of the Opposition that what I am really worried about is that the member for Southern Downs might come back, because while he is not much better, I have to tell you, you are the best. You are the best! What a joke! The Leader of the Liberal Party says on a handshake that he will never be the Premier. So those opposite have sorted that out. What about the rest of the Liberals? Does the member for Surfers Paradise agree with that? What about the member for Clayfield? Does that handshake apply to him? I tell you: when you shake his hand, check that you get all of your fingers back. Those opposite had a singalong down at Binna Burra and they sang Otis Redding's song about sitting on the dock of the bay. I reckon what they should have sung were some of these songs: *All I Need is a Miracle*, *All Out of Love*, *Love is a Battlefield*, *Love Will Tear Us Apart* and—I reckon this is the best; they should have sung this—*Things Can Only Get Better*.

With regard to the nonsense from those opposite about polls, I can tell them that the latest poll from January just gone shows that on a two-party preferred basis with preferences distributed support for the ALP is 60.5 per cent—so our vote is up—which is significantly ahead of the coalition on 39.5 per cent. Those opposite are down. I have to tell you: you keep leading that way and I will be right with you.

Water Prices

Dr FLEGG: My question without notice is to the Deputy Premier. I refer the minister to the Queensland Water Commission's confirmation that water prices will more than double in the next few years and the minister's comments on ABC television on 31 January when she said—

The cost of the infrastructure will mean we will all pay a little bit more for water.

Is the minister so out of touch with everyday Queenslanders that she thinks a doubling of water prices is only 'a little bit more'?

Mr Mickel: Do you bulk-bill?

Ms BLIGH: Yes; who is bulk-billing yet? I am very happy to answer the member's question. But before I do, I am very pleased to advise the House that the unemployment rate figures are out today and unemployment in Queensland has sunk to a new historic low of 4.0 per cent—four per cent.

Government members: Hear, hear!

Honourable members interjected.

Ms BLIGH: I note those opposite want to continually give John Howard some credit for this, but the question they need to ask is this: if John Howard is responsible for it, why can't he do it in the rest of the country? Why can't he do it in the rest of the country? We have an unemployment rate of four per cent and we have created 100,000 jobs in the last year. It is a testament to the Queensland economy.

Let me talk about water prices. Queensland, along with every other state and the Commonwealth, is a signatory to the National Water Initiative. The National Water Initiative requires all of us to employ a cost-recovery mechanism for the price of water infrastructure. What Queensland is doing though is accelerating a range of infrastructure all at once, and that will have some impact on prices. Of course it will. I think Queenslanders understand that, and the commitment we have made is to give them information about what those prices will be as part of the deliberations in this year's budget—not just for this year but price certainty and price pathing over a reasonable period of time. It is my intention to make those price increases as minimal as possible and to phase them in in a way that minimises the impact on consumers.

There is no confirmation of the allegations that the member is making. We have made no decisions on water costs. We have yet to look at all of the data. When we do, we will be making that public. But what people need to understand is that different forms of water are more expensive, and some of the most expensive water on earth is desalinated water. We need to be aware that one of the most cost-effective forms of water is dams. So when we put together our water grid and our water plan, it is about finding a range of water storages to minimise the cost. Therefore, the very people who are opposed to the cheapest form of water—that is, the Traveston Dam—come snivelling in here and complain about the cost of water, yet their alternatives are the most expensive forms of water. They want us to build more expensive forms of water and charge people less. They want us to charge people less! Never let him anywhere near the Treasury! Please, never let him anywhere near the Treasury!

Bowen, Feature Film

Ms JARRATT: My question is to the Premier. Premier, can I firstly thank you for your announcement this morning about the projects for the 150-year celebrations. Bowen is going to receive a fantastic facelift out of that, so thank you very much. I ask the Premier to update the House on the progress of the government supported production of Baz Luhrmann's feature film *Australia* and what economic benefits the Bowen region can expect as a result?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the member for Whitsunday and I acknowledge her remarks in relation to the celebrations—the Q150 celebrations. As I said, I thank the member for her question and her ongoing commitment and enthusiasm for the Whitsunday region. It gives me great pleasure to report on the many benefits the Bowen region will receive from hosting the big budget feature film *Australia*. This high-profile film, which will star Hugh Jackman and Nicole Kidman, traces an English woman's cattle drive across Australia during the 1930s and will be under the direction of celebrated Australian filmmaker Baz Luhrmann. Shooting in Bowen is scheduled from late April until June 2007. The Minister for the Arts and I met him recently as part of our support.

Australia will not only create excitement for locals but also provide valuable jobs for Queenslanders, ongoing business and tourism opportunities, and national and international exposure of the Bowen region. The Queensland government's \$500,000 incentive to shoot here in the Smart State will be money well spent. The production company, Bazmark, will spend approximately \$7 million in Bowen, creating estimated flow-on benefits of almost \$12.6 million for the region. For the information of members, I lay upon the table of the House a copy of the advertisement that appeared in the Bowen and Townsville press in December 2006 which the government put out calling for expressions of interest from local service providers to assist with the production. The production will provide opportunities for aspiring cast and crew, with Bazmark confirming it will employ extras and crew locally, especially in trade related industries required for set construction such as building, carpentry, painting and electrical. The production will also indirectly create jobs for other industries such as transport and hospitality.

Tabled paper: Queensland Government advertisement titled 'Want to be part of Baz Luhrmann's new production?'

Ms Jarratt: Premier, I have been asked to be Nicole Kidman's body double.

Mr BEATTIE: I will note that for the record and take that interjection, so having said it you cannot get it off the record. Nicole Kidman's body double will be the member for Whitsunday. So it is on the record. It is on the record. We are all clear about that. Will someone ring Nicole?

If they have not already, I encourage residents and businesses in the region interested in participating in the production of this film to contact Bazmark and register their interest. I also acknowledge the member for Whitsunday's support for this great part of the state. I also again reiterate the partnership that the state government will have with the Bowen City Council when it will receive \$900,000 to undertake work on the Port Denison foreshore development project in time for Queensland's 150th birthday in 2009, strongly supported by Jan Jarratt, the member for Whitsunday. The Whitsunday Shire Council also received a slice of the government's \$100 million Capital Works Program with \$200,000 for themed directional signage throughout the region as well. You have done very well today, member for Whitsunday. All of this is part of the government's commitment to grow prosperity in our regions.

Water Levels

Mr LANGBROEK: My question without notice is to the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure. I refer to the inability of the Minister for Natural Resources and Water to answer questions yesterday about water usage in south-east Queensland. I ask: can the minister help him out by tabling the technical advice as to the lowest percentage of potable water that could be available for domestic use in the dams in south-east Queensland? Could the minister also advise at what level the water will not be useable for power stations and how many jobs will be put at risk?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. As I said a little earlier, if the members opposite just listened a little more closely a little more often they would actually find out a lot more about what is going on and they would not have to ask questions about matters that have already

been the subject of ministerial statements. But I am happy to repeat for the benefit of the member for Surfers Paradise what I said on Tuesday, and that is that the Water Commission advice is that water for potable drinking use can be accessed from the Wivenhoe-Somerset system down to one per cent. So that is already on the record. It has been on the record in not just this chamber but in the public arena for some time. In relation to the power stations, I also told the House on Tuesday that, should our water position deteriorate further, we do have other options to minimise the take on the dam, including the further scaleback of generation by power stations.

As members would expect, those power stations are working on a regular basis with not only the Queensland Water Commission and SEQWater but also various technical advisers to ensure that they are putting in place contingency plans for a range of possibilities. The facts are that, currently, the Tarong Power Station does not access water from the Wivenhoe Dam for the bulk of its operations; it accesses Boondooma Dam, which was purpose built for its operations. Currently, it is scaling back its generation in off-peak periods to ensure that it lengthens the life of that water storage as long as it possibly can. At the moment, Tarong North Power Station accesses water from the Wivenhoe Dam. Equally, it is looking at scale-back options.

Obviously, we need to make sure that, should these scale-back options become necessary, the electricity needs of south-east Queensland can be met. If members had been listening this morning to the ministerial statement given by the Minister for Mines and Energy they would have heard in some detail all of the contingency planning and available electricity to guarantee that the south-east corner of the state is well supplied for electricity into the future.

Again, I can only draw the attention of the House to the fact that the members asking these questions this morning are those who, firstly, are not paying attention to what is going on, and, secondly, oppose the Traveston Crossing Dam without an alternative. They oppose the use of recycled water for household purposes—

Mr Seeney: Drinking water. Drinking sewage water.

Ms BLIGH: There they go opposing it. They are opposing it. I say 'they' oppose it, but it is hard to know who 'they' are. Clearly, some members of the National Party oppose it, but the Leader of the Liberal Party supports it. However, the backbench Liberal member for Kawana opposes it. So this is the one-team, one-plan, one-destiny approach.

Mr Lucas: They don't want a Traveston Dam, though.

Ms BLIGH: They do not want a dam; they do not want a desalination plant. Then they come in here and pretend to be worried about the water supply to either the south-east corner or its power stations. It is not credible.

Traveston Dam

Mrs SULLIVAN: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Much has been said about the government's intention to build the Traveston Crossing Dam. Can the Deputy Premier advise the House of any recent reports attacking the Traveston Crossing Dam?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the member for the question. I can advise the member for Pumicestone and other members of the House that the mayor of Cooloolooloo shire, along with a number of other mayors in the Mary River area, has commissioned a report that is in the public arena—in the *Gympie Times*—today. I have not been supplied with a copy of the report. Frankly, if the mayor expects the government to take it seriously we would expect to see a copy forwarded, at least as a matter of courtesy. However, I have been provided with a draft executive summary by members of the media who have been supplied with this document.

This document reaches the conclusion that the Traveston Crossing Dam is not needed to meet south-east Queensland's water supply. On its face, on the executive summary, this report is based on a number of seriously flawed assumptions. It has a number of howlers in it, but howler No. 1 claims that the government's projection of south-east Queensland's current supplies of 450 gigalitres per annum is an underestimate. That is wrong. The facts are that the estimate is based on a rigorous remodelling of the actual performance of dams in south-east Queensland based on historical records going back over 100 years.

Howler No. 2 says that the government's estimate of residential demand of 300 litres per capita per day is overstated. That is completely wrong. That is not the basis of our estimate of household demand. All of our planning determines that we will be reducing consumption to 250 litres per capita per day. Even then, the modelling found that the Traveston Crossing Dam was necessary. It even shows that the dam would be necessary if we could cut consumption to 230 litres a day.

Howler No. 3 says that we can meet the demand to 2050 through increased water efficiency, recycling and rainwater capture. This is fundamentally flawed. We are already doing these things. The facts are that the modelling undertaken by SEQWater shows that we still have a large shortfall that can be met only by a water storage or a water creation facility with the yield of the Traveston Crossing Dam.

But the mayors have not just been critical; they propose an alternative. The alternative is a large desalination plant on Bribie Island, and I assume the member for Gympie will be backing them. A desalination plant on Bribie Island would need to be 60 per cent bigger than the desalination plant at Tugun in order to meet the amount of water that will be produced by the Traveston Crossing Dam. It is hardly surprising that nine mayors got together and decided to do that in someone else's shire. That is the kind of thing we see. But I do not think the mayors have asked the Mayor of the Caboolture Shire, Joy Leishman. I would be very surprised if Mal Brough, the federal member for the area, knows about that.

The Liberal Party wants a nuclear plant on Bribie Island. The National Party wants a desalination plant on Bribie Island.

Mr Lucas: Their Three Mile Island!

Ms BLIGH: Their Three Mile Island. They seem to have forgotten that this island is located at the top of one of our most sensitive ecosystems, the very shallow area of Moreton Bay. This government will protect Bribie Island. We will not have a nuclear power plant.

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the member for Darling Downs, I welcome students and teachers from the Anglican Church Grammar School who are in the gallery. That school is located in the electorate of South Brisbane, represented in this House by the Deputy Premier.

Portfolio Responsibility

Mr HOPPER: My question is to the Minister for Natural Resources and Water and Minister Assisting the Premier in North Queensland. I refer to the minister's answer yesterday when asked in this House about water levels in south-east Queensland dams, which the minister could not answer—a very simple question. Why is the minister the minister for water when he is not able to answer simple questions about water levels and he does nothing in the water portfolio?

Mr WALLACE: I again thank the honourable member for his question, because obviously he did not listen to my response yesterday. The minister—

Dr Flegg interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I say to the Leader of the Liberal Party that the National Party member for Darling Downs has asked a question. I ask that the minister be heard in silence.

Mr WALLACE: The Minister for Natural Resources and Water has extensive responsibilities. The government works to achieve the sustainable use of our water, land and vegetation across Queensland. My predecessor provided the current opposition spokesperson for natural resources and water with a briefing on the portfolio responsibilities of all these areas. That is why I am surprised that he keeps asking these questions, because he has had a briefing on the responsibilities that I have.

The Deputy Premier, in her earlier response to the member for Surfers Paradise, indicated that she has responsibility for those water supplies to which she referred. The Minister for Mines and Energy has the responsibility for water supplies in his portfolio. Therefore, I am a bit dumbfounded as to why the member for Darling Downs keeps asking these questions. How many briefings does he need? How many times does he need to ask the same question? He simply does not have a handle on my portfolio.

Mr HOPPER: I rise to a point of order. I think it is the minister who needs the briefing and not me.

Mr SPEAKER: I say to the member for Darling Downs that, first of all, that is not a point of order; it is a frivolous interjection. I ask members on my left and right to be aware that these are not points of order. They are idly raised as points of order, but they are frivolous interjections and they will be taken as such. There is no point of order.

Mr WALLACE: That frivolous interjection goes to show that the question that was asked was frivolous. Clearly, as shadow minister, the member for Darling Downs does not understand the portfolio responsibilities. That was explained to him this morning by the Deputy Premier and in a statement by the Minister for Mines and Energy. After question time, he should go to the *Hansard* and read those statements made by the Deputy Premier and the Minister for Mines and Energy. I have responsibility for water outside of south-east Queensland, across the state in many other water catchments. Clearly, for the member for Darling Downs to continue asking these frivolous questions shows that he does not understand the responsibilities of my department. I challenge the member for Darling Downs to have a good look at those statements before the next sittings so that he can ask me a question about my portfolio responsibilities.

I would be delighted to answer that question. As I was saying yesterday, the good rainfall in north Queensland has added well to the dam catchments.

Watch-houses

Mr O'BRIEN: My question is to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. Yesterday, the parliament heard of a commitment to provide closed-circuit television in custodial areas in watch-houses in Aboriginal communities. Can the minister define what constitutes the custodial part of a watch-house?

Ms SPENCE: I thank the member for the question. We still see massive confusion from the opposition about this issue, so this gives me the opportunity of explaining it yet again. The custodial areas in a police station include areas such as doorways, corridors, transit areas such as where fingerprints are done and where police may escort offenders who have been arrested.

So we are talking about putting cameras in all areas other than cells where offenders would be held inside a police station. As I explained yesterday, we already have cameras in cells in watch-houses in Queensland. There is some confusion about this issue as well because there are different circumstances. In new watch-houses like Brisbane, for example, those cameras will be recording 24/7. In older watch-houses around the state where the cameras were put in 15 years ago after the royal commission, the cameras are not recording 24/7. So a police officer has to go and press the record button to get the recording started. They can be monitored if somebody is looking at it but they do not record.

To make it even more confusing—it is a complicated issue—in some police stations they might have only one video recorder yet there might be two, three or four cells. Obviously one video recorder can only record one cell's camera at one time. So we do not necessarily have the capacity in every watch-house in Queensland to record all the time. So these are complicated issues and I appreciate people's misunderstanding of them, but they are one of the reasons why the Premier and I agreed with the union to audit every watch-house in the state so that it can be explained to us exactly what is required to get every watch-house as modern as, for example, the Brisbane city watch-house.

In the Charlotte Street police station we already have the capacity to digitally record on to a hard drive every prisoner and custodial movement in that police station. Because it is a brand new police station, we put that new technology in. Obviously we do not have that technology in every police station around the state.

I asked the department to pull together figures of deaths in prison custody and deaths in watch-house custody since 1989. That is as far as they can go back. I want to table those figures this morning. I hope every member has a look at those figures. Since 1991 there have been three Aboriginal deaths in police watch-houses from a total of 17 deaths. In any given year, there are more than 220,000 people taken into police custody. So I think we have to keep that in perspective as well. It is the same for our prisons. In the past 15 years there have been a total of 95 deaths in Queensland prisons from unnatural causes and 15 of those were Indigenous. I table those figures.

Tabled paper: Table detailing the number of deaths in police watchhouses 1989-2007.

Tabled paper: Table detailing the number of deaths in prison custody from unnatural causes 1989-2007.

Gladstone Electorate, Land for Industrial Purposes

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: My question without notice is to the minister for transport. As the minister would know, significant areas of land have been set aside in my electorate for industrial and allied purposes. This reflects good planning. Would the minister agree in principle that that allocated land should be used for infrastructure development wherever possible rather than displace and disadvantage additional families and impact on their quality of life?

Mr LUCAS: The honourable member has asked me for an opinion, and she would know that under the standing orders it is not appropriate to ask a minister for an opinion. But I will give some general observations about the issue because I do appreciate the fact that the honourable member has an interest in developmental issues in her electorate and, as we all should believe, that development is incredibly important for this state. The reason we have the unemployment figures that the Deputy Premier announced today is that we share a common vision I would hope in relation to the importance of development, but that should not be at any cost. There should be development that is responsible bearing in mind the needs of the community.

I know that the honourable member has expressed an interest to me, for example, in relation to the current balloon loop proposals for the Wiggins Island terminal and its current alignment and the potential disruption it may have to some residents in that area. I know that some other potential locations might be available, such as looking at the old oval land that might have some other advantages.

The EIS process that the Deputy Premier and I launched last year has now closed. That is now in the process of being assessed. I assure the honourable member that I am more than happy to look at proposals that can adequately do the job but at the same time do not unduly prejudice her constituents. I think that is an entirely reasonable thing to expect me to look at.

The Port of Gladstone is a dynamic port and it has a community that strongly supports it. I note that the honourable member has not at any stage that I can ever recall opposed the continued operation, or indeed the expansion, of the port as unfortunately some people who are self-motivated have. That port provides enormous economic returns to this state. It creates an enormous number of jobs. The expansion itself at the peak employment stage of stage 1 will involve 650 persons over a period of 30 months. Operational personnel at the end of that stage will be 200 from QR and 130 from CQPA—all quality jobs and all Queenslanders with their families living in that community.

The taxes that people pay for our mines allow us to deliver the programs to our teachers, nurses, hospitals and police. I am very proud that the mining industry, QR and our ports can play such an important role. But I do say that that should not be at any cost. Having said that, there are number of infrastructure projects we are currently constructing throughout Queensland in my portfolio whether it be road or rail. It is inevitable that there will be disruption to people.

I do not like resuming properties and sometimes we need to do that. We would be making a far greater apology to the community if we did not take those hard decisions—if we were not prepared to resume the property for the Gateway or for various rail or road projects that we have here. We make no apology for doing that, but we should be compassionate. We should also understand that listening governments always pay attention to what the community thinks, but we cannot always do what everybody in the community wants. We will certainly attempt to satisfy the member's suggestions in this case.

Sunshine Coast, Kawana Hospital

Ms MALE: My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. Can the minister inform the House about progress towards developing the Sunshine Coast's new tertiary hospital at Kawana?

Mr ROBERTSON: I thank the member for her question. As honourable members are aware, the government is committed to building a new \$1 billion state-of-the-art tertiary hospital at Kawana on the Sunshine Coast. This hospital will be a large acute care facility with capacity of around 650 beds and a range of specialist clinical services. It will also service a tertiary referral centre for the entire Sunshine Coast. Importantly, the new hospital will be the cornerstone of a major expansion of health services we are undertaking to meet the future health needs of the fast-growing Sunshine Coast region.

I am delighted to report today that Queensland Health has signed the contract of sale to purchase the Kawana hospital site from developers Stockland Developments. The 20-hectare property is located on the southern side of Kawana Way-Lake Kawana Boulevard intersection at Birtinya near Kawana Waters. I am advised that Stockland will complete filling on the site and construct certain external service infrastructure prior to settlement of the contract. Subject to these works being completed, we are aiming for settlement of the contract in June this year.

At the same time Queensland Health continues to progress service and master planning for the new hospital, and a project team has been established and they are undertaking various works. Discussions have also been initiated with the Caloundra City Council and other government agencies to progress development of the Kawana hospital site, as well as ensure the provision of supporting infrastructure for the hospital. A draft health service plan for the Sunshine Coast is being refined to establish the appropriate time frames and adjustments for existing health services as well as the new hospital services themselves.

Queensland Health will also explore options for partnering with private health service providers in conjunction with the new hospital as part of health service planning for the region. We are making good progress towards developing this major new hospital for the people of the Sunshine Coast, and it shows that we are getting on with the job and delivering on the health promises we made at the last state election.

Water Restrictions

Miss SIMPSON: My question is to the Deputy Premier. The Water Commission recently advised in a briefing that 300 jobs had already been lost due to water restrictions and a further 600 jobs are threatened in one industry alone. I ask the Deputy Premier: how many more jobs will be lost in south-east Queensland as a result of the doubling of water prices and further tightening of water restrictions?

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Gregory, if you are going to interject would you please do it from your seat.

Ms BLIGH: Sometimes I wish that I could just spend five or 10 minutes as a fly on the wall in the opposition tactics meetings in the mornings. This morning must have been a real doozy. They obviously have nothing that they really want to know about what the government is doing because they have asked a series of questions that have been answered by ministers already in other questions or in ministerial statements all week or questions like this one.

What would possess someone to get up and ask a question about jobs on a day when we have a record unemployment rate of four per cent? We have created 100,000 jobs in Queensland.

Mr Lucas: Rope a dope.

Ms BLIGH: Rope a dope indeed. What is deeply concerning here is that this comes from someone who was part of a government that delivered to Queensland an unemployment rate of 8.4 per cent; there were 150,000 Queenslanders out of work. That was the economic legacy of those people opposite. The members opposite want to come in here and talk about projects and losing jobs. Do members remember the capital works freeze? These are the people who decided to stop doing everything. Most political parties want to get into government because they want to do something. This was the first time I think in political history where a government came to power and its first decision was to stop everything—'Let's do nothing'.

The honourable member has asked a question about the ongoing impact of water shortages or potential security of supply issues for industry in the south-east corner and I am very mindful of that. But I am also very mindful of the efforts that are being made by industry right across the south-east corner and indeed other parts of the state to really look at their water use and to be much more efficient. Demand management has to be part of the equation. If you do not want yet more dams, you have to reduce what you are using.

Over the last 12 months organisations such as the Swanbank Power Station—and I am pleased to have an opportunity to put it on the record—have invested in a serious upgrade of their sewerage system. You know what? Swanbank has saved 53 per cent of its water use. This is not even to do with the generation activities that it is involved in. Simply by really looking at where its water was going and investing in new technology that power station has reduced its water use by 53 per cent.

We are in tough times on water. Those people come in and ask these questions when they oppose the Traveston Crossing Dam, they oppose recycled water, they oppose a desalination plant. If we had their water plan—which is a plan to do nothing—we would really be in trouble.

Alcohol Abuse

Ms BARRY: My question is to the Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading, Wine Industry Development and Women. Alcohol abuse is part of today's society. Can the minister advise the House on the latest strategy to counter excessive consumption of alcohol?

Ms KEECH: I thank the honourable member for her question and commend her for her initiatives in working with the government to focus on safe communities both as the member for Aspley and as a health practitioner and also as a very proud mother. As we know, alcohol abuse is an unfortunate part of our society today. It can lead to family dysfunction, violent incidents, injuries and even death. The Beattie government is working hard to change this culture. We have implemented a number of initiatives aimed at curbing alcohol abuse, ranging from alcohol management plans for Indigenous communities to the Brisbane City Safety Action Plan and the statewide Safety Action Plan.

We are all working to make Queensland a safer place but we need to do more. That is why we are targeting young people. I welcome the students here in the public gallery. I am sure that they will work towards having a safe schoolies.

Mr Lucas: They'll be on their best behaviour.

Ms KEECH: Absolutely, good behaviour. After the last schoolies on the Gold Coast I convened a Youth Alcohol Summit and the outcome was an agreement that education is the best weapon at our disposal. To this end we are using a confronting campaign to shock young people into adopting more responsible drinking practices. We believe that the government can do so much but it is up to young people and parents to take responsibility as well.

