



RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Hansard Home Page: <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/hansard/>
 E-mail: hansard@parliament.qld.gov.au
 Phone: (07) 3406 7314 Fax: (07) 3210 0182

Subject **FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SECOND PARLIAMENT** Page

Tuesday, 7 August 2007

ASSENT TO BILLS	2201
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Letter, dated 15 June 2007, from Her Excellency the Governor to Mr Speaker advising of assent to Bills on 15 June 2007.	
	2201
AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT	2201
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Auditor-General of Queensland Report to Parliament No. 4 for 2007 titled 'Are departmental output performance measures relevant, appropriate and a fair representation of performance achievements?'	
	2201
SPEAKER'S STATEMENT	2201
Ringing of Bells	2201
MOTION OF CONDOLENCE	2201
Death of Mr EC Row	2201
MOTION OF CONDOLENCE	2204
Death of Hon. TJ Burns AO	2204
<i>Tabled paper:</i> List of Ministerial and Departmental staff who worked for the Honourable Tom Burns.....	
	2214
ORDER OF BUSINESS	2221
SPEAKER'S RULING	2222
Common Procedural Issues	2222
PETITIONS	2223
TABLED PAPERS	2223
MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS	2229
Aurukun Bauxite Project	2229
Local Government Reform	2230
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Report of the Local Government Reform Commission—Volume 1, dated July 2007	
	2230
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Report of the Local Government Reform Commission—Volume 2, dated July 2007	
	2230
Queensland Police Service	2231
Irwin, Constable B	2231
Queensland Economy	2232
Home WaterWise Rebate Scheme	2232
Asia Pacific Screen Awards	2233
Grant McLennan Fellowship; Billy Thorpe Scholarship	2233
Queensland Museum, Historic Icon	2233

Table of Contents — Tuesday, 7 August 2007

Indigenous Partnership Agreement	2234
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Document, dated July 2007, by the Queensland Government, titled 'Indigenous Partnership Agreement—An agreement between Queensland's Aboriginal and mainland Torres Strait Islander communities and the Queensland Government'	2234
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Copy of a document, dated July 2007, by the Queensland Government, titled 'Queensland Indigenous economic development and employment—making it real'	2234
Building the New Queensland	2234
Queensland Coalition	2240
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Bundle of newspaper articles relating to the leadership of the Liberal Party	2241
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Transcript of interview with Steve Dickson MP on the ABC Coast FM breakfast program with John Stokes on 3 August 2007	2241
Water Infrastructure	2241
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Document by the Department of Infrastructure titled 'Queensland Housing Affordability Strategy'	2242
Local Government Reform	2242
Queensland Police Service	2242
Health System	2243
National Housing Affordability Summit	2243
Queensland Workplace Rights Ombudsman	2244
Indigenous Partnership Agreement	2245
Commonwealth-State-Territory Disability Agreement	2245
TRAVELSAFE COMMITTEE	2246
Membership	2246
ORDER OF BUSINESS	2246
Division: Question put—That the motion be agreed to	2248
Resolved in the affirmative	2248
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE	2248
Local Government Reform	2248
Local Government Reform	2249
Commonwealth Government	2250
Local Government Reform	2251
Commonwealth Funding	2251
Local Government Reform	2252
Interest Rates	2253
South East Queensland Regional Plan	2253
Local Government Reform	2254
Local Government Reform	2255
Health System	2256
Local Government Reform	2256
Indigenous Community Housing Organisations	2257
Emergency Services Volunteers, St Lawrence	2257
PERSONAL EXPLANATION	2258
Toowong Community Medical Centre	2258
MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST	2260
Local Government Reform	2260
Indigenous Communities	2261
Inala Electorate, Funding for State Schools	2262
Local Government Reform	2263
Terrorism	2264
Local Government Reform	2265
Northern Economic Triangle	2266
Local Government Reform	2267
Local Government Reform	2268
Local Government Reform	2269
Stafford Electorate, Infrastructure	2269
LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM IMPLEMENTATION BILL	2270
First Reading	2270
Second Reading	2270
RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN EMBRYOS AND PROHIBITION OF HUMAN CLONING AMENDMENT BILL	2273
First Reading	2273
Second Reading	2273
MINING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL	2275
First Reading	2275
Second Reading	2276
LAND COURT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL	2277
First Reading	2277
Second Reading	2277
COMMUNITY SERVICES BILL	2279
Second Reading	2279