In Brisbane and on the Gold Coast 28 licensed premises are part of a pilot education campaign known as *Know your limits*. The campaign is a joint initiative of the Liquor Licensing Division and the Queensland Police Service and is based on a successful British campaign running for the past three years. The pilot consists of posters and coasters with the posters being put up in toilets. One poster in particular focuses on young women. As a mother of a young woman I am concerned about the number of young women who go out on the town to become literally legless. They put themselves in danger from sexual predators. The message for young men is that overindulgence can lead to fights and them being taken to the watch-house.

My department wants to test the messages and the delivery method in a pilot situation so that we can measure the impact on patron behaviour. The pilot campaign was developed in consultation with the Liquor Licensing Division, the Queensland Police Service, Queensland Health and licensees. I recognise the efforts of these partners in ensuring that we get this message out. The government can only do so much. Customers, parents and in particular young people have responsibilities. I urge all to get on board with the new *Know your limits* campaign.

Sugar Industry

Mrs MENKENS: My question is to the Premier. In regard to the ex gratia refund of transfer duty granted to sugarcane farmers purchasing neighbouring farms, I refer to the Premier's media statement on 26 May 2004 stating that to assist reform in the sugar industry, duty relief would be available where smaller adjoining farms are purchased to amalgamate. Firstly, is the Premier aware that due to a ruling by the Office of State Revenue applications from farmers eligible for the relief have been rejected on a technicality and could the Premier assure us that steps will be taken to ensure that all applications are decided in line with the intent of his release?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for the question. As members know, this scheme is administered by the Treasurer. I have had a talk to her about this and from that brief discussion my understanding is that this money was available for a certain period of time and that period of time has expired. Members will recall that this was part of the reform package. I am going on memory and a quick discussion with the Treasurer, but my recollection is that the reform package was only for a period of time. Members may remember that there were all sorts of contingencies and arrangements that were based on a period of time.

The most sensible thing would be to arrange for a member of staff from the Deputy Premier's office or someone from the Office of State Revenue to brief the member to bring her up to date about what the circumstances are.

Frankly, we do want the reform package to work. This was an agreed position between the Prime Minister and I and we have taken a particular and keen interest in it. I worry sometimes that when sugar prices increase—and the member is involved in the industry and would know this—the momentum for change slows a little. What we need to do is to make sure that the reform package that we initiated between the Commonwealth and state governments is implemented because it is about the long-term security of the sugar industry.

The answer to the member's question is that the Deputy Premier will arrange for someone to brief her specifically, probably later today or tomorrow depending on time. We will make certain the member is briefed. The Deputy Premier has asked me to highlight that there are also appeals on OSR decisions. I do not know if the people involved have sought to appeal. The most sensible thing would be to have a discussion.

I might also reiterate the point I made yesterday in relation to ethanol. I am sure that the member would agree, as most people in the sugar industry would, that we are now making significant progress in getting better access for ethanol at service stations. It has been a bit of an obsession with the government. I would hope that the opposition—and this is not trying to be political or half smart—would continue to put pressure on the Commonwealth to ensure that ethanol gets treated the same way as petrol. Until we do that the sale of ethanol is going to be seriously disadvantaged.

I hear ongoing arguments about petrol prices. If we want to insulate this country to some extent from what happens amongst the oil cartel, what we need to do is to ensure that we have a source of fuel that is domestic. What better source of fuel could we get than sugar or grain? We have a bit of a bias towards sugar, as members would appreciate, but obviously ethanol comes from sugar and grain. We can actually have renewables as a source of fuel here like they have done in Brazil. I went there with the sugar producers. They know exactly what it means: it gives them another outlet for their income and it gives us security on an international basis. I am delighted with BP and Shell, which have gone down this road with us, as have a number of vehicle manufacturers. But we still have a way to go. We need the Commonwealth to treat ethanol in exactly the same way it treats petrol and then we will have more security.

Infrastructure

Ms JONES: My question is to the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology. The member for Burnett suggested in question time that the government was placing too high a priority on infrastructure such as football stadiums and footbridges. Can the minister inform the House how the public has responded to his department's huge construction program on behalf of Queensland taxpayers?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I thank the honourable member for her question and commitment to these types of socioeconomic infrastructure projects in Queensland. I pulled out some statistics when the honourable member for Burnett made that scurrilous statement and was summarily dismissed by the police minister because he had got his facts wrong, as he always does in this place. Some 3.2 million patrons have passed through the gates at Suncorp Stadium. In just one weekend, it raised \$17 million for this fair city of ours. Also, \$200 million went into Australia's coffers during the World Cup, and Queensland played its part in that big tournament.

I do not know whether the honourable member has ever been one of those 3.2 million patrons who have been to Suncorp Stadium, but I can guarantee him that a lot of his constituents have, as indeed have a lot of mine. They come down to the State of Origin on Minister Lucas's trains, Virgin planes and whatever. You cannot get a seat around State of Origin time or during the Broncos game—and we have a game coming up shortly.

Mr Messenger: I've never been invited to the corporate boxes.

Mr SCHWARTEN: You've never been to the stadium. I will take that interjection, Mr Speaker. With his ape-like manners, the member is never likely to be invited into a box either. While we are on the subject of the footbridge, I hope the member is not trotting over the footbridge in his tiny little shorts every morning on his daily exercise, because he is condemning that infrastructure. Even though our department cannot take any kudos for that footbridge, I can say that some 70,000 cyclists and pedestrians cross it every week. Indeed, some 2.7 million people have been to the Gabba in recent years. I trust the member has not been over there, since he is condemning that as well, and I take his point that he is not likely to be invited to a corporate box. Leaving aside the honourable member's embarrassingly low intellect, the truth is that anybody ought to be able to add up those figures.

Mr MESSENGER: I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker. I find those comments offensive and I ask for them to be withdrawn.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I will withdraw; it's stating the bleeding obvious.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Minister, you have given a qualified withdrawal. Would you give an unqualified withdrawal?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I withdraw, Mr Speaker. The real question here is for the shadow Treasurer. Does he agree with the statements made by the misguided member for Burnett? Does he agree with the scurrilous and underhanded comments the member for Burnett has made about the infrastructure that has been provided in this city, that is used by his constituents and that is a very necessary part of our socioeconomic status in this state?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before I call the member for Burnett, it is with pleasure that I welcome teachers and students from the Dysart State High School in the electorate of Fitzroy, which is represented in this place by Mr Jim Pearce. It is great to see regional Queenslanders from central Queensland coming down from Dysart.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Employee Assistance Counselling Program

Mr MESSENGER: My question without notice is to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. I refer the minister to her Employee Assistance Counselling Program, whereby a service is supplied to those state government employees with the assurance that no personal information will be released without prior written approval. I table a brochure from one of the counselling providers with those details.

Tabled paper: Brochure titled 'Interlock The Professional Choice Employee Assistance Program'.

Can the minister please explain why the confidential information of a prison officer who received this counselling has been supplied to her department? I table a de-identified document leaked to the prison officers association.

Tabled paper: Document titled 'Interlock The Professional Choice, Critical Incident Stress Management Form'.

Can the minister guarantee that her department is not collecting confidential information for secret files that can be used to intimidate or bully public servants?

Ms SPENCE: The Department of Corrective Services employs a private agency to undertake the counselling of Corrective Services officers around the state. I am not aware that that private agency passes that information on to the department, but I will certainly look into the information that the member has tabled and get back to him.

Nuclear Power Station

Mr CHOI: My question is to the Minister for Natural Resources and Water. The Townsville region has been nominated as a site for a nuclear power station. Could the minister inform the House about the effects a nuclear power station would have on the local water system?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the honourable member for Capalaba for his interest in this matter. In October last year a Queensland government commissioned report on nuclear power was tabled in this House. The report identified Ross in Townsville and Strathmore near Collinsville, west of Bowen, as two of a handful of sites in Queensland earmarked for a nuclear power station. I was very concerned at these suggestions and I asked my department to look at the potential impacts on the region's water supplies of building such a facility in either area.

A nuclear power station in the Townsville area would seriously impact on the quantity and quality of our region's water. Nuclear power stations require massive amounts of cooling water—approximately 25 per cent more than coal-fired power stations—to condense and recycle steam. If a power station was to be built at Collinsville, it would require at least 25,000 megalitres of fresh—not recycled—water every year. This volume of water could only be supplied by building a new dam or weir on the Bowen or Broken system.

Meanwhile, a nuclear power station at Ross would source its water from the Ross River Dam, with water diverted from the Burdekin Falls Dam through the existing pipeline. However, this would significantly reduce the security of water supply to the twin cities and the Lower Burdekin. The quality of water in the region would also be affected. My advice was that water quality impacts could include thermal pollution and increased amounts of total dissolved solids in waste cooling water.

The temperature of the water that is discharged into the environment will increase. We all know where this water ends up and, as the Premier said, it would cook the reef. However, if the cooling water is evaporated and recycled, the waste water will be high in dissolved chemicals and metals. Discharge of such water would most certainly negatively impact on the environment, even hundreds of kilometres downstream.

The Beattie government is committed to pursuing clean coal technologies, renewable energy and gas as more strategic and economically sensible options. I fully supported the Premier when he introduced legislation in parliament last month prohibiting nuclear facilities, including uranium enrichment plants, nuclear power stations and nuclear waste sites in Queensland. Queensland does not need or want a nuclear power station—not in north Queensland or anywhere else.

Before I resume my seat, I must say that I am looking forward to travelling to Canberra later this afternoon with the Premier to attend the water initiative discussions. It is very important that we get some answers from Canberra today on what that entails. Queensland has 25 per cent of the Murray-Darling Basin within our state. We need to get some answers from Canberra as to what the initiative entails, and it is essential that that happens today. I look forward to reporting back to stakeholder groups—such as AgForce and the QFF—next week about what impacts that will have on their members.

Atherton Hospital, Dialysis Unit

Ms LEE LONG: My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. Minister, in light of your recent correspondence to me and a media release rejecting provisions of dialysis services at the Mareeba Hospital, and given that there has been transportation problems to Atherton in the past, I ask: how many patients are currently receiving dialysis treatment at the Atherton Hospital; how many of them come from Mareeba; is there any transport provided for the Mareeba patients and, if so, how many access the transport; and what help, if any, is provided through the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme?

Mr ROBERTSON: I thank the honourable member for her question. I am advised that currently 20 patients receive renal dialysis at the Atherton Hospital Dialysis Unit, with 14 of these patients coming from Mareeba. There are 20 people with lowered kidney function who are being monitored and who may need dialysis in the future. Eleven of these are from the Atherton area, including five from Ravenshoe, which is about a 40-minute drive and 50 kilometres from Atherton and an 80-minute drive from Mareeba.

The location of a dialysis unit for the tablelands needs to be central as the locations of people needing dialysis will change over time. There is an eight chair dialysis unit located at Atherton which is currently under-utilised. It has the capacity for 32 patients and currently treats 20 patients.

Most people arrange their own transport to Atherton Hospital for dialysis including car pooling. I am advised that the Aboriginal health service, Mulungu, provides a bus from Mareeba to Atherton three times a week and charges \$4 each time. The bus holds nine people and the service is not limited to Indigenous people. Although patients travelling from Mareeba to Atherton are not technically eligible for the patient travel subsidy, as they are within the 50 kilometre cut-off, the district has made an exception for dialysis patients and provides \$10 per trip on application.

Mr SPEAKER: That completes question time.

PRIVILEGE

Language Used in Debate

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (11.30 am): I rise on a matter of privilege to apologise. This morning the Premier made the claim that last night during the whistleblowers debate I compared him wearing a dinner suit and talking about whistleblowing to a prostitute in a ballgown talking about celibacy. I then went on to state that it was his sleazy Labor government that had created a growth industry in whistleblowers.

The Premier claimed this morning that my remarks were unparliamentary and that I should apologise. I have had this morning to think about my comments and reflect on my behaviour. I have decided that the Premier is right. My comments were unparliamentary and I should apologise. So I wholeheartedly and sincerely apologise to the prostitutes of Queensland.

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before members go can, I say to the member for Burnett that the standing orders of this parliament should be taken much more seriously by you as a member of this parliament. It is demeaning to this parliament that you get up on a matter of privilege and behave in the way that you have today. It is demeaning to all of the members of parliament. I would ask you to take seriously the standing orders and what a matter of privilege is. It is an insult to the democracy that we have in this state. I would ask you to think about your own behaviour.

MOTION

Leave to Move Motion

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Leader of the House) (11.33 am): I seek leave to move a motion without notice censuring the member for Burnett over his misuse of this parliament and its privileges.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Is leave granted? Can I make sure everyone is aware what we are doing here.

Mr Seeney: We called a division on the motion that leave be granted.

Division: Question put—That leave be granted for a motion without notice.

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

NOES, 23—Copeland, Cripps, Dempsey, Elmes, Flegg, Gibson, Hobbs, Hopper, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Lingard, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Nicholls, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey. Tellers: Dickson, Langbroek

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

MOTION

Censure of Member for Burnett

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Leader of the House) (11.42 am), by leave: I move—

That the member for Burnett be censured for his conduct in abusing the standing orders of this House.

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure) (11.42 am): I second the motion moved by the member for Rockhampton.

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Leader of the House) (11.43 am): This is the second censure motion like this that I have seen since entering parliament in 1989. I am known as being fairly robust in this parliament. I have had a bit to say over the years. I notice the opposition leader leering and sneering, interjecting and exposing his behaviour to the people of Queensland. I encourage him to keep doing that. The people of Burnett deserve a lot better than what we have witnessed here this morning. They did not send the honourable member for Burnett to this parliament to treat it as a cesspool. They did not send the member for Burnett to this parliament to make smutty, suggestive and rude remarks.

Mr Hobbs: You've never done that! What about the bookie loans? What about that? You hypocrite!

Mr SCHWARTEN: I encourage the honourable members to continue to display their bad manners and their lack of respect for this parliament because they are on show here today. They are showing the people of Queensland exactly what they are made of and of what standard they are.

I have got some good mates in the National Party, believe it or not. One of them was the late Bill Gunn. There is no way in the world that Bill Gunn would have ever got up in this parliament and made such a disgraceful abuse of the standing orders and been in contempt of this parliament. Having made a mistake last night—I half-thought for a moment that the member for Burnett had some decency and was genuinely apologising; I was going to congratulate him—he was true to form. He has a lot of form in this regard. He has a lot of form for making these sorts of smutty, unnecessary and unparliamentary remarks.

It is one thing to enter the cut and thrust of the parliament; it is another to make the sort of suggestion that the honourable member did last night. I believe the Premier made it very clear this morning in a matter of privilege, appropriately, where he was so that there was no doubt in the member's mind as to what it was that the Premier was doing last night. The Premier was not in here dressed inappropriately. He was dressed in a dinner suit because he had been invited to the Governor's residence for a vice-regal function of some international importance with one of our allies, the US ambassador, and he did not deserve to have that condemnation. One can forgive, I guess, the member for Burnett for not knowing much better, because the bit I have had to do with him in this parliament tells me that he does not know any better, and he does not have anybody coaching him either. From my time in opposition I well recall how the tactics group worked, and indeed in government it works the same way. There is a discipline team. I can well imagine what the Premier would have said to me had I have made those remarks. He would have ensured that I got up and apologised. So it actually is a question of leadership.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: You may well laugh, and I encourage you to laugh into the barrel of the camera.

Mr Hopper interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: The member does not even have the manners to interject from his own seat! There is another example of the abuse of standing orders. The member for Darling Downs has been in here long enough to know that you sit in your rightful seat to interject, and yesterday you were warned by the Speaker for it and you have done it again today. That is further evidence of the contempt that your party has for this parliament. I encourage you to keep doing that so that we can get more of it on the news tonight, because it is time that Queenslanders understood.

This is a question of leadership. This is a question of standards. This is a question about whether those opposite are fit to be an alternative government, because clearly they have demonstrated that they lack the discipline and decency to do anything that would remotely resemble being in government. This is a test today to see what they would do about this. Some of them, whom I know to be decent people, will be cringing in the stomach about having to support that sort of behaviour, because I do know—

Ms Boyle: They don't have to support it.

Mr SCHWARTEN: They do not have to support it. They can vote against it, but I understand the party mechanisms and party loyalties and all the rest of it. But I do know that there are a few people over there who would be offended by this behaviour. The other thing that they should remember is that they all represent constituents. It would not matter whether you were the most rusted-on tory in Queensland; you could not condone that. There is not one tory I know—and there are a few of my old mates in Rocky who are rusted-on tories and would cut their right hand off before they would vote anything different—who would support that.

Those opposite have made a grave tactical error by not having the spine to stand up to the member for Burnett, by not showing some leadership that counts and decency that counts. Opposition ought not be about having a race to the bottom in standards; it ought to be about leadership. Members can certainly come into this parliament and be robust—and I am one of those members who gives it out and cops it back—but they do not need to descend to the low standards that we saw here today.

I urge all members to support the motion before the House. It is about standards. It is about leadership. It is about community perception. It is, at the end of the day, a measure of people's fitness to be in this parliament, which is judged at three-year intervals. I hope that the member for Burnett's constituents remember it when his turn comes around at the ballot box next time.

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure) (11.48 am): I second the motion. This debate is a debate about the standards of this House, the standards of the debate in this House, the standards of behaviour of members of this House, and it is a debate on a motion that attempts to draw a line in the sand about those standards.

No doubt speakers after me from the other side will claim that this debate is somehow a waste of the time of the parliament. A debate that establishes the standards of this House is never a waste of time—never. It would not be necessary if the standards of this House had not been so comprehensively and so contemptuously breached and put in jeopardy here this morning. It was not only the behaviour of the member for Burnett, who is the subject of this censure motion, that so frivolously and so contemptuously brought the standards of this House into disrepute. It was the endorsement of his behaviour—the tacit endorsement of his behaviour—by the entire opposition and by, most critically, the leadership, the putative leaders of this group.

It is the case that at times, on all sides, the debate is very robust. But it is important that a robust debate is conducted within the confines of reasonable, polite and civil standards of behaviour. When that behaviour goes beyond that line, it is important that senior representatives of this parliament and senior members of political parties represented here take action to make it clear that that does not represent the rest of us, that this behaviour is not common across this chamber, that this behaviour is not the standard that we expect of ourselves and of each other.

I recognise the comments of the Leader of the House, who acknowledged that he is perhaps one of those members who, from time to time, is a very robust contributor to a debate. But he is absolutely right in his comments that, when he oversteps the line—when any member of this side of the House oversteps the line—the leadership of this side of politics expects that discipline will occur and that members will apologise.

I cast the minds of members back to an incident that occurred in another part of Parliament House—not in the chamber—that personally distressed the member for Burnett. The member on our side of the chamber took the first available opportunity to stand here and apologise. That apology was unequivocal, that apology was genuine. The member had the personal courage to stand up here and apologise. In terms of the incident to which I refer, I think that the behaviour of the member for Cook stands in stark contrast to the behaviour of the member for Burnett today.

Some of my colleagues claim that they saw coming the punchline of the comments of the member for Burnett. Maybe I am slower or maybe I just expect better of people, but I was shocked. When I saw the member on his feet, I thought that we were about to hear a genuine apology from someone who realised that, in the heat of the moment, he had gone too far. If that apology had been genuine and if the member had given it in a sincere spirit and if he had done so at the direction of his leader, I would suggest to the member for Callide that it would have been his finest moment in here this week. It would have been one of the finest moments of his leadership. It would have demonstrated some strength of leadership. It would have demonstrated that the member for Callide had some authority over the members of his team. It would have given him the opportunity to overcome the image that he has left of his side of politics after his behaviour yesterday. It would have demonstrated strength of leadership. Although the member for Burnett may have scored an own goal here this morning, I would have to say that the member for Callide dropped an absolute sitter at first slip.

As the member for Rockhampton said, this is a debate about leadership. It is a debate not only about the behaviour of the member for Burnett but also about the reaction of his colleagues and their support or otherwise for this behaviour. There are only two possibilities. Firstly, the member for Callide and Leader of the Opposition knew what the member for Burnett was going to say and he condoned it before the member for Burnett said it. If that is the case, the member for Callide stands condemned along with the member for Burnett. I challenge the member for Callide to advise the House whether he knew about this, whether he approved of it and whether he condones it. Secondly, the only other possibility is that the member for Callide had no idea what the member for Burnett was going to say. If that is the case, the member for Callide should advise this House what he intends to require of the member for Burnett in relation to those comments and what disciplinary action he will take. Since the event happened, all I have seen and heard is grinning, leering and laughter. These are not the reactions of leadership. Similarly, the member for Moggill, the Leader of the Liberal Party, should advise the House whether he knew and approved of the member's performance this morning and, if he did not know, what he is going to do about it as someone who occupies a leadership position in the Liberal Party.

I think it is particularly ironic that we are having this debate with the conservative side of politics. That is the side of politics that crows about being the defenders of values and standards. That is the side of politics that masquerades as the only protectors of decent family values. I wonder about the families in their electorates, because I know that the families in my electorate would have found what the member for Burnett said last night and repeated this morning absolutely disgusting. Nothing that the member for Burnett said this morning accords with any of the values of the people whom I represent. People know that at the moment there is a debate about standards, manners and values going on in our education system and about how we should teach young people a set of values in our public school system. I would like to draw the attention of the members of the Liberal Party opposite, who seem so keen to back this behaviour this morning, to some recent comments from the federal minister for education, Julie Bishop, who had this to say in a speech about manners and civility—

... the golden thread that connects the touchstones of Australian Liberalism is a desire to build a civilised society.

Civility is a common value and a standard to be expected throughout the community, and in all walks of life, regardless of economic means or position in society.

I imagine that when Julie Bishop said those words, she expected that the elected members of a parliament of Australia would be able to and competent of upholding basic standards of civility.

I have heard quite a lot of robust debate and quite a lot of anger. I have been a participant in debates that can get pretty heated. I am not immune from being involved in those debates. But I have to say that I do not recall anything as deliberate as what I heard this morning. This was not something said in anger. This was not something said under provocation. This was not something said in answer to an attack on the member. This was something that the member for Burnett spent all this morning thinking about. He took two hours to think about how he would respond to the Premier's concerns raised here this morning. So any suggestion that this behaviour is somehow within the standards of the normal robust debate of the House should be dismissed immediately. Those arguments do not apply. What the member for Burnett said was not said in the heat of debate. This was something deliberate, considered and, I would suggest, condoned by the leadership of both the National and Liberal parties.

If I am wrong in that, I am very happy to be corrected. I challenge both the member for Callide and the member for Moggill to advise this House whether they knew it was going to happen and did they support it. If not, what are they going to do? If this is the one-team, one-plan, one-destiny approach, then I shake my head. Where are they going? What is the destiny?

I conclude by calling on all members to support this censure motion. This motion is not only about the member for Burnett or the member for Callide; this is about the standard that every one of us sets for ourselves and for this institution. We need to say today: that is the line in the sand. We do not condone that kind of behaviour. That goes beyond what is reasonable, civil, and polite.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.58 am): What a waste of time the government is indulging in at the end of the first week of the parliament. It is worth noting that this parliament, almost five months after we were elected, still has not had a chance to reply to the address that the Governor gave at the opening of the parliament. Yet the government seeks to come in here and waste the time of the parliament with this sort of nonsense—and nonsense it is; nonsense and hypocrisy.

I will take some time to detail the extent of the nonsense and the hypocrisy that is being demonstrated here. First of all, let us look at the great hypocrisy when members on that side stand up and talk about misusing the parliament and setting standards in the parliament. For two days this week this parliament has not been able to serve its function. This parliament has not been able to debate and discuss the issues that the people of Queensland are debating and discussing. Nobody on that side of the House has even expressed any concern about that, let alone expressed any support for doing anything about it.

Those opposite have absolutely no commitment to this parliament, no commitment to the purpose of this parliament and no commitment to democracy. It is only when that impinges on their political ambitions that they stand up and wax lyrical. When it is a little politically uncomfortable, where are all the great parliamentary supporters? Where are all the great civil libertarians? They sit up the back and hang their heads in shame, as my honourable friend sitting up there knows all too well.

This parliament has been misused and abused this week like it never has before by the government for its own political purposes. I would like to say a lot more about that but I do respect the concern that is starting to show on the Deputy Speaker's face, so I will not transgress out of respect to you.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): I thank the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr SEENEY: That is the overall hypocrisy. But that pales into insignificance compared to the hypocrisy that has been displayed by the member for Rockhampton here this morning. Of all the members who have ever served in this place—and members should go and look on the board at the names of all of the Queenslanders who have served in this place—the member for Rockhampton would be the worst choice for the protector of parliamentary standards. My staff have been collecting some examples, and there are lots of them. I could read them all.

If one thinks of every offensive word in the English language, it has been thrown across this chamber at one time or other by the member for Rockhampton. Every offensive name that one can think of he has thrown across this chamber at one time or another. Yet he stands up here this morning as some defender of parliamentary standards. He stands up with some mock outrage and gives us a moralistic tirade about how somebody else should behave in this place, and he wants to waste two hours of parliamentary time doing it. What a load of hypocrisy!

When I first came into this place about 8½ ago, the old hands used to talk with some respect about the honourable member for Rockhampton—that he was a hard man and a parliamentary performer that they had some respect for. Now he is just a joke. He used to be somebody who had some respect in this parliament, even though we did not agree with him.

Mr Hobbs: Where is he now?

Mr SEENEY: Where is he now? He does not even have the courage and backbone to sit here and listen. You used to have some respect, my honourable friend. In fact, you used to be even a little amusing at times. Now you are just a joke. For you to stand up here this morning and make the comments you did, given the comments you made yesterday when you called people crooks, apes and baboons—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, I ask you to speak through the chair.

Mr SEENEY: I apologise. For the member for Rockhampton to come in here and make those sorts of comments, given that in the last couple of days he has called other members baboons and apes and has used the protection of this parliament to call other people crooks when they do not have the opportunity to reply, that is hypocrisy in the raw and hypocrisy that knows no bounds.

This so-called censure motion has been levelled against the member for Burnett because he did not apologise. The most blatant example that I have ever seen in this House of when a member should have apologised also involved the member for Rockhampton. I well remember the outrage that every one of us on this side of the House felt when under privilege he accused the member for Warrego of somehow running up betting debts and not paying betting debts.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I ask the honourable member to withdraw that remark on the basis that that is untrue and offensive, and I urge him to check the *Hansard* record of the day.

Mr SEENEY: Under the rules of the House, of course I withdraw. The honourable member for Rockhampton does not even have the courage of his convictions to stand and defend his actions. Instead, he comes in here with a display of hypocrisy that has never before been seen in this parliament and never again will be emulated. The member for Rockhampton will always be known as the member who took hypocrisy to a new level.

This censure motion is an absolute nonsense. It is all about wasting the time of the House and it is all about trying to recover from the damage that the government did to itself earlier in the week. The people of Queensland know that this parliament has been misused and abused this week. They know that without me outlining it here and getting myself into further trouble with the Speaker. This censure motion this morning is about trying to recover from that.

The strategy began when the Premier came in here and rose on a matter of privilege at the very beginning this morning and tried to suggest that somehow the member for Burnett was making comments about the way he was dressed. It was an absolute nonsense to suggest that that was the thrust of the comments of the member for Burnett. The Premier should have been sat down at that point, I would suggest, if there were any seriousness in maintaining standards when raising matters of privilege because it was a nonsense matter of privilege. It completely misrepresented what happened last night and, in itself, was an affront to the House.

If we are going to be asked to believe that what the member for Burnett did was anything like what the member for Rockhampton and the Deputy Premier suggested it was, then the Premier stands condemned with them. If the member for Rockhampton is going to condemn the member for Burnett then the Premier stands condemned with him because, according to the logic of the member for Rockhampton, the Premier misused the opportunity to raise a matter of privilege in exactly the same way. It was a frivolous matter of privilege. It was a nonsense matter of privilege that bore no resemblance to any real interpretation of what the member for Burnett said the night before. So the member for Burnett was entitled to respond in kind.

I do not think any member of this House believes for one moment that the mock outrage that we have heard from the other side of the House is anything else but hypocrisy. This motion of censure should be rejected and rejected quickly, and we should get on with debate in this House that will further illustrate the extent to which the Beattie government has failed the people of Queensland.

Hon. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (12.08 pm): I am very pleased to join in this censure debate against the member for Burnett. It has been a great privilege to be one of the longest serving members of this parliament and the longest serving woman ever in the Queensland parliament. One of the nice things about being around for over 17 years is that I have seen this parliament change. When I was elected over 17 years ago there were very few women in this chamber. One of the wonderful things that we have seen in the last decade is the election of so many women to the parliament and we should be very proud of that.

Along with the election of women, we have seen the standards of this parliament change. When I was elected all those years ago I found the standard of debate in this place at times intolerable, and I am on the public record as saying so. It was a pretty rough place to be. It was a very sexist place because there with so few women. Men often made inappropriate comments to women in those days and I, like other members of parliament, railed against it.

I railed against the fact that I was wolf whistled when I was walking across the chamber one day. That is what parliament used to be like. It has changed for the better. The election of women has helped that; the introduction of TV cameras has also helped. We are seeing a more civilised place these days. That is why I am very disappointed at the member for Burnett in relation to his comments.

Let us look at what he has done here with respect to his remarks. Whatever one feels about prostitution, whether one is very anti this industry or not, the women who work in this industry are real people and they do not deserve to be treated like the member for Burnett treated them last night and this morning. They certainly do not. That is why I am really incensed. There is no mock outrage from me. The Leader of the Opposition is condemning us and our mock outrage. This is not mock outrage; I am very, very sincere in my offence at his comments.

I am sure that all the women who work in that industry also find him very, very offensive. As a minister who represents that industry I find him offensive. The member has the shadow minister's role and should know better than to offend those women and their jobs in that fashion. I really object to his antics in this chamber on that ground as well.

I do not agree with the Leader of the Opposition that we are wasting our time in this debate. We are debating the standards of this parliament. The standards of this parliament are very important. The people who elect us expect members of parliament will have certain standards; they expect us to dress in a certain fashion; they expect us to behave in a certain fashion. The member for Burnett has a bit of a reputation for being a smart Alec. We all remember during the election campaign when he rudely interrupted the Premier's press conference in Bundaberg with his megaphone screaming out 'Hey, hey, ho, ho', like any larrikin on the streets. I do not think that the Queensland public expect that kind of behaviour from their members of parliament. I do not think that they expect that behaviour from their members of parliament in this chamber.

There is no mock outrage; there is genuine disgust at the way the member for Burnett conducts himself in this chamber. The fact that he is being supported here today by his leader, who thinks that this is a trivial matter, makes it even more disappointing. I do feel sorry for his colleagues who are going to be forced to have to vote in support of him on this matter because I suspect most of them are also embarrassed and ashamed of him, as we all are.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (12.12 pm): I rise to make a very short contribution. I have listened to what other speakers have said. When the Premier got up this morning and gave his personal explanation I admit that I had not heard the comment from the member for Burnett the evening before so I checked it in the *Hansard*. Sometimes in life less is more. Had the incident been contained to the comments that the member for Burnett made last night and the Premier's response and the member for Burnett could not apologise in an unreserved manner, then it should have been left at that.

Comments have been made by the Leader of the Opposition in relation to the Leader of the House. The member for Rockhampton lives near my electorate and he is a robust debater. I do not think any of us would argue about that. We have heard from the Leader of the House some of the most comical comments in this place, matched only by the member for Gregory. We have heard some fairly caustic comments from the member for Rockhampton as well. That could be explained and accepted as part of the robust debate of this place.

One of the things that I learnt thankfully very early in the piece was that one can be in this parliament for a considerable period of time and one's entire contribution to the community can be remembered by one event or one ill-chosen statement. I came into this place in fairly unusual circumstances and a member of the Labor Party commented on one of my predecessors in the seat who made a similar ill-chosen comment in the parliament. I cannot recall now the circumstances. I do not think that I am wrong in saying that there are many older members of the Labor Party who remember him for that comment rather than for any other contribution that he may have made.

It is regrettable that the member for Burnett risks being remembered here for perhaps an ill-chosen comment, albeit that he wrote the response out—an ill-chosen response to a circumstance that could have been let lie.

The only other comment I will make is in a similar vein to comments made by the minister for police. I have never supported the area of prostitution. I have made no secret of that in this chamber. I have voted against quite a number of bills that have freed up or introduced prostitution as a recognised part of our culture and society. I see prostitution as dehumanising people who are of great value and who have great potential. I do not believe that those people should be used as the butt of ill-considered humour. As I said, while I do not condone or accept their lifestyle, they are people who deserve our respect and support.

On that basis, while I believe the member for Burnett has contributed in great measure in his time in parliament, in particular in his electorate in relation to health matters, this will be an incident that over time he may regret as being something that he will be remembered for when other things perhaps are better valued.

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—Lib) (12.15 pm): So far we have spent some 47-odd minutes on this waste of time by the Leader of the House. As the leader of the coalition said earlier, it could not be any richer coming from somebody like the Leader of the House. In fact, his major contribution to this place is the game that he plays called 'insult of the day'. Day after day we see the Leader of the House sit on the opposite side provoking members on this side who, because we are in opposition, cannot respond to the jibes that he trots out on a daily basis.

Let us have a look at the sorts of things that the Leader of the House comes out with. He has referred to people as being lower than dingo droppings; he has referred to somebody as being a dog in a manger—which is an offensive remark, particularly to people in some religions—he has called people crooks; he has called them apes. He has thrown everything he can across this chamber at members on this side. Then he comes out this morning with something as precious as, 'Well, imagine if I said that what the Premier would say to me'. The members on the other side need to grow up a little bit. This man says worse than that every day he walks in. Then he comes in here and wants to be absolutely precious about what someone else says. If we moved a censure motion every time he carries on the way he does we would be debating a censure motion every sitting day in this place.

The Leader of the House loves to dish it out—he does it every day; it is all in the *Hansard*—but he cannot take it when somebody has a joke at his expense. We saw the Premier walk in here this morning and dish it out to people on this side of the House—to the member for Gympie. We saw the Premier walk in and raise a frivolous matter of privilege, being precious about a statement that nobody in this House would take as a personal affront in the way that the Premier did. In fact, if the Premier wants to walk in and raise a matter of privilege every time there is some colourful language used in this House we will have matters of privilege raised every day.

We heard the Minister for Police and Corrective Services quite rightly talk about the problems of sexism which were part and parcel of the culture in this place and in other places. People like the minister for corrective services and I and many, many people throughout our whole community find that sort of vilification and prejudice offensive and have fought for many years to change attitudes to it. Then we have the Premier coming in raising a matter of privilege, claiming that he is offended and he has been vilified because someone said he was wearing a dinner suit. There has to be some sense of priority in this place.

As the member for Callide said, there are a whole lot of members sitting here who have not even replied to the Governor's speech. We could have had another three or four responses in the time that the Leader of the House has wasted now, not to mention the fact that the government is confronting a water crisis, a health crisis and an integrity crisis. Yet the time of this House has not been spent on water and accountability; it has been wasted on nonsense like this.

Quite frankly, the member for Burnett said nothing that was personal or nasty, not like other comments that get thrown across this chamber. The worst you can accuse him of is wasting 30 or 40 seconds with a joke, compared to the hour or so that the government has wasted now.

Government members interjected.

Dr FLEGG: Those opposite who are feigning all this anger ought to go and look at the *Hansard* and see how trivial this issue is. All it does is confirm for me and members of the community that the sour, old members of the ALP on the other side purely and simply have no sense of humour—that is what they are guilty of.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): Before the member for Murrumba commences speaking, I remind members that if they wish to make any comment or interject they should do so from their own seats.

Hon. DM WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (12.21 pm): The good doctor protests too much. He is not curing the disease of the opposition; he is just offering them a placebo. The truth of the matter is that the things that the Leader of the House might have said in the past are nothing to the purpose, because what we are debating here is not whether this is a robust place. We all know that it is a robust place. We are not debating whether he or I or anybody else in the past have said things that contained a bit of vitriol. I look back on the *Hansard* record from time to time and I see some things that I have said in the past that actually were a bit funny but perhaps were a bit more aggressive than I thought in retrospect was deserved.

We have all engaged in vigorous debate and so we should engage in vigorous debate. This is a place where, with very few exceptions, everybody comes with an agenda, with a passion, with a set of beliefs, and obviously they are going to express those beliefs with vigour and feel a certain amount of ire against those who stand in the way of the implementation of those beliefs. Of course it is vigorous, but what we are here debating is a gross misuse, a violation and a disrespect of the standing orders and privileges of this place.

It is unconscionable and it is unacceptable to use a point of privilege—a privilege of this House, the privilege to stop the debate that is going on in this place, the privilege to stop the discussion of the concerns of an entire state and the people of that state—to make a gratuitous, aggressive and bitter

attack on another individual. Points of privilege cannot be used for that purpose. Points of privilege can be used to explain a member's position. Points of privilege can be used to explain that a member has been misrepresented. Points of privilege can be used to raise a matter that relates to the privileges of the House. But to pervert the capacity to raise a point of privilege by turning it into an opportunity for a bitter, nasty and demeaning attack is something which is entirely appropriate that the House should censure. I put it to honourable members on the other side as well as on this that this is a matter where the privileges of this House have been derogated from by the activities of the honourable member for Burnett.

The honourable member for Sandgate drew my attention to the fact that yesterday the Premier suggested that maybe the member for Bundaberg was embarrassed by something that the member for Burnett had said, and the member for Bundaberg said, 'I would never be embarrassed by the activities of my colleague.' Prophetic words that the honourable member might very well wish to eat because, if there was ever anything that was embarrassing in this House, if there was ever anything that demeaned this House, it was the misuse of a point of privilege so that the whole business of this House and the concerns of an entire people could be interrupted so that somebody could sink a low shaft into somebody else. That is not what parliamentary debate is about and that is not what our democracy is about.

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (12.25 pm): I would like to say a few words here today. The first thing I will deal with is prophetic words. I will tell you some prophetic words, Mr Deputy Speaker. In my first speech, I uttered the prophetic words that there was a crisis in health in this state. That turned out to be true. But the only reason it became known publicly is (a) the bravery of Toni Hoffman and (b) the ability to stand up in this place and speak the truth.

At every step of the way while I have been speaking that truth, I have had members of the Labor Party trying to stop me. They have been trying to stop me from speaking out, they have been trying to stop that truth from coming out, and they have not changed. This whole debate now is not about matters of privilege and parliamentary procedure; this is just a waste of time by the Labor Party—a complete waste of time. Mr Deputy Speaker, I will remind you of another waste of time that was instigated by this Labor Party. We had a minute's silence for convicted drug traffickers. That was another waste of time in this place. That is the calibre of the people on the other side of this House.

The argument was never, ever about the dress of the Premier. He tried to make out it was all about his cute little dinner suit. It was not about the dress of the Premier. It was in the context of a debate on an important piece of legislation—the whistleblowing legislation. That whistleblowing legislation is a result of the fact that 17 or so people died in Bundaberg and we were then able to expose those deaths and help fix this sick health system—this sick, sleazy, Labor health system in Queensland.

I have not breached any parliamentary regulations. If members talk about a race to the bottom, they only have to look at the opposite side to see about racing to the bottom in standards. What about the standards that the people of the Burnett and Bundaberg have to put up with now? What about the standards? Wake up and smell the roses. This is not reality.

Mr Schwarten: You're not real, that's for sure.

Mr MESSENGER: You need to get real. Get out there and start talking to the people from the Burnett. Get out there and start talking to the pensioners who have to wait six years for dental work.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): Leader of the House and the member for Burnett! Would you return to your speech and stop debating the matter across the House.

Mr MESSENGER: I suggest that the Leader of the House gets out there and talks to the people in Bundaberg and Burnett who have had loved ones and family members die while on waiting lists. He should talk to the people who have to line up for 10 hours in emergency rooms and wait for attention from doctors who have probably been working 24 or 48 hours straight.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Would the member for Burnett please get back to the question that has been put? At the moment, you are straying quite some distance from being relevant.

Mr MESSENGER: Mr Deputy Speaker, in order to describe why I spoke as I did this morning, it might help if you had a little bit of an understanding about how I am feeling.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Would the member for Burnett like to rephrase that comment? I take that as a reflection upon this chair.

Mr MESSENGER: I withdraw any offensive comments or remarks that I may have made towards you, Mr Deputy Speaker, or any reflections I made on the chair. I would like to be able to speak freely and widely about how I feel because it will give a little context and background information about why I spoke as I did.

Why did I compare the Premier to a prostitute while we were debating whistleblowers legislation? In my opinion, the Premier of Queensland is one of the most disgusting and contemptuous people to have ever drawn breath in Queensland. He is responsible for the deaths of at least 17 people in Bundaberg and the Burnett. This is the Premier who created a health system, ran it down, hired Patel, covered up for Patel and then flew the doctor overseas at taxpayers' expense.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): Order! I would remind the member of the Speaker's ruling in relation to sub judice. The matter to which you refer is sub judice and I ask you to desist from any further comment.

Mr MESSENGER: The Deputy Premier talked about values. She talked about values in education. I, too, uphold values in this parliament and this state. I recently visited Borallon prison in my capacity as shadow police and corrective services minister. I spoke with the guards out there. They said that every week there are 30 people inducted into Borallon. After they went through psychological and literacy and numeracy tests—

Mr SCHWARTEN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I question the relevance of prison officers in this debate. He is on trial, not the prison officers.

Mr MESSENGER: We are talking about the issue of values which was raised by the Premier.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let us get back to the debate.

Mr MESSENGER: The point I would like to make is that 15 inmates a week at Borallon have great difficulty reading and writing and three cannot read or write. Why are we seeing those people out there? The link between literacy and incarceration rates and mental health rates—

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, members. Would the member for Burnett address the matter of the question which is to be put. I fail to see how the illiteracy of prisoners at Borallon is relevant.

Mr MESSENGER: I will try to be very succinct and draw the link. We are seeing an increase in prison populations and a declining level of educational standards because of this government's bold social experiment that it has had throughout the years. The values that this government holds are allowing our children to graduate from high school without being able to read and write. They have run down the education system. There is a crisis in policing.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I would ask the member for Burnett, as I have asked on a number of occasions, to address the question to be put. If you persist I will ask you to sit. Thank you.

Mr MESSENGER: I will keep my comments brief and close my speech. I will apologise to the Premier when he apologises to the victims in Bundaberg, the widows who suffer every day and the people struggling to get compensation. That is when I will apologise to the Premier.

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Leader of the House) (12.35 pm): I move—

That the question be now put.

Motion agreed to.

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

AYES, 54—Attwood, Barry, Bligh, Bombolas, Boyle, Choi, Croft, Cunningham, Darling, English, Fenlon, Finn, Fraser, Gray, Hayward, Hinchliffe, Jarratt, Jones, Keech, Kiernan, Lavarch, Lawlor, Lee, Lee Long, McNamara, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, O'Brien, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Pratt, Purcell, Reeves, Reilly, Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Struthers, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Weightman, Welford, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Male, Nolan

NOES, 22—Copeland, Cripps, Dempsey, Elmes, Flegg, Hobbs, Hopper, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Lingard, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Nicholls, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey. Tellers: Dickson, Langbroek

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Motion agreed to.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 7 February (see p. 178).

Mrs MENKENS (Burdekin—NPA) (12.41 pm): I rise to support, and add my contribution to the debate on, the Vocational Education, Training and Employment and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2006, which was introduced at the end of last year. The bill amends three acts, with the main objectives to enable the implementation of actions outlined in the *Queensland skills plan* white paper and to address minor technical issues to ensure the legislation remains current and accurate. We are all aware of the huge skills shortage that is evident right across Queensland—not just Queensland but Australia-wide,

and it is certainly extremely evident in the Burdekin electorate and north Queensland in general. There is an enormous amount of developing industries and ongoing commercial enterprises right across northern Queensland.

Possibly one of the hardest hit areas in this regard is primary production, where award rates of pay cannot compete with the opportunities that, say, the mining and other industries can offer. This is a difficulty in north Queensland. However, shortages of skilled personnel are evident right across nearly all vocational and professional areas. We are seeing changing dynamics with backpackers being totally relied on and a large number of overseas skilled workers being brought in. The *Queensland skills plan* white paper, which was released in March 2006, outlines the major reforms to the state's education and training system that the government intends to implement. It was produced in an effort to address the growing skills shortage in Queensland and to develop a new training system which better serves industry's changing needs.

This bill principally amends the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 2000 to support the implementation of specific actions as outlined in the *Queensland skills plan* white paper. One of the most important aspects from the white paper is the removal of the legislated role of Industry Training Advisory Bodies, the ITABs, to enable a range of new arrangements for industry engagement that aim to improve the alignment between industry skills needs and training delivery. ITABs have been in place for a significant number of years and I believe in many cases have been very effective and sensitive to the needs of industry. Vocational training must be tailored to the ever-changing needs of industry, and to this extent the relationship between training providers and industry must be very strong. Because the ITABs were accepted by industry, there has been some apprehension towards abolishing this process and I, along with the coalition, will certainly be watching for the success of the new initiatives that this bill promises.

Genuine representation from industry is the key to success, and in many cases previously with some of the ITABs real input from the actual businesspeople was difficult to obtain and the personnel on these boards was often not truly representative of the actual needs on the ground. The white paper acknowledged that significant feedback was received that the existing industry advisory arrangements did not meet the needs of many Queensland employers and revitalisation of those arrangements was definitely needed. It was needed particularly to ensure greater representation of regional and remote location employers. That is definitely a concern that was echoed throughout north Queensland.

I note that in place of the ITAB structure this bill introduces new strategies such as industry skills alliances, centres of excellence, industry-government skilling partnerships and skills formation strategies which seemingly aim to better serve the needs of industry at local, regional and state levels. The coalition's consultation has confirmed that industries generally support this amendment, but there will be a lot of work needed to rebuild the confidence of industry and the new processes, and I for one certainly hope that that does occur because it is essential for the real skilling and skill upgrades in Queensland.

Funding for ITABs ceased on 1 January 2007. Clause 7 of this bill effectively removes their legislative role. It is vital that the teaching of skills is relevant to the future needs of industry. The involvement of industry may ensure that what is learned will match what is really needed in relevant industry and at the local level. This is of course an all-Queensland initiative, but north Queensland is the powerhouse of Queensland industry. I will stay with this thought because I certainly believe that this is where the centre of the main skills needs are. Industry is occurring right across north Queensland. Nowhere else is in more need of these skills.

The other major initiative within this bill is streamlining the completion process to support early completion by apprentices and trainees to better meet industry needs and to address significant trade skills shortages. This process is dealt with in clause 6 of the bill. It implements another initiative of the *Queensland skills plan* white paper—reorganising the process for completion of apprenticeships and traineeships and the implementation of competency based training apprenticeships. I understand the reasoning behind the decisions made in this initiative, but I believe it is a fairly difficult area. Certainly, we need more skilled tradespeople in employment. We need them fast; we need them now. In fact, we needed them yesterday. Shortening the training time is an obvious answer to expedite this process, but it can be fraught with potential hazards.

I, along with the previous member for Hinchinbrook, Mr Rowell, and the current member for Hinchinbrook, Mr Cripps, attended several meetings with hairdressers in the Burdekin, Townsville and Ingham regions. Hairdressing is a highly skilled profession and it is typical of the types of trades that require a very high level of learned dexterity. Learned dexterity takes experience and it takes practice. Some of the very real concerns of some tradespeople and employers is that shorter time lines may not be conducive to fully gaining complete competency in those skills. Many current hairdressers were trained over a four-year period and current suggested timings are less than three years.

Competency based training—CBT—is a concept in training that has been introduced in recent years. I was teaching in the TAFE system when CBT was first introduced into vocational training and TAFE colleges across Australia. I suppose one could say that it was met with quite a lot of suspicion and

concern. I was actually involved at the state level in developing the competency based models for the Diploma of Business. In the early 1990s this was a totally new concept and certainly required a mindset for trainers, for students and for industry. The basis of competency means just that: it means that the student is actually competent or able to successfully achieve selected outcomes.

The argument against theoretical teaching and the previous methods of assessment were that a student might pass at 51 per cent, but what about the other 49 per cent, which was the bit that the student did not pass? If an airline pilot was competent only in 51 per cent of the procedures, I do not think that any of us would want to fly with that pilot. I believe the argument for competency based training is very valid. I also believe that it is an excellent method, provided the assessment tools and standards are of sufficient quality. I note that in his second reading speech the minister stated—

Rewarding apprentices who are competent instead of maintaining a time served approach ensures quality tradespersons who can meet the needs of industry.

That certainly makes common sense. It is true and competency based training certainly can work. The concern—and no doubt it has always been so—is whether the assessment tools that are used are sufficient to gauge the student's competency. Certainly, as the minister also stated—

It is foreseeable that the expedited completion of competent apprentices or trainees will assist in the timely provision of fully qualified tradespeople into the labour market.