Table of Contents — Tuesday, 7 August 2007

LIQUOR (RESTRICTION OF SUPPLY TO MINORS) AMENDMENT BILL	2303
Second Reading	2303
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Memo, dated 21 August 2006, from Brisbane Based Compliance Officers, Department of Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development to Chris Waters, Executive Director, Liquor Licensing Division regarding understaffing.....	2310
Division: Question put—That the bill be now read a second time.	2326
Resolved in the negative.	2326
ADJOURNMENT	2326
Caloundra Aerodrome	2326
Death of Hon. TJ Burns AO	2327
Givelda Primary School	2327
Death of Hon. TJ Burns AO; Scouting Movement	2328
Death of Mrs D White	2328
Springbrook National Park	2329
Hospital Connect	2330
Death of Hon. TJ Burns AO	2330
Health System	2331
Aviation Industry; Death of Hon. TJ Burns AO	2331
ATTENDANCE	2332

TUESDAY, 7 AUGUST 2007

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

Mr SPEAKER (Hon. MF Reynolds, Townsville) acknowledged the traditional owners of the land upon which this parliament is assembled and the custodians of the sacred lands of our state.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have to report that I have received from Her Excellency the Governor a letter in respect of assent to certain bills, the contents of which will be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*. I table the letter for the information of members.

15 June 2007

The Honourable M.F. Reynolds, AM, MP
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

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

Date of Assent: 15 June 2007

"A Bill for An Act to establish the Clean Coal Council and to authorise the Premier to enter into the Queensland Clean Coal Agreement."

"A Bill for An Act to amend the Duties Act 2001, the Electricity Act 1994, the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2006, the Land Tax Act 1915 and the Petroleum Products Subsidy Act 1965."

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

Yours sincerely

Governor

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 15 June 2007, from Her Excellency the Governor to Mr Speaker advising of assent to Bills on 15 June 2007.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

Mr SPEAKER: I have to report that today I received from the Auditor-General Report to Parliament No. 4 for 2007 titled *Are departmental output performance measures relevant, appropriate and a fair representation of performance achievements?* I table the report for the information of members.

Tabled paper: Auditor-General of Queensland Report to Parliament No. 4 for 2007 titled 'Are departmental output performance measures relevant, appropriate and a fair representation of performance achievements?'

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Ringling of Bells

Mr SPEAKER: Before going on with the orders of business for the day, I have been told that for some members the bells were not working in the Annexe for the start of the session today. I was informed by the Clerk that they were late in coming on. We will ensure that the bells are working in future. We have allowed time for members to be here in any case.

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Death of Mr EC Row

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.33 am): I move—

1. That this House desires to place on record its appreciation of the services rendered to this state by the late Edward Charles Row, a former member of the parliament of Queensland.
2. That Mr Speaker be requested to convey to the family of the deceased gentleman the above resolution, together with an expression of the sympathy and sorrow of the members of the parliament in Queensland for the loss they have sustained.

Edward Charles Row, better known as Ted Row, was born in Ingham on 26 March 1923 and educated at Trebonne State School and then Queensland Agricultural High School and College in Gatton. From 1953 until 1972 Mr Row was a government member of the Ingham Hospitals Board. Mr Row was a sugarcane grower and was a senior vice-president of the Queensland Canegrowers Council from 1962 to 1972. He was also a member of the Sugar Experiment Stations Board from 1968 to 1972. Mr Row became a councillor of the Hinchinbrook Shire Council in 1962 until 1972 and was chairman of the Hinchinbrook National Party Executive Council for five years from 1962.

Mr Row entered parliament as the National Party member for Hinchinbrook in 1972 and retired from politics in 1989 on the election of the Goss government. In his maiden speech he spoke about research and production in the sugar industry and was concerned about the future of rural communities because of urban drift.

Mr Row was an advocate for sound environmental standards in Queensland and recognised the contributions of the migrant communities in north Queensland. Mr Row was a delegate of the Australian Constitutional Convention and participated as a member of the parliamentary delegation to Asia in 1976 and the United States of America, Europe and the United Kingdom in 1981. Mr Row was a longstanding delegate of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association from 1982 until 1988. Mr Row was on a number of parliamentary committees including the Select Committee of Privileges.