I am greatly concerned that, in the effort to expedite the training processes, some valuable areas of training may be left out. Industry leaders put an employee's attitude and values at the top of their priority list. As a former communications teacher, I can assure members that I feel very strongly about this. Attitudes and values are not easy to impart in the vocational field. I am pretty passionate about this. I know that members have heard me speak about this matter previously. Earlier vocational curricula in the Queensland TAFE system—and I am going back quite some years here—allowed for a genuine focus on these areas, but in more recent years life skills and communication have been almost ignored. I will not pick out TAFE specifically for this; in training areas across Australia these vital subject areas have been dismissed as being of lesser importance. There are lots of excellent programs that will help young people develop self-esteem, a set of values, responsibility, assertiveness and those very essential customer service skills. That is what industry wants. That is what employers want. I believe that they are as important, if not sometimes more important, than the actual trade training skills.

I will be looking for assurances from the department that these areas will not be ridden roughshod over, as has happened in many cases in recent years. I believe that cost cutting in vocational training by TAFE and other training providers has been the cause of this deficiency. This is a subjective area. It is very difficult to assess and it is very easy to bypass, because it is not seen as an essential skill. Although industry has generally supported this amendment, there are some genuine concerns regarding access to the full range of TAFE subjects that apprentices and trainees are required to undertake to complete their theoretical training, which is not only the life skills area.

The bill also establishes a process by which an apprentice or trainee can be deemed as competent by the Training and Employment Recognition Council even though one of the parties to the training contract does not sign the completion agreement. If the apprentice or trainee has achieved all practical and theoretical competencies and their completion agreement is not signed, the council can make a determination about the apprentice's or the trainee's competency, ensuring that all parties are afforded the opportunity to submit their case.

This is a significant change. It is a new initiative in training. It could also be seen to open up a proverbial can of worms. The quality assurance of the level of training is essential and it is critical to ensure that the fast-track completion of apprenticeships does not compromise the quality of the training. Training quality standards must not be comprised in an effort to address the growing shortage of skilled workers. Although it is recognised that some apprentices may achieve a level of competency earlier than their peers and that they should not be stalled for the sake of bureaucratic time lines, procedures must be in place to ensure that the early completion mechanism is not abused by apprentices or their employers. Industry has also expressed concerns in relation to this amendment regarding the breadth and width of consultation.

There is a critical need for increased funding to TAFE. That increase in funding is needed not simply for infrastructure but to increase the number and quality of teachers. Governments put much stock on new buildings, but I note that in quite a few regional communities the TAFE colleges are almost empty white elephants. The infrastructure is there, but the students and the staff are not. I think we should consider changing that situation.

Over the years industry has been very critical of the flexibility in the delivery of TAFE subjects. Because of the bureaucratic nature of such an institution it can take many months—and sometimes years—to accredit a new course and have it up and running. In this regard, sadly, in recent years TAFE has lost much of its competitive edge. I for one have been very sad to see that occur. In previous years, the quality of TAFE training was greatly applauded throughout Queensland. TAFE needs some rejuvenation in funds and in processes. I hope that this bill attempts to address those issues.

I have a great deal of loyalty to TAFE. I am an ex-TAFE teacher and I also was a member and chairman of the community council. As such, I have a very strong allegiance to the system. The real challenge will be to ensure that TAFE colleges remain at the leading edge of vocational training.

I also note that the bill makes a minor amendment to the Agricultural College Act 2005. The agricultural colleges in Queensland have a very proud history. Those agricultural colleges are unique in their structure and, for that reason, they are looked up to by all the other states. Major changes to agricultural colleges have occurred since the legislation was introduced in 2005 with the amalgamation of the colleges. For many years the colleges resisted amalgamating, but it has occurred. At this stage, I think it is fair to say that the colleges are still in a rebuilding phase. I certainly hope that that continues and that the colleges can regain the strength they used to have in years gone by.

I am certainly very proud of our Burdekin Agricultural College and the magnificent work that is done there by the staff. Over the years, it has been amazing to find out where those students from that college have gone. That is the college that I have the most contact with and it is very interesting to hear the success stories of where the students from that college have gone.

The Mareeba college was set up while I was on the board of the Burdekin College of TAFE. So technically, Queensland has five agricultural colleges, including the Mareeba college. That college was started as an experiment. It offers training in different fields. Yesterday, the member for Hinchinbrook outlined in great detail what that college offered. That college has also gone from strength to strength.

Of course, the nature of training has changed so much over the years. Much of the training is not carried out on campus—being either at the TAFE colleges or the agricultural colleges. At times that is a little hard for the community to comprehend. Even so, in many cases the training hours are being undertaken, but they are not necessarily being undertaken on campus. As those students are not viewed as living on the campus, often those colleges receive negative publicity, which is not always correct.

I support the excellent points that were raised by the shadow minister, the member for Cunningham, and also by the other coalition members who have contributed to this debate. With the few concerns that I have raised, I have great pleasure in commending this bill to the House.

Sitting suspended from 12.58 pm to 2.30 pm.

Debate, on motion of Mr Fraser, adjourned.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (DISSOLUTION OF JOHNSTONE SHIRE COUNCIL) REGULATION 2007

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport) (2.30 pm): In accordance with section 73 of the Constitution of Queensland 2001, and in order to exercise the government's jurisdiction in relation to such matters as defined in section 164 of the Local Government Act 1993, I lay upon the table of the House for ratification by the Legislative Assembly the Local Government (Dissolution of Johnstone Shire Council) Regulation 2007.

Tabled paper: Copy of Local Government (Dissolution of Johnstone Shire Council) Regulation 2007, tabled pursuant to section 73 of the Constitution of Queensland 2001.

DISSOLUTION OF JOHNSTONE SHIRE COUNCIL

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport) (2.30 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That this House—

- (1) notes the regulation, approved by the Governor in Council, on 8 February 2007, dissolving the Johnstone Shire Council;
- (2) notes that the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport has tabled a copy of the regulation in this House in accordance with section 73 of the Constitution of Queensland 2001; and
- (3) ratifies the regulation in accordance with section 164(2) of the Local Government Act 1993.

Hon. D BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety) (2.31 pm): I second the motion.

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport) (2.31 pm): Today it is my unhappy task to announce to the House that I have recommended to the Governor in Council that the Johnstone Shire Council be dismissed. This is not a course of action about which I am enthusiastic, but it is the necessary and right decision for the people of the shire, centred on Innisfail in far-north Queensland. After suffering through an ineffective council for some time, which has become mired in a culture of bullying and petty argument at the cost of its constituents, the people of the Johnstone shire require strong, stable leadership and effective decision making. As they seek to rebuild and today still face the challenges of the forces of Mother Nature, they require a local authority that is functioning in the public interest.

Where the people of this cyclone ravaged area expected and deserved the very best from the people they elected to council, they were instead served far, far less. Where they expected representatives who would put their best interests first, they received a council more intent on infighting and argument—which spilled beyond the chamber—at the cost of sound decision making. It had been my sincere hope that this council would rally and begin to function, but it is clear that that goal is not going to be reached now or in the foreseeable future and, after exhaustive investigation by independent advisers, it is unavoidable that today is the end of the road.

While some improvements have been made since the issuance of the show cause notice by the former minister for local government, they fall far short of the dramatic turnaround required. Council remains beset by episodes of highly inappropriate behaviour by individuals and labours under severe financial limitations of a long standing and deep-seated nature. The situation is untenable.

Fundamentally, debate is an integral part of the democratic process. Debate needs to be encouraged and debate is ultimately about meeting the best possible outcome for our constituents and our ratepayers. But there is a point where debate can descend into debacle. The Johnstone Shire Council has reached this point all too frequently and then proceeded to plummet hopelessly beyond that edge.

It is important that I highlight to the House at the outset that the ability to provide certainty and a path forward for the Johnstone shire decision has been hindered greatly by the actions of two councillors in particular who, without the support of other councillors, launched legal action to frustrate and needlessly delay this process. Despite their actions, in the time that has elapsed there has been an overall lack of real progress.

After a hearing in October last year, the Supreme Court dismissed their action on Tuesday this week. While there can never be an appropriate time to carry out such a burdensome task, it is my view that the people of Johnstone shire have long required strong and effective local government and they should be afforded that right as soon as possible.

After the decision of the court on Tuesday, yesterday I tabled in the House, in the interests of transparency, two reports into the Johnstone Shire Council. These reports have previously been supplied to the Johnstone shire, prior to the hearing in the Supreme Court last year. For the benefit of all members, I should place on the *Hansard* record some of their contents as a way of demonstrating the background that has led to this decision.

In July last year, Gary Kellar released his report on the Johnstone Shire Council to the former minister. It is a thoroughly researched, well-informed document that at the same time makes for what can only be described as troubling reading. Mr Kellar found the council was one that operated in a climate of intimidation, fear and bullying with councillors so hopelessly mired in hostility toward one another that debate actually tumbled outside of chambers into the street. Such is the atmosphere of animosity, it appears—and Mr Kellar makes clear—the council had little chance of ever regaining a good reputation among the people who elected it to power, the people of Innisfail.

Mr Kellar concludes that there is a clear demarcation of policy direction between a group comprising the now former deputy mayor and four other councillors and the remaining councillors who support the direction generally favoured by the mayor. That division created considerable lingering tension between both the two groups of councillors and between the councillors and the council staff. In some cases, councillors have developed particularly poor relations with staff at both executive and operational level. This atmosphere of tension has resulted in high levels—unacceptable levels—of conflict both within the meeting chamber and in the councillors' personal dealings with staff and one another.

Mr Kellar reported that the degree of personal conflict has in the past been so intense that it spills over into private life and community interaction. Because of this, in the past, decisions were often made on the basis of personalities rather than well-considered facts. Council staff interviewed by Mr Kellar confirmed a culture of bullying and intimidation both within the chamber and in interaction outside of formal proceedings within the business of council.

This evidence was overwhelmingly indicative of an environment where shouting, aggressive demeanours, swearing and threats of violence were aimed at other councillors and staff. On one occasion one councillor invited another to 'settle this outside'. Female councillors spoke of being especially fearful of the behaviour directed toward them—by two councillors in particular—to the point that they were reluctant to speak out in opposition to issues pursued by them. Despite undertakings and apologies, in the last month a council meeting descended into such inappropriate behaviour that councillors saw the need to report the matter to local police.

This was all in addition to what Mr Kellar described as an enduring and substantial culture amongst some councillors of repeated and deliberate breaches of almost all of the key elements of the councillor code of conduct. However, complaints in regard to breaches were discouraged either by lack of confidence that they would be dealt with or by fear that such complaint would result in personal intimidation and harassment.

Similarly, there was a significant ignorance among councillors of the proper procedure of council. This was coupled with a lack of acceptance by some councillors of the essential nature of good order and respect for the right to express alternative views—a fundamental tenet to good rule and to the effectiveness of local government decision making. This significant breakdown in procedural protocols led to meeting procedures not being observed consistently and more often than not being ignored by the councillors and not enforced by the mayor. This failure to observe procedure has permitted gross breaches of conduct and procedural fairness.

I am greatly troubled to report to the House that, notwithstanding his long service and the regard in which he is held, the mayor—in the context of council governance—is found to be seriously ineffective, according to Mr Kellar's report. The difficult circumstances of the council no doubt required strong and decisive, interventionist leadership and that, unfortunately, has not been provided. Mr Kellar states at page 27 of his report—

Unless current circumstances experience a dramatic turn-a-round, there is little prospect of the council recovering a reputation for being able to exercise properly its jurisdiction of local government. The mere promise to reform is difficult to rely on given current experience. Although a majority of councillors have expressed a desire to move ahead with good will there will need to be some confidence that their resolve is sustainable.

As a result of Mr Kellar's report, the former minister issued a show cause notice on 2 August 2006 which required the Johnstone Shire Council to specifically address the matters of concern in writing within 14 days. This response was also to specifically include strategies for dealing with and resolving the concerns.

The deadline was reached and the council responded on 15 August. However, council provided two responses to the show cause notice—one from the majority of councillors and the other from the mayor and a minority of councillors. A group of four councillors, including the mayor, answered three of the show cause questions and the remaining five councillors addressed all 10. At base, when challenged by the show cause notice to draw together to work in the public interest of the shire, the councillors fragmented into groups and could not provide a united response to the notice. Mr Scott Mead, who was subsequently appointed to review the responses, concluded what is obvious: there is no joint commitment from council as a whole to work together in a professional manner to address all of the issues raised in the show cause notice.

Mr Mead noted that even being issued the notice of the former minister's intention to recommend to the Governor-in-Council that council be dissolved was not sufficient to prompt the councillors to put aside their differences and work together to address the issues raised for the good of their community. He was of the opinion that the required dramatic turnaround by the Johnstone Shire Council had not occurred and was unlikely to occur in the near future.

I became the subject of the injunction upon assuming the role of minister for local government. Under the terms of the injunction, I was required to give Johnstone shire seven days notice of my intention to consider their case and move to make a decision.

Shortly after becoming the minister I travelled to meet with the councillors and mayor and shortly after that meeting I gave formal notice that I intended to make a decision on whether or not it should be dissolved within seven days. This was the catalyst for the enlivening of a lengthy and protracted legal sequel prompted by the two Johnstone shire councillors.

The basis of this action was a challenge to the issuance of the original show cause notice issued by the former minister. The matter was heard in the Supreme Court in Cairns on October 19. As I said earlier, on Tuesday this week, Justice Jones delivered his judgement and the application by the councillors was dismissed. That leads us to today.

The Director-General of the Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation has today travelled to Innisfail to inform the mayor, the CEO and the councillors that the council has been suspended and that this motion is to be debated in the parliament today.

Effective immediately, an administrator, Mr Graham Webb, will take control of the council's operations. Mr Webb is a former chief executive officer with the Burdekin Shire Council from 1992 until last year. Prior to that he was the shire clerk and deputy shire clerk of the Burdekin shire. In total he served in those roles for 27 years. He is a chief executive with significant, well-recognised and well-respected skills in successfully managing a mid-size Queensland local government similar in many ways to the Johnstone shire. I have the utmost faith in Mr Webb's abilities to lead the Johnstone shire through this difficult time until the next local government elections are held in March 2008.

As the span of time suggests, this is a matter that has been bogged down in complicated and unnecessary legal proceedings instigated by the two councillors. This was an extraordinary legal action which effectively left the people of Innisfail in limbo without an effective functioning council. At the time the action was launched I was, and remain today, firmly of the view that this was a matter that should have been resolved as quickly as possible and for the good of the area the two councillors should have discontinued their ultimately fruitless action. This was legal action by two individuals intent on putting

their own interests ahead of the community they were elected to represent. Ultimately, it proved to be futile in all respects. The time that has since elapsed because of this action has not in fact seen the council turn around its operations and demonstrate a capacity to discharge its functions appropriately.

This is a weighty decision and one that I have taken only after thorough and lengthy deliberation. In the interests of solid, accountable, effective local government it is one that I had to take. Accordingly, my decision has at the same time not been a reluctant one. This is a council that has failed its community and its constituents at a time when they needed it most. The council chambers are located in Innisfail, a town that was devastated by Cyclone Larry and whose residents were left wanting for stable local government representation when they needed it most. Ultimately, they deserve better.

The parliament of Queensland cannot abide, nor should ratepayers be expected to abide, anything but the best endeavours and professionalism from those people they have elected. I will travel to Innisfail tonight and introduce the new administrator tomorrow to council staff and the local community. I will provide a personal assurance to local residents along with council employees that this decision has been made in the ultimate best interests of the residents of the Johnstone shire.

It is my sincere hope that after this deeply troubling episode we can ensure that one day soon the people of this great area of Queensland's north can again have faith and trust in their local government.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (2.43 pm): Today is indeed a very difficult day for local government. I reluctantly support the minister in his endeavours to manage this difficult issue with the council. It seems that there are a few councils throughout the state that are experiencing similar sorts of difficulties. A very strong message needs to be sent to councils that they have a responsibility to their community. They have been elected, just like we have been elected here, and their role is to ensure that the administration of council is run well and that meeting procedures are followed the way they should be. People need to have confidence that the future of their community is well managed.

This particular instance with the Johnstone shire has been a long drawn-out event that has finally reached a conclusion. I am greatly disappointed that the council had to be dismissed. I do support the evidence that we have before us. That is all that we can go on. There has been a lot of hearsay reported but at the end of the day one needs to analyse the results of the investigation that quite clearly showed there were serious problems that the council was unable to resolve.

We all know that personalities are strong at times. There is a responsibility on those people who think they are doing the right thing or trying to impose their will on others. In fact, all they are doing is bringing their own community down. This is an example where that has happened.

I want to recognise the longstanding problems that the Johnstone shire has had over many years. These are problems which are experienced by many councils but today we are talking about the council that has been dismissed. That council has had some serious funding problems. Funding problems that councils have are not necessarily all their own fault when you consider the chain of command from the federal government down. The federal government has never had it better insofar as the taxation that is being generated; the state governments have never had it better with GST rolling in. But local governments have, in fact, had less money coming in. Their take of the tax bill has gone down. There are pressures on local governments to meet demands. They have what is called cost shifting coming from both state and federal government. They are expected to ensure that they provide the services. In some instances they are not provided with funding. We do have a serious situation where councils are under enormous pressure. This certainly would not have helped in the case of the Johnstone shire.

Having administrators is not new. Burke Shire Council went through a similar situation in the late eighties. The Gold Coast Council also had an administrator brought in. I was a mayor and a councillor back in those days and I remember the issue at the time. There was a lot of concern as to how it would operate; would the community be looked after and so forth. From what I understand, particularly in the case of the Gold Coast, the administration of that council was successful.

Mr Lawlor: Russ got all his applications through, like Gemini Towers at Burleigh.

Mr HOBBS: There we are—development occurred. Today brings a new era of planning and those sorts of issues can be managed a bit more openly. I welcome the appointment of Mr Graham Webb. He is obviously a longstanding local government CEO and administrator with some 27 years experience. I knew him when he was with the council in the Burdekin area and I think that he will do a good job. I hope and trust that he will be able to manage that without great difficulty.

The administrator must ensure that services are maintained at a satisfactory level. The role of an administrator is exactly the same as a council. We are currently going through the SSS process, which is probably a more unusual time, and we will have one person instead of a whole council or a whole community in the role of administrator. It will be particularly important for Mr Webb to ensure that there is a fairly open process of handling the SSS process within his shire. The Cardwell and Johnstone shires are the two shires in that area. There will have to be a lot of openness in the way that that is handled. Otherwise there will be unnecessary concern in relation to whether there will be an amalgamation or a takeover. There needs to be a lot of openness in the way that is managed. I am sure that Mr Webb will understand that and let us hope that he can manage it well.

It is important that the minister also keeps an eye on how this is run now. It is a new experience for the minister and this parliament. As I said, only a couple of administrators have been appointed in recent times, so we need to make sure that this is a model case and that the community is fully informed about what will happen to them. They need to understand that the council is still operating but instead of all the councillors turning up for work only one person will turn up for work. That is basically what it means. The council will still progress.

I look forward to a new council being elected at the next election. I do not know whether that will happen in March or how the SSS process will impact on that, but let us hope we get a new and fresh council in there as soon as possible after the election. As I mentioned before, this is a strong message to all councils. There are some messes out there that need to be resolved, and this is a damn good lesson for councils. They need to understand that they have a responsibility to their community and they can get themselves sacked.

The Johnstone shire suffered such tragedy after Cyclone Larry, and the council and Neil Clarke did great work in the aftermath of that. Obviously, they rallied around and did the job when the cyclone hit and with the recovery. I am sure there is still work to be done in relation to fixing some buildings, the clean-up and so forth; it is an ongoing job that will probably never end. It is disappointing that they got through the initial aftermath of the cyclone but now they have faced this.

In saying that, I do not doubt that the seed for this problem started well before that and the cyclone was just an event that happened in the middle of that turmoil within council. In many instances, turmoil of this type in a council bubbles along under the surface for a while and the community probably hears bits and pieces of it, but it is only later when it gets really serious that it gets to ministerial level. There may have been problems for a long time, but let us hope this is a good lesson for everybody.

On 2 August 2006, the show cause notice was given, so council had a considerable time to show that it was capable of running the council properly. Obviously, that has not occurred. It is a great disappointment to me that the minister had to take this action. However, let us hope that the community will be well served by Mr Webb and that the affairs of council will soon be back in the hands of the locals again.

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (2.52 pm): I too would like to say a few words on this matter. I concur with the member for Warrego; I am very disappointed to hear about this decision, though I suppose I am not entirely surprised. I have got to know most of the members of the council over the last six years, and on an individual basis they are all lovely people. It is just a shame that when they got into council they could not do council business and work out their differences in some way. They battled through the difficult times after Cyclone Larry, and there have been difficult times getting all those people back on track, but it has happened. I think they should be congratulated for that side of things, anyway.

The Beattie government and the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport have given the council every opportunity to rectify the situation. They were given a long time to show that they can work together and work out their differences, but it just has not happened. This is a lesson for all councils that they need to put their personalities aside for the good of their own constituents and the good of their own area. I also think this proves that four-year terms can be a long time if you have a bad government. Now that Mr Webb has been appointed, he will take control and manage the council in the interim. I am sure he will do a good job and take it forward.

Like parliamentarians, councillors are voted in by the people and the people would like them to finish their term. Then, at the end of the term, if the people do not like them, they would like to be the ones who vote them out. This case is an extreme example. They were given every opportunity and I think the minister has made the right decision.

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (2.55 pm): As members probably know, I represent some of the Johnstone shire in this place. There is no doubt that there has been a considerable amount of concern regarding the activity of the Johnstone Shire Council over the last few years, culminating in the former minister for local government issuing a show cause notice before an injunction was sought by two councillors late last year. That injunction was dismissed recently, and subsequently today the council has been dismissed.

Firstly, I would like the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport to know that I feel strongly that the government should undertake an extensive education program about how this affects the governance of the shire of Johnstone. He and all members of this place would know what the effects of this decision will be, but I think in general the community will have less of an understanding about the consequences of this decision. So my suggestion to the minister is that the government may like to undertake some sort of education program about what this decision means.

I believe that the minister and the government should be very conscious of the fact that this community struggled in 2006 and continues to struggle following the devastation caused to that area by Cyclone Larry. While I recognise that the minister has taken this decision in accordance with what he

believes is the correct course of action, given that this is his decision, it is now incumbent upon him to ensure that the administrator of the council undertakes that role with a degree of sensitivity and takes into consideration the serious challenges that that community has faced in recent times.

There is no doubt that there has been a significant volume of people in the Johnstone shire who have expressed their dissatisfaction with the Johnstone Shire Council, which has now been dismissed. It is important that the minister ensures that the administrator acts in good faith throughout the time he is in that position. Certainly, critical issues pertaining to the government's size, shape and sustainability initiative are currently being discussed in Queensland and in the Johnstone Shire Council, so it will be vitally important that the administrator establishes very strong links with the community that are representative and reflect the attitudes of the community with regards to that process.

The minister has made a weighty decision and I trust that at all times in the future he and the administrator he has appointed will act in good faith. From the advice that I have received, I understand that Mr Webb is well qualified and experienced to fill this position. With those few comments on the record, I will be taking a keen interest in this process as it unfolds.

Mr DICKSON (Kawana—Lib) (2.57 pm): I would like to speak to the fact that Johnstone Shire Council has been placed into administration. Firstly, I would like to congratulate the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport, Andrew Fraser. The work he has done up to date that I have experienced has been totally outstanding. The message this will send to all local governments in Queensland is very clear: do the right thing by your local community, perform and act appropriately.

I was a part of the local government from 2000 to 2004 and then I was elected in 2004 up until I was elected to the state government, and I saw some very unusual things happen in local government. This is not an isolated case, and I believe the minister could look at many other councils throughout Queensland. There are a few that do not do the right thing by the community and they need to be weeded out or stood on to make sure they do the right thing by the people they represent. It is very easy to represent the people if councillors do the right thing but, when they do the wrong thing, the government in the past has not stood on these people. I think now is the time to do that. I again endorse what the minister has done.

I come from the Maroochy shire. Some very unusual things happened in that council from 2000 to 2004, and not just with the politicians. We read about it in the Queensland newspapers and it was talked about throughout the nation and throughout the world. We had a very unusual mayor at the time—a mayor whom I am sure a lot of people in this room are aware of.

In recent times, I brought a situation from Maroochy shire to the minister's attention. A car park had been brought online inappropriately, and the minister did the right thing on that occasion as well. I talk highly about this minister. He is doing a great job, and that is coming from the other side of politics. I endorse what he has done. If he can continue on this path, I will stand up and do this again in the future. I appreciate the time of the House.

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport) (2.59 pm), in reply: At the outset I recognise and thank all members of the House for their understanding and support for the course of action that has been found to be necessary in these circumstances. I do not think anyone takes a particular joy in being involved in a decision such as this. The reality for all of us who have stood for public office is that we are fundamentally at base democrats. We believe in the role of democracy in our communities. This reserve power that exists and has existed in the Local Government Act for quite some time is one that should never be exercised capriciously or enthusiastically by any stretch of the imagination. For all of us today this provides us with a set of circumstances that I do not think anyone takes any particular joy in. I am grateful for the recognition of support for the choice of Graham Webb as administrator. I am entirely confident that Mr Webb will live up to every expectation that we have of him and all the residents of Johnstone shire have.

Can I in particular acknowledge a couple of points made during the contributions of members. The issue about the nature and the point at which problems beset a council raised by the shadow minister is a relevant one. One of the main factors for Johnstone shire has been a struggle under difficult financial circumstances. As I said in my opening remarks, they are deep seated and well in place. There is no question that they were there before the current shire councillors arrived. For many councillors they arrive in that position and are faced with a set of circumstances such as that. Johnstone shire councillors were no different. But the key point here is that, faced with that set of circumstances, there has been a demonstrable lack of ability to try to overcome them. That is why we have arrived at this point today.

I pick up the point made by the member for Hinchinbrook. As minister I intend writing to all local residents in the next week or so to explain the situation. Hopefully that will be with local residents within that time frame. We have also set up a 1800 number for local residents if they have any questions about what has actually happened today. For the record that number is 1800249566.

We have also set up an email link—Johnstone@DLGPSR.qld.gov.au—for anyone who wishes to use email as well. I think it is important and indeed incumbent upon me, the government and the department of local government to make sure that we can in fact provide every support to the residents and indeed to the administrator, Mr Webb.

Can I acknowledge the support of every member of the House in proceeding down this difficult path that we have today. As I said when starting my reply, I do not think it is a circumstance that anyone takes a particular joy in.

Motion agreed to.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from p. 252.

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (3.03 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Vocational Education, Training and Employment and Other Acts Amendment Bill. This bill is aimed at addressing the looming shortage in tradespeople. The Beattie government proposes in this bill to change a number of factors surrounding vocational education and training. A centrepiece of those changes is that which is aimed at shortening the length of apprenticeships and traineeships. This is explained as allowing industry needs to be better met and to address the significant trade skills shortage.

While accepting the shortage is already serious and getting worse, I am not convinced that shortening apprenticeships is the right answer. I had many years of personal experience in the building industry which gave me a good understanding of the apprenticeship process. The apprenticeship system has been tried and tested over many decades and has been proven to work and work well.

What we need is not shorter apprenticeships but many more apprentices. The existing incentives are simply not making it attractive enough for small employers to take them on. That is not likely to change if the length of the apprenticeship is a little shorter. An unattractive deal is an unattractive deal, no matter if it is three years or four years.

I recognise the government's willingness to make changes to try to address this issue. But I believe they will not make enough difference to matter. We in the far north have just experienced firsthand, since Cyclone Larry and Cyclone Monica, the importance of good qualified tradesmen and the importance of being able to access them in a reasonable time frame, especially when one needs a roof over one's head or some all-important plumbing fixed. We all know how much damage water can do to a building if it is not fixed early.

Even now when this government has legislated that all homes must have fire alarms installed by 1 July 2007 I am advised that it is difficult to engage an electrician in less than three months. As with anything else, such as doctors, when there is a shortage the price goes up. It does not matter whether it is a product or a service.

Learning a trade, any trade, whether it be nursing, law, medicine, mechanics, carpentry, plumbing or whatever all takes time. Each has its own lingo and structure, so time is of the essence for an apprentice to learn and become proficient. The past has produced some very wonderful and clever tradesmen across-the-board who left school after grade 10. Certainly times have changed in some ways but not in others. I would rather see our youth, who are good with their hands and not university material, get an apprenticeship after grade 10 and become tradesmen by the time they are 20.

Tradesmen in small business have told me that they would rather put on a young person, train them how they want them and keep them for four years or more. However, the incentive threshold and other conditions have not changed in years. Small businesses have shown their dissatisfaction by not putting on apprentices in the numbers that they otherwise might. We do not want to import tradesmen, like doctors for example, for the sake of giving small business a little more incentive to train our own youth. In closing, I would like to recognise the good work being done at the TAFE facilities on the tablelands and the agricultural college at Mareeba.

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (3.06 pm): It is with pleasure that I rise to speak to the Vocational Education, Training and Employment and Other Acts Amendment Bill. I would like to recognise the teachers, the trainers and the principals who have gone back to work this year under fairly difficult circumstances. Right across the electorate and areas around the Mirani electorate there are issues in terms of the vocational training of our young people and our not-so-young people. The reality is that we are desperate for tradesmen right throughout the region and probably right throughout the state. There is a real need to maximise the availability of training in our region.

I totally agree with the bill. Unfortunately, it is probably a little too late to generate the maximum benefit in terms of young people in our communities doing training. Certainly there are good initiatives in this area. I have spoken in this House before about the Kickstart to Literacy Program run at Mirani State High School. We are putting young boys and some girls through a training program. They dismantle small motors and utilise computers to access manuals. This gives them a real insight into working with their hands but also being able to recognise whether they have the aptitude to work in an industry.

That program has been magnificently successful. We have school based apprenticeships and industry based apprenticeships that come out of the program as the students move through the program. The great part about that program—it was federally funded to start with—is the huge community support not only at the school but right throughout industry in the Mackay district. The program has something like 30 quite significant sponsors throughout the region. They range from the mining industry to small business to tool suppliers to trainers. They are working with the school to get those excellent results.

Late last year I joined with others to open a shed that they had built on the school grounds to facilitate the program. They were working in a skillion prior to the building of the shed. They were working in an open skillion with a dirt floor. They had a considerable amount of trouble locating the shed on the school grounds, getting approvals and finally getting the shed built. They had trouble getting the funding for it because it is outside the school curriculum.

The interesting part about it was that I and another person opened the shed with two grinders cutting through a steel band on the entrance to the shed. It was unique and quite colourful, even though we did not conform with the workplace health and safety standards as we should have. I have also spoken previously of the skills centre at Sarina State High School, and that is an evolving process. We have built quite a large shed—a 45-metre by 20-metre shed—which shortly will incorporate lathes, welders and all of the training equipment that is necessary to train our young people. That is in partnership with the TAFE college in Mackay which will provide trainers for the high school. The skills centre also involves agricultural training. As I said, this year is the first full year of the skills centre in Sarina, and I invite the minister in his travels to come and have a look at what we are doing there. It is magnificent.

One of the bigger issues with the school is that the two campuses are separated by a tram line and a rail line. For the students to access the skills centre, they have to walk down the street along the highway and back up to the skills centre. There is a shortcut that they could take down along the rail line, but unfortunately it was unfenced. My call to QR to look at putting fencing there a couple of months ago has borne fruit, and we expect to have a fence along the railway line within a couple of months so the students can take a very much shorter route to the skills centre and not have to walk the full length of the street. The skills centre in Sarina has also gained great support throughout the community. Indeed, this curriculum year the principal has had to turn away students from that curriculum because the school has had so many inquiries for students to go through the process. We look forward to great results in the coming year.

There is one issue that I want to raise quickly in the parliament, and that is the staffing of our schools. Like many other rural electorates, my electorate has many smaller schools—one-, two- or three-teacher schools. With the introduction of the prep year—and I am totally supportive of that—there has been an increased load on those schools in terms of not having full-time teacher aides for the prep year. Also, the addition of the prep class in one-, two- or three-teacher schools has impacted on the lower grades. In some cases the prep and grades 1, 2 and 3 classes are being looked after by one teacher. In a single-teacher school obviously the whole gambit of classes and prep are being looked after by one teacher.

This causes a number of issues, and I wrote a letter to the minister recently in terms of a school at the top end of the Pioneer Valley—the little Pinnacle State School—that has 51 students which leaves it two students short of a three-teacher school. It has had three teachers and has a good complement of teachers. One of the issues in terms of losing a teacher because it is two students short is that it will lose continuity of teaching in the area. There has been a real rapport amongst the teachers and trainers in the area to look after that situation. I was grateful that just this morning I was informed that instead of losing the teacher right now the process will be delayed for a fortnight or so because there is an indication that two families will move into the area and therefore the student numbers will rise to 53 or 54 and enable the school to retain its third teacher.

I have concerns about the hard and fast rule of a certain number of teachers to a certain number of students in these smaller schools in particular which are quite remote, in some cases, and in terms of having the facilities and the wherewithal to enable a single teacher to teach seven classes plus the prep year. I think it would be worthwhile the minister looking at those hard and fast rules. There should be some means by which that can be varied from time to time. In bigger schools it is not such a big hassle because they can overlap, but in one- or two-teacher schools it certainly becomes an issue, particularly for the community. The community of Pinnacle has spent the last couple of weeks looking for houses in

the valley. As most members would know, there has been torrential rain in that area and those people have had difficulty moving around. Regardless, they have secured housing for two families which will move in, I understand, fairly shortly. Hopefully that will come together.

In my short contribution today to this bill I want to pay my respects and give encouragement to the teachers and trainers in my electorate. I understand that a training campus is to be built in Mackay, and I welcome that with open arms. I just hope that it is not too late, because we are having real issues with climate change. There was a suggestion by Tim Flannery, the Australian of the Year, that coal exports are inappropriate. Let us hope that that is not the case, because that certainly will make a big difference to the requirement of trained personnel throughout my region. With those few words, I support the legislation.

Mrs SCOTT (Woodridge—ALP) (3.15 pm): The Vocational Education, Training and Employment and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2006 clearly demonstrates that the Smart State initiative has well and truly been adopted into our education system. The bill shows a responsiveness to the needs of industry which will have wide benefits into the future and address the serious skills shortages which are now very evident in our state. I want to express my admiration and confidence in the direction of our education system with our prep year now statewide, our emphasis on middle schooling, the education and training reforms, school based apprenticeships, greater interface with employers and industry, and more encouragement for young people to seek careers in vocational areas. So thank you to our present education minister, previous minister Anna Bligh and former employment and training minister Tom Barton.

Some two years ago I attended what was the Logan Institute of TAFE with the then minister, the Hon. Tom Barton, to launch what was a trial of a shortened apprenticeship course in metal trades for a number of mature aged men aged approximately 25 to 35. All had experienced various difficulties in their personal lives and were being assisted by workers from BoysTown. Mr John Perry, the National General Manager of Employment Access from BoysTown, ever-seeking innovative ways to re-engage with those who have somehow fallen through the cracks, had sought, along with Minister Tom Barton, Bill Kingston, the regional director of employment and Indigenous initiatives, and our TAFE college, to structure a course which would be more intensive and result in these men getting out on to the job in a much shorter period.

This course was highly successful and resulted in a number of them completing the course and gaining their qualification, with many of them being able to work as trades assistants. I want to commend BoysTown for its commitment to work with disengaged young people. With its contract for the mowing of the Roma Street Parkland, the fencing contract for the Department of Housing through Q-Build and other initiatives such as office furniture removal and furniture restoration to name but a few, it is able to engage young people in meaningful work and many of these then go on further to apprenticeships or traineeships.

Let me now return to this bill. I must say that this bill is a great example as to why education and training should remain flexible within the states where we can be responsive to the individual needs of industry and business and not allow the Commonwealth to dictate what we teach. If we look at the speciality colleges now being set up—one for wine industry in Stanthorpe, aviation at Hendra in proximity to the airport, Creative Industries at Kelvin Grove village and science at Toowong—these will take the best and brightest students within these fields and nurture their talents.

The closer relationship between employers, industry and our training and education facilities will greatly enhance the outcomes for our students and ensure that we are training people to fill the needs of employers. The centres of excellence and the skills formation strategies will ensure a skilled, sustainable workforce.

The Queensland Skills Plan, as a result of wide consultation, will allow greater flexibility and, with competency based training, allow people to complete their apprenticeships in a shorter period. With the huge growth in our state and so many employers throughout the state crying out for skilled tradespeople, these initiatives will go a long way to assist.

I believe that the future of our state will be well served through an education and training system that works closely with industry and business and responds to the needs expressed. We are truly seeing a transformation of our state—smart industries, smart business, smart research and development—and it all starts with smart education, smart training and smart students. I commend the bill to the House.

Hon. RJ WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Education and Training and Minister for the Arts) (3.20 pm), in reply: I would like to thank all honourable members for their contributions to this debate. In particular, I appreciate the support of the members of the opposition and their comments in relation to the various issues affecting vocational education and training in their electorates and some issues regarding schools. The interface between schools and vocational education through TAFE and other private vocational education and training providers is an important one on which we will continue to work through the many initiatives announced in our \$1 billion Queensland Skills Plan.

I will address briefly some of the issues raised by the opposition spokesperson, the member for Cunningham. He raised the legitimate concern that, with the focus on competency based training and the bonus being provided of early completion, there may be attempts in some quarters to short-circuit the level of training that one would expect an apprentice to complete before becoming a fully fledged tradesperson. I share the member's concern that we should not allow standards to drop simply because we have a skills shortage and we want to get people into the trades as quickly as possible.

There are a couple of comments that I want to make about that. Firstly, the streamlining of the completion process that we are undertaking will ensure that quality standards are maintained. So there will still be a very strong focus on standards. Secondly, it is clear that there are some trades that require longer terms of experience than others and the one size fits all that, I suppose, has been a legacy of the past is, in many cases, not rational. For example, to become a fully qualified carpenter or house builder—or a builder generally—would require more experience and more training than to be a plasterer. In my view, there is no sensible reason a plasterer should spend a full four years training. Similarly, in retail and hospitality there are areas where certain trades could be completed in a shorter time without any loss in the skills being provided.

At the moment, in those sorts of situations there is a disincentive for people to go into the trades, because they know that they can get the skills within two or three years, or thereabouts, and then have to continue to languish on very low wages—in effect, trainee wages—before they can become recognised and be paid at the proper rates. So I think it is a double-edged sword. I think there are real advantages in what we are doing, but there are some minor risks that we need to monitor.

The approach we are taking is consistent with the Council of Australian Government's national approach on apprenticeships, training and skills recognition. We will be doing a fair bit of work monitoring apprentices through our regional staff and field staff in the Department of Education, Training and the Arts so that they are properly informing not just apprentices but also the employers or the other sponsors, such as group training associations, on the standards that are expected. That education and monitoring process will also be facilitated through the Australian government apprenticeship centres, which will assist us in making sure that information is made available to the relevant parties on the competency standards that are required. As the member for Cunningham noted in the bill, we have put in place mechanisms to resolve any conflicts or disputes that arise out of the issue of the assessment of skills for any particular apprentice.

The member for Cunningham also mentioned an occasional circumstance where classes were cancelled and inconvenience was caused. That certainly raised my eyebrows, but I am informed that on rare occasions the numbers in a class fell so low that to continue to offer that course simply could not be justified. There is just no demand for it. We need to manage the transition for those people, such as the individual the member mentioned. I have asked my department to look at any circumstances in which courses close and to ensure that students who have substantially completed the course and who need to complete the remainder of the course in some way are given every possible assistance to link to either another TAFE or completing their course through open learning or some other distance learning process.

There is no doubt that the high targets that we have set ourselves in the Queensland Skills Plan puts greater pressure on the TAFE system. We are increasing the number and capacity of training providers, the quality of training providers and the teachers delivering apprenticeship training not only in TAFEs but also in the private system. Incidentally, in Queensland we have a much more collaborative and much more effective interaction between TAFE and private providers than has any other state in Australia. In all other states, they rarely talk to each other. It is in a bit of a mess. In Queensland, on the training front, both in terms of school based apprenticeships and traineeships and in the collaboration that occurs between the public and private training providers, we are light-years ahead of where the other states are at the moment.

We are subsidising workplace trainer and assessor training for tradespeople so that they can do more training on the job. We are reorganising TAFE, as I think I have mentioned publicly before, with combining TAFEs on the south side and on the north side of Brisbane, aggregating the TAFEs around the city and strengthening their capacity to deliver the 17,000 extra training places—apprenticeships—that we want to deliver by 2010 under the Queensland Skills Plan.

The establishment of the Trade and Technician Skills Institute is an \$81 million investment in the largest trade skills institute anywhere in Australia. The honourable member is welcome to take the opportunity for a visit hosted by my department out to Acacia Ridge on the south side of Brisbane. When the member sees it, it will blow his mind. It is a truly extraordinary facility. It is big.

Mr Copeland interjected.

Ms Struthers interjected.

Mrs Scott interjected.

Mr WELFORD: A number of members have indicated a similar interest. My parliamentary secretary might care to host a visit for any members of parliament who would like to go. Members might think that the new Gallery of Modern Art at South Bank is a pretty spectacular place. They should wait until they see that trade training facility at Acacia Ridge. It makes the gallery look like a shoebox.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr WELFORD: That was a bit unfair, really. The gallery is slightly better designed than a shoebox.

The *Report on government services*, which is the national report that provides state comparisons across all departments in every state of Australia, showed that 72 per cent of TAFE graduates in Queensland have achieved their main reason for training, that is, we have a higher success rate in TAFE graduates in Queensland moving into their chosen careers following TAFE than in any other state of Australia. I have already mentioned the process for resolving disputes. There are occasions when an employer and an employee are in dispute as to whether the apprentice has completed their required competency levels. We will make sure that we monitor that process to put a fair procedure in place.

I think they are the main issues. This is not a complex or lengthy bill, but it is a necessary part of the rollout of the Queensland Skills Plan—or the white paper, as the member for Cunningham mentioned. This Queensland Skills Plan keeps our state at the forefront of investment in skills development for the future economic prosperity and employment prospects of the people of Queensland.

As I say, we are fortunate to be already leading the nation in many respects. I do not say that rhetorically or flippantly. When I meet with ministers from other states I get an insight into how they are continuing to struggle to get from base 1. Already our Queensland Skills Plan, with its \$1 billion investment over the next four years, will further accelerate our achievements in Queensland on this front. We need it of course because our state is the state that has the greatest demand for skills, with the booming resources economy and the other aspects of Queensland that create the enormous demand for skills. But it is not just an immediate need; it is a long-term need that we need to focus on.

We need to strengthen our investment in education and skills. Despite all the dancing by the federal education minister around issues like whether we pay teachers more or whether principals can hire and fire—and these issues are at the margin when it comes to the long-term future of this country—the federal government is frankly blind to the levels of investment that are necessary if we are going to stay ahead of the pack in terms of international economic competitiveness. But our state is showing the way. I think we can hold our heads up and be proud to continue to boast that we are, indeed, the Smart State. I thank members for their contributions.

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

Motion agreed to.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 20, 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.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. RJ WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (3.32 pm): I move—

That government business orders of the day Nos 2 to 19 be postponed.

Motion agreed to.

REVOCATION OF STATE FOREST AREA

Hon. LH NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism) (3.33 pm): I move—

- (1) That this House requests the Governor in Council to revoke by regulation the setting apart and declaration as State Forest under the Forestry Act 1959 of those areas as set out in the Proposal tabled by me in the House today on 28 November 2006; viz—

Description of area to be revoked

Beerburrum East Forest (SF611)	Area described as Lot 1 on SP185011 and containing 21.17 State hectares as illustrated on the attached sketch marked "B".
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- (2) That Mr Speaker and the Clerk of the Parliament forward a copy of this resolution to the Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism for submission to the Governor in Council.

I support the revocation of land from the forest estate for alternative uses as it can be clearly demonstrated that the proposed usage is in the broader public interest and that there is no practical alternative to the proposal. Careful consideration has been given to this proposal and detailed consultation has occurred with affected state and local government agencies and stakeholders. Native title issues have also been considered in relation to this proposal and it has been determined that the action may proceed. I will now outline the background for the proposal.

This proposal involves the excision of about 21.7 hectares from Beerburrum East State Forest, located to the south of the township of Beerburrum. The proposed revocation is in support of the Caboolture to Landsborough rail upgrade. This critical upgrade is a key component of the Queensland government's South East Queensland Regional Plan released in 2005. The plan identified the need for a study into improved passenger services, such as Citytrain and the tilt train, and rail freight operations on the rail network along the main north coast line.

The Integrated Regional Transport Plan for south-east Queensland recommended that options be investigated to increase the speed, comfort, safety, service frequency and reliability of rail services. The ability to provide additional services on the existing line is limited by restricted operating speeds and long sections of single track. Congestion is also being experienced due to competing passenger and freight service demands.

The area required to be revoked from the state forest is essential for the construction of the first stage, the Caboolture to Beerburrum section. The parcel of land is part of lot 1 on SP185011. The area to be revoked largely comprises exotic pine plantation. Where the corridor passes over Beerburrum Creek, the construction of the bridge will be done in a way to ensure potential adverse impact to the natural environment of the area is kept to a minimum. Overall, the rail corridor through this area is considered to have minimal environmental impact.

Forestry Plantations Queensland is supportive of the proposal and arrangements with the Department of Transport will ensure options for suitable areas within the region can be found to provide alternative areas for forestry production. The forest resource will be salvage harvested before construction occurs.

It is expected that the population of the Sunshine Coast will increase from the current 275,000 to 424,000 people by 2026. In transport terms, that is an estimated increase of about half a million trips a day. Scheduled for completion in 2012, the new rail corridor between Caboolture and Landsborough will assist in providing the Sunshine Coast with a safer, faster and more efficient rail service.

Indigenous issues have been considered and a cultural heritage management plan pursuant to the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003 has been developed and approved for this section of the corridor. A native title assessment has been undertaken for the area and it has been determined that native title has been extinguished.

There has been extensive consultation with the local community regarding the proposed Caboolture to Landsborough rail upgrade. Regular newsletters have been sent to those within the area of interest.

In summary, this action is the most appropriate way to provide the necessary corridor for this essential community infrastructure. This action provides for the timely commencement of works for stage 1 of the rail upgrade between Caboolture and Beerburrum. Additionally, there are minimal conservation implications as the area to be revoked is largely exotic pine plantation. The upgrade of the rail service between Landsborough will go a long way towards addressing commuter demand within the growth area of south-east Queensland, including the Sunshine Coast and hinterland.

I encourage members to join with me in supporting the motion before the House, namely to revoke by regulation that part of the Beerburrum State Forest specified in this proposal.

Ms MALE (Glass House—ALP) (3.40 pm): I rise this afternoon to support the revocation of land from the forest estate to enable the route for the Caboolture to Landsborough rail duplication and upgrade to proceed. This project has been through various stages of professional study with a variety of routes being proposed and presented to the local residents during community consultation.

The final route that has been agreed upon provides for a much straighter alignment which allows for increased speed, providing an eight-minute benefit to commuters along this length. Eight minutes saved per trip equates to a travel saving of over an hour per week. Over the course of a working year, a local resident can save 60 hours of travel time. This is 60 hours that they can spend with their families, playing sport or doing something else that they prefer rather than sitting in a train. The project and the revocation from part of Beerburrum State Forest are clearly in the public interest, and there is no practical alternative to the proposal.

The Sunshine Coast and its hinterland is a place where more people are choosing to live. This is to be expected as it is indeed a beautiful part of Queensland. The area has so much to offer people of all ages. I am not saying that just because that was where I grew up and where I now have the privilege to represent. As a consequence of the area's popularity, a strain is placed on the north coast public transport services and infrastructure.

It has been determined that the majority of the desired levels of service cannot be met with the existing rail infrastructure. Hence, an upgrade of the Caboolture to Landsborough section of the main north coast rail line is needed. As I have said, the upgrade will improve the travel time of the Landsborough service, but other improvements for passenger and freight rail services include increased services, more frequent services, increased seating capacity, freight capacity and reliability. The duplication of the line will also eliminate the lay-by waiting which rail commuters often face as they have to allow freight trains to pass. That will be another significant time saving.

I am also looking forward to the elimination of open level crossings at Barrs Road and in the Beerwah town centre. This will provide a safer road environment for local residents and also help to eliminate the congestion that occurs because of train movements through the crossing.

One of the other advantages of an improved public transport system is the incentive it provides to local residents to leave their cars at home and hop on a fast, efficient, reliable service. We all need to look at changing our commuting habits where possible to provide environmental, economic and social benefits to local communities. I try to walk to work wherever possible and catch the train to Brisbane for meetings instead of driving. I always encourage others to do so.

The upgrade will assist in achieving the Integrated Regional Transport Plan public transport mode share targets and will support the objectives of the Regional Framework for Growth Management by promoting the growth of Caboolture as a principal activity centre and Beerwah as a major activity centre under the South East Queensland Regional Plan.

This is a good example of the government being able to deliver beneficial outcomes for the community. With this in mind, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the local communities of Caboolture and Glass House, as well as the surrounding areas, for their feedback and patience during the Caboolture to Landsborough rail study.

This decision is part of the Queensland government's long-term plan to meet the future needs of the Sunshine Coast as outlined in the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program 2006-2026.

I strongly support the revocation by regulation of that part of the Beerburrum State Forest specified in this proposal as it is clearly going to deliver big gains for my community and for the Sunshine Coast and hinterland. It is with great pleasure that I rise this afternoon to second the motion that the minister for environment has put.

Mrs MENKENS (Burdekin—NPA) (3.42 pm): I rise to speak in support of the motion for the revocation of 21.17 hectares of Beerburrum State Forest described as Lot 1 on SP185011, just south of the town of Beerburrum, by the Department of Transport for the Caboolture to Landsborough rail upgrade.

The rail upgrade and associated works are part of the larger South East Queensland Integrated Regional Transport Plan scheduled for completion by 2014. With the continued population growth in this part of the state it is prudent that the planned development of our infrastructure continue if this state's future is not to be further jeopardised by this government's demonstrated lack of strategic planning initiatives.

The area being excised from the Beerburrum East State Forest, SF611, is required for the first stage of the Caboolture to Beerburrum section of the rail line and is part of the earliest corridor works that are integral to the construction program. Land resumption for the project has commenced by the department of transport and is due to be finished by February 2007. Construction is due to start on the \$262.4 million 14-kilometre rail upgrade between Caboolture to Beerburrum early in 2007 and is due for completion by mid-2009.

Demand for services on this section of the railway is predicted to increase due to population increases on the Sunshine Coast and hinterland, increases in tourism related travel and growing demand for rail freight. For infrastructure to expand to cater for growth, there will obviously be subsequent impacts on the local environment and it is important that these impacts be appreciated and managed to achieve the best outcomes.

Expansion of essential facilities and the continued conservation of our environment are not mutually exclusive, as I am sure the minister agrees. While we do necessarily have to accept the associated impacts, we do not have to accept a lessening of environmental values as a result. Properly managed, such projects can proceed with due regard for the need for increased capacity in our transport network and the preservation and conservation of our native flora and fauna.

In fact, the Beerburrum to Landsborough Corridor report does identify several fauna species that are present in the area. According to the report, no plant species listed as threatened under the Nature Conservation Act or Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 have been identified within the proposed rail upgrade during the site surveys.

However, of the fauna species observed within the area, five are recognised as species of special conservation significance under Commonwealth and/or state government legislation. Three are listed as migratory species under the EPBC act and they are the rainbow bee-eater, the black-faced monarch and the spectacled monarch, while two are listed under the Nature Conservation Act.

Three species listed under the Nature Conservation Act, the grey goshawk, the koala and the glossy black cockatoo, and one under the EPBC act, the grey-headed flying-fox, are considered likely to occur due to the presence of suitable habitat and local records. Four priority species are considered possible occurrences.

Bearing in mind the sensitivity of threatened and endangered species, I would be interested to hear from the minister what effects are expected from not only the construction and commissioning of the new rail line, but also the effects of the resultant increased traffic on the line. Similarly, could the minister inform us of the procedures that will be used to monitor the effects of the project on the future viability of the affected species and their habitat and what, if any, contingency plans have been considered if it is found that there has been undue stress placed on either the different species or their habitats.

Fauna aside, the Beerburrum East State Forest is also the largest contiguous area of remnant vegetation to be impacted by the planned upgrade. The report states that it is expected that these impacts will create new edges along the alignment. Edge effects generally include weed invasion, changes to species composition and increased exposure to fire. Rehabilitation measures will need to be implemented to reduce edge effects of rail construction particularly in remnant vegetation and all watercourses.

Can the minister expand on just what remediation measures will be implemented, who will be responsible for them, who will monitor them and their expected duration? Is it expected that these measures will be a once-off event or, given the nature and tenacity of some of the hardier and more invasive weeds, ongoing for the foreseeable future?

We are all aware of the massive problems caused by the spread of weeds and pests and their propensity to compete with and outgrow native flora, threatened or not. A further problem could be the introduction of weeds not as yet present in the area brought in by vehicles and machinery during the construction phase. The health of our watercourses and the deleterious effects major earthworks can have on them is an ever-present worry. I would be interested in hearing what water quality monitoring will be undertaken during and immediately after completion of the upgrade until all new earthworks have been stabilised. I note that the report states that impacts on riparian vegetation is expected to be minor provided water quality and weed controls are implemented during and post construction.

I am satisfied that the upgrade itself will provide for the increased rail usage expected for the line in the future and, subject to the answers to the previous queries, that all the necessary planning, consultation and monitoring phases are in place and will be sufficient to minimise as much as possible any negative impacts on the immediate environment.

Hon. LH NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism) (3.48 pm), in reply: I thank the member for Glass House and the member for Burdekin for their input into this motion and for their support. We only ever revoke when there is no alternative. In this case the local community is the clear winner.

Rather than me wasting time here this afternoon in relation to the issues that the member for Burdekin has raised, I suggest that she look at the environmental impact study. Many of the species she mentions are not in pine forests anyway. The EIS will give the member the details that she requires and when it comes time for construction to occur I would be happy to speak with her then.

Motion agreed to.

STATE PENALTIES ENFORCEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 31 October 2006 (see p. 273).

Mr NICHOLLS (Clayfield—Lib) (3.49 pm): The State Penalties Enforcement and Other Legislation Amendment Bill amends a number of acts, including the State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999, the Bail Act 1980, the Guardianship and Administration Act 2000, the Justices Act 1886, the Land and Resources Tribunal Act 1999 and the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992. The State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999 established the State Penalties Enforcement Registry, commonly known as SPER. SPER was introduced in November 2000 to collect unpaid fines, with the moneys as required by the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 to be used for road safety education and awareness programs, road accident injury rehabilitation programs and road funding to improve the safety of those sections of state controlled roads where accidents happen most frequently.

There have been a number of questions on notice asked of various Attorneys in relation to SPER. I am advised that, as at April 2005, about \$200 million had been collected. Mr Attorney, I ask if you could update the House with the current figure during the debate today.

In the 2005-06 year, the actual number of fines finalised was 380,000. The estimated number for 2006-07 is 400,000. However, in the 2005-06 year, the actual clearance rate was only 70 per cent, and I understand that figure remains the same for the 2006-07 year. The next question I have for the Attorney is this: why is the clearance rate so low and how is SPER going to be able to collect the anticipated monetary increase that must result if this bill passes into legislation? I note the Acting Attorney-General's second reading speech stated—

SPER collects and enforces most court ordered fines, infringement notice penalties and fees, compensation and restitution and amounts forfeited under undertakings and recognisances.

The bill's stated intention is to provide a method of providing debtors with greater options to meet their obligations. Before addressing that point in particular, I would like to also ask the Attorney a question in respect of court orders and payments within time. Traditionally, a court orders a period of time within which payment can be made subsequent to which the debt is then registered with SPER for further action. In the introduction, the Acting Attorney-General referred to a time to pay of three months. I note that under the terms of this bill a proper officer of the court may give SPER particulars of any unpaid amount at any time after the court order is made and may also order the proper officer to register particulars of the fine or penalty with SPER. When we come to the consideration in detail, I will be asking some questions about that process to seek some clarification.

I also note the effect of clause 10, which amends section 35(2)(a). Attorney, can you confirm during the debate whether this means that registration of a debt with SPER can occur before the expiry of the time to pay, as is implied in your speech? If that is the case, can you confirm that the SPER registration fee is not included in the amount recovered? I believe that to be the impact of section 35(2)(a). That certainly appears to be the case from reading the second reading speech, and I ask for that to be confirmed again. If it is the case, is the registration fee only included at the end of the time given by the court when ordering the fine be paid? An example would be if a court imposes a fine of \$100 and it increases to \$146.50—which would be an increase of almost one half again of the initial fine. That would otherwise be the case if it was a SPER registered fine after the time to pay had expired. If the Attorney could confirm that, we would be grateful.

One of the big changes brought about by the bill is contained in clause 9, which amends section 34 of the act. It lists those penalties which will fall under SPER and increases the range of fines and other moneys that will be able to be collected under the SPER regime. The Acting Attorney-General's second reading speech states—

Under the current law, the SPER Registrar is able to make a good behaviour order only after the debtor has provided a report from a doctor to confirm that the debtor is not suitable to perform community service, cannot pay or continue to pay the fine and it is inappropriate for payment to be enforced by the issuing of an arrest and imprisonment warrant by the SPER registrar.

This deals with the capacity of vulnerable people to comply with orders of the court. The coalition wholeheartedly supports the intent of this. However, we would like to make some comments on the good behaviour orders. The strict nature of those requirements makes good behaviour orders a rarity, and the bill moves to provide assistance to disadvantaged vulnerable debtors such as the homeless, mentally ill and those who have an impaired decision-making ability to handle their debts.

Clause 26 of the bill replaces the existing section 118 of the act and in the proposed subclauses (1) to (10) presents a fresh regime under which a good behaviour order can be made. It is worthwhile noting the language used in the new section 118. It states that the registrar is required to be satisfied that the enforcement debtor is 'not suitable for performing community service under a fine option order' and that 'the enforcement debtor cannot pay or continue to pay the unpaid amount' and that it is 'inappropriate to enforce payment' by the issuing of an arrest and imprisonment warrant.

In particular, the new subsection (2) states that the registrar may have regard to 'any relevant advice including expert advice' the registrar considers appropriate. Nowhere in the legislation is there a guiding definition of the terms of what constitutes relevant advice or expert advice. It appears that it is up to the registrar to make a subjective assessment of what that advice might be in each individual case. It therefore rests with the registrar to turn to a person or persons they deem fit to provide them with the assistance to make a decision about whether to make a good behaviour order.

However, the registrar then has to make the determination to issue a good behaviour order but only with the consent of the enforcement debtor—that is the person against whom the order is made. There was particular reference in the second reading speech to people who are homeless, mentally ill and with impaired decision-making ability involved in the legal process. It is very difficult to believe that this system will assist those who are homeless, mentally ill or have an impaired decision-making ability to any great degree over the current provisions of the legislation.

The coalition believes that, as this segment of society has been singled out, it is important to look at how they interact with the legal system, particularly in light of these orders. Implicit in the second reading speech is the belief that those who are homeless, mentally ill or with an impaired decision-making ability actively engage in the legal process, not just once—that is, when they are dealt with and fined for the offence—but that they re-engage in the process to obtain a good behaviour order. The coalition would submit that this is sometimes a highly unlikely outcome.

One has to wonder how realistic such a statement is. In July 2005 the Law and Justice Foundation in New South Wales published an article titled 'No home, no justice: The legal needs of homeless people in New South Wales'. Whilst the publication deals with New South Wales, there is no basis for doubting that the comments would be applicable in Queensland.

The document describes homelessness as being of three types (1) primary homelessness, which is people living without conventional accommodation, such as on the streets, in parks and bus shelters and so on; (2) secondary homelessness, which incorporates those who move from one temporary shelter to another; and (3), as one would expect, tertiary homelessness, which includes those who live in boarding houses on a medium- to long-term basis.

Under the provisions of paragraph XX of the executive summary, headed 'Barriers to accessing legal assistance', the authors state—

On a day to day basis, homeless people have many immediate needs; finding accommodation, getting food or money, caring for families. These needs tend to take precedence over their legal issues. In addition, legal issues can remain unaddressed because people have limited resources, feelings of despair or hopelessness, mental health or addiction issues, poor literacy or minimal education and a fear of disclosing this, a lack of knowledge of legal options, and a feeling that the law would never work in their interests. Services report that when homeless people finally do contact their legal service (if at all), the issue has already reached crisis point; the eviction is imminent; their benefits have been cut off; the court case is tomorrow.

Attorney, I am sure you have seen and heard of those sorts of examples. They continue—

In some cases it may be too late to resolve the issue (e.g. the limitation period may have expired) or the issue has become more complex and difficult to address. The multiple, urgent and interrelated legal problems of homeless people, together with the barriers they face in addressing these issues, have significant implications for the nature and legal service delivery that is appropriate for homeless people in New South Wales.

And so concludes that section of the report.

Again, though the concluding comments relate to New South Wales, I feel there is no doubt that the situation and circumstances they describe would equally apply in Queensland. At paragraph 25(xxv) of the executive summary headed 'Participation in the legal system' the authors list a number of barriers and reasons that homeless people find for not making it to court and achieving the best possible outcome. These include a fear and lack of confidence in the legal system. People lack confidence that the legal system can deliver favourable outcomes for people in their situations. Secondly, there is a lack of awareness of their legal rights, their options for legal redress and which legal process to follow. This extends to people not being aware of the right or process to appeal the decisions made by government departments such as Centrelink and the Department of Housing. This can be exacerbated for people with a mental illness or other cognitive impairment. Thirdly, there may be no stable address or contact details at which to receive notification of court dates. This is a particular issue in relation to criminal matters. Not having a single address can also reduce the prospect of a person being granted bail.

There is the complexity of legal processes which can be multitiered, involve several agencies and be lengthy—for example, the fine enforcement system and social security review process. Such processes are difficult for homeless people to negotiate and see through to their conclusion. The formality of legal proceedings which homeless people report finding intimidating is another barrier. A further barrier is the reliance in the legal process on complex written documents and applications. This is particularly problematic for the homeless population which includes people with limited education, poor literacy and comprehension. The cost and limited availability of legal representation for homeless people who have few financial resources is also a barrier.

There is no reason to doubt that a homeless person facing the procedure of having to obtain a good behaviour order would equally find the process daunting and are more likely to disengage from it and perhaps more likely to find it a difficult process to engage in in the first place.

At page 230 of the report under the heading 'Barriers to participation in the legal process' the author states—

Homeless people may encounter significant barriers in participating in the legal system. From data collected for the current study, these barriers tend to fall into two groups; individual barriers (mental illness and other cognitive impairment; lack of awareness, lack of confidence in and fear of legal system, low literacy, poor understanding of the process) and systematic barriers (cost; rural and regional issues; length and complexity; formality; lack of legal representation, arising from the nature of legal system which particularly disadvantages homeless people. For the purposes of this section, participation includes initiating and getting to legal process (e.g. lodging an appeal, getting to Court) and being involved in the process (e.g. during the Court hearing or Tribunal process).

The authors note at page 235—

... many homeless people (particularly street based homeless people) have mental health and drug and alcohol issues. This can impact on the person's capacity to engage in legal processes, particularly when they are complex and lengthy.

Mental illness and other cognitive impairment including memory loss and drug and alcohol use are also identified by stakeholders in this study as a significant barrier to attending Court or a Tribunal. These disabilities can lead to people having difficulties organising their lives and thus remembering and making necessary arrangements for their Court dates.

At page 240 the reports states—

The relatively low level of literacy, education among homeless people can act as a barrier and as a significant barrier to this group participating in a system that rests heavily on the written word. In addition, people tend not to disclose difficulties they face in reading or understanding written material that can inhibit recognition of their literacy problems.

Just embarrassment, I suspect. It continues—

The consultations also indicated that some clients had difficulty understanding legal information and advice given orally; it was not just an issue of literacy but of comprehension.

Let me return to the proposed new section 118. Questions must be asked as to how the registrar determines a person is not suitable to perform community service under a compliance option order. These include, firstly, what documentation is required, where does it come from, and, similarly, how is the registrar to be informed that a debtor cannot pay or continue to pay the fine? Secondly, what documentation is required to support that and where does it come from? Thirdly, what expert advice or relevant advice is to be obtained in relation to the individual debtor and how is that information to be gathered? Are medical records required and, if so, how are they obtained? The bill has some gaps, and I would ask the Attorney to explain how these questions are envisaged to be resolved on a practical level for people who are vulnerable.

Given that people who are homeless may suffer a mental illness or in some manner have an impaired decision-making ability we think it is ridiculous to claim that this system is going to provide them with a better recourse. People in that position simply do not deal with the legal processes—that is, first of all appearing in court and, secondly, dealing with the complicated process to resolve a debt that they have been deemed to owe.

It is clearly about time we looked at the intervention at the start of the process not the end. To that end, I note that in June 2005 the disability law project conducted by the Advocacy Support Centre in Toowoomba issued an interim report. The executive summary stated—

The key focus of this report is to provide preliminary findings of the Disability Law Project with respect to the efficiencies and deficiencies of the Queensland Criminal Justice System, particularly the legal face of that system in its treatment of people who suffer from either intellectual disability and/or mental illness.

The thrust of the project was to place it at the juncture between the alleged offence and the judicial outcome. The concept behind the project was to highlight that there are many people appearing in the judicial process who should not be there because they are suffering from a mental illness or some other form of disability.

The project ran over a three-month period for 36 clients who were charged with a range of offences including stealing, drug related assault, public nuisance, wilful damage, driving under the influence, breach of probation and breach of domestic violence orders. Of the 36 clients, 23 were adjourned to investigate the possible impact of their disability on the offending behaviour and to determine whether or not the person may be afforded a defence, and four matters were subject to involuntary treatment orders and, by virtue of the Mental Health Act, were directed to the Attorney-General.

Of the 23 matters adjourned it was believed that 11 may have a defence and were referred to a forensic psychiatrist for the purpose of medical/psychiatric assessment. The conclusion of the report has this paragraph—

In its infancy of only three months it has strongly signified a criminal justice system that is presently ill afforded in not only ensuring a quality service to disabled offenders but actually assists in the further marginalisation of this client group. This marginalisation not only occurs as a result of the deficiencies within the duty lawyer scheme, but also in a system that due to the lack of conducive penalties under the Penalties and Sentences Act, essentially fast tracks disabled clients to an often legally untenable position of the incarceration.

It is simply inconceivable that this bill is going to be of any benefit to people, as defined by the acting shadow Attorney-General. The coalition calls on the Attorney to be able to provide some documentary evidence to establish the basis for that statement in his second reading speech. Other matters in the bill that we will be seeking some answers on relate to clause 2 of the bill, where it sets the

commencement date for parts 2, 3, 5 and 7 as date to be fixed by proclamation. We will be asking the Attorney to advise when he anticipates the system will be in place and when the proclamation to bring those clauses into effect will be issued.

In clause 32 of the bill the registrar has the capacity to write off an unpaid fine or other amount in certain circumstances, including under guidelines issued by the minister. We will be dealing with this in the consideration in detail stage. At that time we will be asking the minister to explain the parameters of those guidelines without going into the detail. We would also be interested to know whether the Attorney has any contemplation of people being able to appeal a determination by the registrar.

I will make a general comment in relation to the SPER legislation. This is reflected in an article by Michelle Fleming in the *Sunshine Coast Daily* of 30 December 2006—just over a month ago—under the heading 'Do crime don't pay the fine'. Similar problems were highlighted by Toby Walker in another article. In the article the police are quoted as questioning the common use of fines to punish criminals because offenders repeatedly break the law whilst amassing thousands of dollars in debt. The paper highlighted the case of a woman who fronted Caboolture Magistrates Court with \$28,000 in unpaid fines. She had 13 pages of criminal history, eight pages of traffic history and five pages of other history and over six years had accumulated \$28,000 worth of debts on SPER yet had never been to prison. The article quotes the officer as saying that they can pay off the fine for as little as \$10 a week but can also receive another fine the next time they appear in court. The police source claims that SPER is like a credit card—the offenders do not pay the fines but put them straight on the SPER account.

The article goes on to report an initiative of the Caboolture Magistrates Court taken to change the system by accessing the registered details of offenders before sentencing is considered. This results in the court considering whether a further fine is appropriate or if an offender's failure to pay previous fines should result in a community service sentence. It is the coalition's contention that more fines on top of existing debts should not be allowed to accumulate on an unchecked basis. Offenders who appear before the courts on a regular basis should be made to acknowledge their behaviour by performing community service. We do not want to see SPER continue to be used as a credit card for those people who refuse to pay their bills. SPER has the potential to be used as a pure collection agency and potentially with little regard to the public. Its use must be guarded and strictly watched to ensure that it does not fall into that trap and is not used by the government that way.

I now want to turn to the amendments proposed to the Guardianship and Administration Act as contained in part 4 of the bill—that is, clauses 40 to 42. In essence, sections 200 and 214 of the Guardianship and Administration Act are to be amended by part 4. Under the current regime, the positions of Adult Guardian and Public Advocate must be advertised for a qualified person to apply and a selection process to be implemented, and the Governor in Council must appoint those successful applicants. Under the proposal that we are considering today and contained within this bill, that process is done away with when people are to be reappointed.

Both the Adult Guardian and the Public Advocate are appointed for terms not longer than five years. In relation to the Adult Guardian, I have obtained from the library a copy of the job description for an application for that position that closed on 9 January 2006. It states—

The Adult Guardian is an independent statutory officer appointed by Governor in Council to protect the rights of people with a decision making disability, promote their rights, interests and dignity and to counter exploitation, abuse and neglect.

The document goes into significant detail as to that officer's duties and it is clearly one of considerable importance to the community. At the same time I obtained a copy of a job description for the Public Advocate with a closing date of 12 September 2005 which in part states—

The Public Advocate conducts systemic advocacy on behalf of adult Queenslanders who have a decision making disability. The Public Advocate's role is to monitor all the systems and services in place for people with impaired decision making capacity and to recommend changes to laws, rules, regulations, policies and practices for the benefit of those adults.

Again, the duties as contained within the document are important and extensive. I want to table copies of both of those documents today.

Tabled paper: Department of Justice and Attorney-General Position Description, dated 6 September 2005, for Public Advocate

Tabled paper: Department of Justice and Attorney-General Position Description, dated 7 December 2005, for Adult Guardian

The only reason being given for these positions not being advertised as is proposed by the legislation is that that brings them into line with the position of the president and members of the tribunal—the Guardianship and Administration Tribunal—who are reappointed without their positions being advertised. It is the coalition's view that that is not a sufficient reason why these important officers' positions should not be advertised. The real concern is that these positions, which are fundamental to many people here in this state, will simply be a rubber stamp by this government to protect its own interests. The opposition will not be supporting this part of the amendments. In saying that, I do want to make it very clear that my comments are not meant to be a reflection of the current holders of those positions.

In general, we support the changes. We have outlined questions of the Attorney that we have in relation to the operation of parts of the bill, particularly in relation to SPER. We have concerns about the operation of SPER that it not be used as a simple revenue-raising measure. We also have concerns that

the efficacy of the good behaviour orders is somewhat doubtful given the capacity of those vulnerable people to whom that order is meant to benefit to engage in the legal system, and we have concerns in relation to the removal of the requirement for advertising and the public scrutiny that would come from advertising in the bill.

Mr LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (4.13 pm): I support the State Penalties Enforcement and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Fines and monetary penalties issued in Queensland—for instance, by courts, police and so on—are collected or attempted to be collected by the State Penalties Enforcement Registry, known by the acronym SPER, which began operating in the year 2000. Effectively, SPER centralised collection of fines and penalties which was previously carried out by courts and individual agencies. This of course led to massive duplication and waste of resources. SPER collects and enforces most court ordered fines—which would normally be a Magistrates Court type fine—infraction notices, penalties and fees, compensation and restitution, and amounts forfeited under undertakings and recognisances.

This bill improves and streamlines the operation of the SPER fine collection system. It amends the State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999, the Bail Act 1980, the Justices Act 1886 and the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992. It will give debtors a variety of payment options and they will be available much earlier than is usually the case. As with any business, it is well known that the sooner contact is made with a debtor the more likely it is that the debt will be recovered. At the moment when a court imposes a fine or penalty, a period of time is given to pay—usually three months. Also, an order is usually made that in the event of default a period of imprisonment is imposed. Therefore, if the fine is unpaid the court has a choice to issue a warrant for the arrest and imprisonment of the debtor or give details of the debt to SPER for collection.

Some 40 per cent of debtors pay the fines and 60 per cent are registered with SPER for collection and enforcement. Ninety per cent of SPER debtors pay by methods not available to the courts—for instance, Centrelink debits—but they cannot be used during the time-to-pay period. As a result, if there is three months given to pay the fine, those alternative methods of payment are not available. These amendments will allow the court to notify SPER of the amount of the fine or the penalty at any time after the court order is made so the alternative methods of payment will be immediately available to the debtor. This will improve the effectiveness of the collection of those amounts through the use of SPER's largely automated fine collection system. There will be a variety of flexible payment options offered by SPER, including Centrelink debts, which I have mentioned, direct debits and 24-hour telephone and internet banking.

One amendment to the bill will ensure that all unpaid amounts of a debtor are included in the one instalment payment plan issued to the debtor. For example, if a debtor has five or six fines, they would be aggregated and the subject of one instalment payment plan. The bill will also allow a debtor to use the phone or internet to make an application to SPER for various matters instead of being limited to the written applications which are required now. Currently the SPER registrar is able to make a good behaviour order only after a debtor has provided a report from a doctor confirming that the debtor is not suitable to perform community service, cannot pay or continue to pay the fine and that it would be inappropriate for payment to be enforced by the issuing of a warrant by the SPER registrar for the debtor's arrest or imprisonment.

What is achieved by imprisoning a debtor? For several hundred dollars he or she may be imprisoned for several weeks which costs the taxpayer thousands of dollars. There is also the family dislocation and employment disruption which follows. A debtor may lose his job if he has one and end up a bigger burden on the community. Imprisonment, although sometimes unavoidable, is not a cost-effective enforcement tool. Because of the mandatory requirements, there are very few good behaviour orders made even though they would often be appropriate. The present system particularly disadvantages debtors such as the homeless, mentally ill and those with impaired decision-making capacity. As a result of this bill, the SPER registrar can make a good behaviour order if he is satisfied the debtor is unable to pay the fine and is not suitable for community service or imprisonment. Therefore, the registrar can effectively inform himself in any way he deems appropriate and can write-off unpaid fines in the appropriate circumstances. The bill will lead to a more efficient and user-friendly fine penalty collection system in Queensland, and I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (4.18 pm): I want to raise a couple of issues regarding this legislation. For many people the empowerment of SPER to be a debt collection agency for government is welcomed. This bill streamlines the time in which SPER is involved in that debt collection. I believe that there have been a number of instances where people who have been given a fine through the court process would more than happily pay it off from the imposition of the fine, but that option is currently not available. The earlier introduction of the payment options available at a later time through SPER is welcomed. Many people in the community want to honour their debt, albeit grudgingly when it is imposed through the court system, and to be able to pay it off either as a direct debit or some other kind of payment regime will be welcomed. The introduction of the option for 24-hour phone and internet banking and the option to contact SPER through the internet to make alterations to the arrangement with SPER or to negotiate with SPER are also welcome.

I wish to raise one issue with the minister. When the SPER legislation was introduced back in 2000, the notion of SPER was welcomed. I have not checked the *Hansard*, but I think the bill was passed by the House quite happily. However, SPER has raised in the community a degree of frustration and anger. Over the past couple of years SPER has started to collect very old debts. In my electorate alone a number of people—not a huge number; not hundreds, that is for sure—have come to me about letters that they have received from SPER out of the blue relating to fines of which they have no knowledge. Those fines were 10 and 12 years old. There was no way that those people had the paperwork by which to argue whether the fine was appropriate or, indeed, attributable to them. In one instance that I can recall, the vehicle that the person was cited to have been driving for the fine had never been owned by that person. The debts were so old that these people were at a disadvantage in being able to fight their case.

After the SPER legislation was passed by this House, I certainly did not envisage that it would be used as a very convenient debt collection agency for fines that had been outstanding for quite protracted periods. Obviously, the collection of these fines by the previous regime had become too hard, or that regime did not have the resources by which to collect the fines, so nothing was done. Suddenly, SPER dropped on the fact that it could collect these dated fines; that the recipients of the fines had limited opportunities by which to defend themselves because of the age of the fines. This created, justifiably, a high level of anger and angst in the community.

I raise this issue with the Attorney-General for his consideration in terms of the appropriateness of the collection of some of these aged fines. Other people have come to me about fines that they had never received. One fellow's fine was sent to New Zealand. It was addressed to the right street name and the right town name, but that was all that was similar. That man's fine had gone to New Zealand, not to Queensland. That person was never aware that the fine had been imposed. I believe collection of aged debts has certainly questionable merit and appropriateness.

I note the information that was provided to us through the bills office—and I thank it for the hard work that it does in relation to preparing information about bills and other briefing documents that we get through the library—about the writing off of debts. It states—

SPER has identified many fines, some dating back to the 1970s, which are uncollectable or unenforceable because ... the debtor has died ... the debtor is a corporation that has been deregistered; or ... there is insufficient information known about the debtor to adequately identify them or differentiate them from another person, or there is insufficient information to establish their liability for the fine ...

The example given is a very common name, John Smith. I question why this government—or any government—would be chasing fines that are over 30 years old. If those fines have not been collected now, the morality of collecting them against a person 30 years after the imposition of that fine is questionable at best.

I seek the minister's response to the intention of SPER, through his department, and the extent to which he regards it appropriate to collect these very old fines. By that, I am not referring to those people who have made a habit of receiving infringement notices and never paying any of them—for example, people who, if you check their files, you would find have 300 unpaid fines. I am talking about people who have received one-off fines. Those are the sorts of people who have come to my office. They have been completely flummoxed by receiving this SPER debt notice for a fine that may be 10 years old. As I said, they have absolutely no idea whether they have been justifiably issued with the debt from SPER or whether, in fact, they should have attracted the fine in the first place.

The only other clarification I would like to make is that the amendment allows the registrar to write off debts for deceased persons, deregistered corporations and debtors about whom there is insufficient information. A further amendment will allow the minister to issue guidelines with respect to writing off unpaid fines by the registrar of SPER in accordance with the New South Wales and South Australian model of not making the guidelines public. To my mind, the only acceptable reason for the privacy of the reasons for writing off unpaid fines would be to avoid the situation of a fine defaulter being able to look up the guidelines and write a letter to the Attorney-General, or to SPER, saying, 'I cannot pay because' of X, Y and Z. Those guidelines would be a really good handbook of how to get out of paying fines. If that is the only reason, that is fine. I would like the minister's comment on that matter. Otherwise, I welcome the opportunity for people who want to do the right thing and pay their fines being able to organise payment schedules that are convenient and able to be met by them in their circumstances.

Mr WETTENHALL (Barron River—ALP) (4.25 pm): I rise to speak in support of the bill before the House. The bill will amend the State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999 and make other amendments to the Bail Act, the Justices Act and the Penalties and Sentences Act.

The State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999, which commenced operation in 2000, created the State Penalties Enforcement Registry, known as SPER. SPER collects and enforces most court ordered fines, infringement penalties and fees, compensation and restitution, and amounts forfeited under undertakings and recognisance. The creation of SPER was a significant advance over the previous methods of collecting and enforcing fines and penalties. SPER was empowered to collect court debts through using methods not previously available to the courts—for example, by enabling direct debits to Centrelink.

However, one of the main restrictions that has emerged on the ability of SPER to effectively collect and enforce debts was that it was unable to have contact with a debtor until the time in which the court had allowed the offender to pay the fine or other amount had expired. As honourable members will know, courts are able to allow a time in which to pay fines and other court ordered amounts—typically between one month and six months, but averaging about three months. Once time to pay has expired, the registrar of the court, more popularly known as clerk of the court, may either issue a warrant for the arrest and imprisonment of the debtor—in effect, enforcing the default imprisonment period imposed by the court—or instead elect to forward particulars of the debtor and the unpaid amount to SPER to collect and enforce.

Some 60 per cent of fines and penalties are registered with the State Penalties Enforcement Registry for collection and enforcement after the time-to-pay period has expired. As other honourable members have noted in this debate, anyone who has had the experience of collecting debts knows that the sooner contact is made with the debtor the more likely it is that that debt will be paid. The amendments contained in this bill will enable the State Penalties Enforcement Registry to make early contact with the debtor, whether or not the time to pay the fine or penalty has expired.

Debtors also have access under the new regime introduced by these amendments to flexible payment options offered by the State Penalties Enforcement Registry, such as Centrelink debit, direct debit and 24-hour telephone and internet banking. These payment options are not available through the court system within the current time-to-pay arrangements.

The amendments will enable the court to register fines with the State Penalties Enforcement Registry and enable early contact with the debtor. That, in turn, will increase the effectiveness of the collection process for fines and will offer debtors a more flexible range of payment options. That will overcome one of the difficulties that the member for Gladstone referred to, namely, ageing debts. So these amendments are designed to avoid the accumulation of ageing debts which are difficult to recover and in some circumstances may be harsh and unfair to recover. It is entirely appropriate that the guidelines that apply in circumstances where debts are to be written off remain confidential because we do not want to telegraph the methods by which debtors who wish to avoid the payment of fines can do so.

A significant improvement to the way in which unpaid fines are dealt with is the empowerment of the registrar to issue a good behaviour order in lieu of payment of a fine. This currently occurs in circumstances where a debtor does not have the capacity to pay and is unlikely to pay in the future and where the debtor is unsuitable to perform community service for whatever reason. Under the current provisions a debtor must produce a report from a doctor confirming that the debtor is not suitable to perform community service, cannot pay or continue to pay the fine and it would not be appropriate for the payment to be enforced by the registrar issuing an arrest and imprisonment warrant.

Doctors are not always in the best position to determine whether a debtor has the ability to pay or is suitable to perform community service. Because it is mandatory for a registrar to obtain a doctor's opinion, consequently experience has shown that very few good behaviour orders are made, even in circumstances where it is entirely appropriate that they are made.

These amendments will remove the requirement that the State Penalties Enforcement Registry first obtain a doctor's report before making good behaviour orders for debtors. That is a common-sense amendment that enables the registrar to make a good behaviour order when the registrar is satisfied that the debtor is unable to pay the fine having regard to any expert advice that the registrar considers appropriate. For example, the advice may be obtained from an advocate or a person who works in a diversionary interventionist or rehabilitation program.

It is entirely appropriate that the registrar or the proper officer of the court is given those discretions in a relatively unfettered way. Honourable members will know that persons who are appointed as registrars are persons who typically have long experience in the court system and many act as magistrates in the Magistrates Court. I certainly have every confidence in their ability to apply their experience and judgement and common sense to the circumstances in which it is appropriate that a debtor is given a good behaviour order.

The amendments also empower the State Penalties Enforcement Registry to write off debts which are uncollectable or unenforceable because of the death of a debtor, the deregistration of a debtor that is a corporation, or insufficient information is known about the debtor to adequately identify them. They are logical improvements to the circumstances in which debts can be written off. Under the current arrangements that are somewhat cumbersome, the Governor may waive all or part of an unpaid amount. The new amendments will allow the registrar to write off debts for those categories of persons.

Further amendments will allow the minister to issue guidelines to assist the registrar to write off unpaid fines. However, as has been noted in other jurisdictions, those guidelines will not be made public in order that the circumstances in which debts can be written off cannot be manipulated or exploited or defeated.

Other amendments will improve the State Penalties Enforcement Registry's ability to identify debtors through improved access to information. Currently only the debtor's name and address are supplied to SPER by a prosecuting or investigating authority. The amendments will enable SPER to obtain certain information from agencies to assist in identifying and locating debtors. In addition to improving recovery of unpaid fines and penalties, these amendments will enable SPER to contact debtors early to offer suitable payment options instead of issuing arrest warrants for imprisonment. Those changes will avoid the very circumstances to which the member for Gladstone referred—namely, debts become quite old and stale.

The amendments that allow the State Penalties Enforcement Registry to access additional information about a debtor are justified in order to enhance the ability of SPER to contact debtors and offer suitable payment and other options. As a consequence of these amendments, more fines and penalties will be paid and collected, which will in turn promote community confidence in the fine enforcement system and ultimately avoid the accumulation of debts of the magnitude to which the honourable member for Clayfield referred in his speech to the House earlier.

Other amendments allow alleged offenders to elect to have the alleged offence decided in court in a manner such as by telephone or internet instead of only in writing. Again, that reflects modern business practice and can only improve the ability of people to communicate with the registry. Similarly, applications to pay fines in instalments will no longer be required to be made in writing.

Clause 9 significantly expands the types of court orders that may be registered with SPER under the Justices Act. The court orders that may be registered include an order that an amount be recoverable by execution and an order under the Penalties and Sentences Act that a penalty be paid. The full range of orders that can now be registered with SPER include: fines for an offence, an amount to be paid on forfeiture of a recognisance, orders for restitutional compensation, an amount to be paid under the Bail Act on the forfeiture of a bail undertaking, orders under the Justices Act to be recoverable by execution and an order under the Crown Proceedings Act prior to 27 November 2000. It is of note that a number of those fines, penalties and orders were previously only able to be enforced by courts issuing a warrant for arrest and imprisonment or a warrant of execution against property.

Other amendments automatically extend the time for a debtor to pay when the debtor applies for other options or elects to go to court and also enable a debtor to apply for a range of other options after service of the enforcement order by telephone or internet without having to submit a written application.

Clause 16 expands the types of debts which may be converted to community service when the debtor has no capacity to pay the fine. Presently, only fines may be converted. However, new amendments will enable ancillary orders, such as professional fees, witness expenses and other fees, to be converted to a fine option order—that is, community service.

Further amendments will provide that instalment payment notices will include the total of all amounts payable by the debtor under the act. That will enable all fines previously outstanding with SPER to be included in the one instalment plan and avoid the debtor being liable to pay several instalment plans without full consideration of the debtor's ability to pay under each plan.

Overall, the amendments are an important simplification and consolidation of the instalment plan system that will result in a more efficient collection of debts owed. It will allow persons with special needs or difficulties to communicate with much greater ease with the State Penalties Enforcement Registry. Most importantly, it will enable the debts owed to the state to be collected in a more efficient manner and avoid the unfair imprisonment of people who, by virtue of their circumstances, would be far better to be dealt with in an alternative way. I commend those amendments to the House.

Hon. KG SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Premier in Western Queensland) (4.40 pm), in reply: At the outset I thank all honourable members who contributed to the debate. I appreciate their support. I particularly appreciate the support from the members for Southport and Barron River as government members supporting this important legislation. I am also grateful for the contributions of the member for Clayfield, standing in as the member for Caloundra, and the member for Gladstone. I am appreciative of everyone's contribution, particularly the opposition in terms of its substantial support for the bill, particularly the SPER part of the bill.

Fines are generally imposed as an alternative to imprisonment for less serious offences and to act as a deterrent to further reoffending. SPER's objectives include maintaining the integrity of the fine collection system in this state and reducing the cost to the state of enforcing fines.

The bill before the House today will improve the operation of SPER's fine collection system. Since SPER's commencement in 2000 SPER has made significant improvements in its operations. SPER now has a 75 per cent clearance rate of all fines, infringement notices and other monetary penalties lodged with it for collection, which was one of the questions asked by the member for Clayfield. These amendments will complement the internal improvements already made by SPER.

SPER has found that 90 per cent of debtors paid by means not available at the courts, such as Centrelink debit and internet and phone banking. The early registration of court fines with SPER will give debtors greater options to pay their fines. Also, it has been SPER's experience that the earlier a debtor is contacted the more likely it is that they will pay their fine.

These amendments will enable SPER to contact debtors at an earlier stage and offer more flexible payment options. The net result will be that debtors owing money to the state for a fine, an infringement notice or other monetary penalty will be more likely to pay the fine to SPER. The amendments will also provide more flexibility for debtors to contact SPER and do business with SPER via the phone or internet and not just in writing. I acknowledge the remarks made by the member for Gladstone in welcoming that change. This will bring SPER up to date with modern ways of conducting business. This again will improve the efficiency of SPER and streamline the fine collection system in this state.

Debtors will be no worse off as a result of these amendments. Debtors or courts opting to register their fines with SPER early will not be subject to any registration fee. That is, of course, a point that was raised by the member for Clayfield. He asked whether debtors would be any worse off and whether they would be subject to a registration fee. The answer is no.

The amendments will also allow the registrar of SPER more flexibility to make good behaviour orders. The onerous condition that the debtor provides a medical report is no longer required. Those vulnerable debtors who genuinely wish to resolve their outstanding fines can be assisted through the making of a good behaviour order.

The amendments will also allow SPER to address those fines, many of which were inherited when SPER commenced, that are not capable of being collected or enforced because the debtor has died, the corporation is deregistered or there is insufficient information to identify the debtor or the debt owing. The SPER registrar will be able to write off those uncollectable or unenforceable debts.

SPER's registrar will also be able to write off those unenforceable or uncollectable fines under confidential guidelines that are yet to be developed or made. It is envisaged that the guidelines will capture other categories or groups of fines. There would be stringent criteria to meet prior to the debt being written off by the registrar. To do otherwise would undermine the integrity of the fine collection system in this state.

These amendments will also bolster SPER's ability to contact debtors to collect and enforce fines by permitting SPER to obtain limited information from investigatory and prosecuting agencies to assist with the identification and location of debtors. Again, this will reinforce the effectiveness of the fine collection system in this state.

In conclusion, I again want to thank all honourable members for their contributions during the debate. The government believes this is very beneficial legislation. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank all stakeholders for their invaluable input during the development of this legislation. As I said earlier, I also thank the opposition for its substantial support of this legislation.

Several matters were raised during the debate that may be dealt with in the clauses. The current collection figure was requested. I am advised that the current collection figure is \$362 million. As I said before, the current clear-up rate is 75 per cent to 76 per cent as at 31 December. That is for the financial year ending on 31 December 2006.

I was asked whether the early registration fee was included. That is referred to in clauses 9 and 10. The answer is that there is no penalty. The debtors will be no worse off. I will refer to other matters as we come to the clauses in consideration in detail. I think that would be the best way of doing it.

The member for Gladstone raised some matters. The matters of concern were raised by her in a letter that she may have written earlier in the year on behalf of a constituent. I am happy to deal with those at the appropriate time later in the debate.

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

Motion agreed to.

Consideration in Detail

Clause 1, as read, agreed to.

Clause 2—

Mr NICHOLLS (4.50 pm): During the course of the debate I indicated that we were seeking some guidance from the minister in relation to the commencement date. That clause deals with the commencement of parts 2, 3, 5 and 7. They are each of the parts that amend the respective acts—the State Penalties Enforcement Act, the Bail Act, the Justices Act and the Penalties and Sentences Act. I ask the Attorney to indicate what steps have been taken or will be taken to introduce the new systems contemplated by this bill, when he anticipates that those parts will commence and will they all commence on the same day?

Mr SHINE: It is necessary for SPER, in conjunction with the courts, to undertake work on its computer systems and operations to support the amendments and the early registration of court fines with SPER. The legislation should commence only after that work has been completed. These works, I am instructed, are currently being undertaken. Given the time frame for these preparatory works it is anticipated that the legislation will commence prior to the end of this current financial year.

Clause 2, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 3 to 8, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 9 and 10—

Mr NICHOLLS (4.51 pm): I thank the Attorney for his answer in relation to adding the cost of registration to a court-imposed fine where that fine is to be registered before the expiry of the date of payment.

Mr Lucas: I reckon you're doing a better job than the normal shadow Attorney-General.

An opposition member: You just worry about your roads.

Mr NICHOLLS: I am particularly looking forward to the debate on the transport bill with the minister. In terms of clause 9(2A), could the Attorney perhaps outline the process by which after the court imposes the fine the registrar is to give the details to SPER? The legislation does not appear clear. Is this done automatically by the registrar or the clerk of the court or must a person ordered to pay a fine make an application to the court or is it something that is offered at the same time?

Mr SHINE: I am instructed that it will be done automatically. It is not up to the individual to take any step.

Clauses 9 and 10, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 11 to 31, as read, agreed to.

Clause 32—

Mr NICHOLLS (4.52 pm): In respect of clause 32, I understand the need for the guidelines that the minister issues to be confidential so that those who would seek to be relieved of their obligation to pay do not tailor their application within those guidelines. However, can the minister provide some indication of the broad parameters of the issues that he will be considering in framing the guidelines to be given to the registrar when considering whether to write off an unpaid amount? The question to the minister is: will the guidelines include an ability to forgive a debt which is quite distinct from writing off a debt which cannot be collected?

Mr SHINE: With respect to the forgiveness of debts, the current procedure would still apply—that is, an application to the Governor for a pardon.

Mr Lucas: Forgiveness is divine.

Mr SHINE: It is indeed. With respect to the guidelines and how the guidelines will be made, which I think was the import of the parameters that would apply, over time SPER would identify the types of fines that emerge as uncollectable and unenforceable. However, the establishment of a guideline is not a recommendation for the registrar of SPER to make alone.

Many stakeholders will have an interest in the development of the guidelines, including those who are administering authorities and courts which issue the fines, the agency which relies on SPER to preserve the integrity of the laws that it enforces and others who may benefit from the funds collected from fines like the RSPCA. Ultimately the department will be responsible for consulting with these stakeholders to ensure that a balance of views is achieved and that appropriate legal advice has been obtained. Under these conditions, I will be able to issue appropriate and beneficial guidelines. In answering the question, guidance will be sought from the courts, from the agencies who are collecting the fines and the beneficiaries of the fines, be they government or non-government.

Clause 32, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 33 to 39, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 40 to 42—

Mr NICHOLLS (4.55 pm): As I indicated in the debate in relation to the bill, the coalition does not support these clauses, which remove the requirement for advertising for reappointment for the positions covered in particular in clauses 41 and 42. The positions of Adult Guardian and Public Advocate are important and influential positions. People appointed to these positions are in a position of considerable influence and authority. Their decisions, in fact, are reviewable only by a tribunal and that is neither an easy nor a cheap option for those people so affected.

In 2004-05 the Office of Adult Guardian acted as guardian or attorney in relation to personal matters for 684 people with impaired capacity and there is no reason to think that that number has declined. Given the extent of the authority of those appointed, and remembering that the appointee may hold office for up to five years, the mere fact of a reappointment should not obviate the necessity to advertise the position.

In many public sector organisations the virtue of advertising, even when reappointment may ultimately result, is understood and supported. There has been comment in the press over the last year about appointments to these positions made by the former Attorney. Concerns were raised in one instance involving the Office of the Public Advocate. It is important to note that those concerns centred mainly on the delay of over three months taken by the government to appoint the current Public Advocate.

It can also only go to the issue of openness of government to keep the current procedure requiring advertising in place and to enable a fair and open and continuing scrutiny of those appointed on merit to fill those important positions. The coalition is unable to support clauses 40, 41 and 42 and will be opposing those clauses.

Mr SHINE: The reason that the government has included these clauses—that is, the abolition of the need to advertise for reappointment—is as has been mentioned by the honourable member in his speech, and that is to encourage continuity and stability and to make the reappointment consistent with the reappointment of the president, deputy president and other tribunal members of the Guardianship and Administration Tribunal. That is the reason that the government has taken this course. The honourable member has indicated that the opposition does not accept that. I do not think that I can take the argument any further.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: Could I seek a clarification? The wording in the bill is very clear: the advertising does not apply to the reappointment of a person as the Adult Guardian. If a new Adult Guardian had to be sought that position would be advertised; it is only if an existing Adult Guardian was to be reappointed for a further period—is that true?

Mr SHINE: That is absolutely so. It is definitely restricted to reappointment as opposed to a new appointment or appointment.

Mr NICHOLLS: I do note the minister's response there. I think though in terms of the reason given for removing the requirement for reappointment being merely to ensure consistency with the appointment process for the tribunal matters is not a good enough reason to lose the transparency of the process. Matters change over time; people's qualifications change over time; other people may be better qualified over time to hold these positions. It also ought to be remembered, as I said, that these positions are positions which on a day-to-day basis involve many people—over 684 people in the case of the Adult Guardian.

Although tribunal members may be appointed in this fashion, they will review far fewer cases than the actual person with the authority under the legislation to make decisions for people on a day-to-day basis. For that reason, it is appropriate that the person who has the most contact with people who have an impaired capacity is appointed through a transparent and open process so the community can have confidence in the decisions that are being made. This will also protect the position of those appointees. They can state that they were appointed after a full, fair, frank and open process. We know it is often claimed that this does not occur with some government appointments—and this can be any government. Advertising is one safeguard against those claims. The coalition persists in its opposition.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: I seek one further clarification. The period of time for the initial appointment is set. Is the period of reappointment also confined to a year or two years? Is there a sunset on the full period the Adult Guardian can hold before it is mandatory for that position to be readvertised?

Mr SHINE: I am instructed that the appointment is for a period of up to five years. It is not an automatic reappointment. It is a matter for the minister to weigh up the pros and cons at that time. The fact that it is not readvertised is only one condition that is not being applied as it may have been in the initial appointment. The only thing that changes is the fact that there is no advertising; the other steps that the minister takes into account in terms of appointing appropriate people still have to be undertaken. In answer to the honourable member's question, the reappointment can be for a period of up to five years.

Mr NICHOLLS: In relation to the point that has been raised by the Attorney and the honourable member for Gladstone, my understanding of it—and perhaps the Attorney can clarify this for me—is that there is no limit on the number of times a person can be reappointed; it is just that their appointment period at a single stretch can only be five years. So it would be possible for the Adult Guardian to be reappointed for four stretches of five years or four stretches of three years, if that were the case.

Mr SHINE: Yes. As I understand it, there is no limitation on that type of reappointment.

Division: Question put—That clauses 40 to 42, as read, stand part of the bill.

AYES, 48—Attwood, Barry, Bombolas, Boyle, Choi, Croft, English, Fenlon, Finn, Fraser, Gray, Hayward, Hinchliffe, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Jones, Keech, Kiernan, Lavarch, Lawlor, Lee, Lucas, McNamara, Mickel, Miller, Moorhead, Nelson-Carr, O'Brien, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Purcell, Reeves, Reilly, Roberts, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Weightman, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall. Tellers: Male, Nolan

NOES, 22—Copeland, Cripps, Cunningham, Dempsey, Elmes, Flegg, Gibson, Hobbs, Johnson, Knuth, Lee Long, Lingard, Menkens, Messenger, Nicholls, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey. Tellers: Dickson, Rickuss

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Clauses 40 to 42, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 43 to 59, 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.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (5.12 pm): I move—

That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 9.30 am on Tuesday, 20 February 2007.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (5.12 pm): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Freeman, Mr L

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (5.12 pm): I rise to speak on behalf of a constituent in my electorate, Mr Lin Freeman. I have previously spoken in this place about the concerns that Lin has held over a number of years. I know that each of us has people in their electorates who have issues that we have dealt with over a protracted period. Lin is one such constituent.

He no longer resides at the farm that he operated in the Boyne Valley because it was taken by the National Australia Bank. He has contended for many years that that bank repossession was done inappropriately and improperly. He was one who was subjected to the shadow ledger process. That has been the subject of a Senate report. In the Senate report it was found that the use of shadow ledgers by banks is inappropriate. In the Senate report it was found that some banks used inaccurate accounting methods, they did not discover documents at the relevant times but discovered them at a later date which was to the advantage of the bank, they discovered incorrect and false documents and bank witnesses gave incorrect evidence in the courts. Lin says that he has placed beside the allegations the appropriate clauses of the report. I have copious and detailed documents that I seek leave to table.

Leave granted.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 28 January 2007, to Mrs Cunningham MP from Mr L Freeman and enclosures regarding National Australia Bank Limited.

There would be those who would say that he needs to get on with his life. Indeed I have had that conversation with Lin. However, he rightly replies that he has nothing to get on with. Everything that he invested his time, his heart and his soul into was taken by the banks. He contends with some justification that at the time the bank acted inappropriately and subsequently has acted inappropriately. He still remains of the view that justice should and needs to be served. I wish him every success in that venture.

North Stradbroke Island Bikeway Project

Mr WEIGHTMAN (Cleveland—ALP) (5.14 pm): I rise to encourage the House to consider a non-conforming petition submitted by one of my constituents regarding a North Stradbroke Island bikeway. I seek leave to table that petition.

Leave granted.

Tabled paper: Document titled 'Dunwich to Pt Lookout Cycleway Petition'.

The creation of a North Stradbroke Island bikeway would be a fantastic opportunity to improve the health, lifestyle, access and opportunities of the island's residents and visitors. In essence, the project would create a system of bike paths for residents and visitors to travel across the island, linking the three major settlements of Dunwich, Amity and Point Lookout.

North Stradbroke is a picturesque and unique island—one of the largest sand islands in the world. The bikeway project would be enormously beneficial for the island's residents and visitors. Aside from the benefits that would be gained from a transport point of view, from a tourism perspective and a safety perspective the project would be an excellent way of showcasing the island's natural beauty and providing an avenue for exercise as part of a healthy lifestyle.

The main transport conduits on the island at present are East Coast, Point Lookout and Beehive roads. These corridors link the island's three villages and provide a route for tourists and residents alike. However, in an effort to preserve the natural contours of the land and the precious environment, the roads are undulating and the shoulders occasionally very narrow and dangerous.

A bikeway would significantly improve the safety of cyclists on the island by providing a separate route for their travel. Further, for the many visitors and residents who travel by ferry to the island and then rely on public transport to get to their destination, the bikeway would provide another option. The project would also give the recreational cyclist a unique experience in exploring North Stradbroke Island and its communities.

Approximately two-thirds of all residents in south-east Queensland have access to a bicycle. The Redlands is an area with one of the highest rates of bicycle ownership in our corner of the state. Cycling provides significant benefits for health, the environment and tourism, as well as connecting communities. On North Stradbroke Island a bikeway would serve to highlight all these benefits. By linking Dunwich, Amity and Point Lookout a bikeway would enable tourists and residents to travel the island by bicycle, meaning fewer cars on the road, a reduction in vehicle emissions, new opportunities for exercise and activity and a fantastic new island attraction.

In March this year Queensland Transport will release a new draft plan for an integrated regional cycle network, a fantastic government initiative that aims to connect south-east Queensland centres via a cycle network. I fully intend to work with Queensland Transport to incorporate a North Stradbroke Island bikeway into the plan, as one of the priority projects. North Stradbroke Island is a wonderful part of Queensland and an area that I am enormously proud to represent. A bikeway would make a positive contribution to life on the island and provide a fantastic opportunity to highlight the wonderful features of the island.

Jackwitz, Mr C

Mr RICKUSS (Lockyer—NPA) (5.18 pm): I rise to talk about a sad occasion. I had to go to a funeral today of a young fellow in my area. It was quite traumatic. Chris Jackwitz was born on 28 November 1974 at Gatton. I rise to express my deep sadness at the loss of Chris Jackwitz. Chris was one of those sorts of people who other people enjoyed being around. His positive attitude and his zest for life were infectious to his friends and family.

He is only a few years older than my own sons, so I can understand the loss that his mother and father, Hazel and Keith, and Chris's large family are feeling at the moment. As a parent one does not want to be present at one's own child's funeral. As I said to Keith, it just makes me and a lot of others sad.

To Desley, his wife and childhood sweetheart from Gatton High School, and their two children, Elijah Wilhelm seven years old and Caitlyn Mai four years, I express my deepest sympathy on behalf of my wife, Ann, and me. Desley, my wife, Ann, is also my childhood sweetheart so I have a bit of an understanding of yours and Chris's relationship. Unfortunately for Desley it is going to be tough, but I am sure with the help of her family, friends and especially her children she will be able to overcome this tragedy.

You have two wonderful children who will be Chris's living legacy on earth. I am not trying to put pressure on Elijah or Caitlyn in any way—they will grow up to be individuals—but I am sure that a bit of Chris will always come through their personality and character. Chris's ability to be positive and progress with his business and his community life was a great asset to the local area. Chris was a man who was willing to have a go and take things head-on to try to find a solution. I can understand Chris's frustration at times at the snail pace of government on issues such as recycled water and other issues related to farmers and the drought. Chris is a great loss to Desley, his family and the Lockyer. As an old family friend, Col Schulz, said to me on the way out of the funeral, 'There's a lot more mongrels around who could have died before Chris.' A lot of people in the Lockyer will be sad today and for some time to come as they think of Chris, but please remember his grin and his positive attitude and his appreciation of life.

Inala, Community Renewal

Ms PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (5.20 pm): The Beattie government's Community Renewal has transformed Inala. Under phase 1 of the Community Renewal Program, between 1998 and 2004 \$8.8 million was allocated to Inala. I am pleased to state that the five-year budget from 2004 to 2009 shows that there will be \$4 million allocated. Through Community Renewal the state government engages with Queenslanders to improve the quality of life in their communities. The programs that are delivered are sometimes small, but they have a dramatic impact upon the local area. Streetscaping, renovated houses, support for community festivals, upgrading of bikeways, employment of youth workers, promotion of healthy schools, literacy projects and sport mentor programs are just a few examples of how the funding is being spent.

Housing affordability continues to be an issue that is not just evidenced in the seat of Inala but also across the state and across Australia. It is a shame that the Howard government has failed to increase its commitment to funding for housing. Increased population into south-east Queensland has put additional pressures on the current housing stock and rental prices continue to soar. More and more people are moving further out into the suburbs in the search for affordable rent. It is becoming increasingly harder for young people to even think about being able to afford their own homes.

I am pleased to report that in Inala we are witnessing a new approach to social housing. The old Richlands TAFE site, once a high school, is about to become an integrated affordable housing precinct. The Brisbane Housing Co. is developing 39 units. Three of the old TAFE buildings will be converted into two- and three-bedroom town houses. Stage 2 will consist of 21 units and 43 blocks of land which will be sold on the open market for purchase. But it does not stop there. Mission Australia, the Queensland government and Griffith University will continue their nationally recognised Pathways to Prevention Program. This program seeks to work with children between the ages of four and six at an early stage and their families to assist with the child's communication and behavioural skills. Also on the site, the Inala Elders will move to a better renovated premises and will be able to continue the valuable work it does, especially with the young people in the community.

A new child-care centre will be located on the southern end of the block which is adjacent to the Richlands East Primary School. Another important element of the site is the preservation of some recreational space. This was initially earmarked for a pool. However, the lord mayor has failed to come up with any money for the planned maintenance of this project, which means that this pool simply cannot move forward. It appears that he has other priorities than the health and wellbeing of Inala residents. This should come as no surprise considering the former Liberal lord mayor, Sallyanne Atkinson, failed to deliver a bus service to the residents of Inala. As an alternative to the pool, we will work closely with the community to come up with other options for this area. One option is the installation of play and activity areas at the nearby Rocks Riverside Parkway. At the end of the day, this affordable housing precinct out in Inala will be the benchmark for future affordable housing statewide. As mentioned, this is about more than affordable housing; it is about a community—a community that takes pride in its members and a community that supports its members most in need.

Gold Coast Turf Club

Mr STEVENS (Robina—Lib) (5.23 pm): I bring to the attention of the House the proposal being investigated by Queensland Racing and other private investment interests of the relocation of the Gold Coast Turf Club from its current magnificent location close to Surfers Paradise to a site at Carrara identified as Palm Meadows. This whole exercise by Queensland Racing and its chairman, Bob Bentley, is another monumental experiment in grandiose futility similar to the supertrack at Wacol. The studies and time expended are a complete waste of valuable racing industry funds.

The current Gold Coast City Council designated and state government endorsed equine precinct has seen the development of Queensland's biggest thoroughbred carnival in the Magic Millions horse sales and the Gold Coast Turf Club's Magic Millions race day. This carnival is of international significance and a generator of significant tourism dollars for the state. It has prospered in its current location and can go to even dizzy heights if the issues of amenities and transport to the venue on

Magic Millions race day are addressed. To throw the baby out with the bathwater and say, 'Let's start again at a new location at Palm Meadows,' is ludicrous in the extreme and reeks of hidden agendas and convenient expediency to achieve other intentions. The Magic Millions sales company is a very successful privately owned operation generating huge profits for its owners, and I am immensely proud of its fantastic achievements to date. The company, however, does not need public funding to relocate or upgrade its enterprise and commercial opportunities to expand its operation are available to it today in the current location. It only requires it to reinvest some of its profits from the sales in a better and larger facility, and that will be a commercial decision that it will make for itself at the appropriate time.

The proposed relocation site at Palm Meadows is in the flood plain of the Gold Coast and many attempts at development of that site have been rebuffed by the Gold Coast City Council to protect the residents in suburbs further downstream. Obviously a new track would have to be built above flood level, as would the grandstands, stable complexes and residential houses, and quite simply the proposed site fails all of the tests for sustainable development. To say that transport to and from this location would be any easier than the difficulty currently endured shuttling to the Bundall site is a furphy, as it is even further away from the high-density populations of Southport, Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach.

I am a passionate supporter of the Gold Coast Turf Club and I have been witness to and part of its ever-growing success. It pains me greatly that dodgy backdoor deals are being attempted behind closed doors to address the sad lack of financial commitment by this state government to providing appropriate facilities at Queensland's premier racing event. The chairman of the Gold Coast Turf Club has advised me that he has not received one document about the proposal, and that in itself is a damning indictment of Queensland Racing.

Time expired.

Gold Coast Fishermen's Cooperative, Southport Spit Jetty

Ms CROFT (Broadwater—ALP) (5.26 pm): The Gold Coast community has warmly welcomed an assistance package recently announced by the Premier and the natural resources minister to assist Gold Coast commercial fishers. These fishers, who are based at the Southport Spit, have been a fixture of Gold Coast life for a number of years. They have provided the freshest seafood on both a wholesale and retail basis to the public. There are not many places where people can get a kilo of prawns straight off the boat with the sea water still dripping off them. Unfortunately, the nine jetties being used by the Gold Coast Fishermen's Cooperative had to be closed after one fisherman was injured when he fell through a rotten walkway.

Workplace Health and Safety officials ruled the jetties were unsafe and they could not be used. The members of the Gold Coast Fishermen's Cooperative have had to use a number of temporary locations to land their catch, including nearby beaches. This situation was far from ideal, and that is why my colleague Peter Lawlor, the member for Southport, met with fishermen and I met with a number of residents who came and registered their concern about this situation. We made our representations to the Premier and the minister for natural resources, and that is why it is great to see that the Premier and the minister put together a package to assist these fishers. The deal was hammered out on an early morning walk with all parties last week. The package includes that the government will remove the old jetties and install new pylons at a cost of \$120,000. The Gold Coast Fishermen's Cooperative will then get a special \$240,000 government loan to purchase replacement portable jetties. The jetties will remain the property of the cooperative, which will be able to resell them once a more permanent solution can be found. I believe that this is a win for the fishers and it is also a win for Gold Coast locals and the Gold Coast tradition of buying fresh prawns straight off the boat.

Doomben and Eagle Farm Racecourses

Mr NICHOLLS (Clayfield—Lib) (5.29 pm): I wish to alert the chamber to the impending doom of the Doomben Racecourse in my electorate due to the duplicity and sleazy dealings of this Labor government. For some years now it has been on the agenda of Queensland Racing to preside over the demise of a vibrant, two-track metropolitan racing industry. Why this should be, I do not know. As my friend from Robina has indicated, it may be a desire to establish a new precinct at Palm Meadows. Others say that it is a desire by a former racing minister to see the end of the QTC. Whatever the reason, any decision to sell or dispose of either racetrack is strongly opposed by the residents and by the industry.

The Premier knows that. That is why in 2004 the ALP, cravenly but welcomingly, followed the coalition and joined our campaign to save both racetracks. Indeed, so much of an issue was it that the Premier wrote to the electorate not on one, but on two separate occasions. Let me read what he promised to the people of Clayfield—

I have given Liddy—

who is in Melbourne now, so that is not much use to anyone—

my word that if we are re-elected the government will not, under any circumstances, support any option for these sites that involves selling the racetracks for high-density housing.

I ask members to note the words 'not, under any circumstances'. That was 'not any circumstances' when Liddy was there. The Premier was so concerned that he wrote a second letter to the electors in Clayfield. In it he said—

... I ruled out high density housing for the racecourse. I stand by this, and ask you to keep a copy of this letter as my commitment to racing people and concerned citizens that I will work with you on this issue.

Guess what? We kept a copy of the Premier's letter. In fact, the matter was still a live issue at the recent 2006 campaign when the ALP candidate claimed that the Eagle Farm and Doomben racecourses were to remain and be upgraded. I table for the information of members copies of the Premier's two letters and the ALP's campaign brochure.

Tabled paper: Copy of letter, dated 30 January 2004, from the Premier addressed Dear Resident regarding the Eagle Farm and Doomben racecourses.

Tabled paper: Copy letter, dated 4 February 2004, from the Premier to Mr Staines regarding the racing industry.

Tabled paper: Copy document, undated, titled 'A Message from Liddy'.

We all know that recently this matter has come to the fore by the board of Queensland Racing, who seem to be the only people who want to see the racetrack sold. The government's position on this is not clear. It has been ducking and weaving all over the place. At a public meeting conducted by me and the able and intelligent Councillor David McLachlan, the councillor for the Hamilton ward, held on a Thursday in early January, 260 people unanimously called on the Premier not to allow the destruction of this local icon for the racing industry and the people of Clayfield.

I wrote to the Premier inviting him to work with me. What has happened since then? Nothing! Despite taking \$45 million a year in gambling revenue from thoroughbred racing, this sleazy Labor government refuses to invest in one of Queensland's premier industries. Yesterday, the minister refused to give an indication of his support for Doomben when offered the clear opportunity to do so. What does he say? 'I see there is strong merit in them pooling their resources. I see merit in the proposal that is before the members of these two clubs.' I say to the minister and to the Premier that that is not good enough. They either come out and tell the people of Clayfield and the racing industry that they will honour their promise to them, or they tell them that they never intended to be held to that promise and that it was just another sleazy trick from a sleazy government that will say and do anything to stay in power.

Burpengary Meadows State School

Hon. KW HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (5.32 pm): I rise to speak about the new Burpengary Meadows State School in the electorate of Kallangur. This school has opened with a great start. The school has been designed as a single campus school with prep to year 7, but it is broken into two subschools, prep to year 3 and year 4, and year 7 is located in separate yet linked learning precincts in an area bounded by Kurrajong Drive, Rowley Road and Hauton Road, Burpengary. The new principal of this school is Peter Black and what a great job he has done in getting the school in place for its successful opening on 29 January.

Mr Hoolihan: A great bloke.

Mr HAYWARD: He speaks very highly of the member. When we spoke about his previous history in Rockhampton, he said the member was a great supporter when he was teaching there. As I have just indicated, Peter is well known for his teaching activities previously in the Rockhampton district. He was appointed in July 2006 to undertake the necessary preliminary work to set up the school.

I understand that the school was to open with 220 students and, as a testament to its initial success and the hard work of the staff, as of yesterday it had 288 students enrolled. Burpengary is a growth area. The school has a staff complement of 26—16 teachers and 10 auxiliary staff. I remember being at the school during January when Peter was interviewing potential new teachers in order to meet the unexpected enrolment demand that was occurring. This is a new school. One way of telling that—and all members would understand this—is that at the initial P&C meeting to elect an interim executive on 18 October, the school had a parent roll-up of 85 parents. Many well-established schools would love to get a roll-up such as that for the annual general meeting of their P&C. I hope the school gets a similar turnout at its first annual general meeting on 21 February.

The parent and community interest in the new school has been fantastic. A very successful open day was held on 26 January, Australia Day. Parents and other Burpengary residents had an opportunity to inspect the new school and meet the teachers who staff the school and teach their children. I congratulate the staff of this new school. I think that its huge parent and community support will ensure that it will have a great future in serving the Burpengary community. Burpengary Meadows State School will be another great state school in the Kallangur electorate.

Water Infrastructure

Mr GIBSON (Gympie—NPA) (5.35 pm): I wish to inform the chamber of a public meeting that took place in my electorate last Sunday at the pavilion at the showgrounds at Gympie to which over 1,000 people attended. The meeting was organised by the Save the Mary River Group. Interestingly, this was not an antidam rally; rather, it was an information day where various speakers addressed a broad range of topics ranging from aquatic weed control to endangered species, environmental law, water recycling and the failure of the fish ladder at Paradise Dam.

There was also a discussion about desalination. This was the topic on which I spoke, along with David Ross. I reported on my recent trip to Western Australia to visit the recently commissioned desalination plant at Kwinana—a plant that produces over 130 million litres a day and which is powered by renewable green energy from a wind farm. It manages to return the brine into the ecologically sensitive Coburn Sound in a manner that results in it being within 0.01 per cent of the salinity level that existed beforehand. This is truly a great achievement. It is something of which the Western Australian Labor government should be proud. It is something from which the Queensland Labor government could learn. This plant produces 17 per cent of the water needs of Perth. The question that begs to be asked is: why can we not do that here if we are supposedly the Smart State?

Senator Joyce also addressed that rally and raised the possibility of a Senate inquiry into the process concerning the proposed dam at Traveston Crossing. I am glad to report to this chamber that this process has commenced in the Senate. I call on all Queensland senators, regardless of their political affiliation, to support this inquiry. The truth must come out and it must be based on scientific evidence, particularly in light of the revelation today from the former Labor member for Noosa of political interference in the selection process for the dam site. It is entirely appropriate that a Senate inquiry look into the reasons this decision was made. It might also examine the social and economic impacts along with the environmental impacts that are being assessed under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

We need to know the facts. We cannot rely upon 'Honest Pete' and his sleazy Labor government. We need to know that this decision to build a dam at Traveston Crossing is based on good science, not bad politics.

Mr MICKEL: I rise to a point of order. I do not think it is appropriate, and nor does it enhance the reputation of this House, for the Premier to be referred to in that manner. The Premier should be addressed by his title. That is in the standing orders. I know that the honourable member is a new member, but he should at least get right the titles of members of this place.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr English): I remind the honourable member to address all members in this chamber by their correct title.

Mr GIBSON: This week we have seen a report from Professor Stuart White of the Institute for Sustainable Futures condemn the dam. Also on the record are Professor Jean Joss of Macquarie University raising concerns about the lungfish and Associate Professor David Williams, who has concerns about the seepage of the dam. The question I ask is: which academics have come out in support of this dam?

Killen, Sir James

Mr LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (5.38 pm): Last month Queensland lost one of its most distinguished citizens in Sir James Killen. I knew him well because we had common interests: politics, the law and, of course, horseracing. He may have had more mates on the Labor side than the conservative side, but he certainly had many from both sides. Ironically, through an appointment made by the Borbidge government, I got to know Sir James even better and appreciated his many qualities.

In 1996, the then racing minister, Russell Cooper, appointed Jim to the Racing Appeals Tribunal. I was already a member of that tribunal, but given that I had stood in the 1995 election, again unsuccessfully against Mick Veivers, I fully expected to be replaced. But to my genuine surprise I was reappointed and went on to serve with Sir Jim and also the distinguished solicitor and friend, Leo Williams, on the tribunal for the next five years.

Hearing appeals over greyhound and harness racing matters can be exacting and even boring, but with Jim on the panel that was never the case. He was able to relate to the owners, trainers, drivers and other licensees appearing before us with the same ease with which he mixed with Prime Ministers, judges and Archbishops. I well recall the occasion when a greyhound trainer offered to bring his dog into the tribunal to Jim's great amusement because he said that Jim and the dog had a lot in common.

Jim Killen had a long association with the great sport of horseracing. He owned a number of thoroughbreds with well-known owners such as the race caller, Vince Curry, and with well-known businessmen Jim Kennedy and the late Brian Sweeney. They had some success—certainly more than I did.

As a barrister, he loved appearing for jockeys appealing against a suspension. In one case he appeared for Norman 'Whopper' Stephens, who was suspended for causing interference in a race at Eagle Farm. Jim told the story about how when Stephens was asked why he tried to get through a narrow gap between two horses, thereby causing the interference, he said, 'I was riding a skinny horse.' Jim lost the appeal but he certainly added that story to his extensive repertoire.

He attended the Gold Coast Turf Club quite often where he and his wife, Lady Benise, were better known than Gai Waterhouse and John Singleton. The Gold Coast Turf Club and the whole racing industry will miss him. Above all else, he was a man of generous spirit who crossed the political divide in a way we seldom do today. We are unlikely to see his like again, and we are poorer for that.

I extend my sympathy, and that of the racing industry, to Lady Benise, his daughters, Diana and Heather, and particularly to his granddaughter Dana, who lives on the Gold Coast. Dana recently gave birth to her first child, a son, Scott. Sadly Jim did not live to see the arrival of his first male heir, but he knew Scott was on the way and it gave him great comfort.

Sir James was a great Australian, a great Queenslander and a great bloke. There are many stories told about Jim. One was when Prime Minister McMahon in a party room meeting said, 'Well, I guess I'm my own worst enemy.' Killen's booming voice from the back responded, 'Not while I'm alive you're not.' Unfortunately, he is now no longer with us.

Then there is the famous 'Killen, you were magnificent' message that he allegedly got from Prime Minister Menzies, but he actually invented it. The press were on to him all the time about what did the Prime Minister say, so he just said, 'Killen, you were magnificent.' That is ironic because he won the seat of Moreton in 1960 on Communist Party preferences which gave the anticommunist Menzies coalition a majority of one in the federal government.

With the passing of Denis James Killen I have lost a friend and Australia and Queensland have lost a great character and a wonderful politician and, as I have already said, a genuinely good bloke.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 5.41 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, Lavarch, Lawlor, Lee Long, Lee, Lingard, Lucas, McArdle, McNamara, Male, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Mickel, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nicholls, Nolan, O'Brien, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Pratt, Purcell, Reeves, 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