A funeral service for Ted Row was held at Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Church at Kenmore on 9 July 2007. I take this opportunity, on behalf of the government and all members, to extend my sympathy and that of this House to his wife, Connie, and to their children.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.36 am): I rise to second the condolence motion that has been moved by the Premier so that this House can extend its sympathies to the family of the late Edward Charles Row. As the Premier has indicated, Ted Row, as he was better known, was born on 26 March 1923 in Ingham. He married on 21 January 1950 and had two sons and five daughters. He lived to see 17 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. He was educated at Trebonne State School and the Queensland Agricultural High School and College at Lawes. He was a cane grower. He was very proud of the fact that he was a cane grower and took a very avid interest in the cane industry. He was a member of the committee of the Victorian Mill Suppliers in 1953; he was a member of the Herbert River Canegrowers Executive in 1962; he was a member of the Queensland Canegrowers Council in 1962; he was vice-president of the Queensland Canegrowers Council in 1972; he was director of the Herbert River Canegrowers Cooperative Society from 1962 to 1972; and he was a member of the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations from 1968 to 1972.

Ted had a long career in public affairs. He was a councillor of the Hinchinbrook shire from 1962 to 1972; he was chairman of the Hinchinbrook Electorate Council from 1962 to 1967; he was deputy chairman of the Liberal Country Party Coordinating Committee from 1962 to 1967; and he was the member for Hinchinbrook in this parliament for 17 years. He was first elected to this parliament on 27 May 1972 and retired on 2 December 1989.

During his years in this parliament Ted was parliamentary delegate to Asia in 1976; he was a member of the Australian Constitutional Convention from 1975 to 1976; he was a Chairman of Committees from November 1983; and he was a member of various parliamentary select committees during his term of office. He was a member of many committees in relation to primary industries, water resources, maritime services, local government and racing. He attended CPA seminars in Kuala Lumpur in 1987 and in London and Trinidad in 1988 as the regional representative for the Australasian and Pacific region and was a member of the parliamentary delegation to the USA, Europe and United Kingdom in 1981.

In the years that he was in this parliament, Ted Row was an avid contributor and supporter of the Queensland sugar industry and its development. That is what he was best known for and he is well remembered in the industry for the contribution that he made. Along with his parliamentary colleagues, the late Ron Camm, a former member for Whitsunday, and the late Tom Newbery, a former member for Mirani, he was an extremely strong voice and advocate for the industry that he loved and a proud proponent for the economic benefits it brought to the state.

In conjunction with his colleagues, it was through Ted Row's confidence and persuasion in both state and federal arenas that the sugar industry emerged as the agricultural bastion of coastal Queensland. Ted Row's passion for the sugar industry was reflected in his maiden speech when he stated—

North Queensland, especially the coastal sections whose economy has been built basically on sugar, stands on a vital watershed in its history. For it is in this coastal section of high productivity that the question of whether or not Queensland holds its rural population will be determined. Queensland's strength to date has been in its decentralisation of population, with centres of sound economy extending along the coast from Brisbane to Mossman ... Because of this Queensland has been freer than any other State of the dehydrating factor of constant urbanisation.

Honourable members, that quote illustrates what, I believe, Ted Row was about. He represented his industry, he represented his electorate and he represented his region. He was a proud supporter not just of his electorate and his industry but of the regions of Queensland. He was zealous in his desire to

see the provision of employment opportunities for young people within his electorate. There is a quote from his maiden speech on the topic of the provision of employment opportunities. Ted recognised that, and these are his own words—

... young people will be lost permanently in the drain to the metropolitan area with the inevitable result that Queensland will become just another state with virtually all of its population concentrated in a few concrete jungles and cities as in the south.

He was a fighter for regional Queensland and he was a fighter for those people who sent him to this parliament. Apart from his representation here in this parliament he had a range of community interests. He was a member of the Ingham hospital board from 1953 to 1972, he was a member of the Ingham Bowling Club, he was a member of the aero club—he held his own private pilots licence—he was a member of the Ingham Rotary Club for many years and his other interests included aged care, boating and pistol and trap shooting.

He will certainly be missed by those people whom he represented in this parliament for many years. He will be well remembered in the National Party as a member who represented our party proudly in this parliament. I join with the Premier in extending the sympathies of the House to his family.

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—Lib) (9.41 am): I join with the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in placing on record our appreciation for the life of Ted Row and our condolences to his family—his wife, Connie, and their seven children Ed, Richard, Rosemary, Janet, Mary-Annette, Edwina and Paul. Ted gave a life of service to the community not just in this House but in north Queensland.

He was a member of this House, as others have said, from 1972 to 1989 but he was a passionate advocate for north Queensland and for the sugar industry in particular. He was a man who, for most of his adult and working life, participated in public life in this state, particularly in the north. Ted was a constituent of mine. He was living at Kenmore and was laid to rest in the Brookfield Cemetery. The prophetic words that the Leader of the Opposition quoted from his maiden speech in relation to the drain of youth from rural areas to the metropolitan area obviously was one that came home to Ted as he spent his later years after his retirement in 1989 in proximity to his very large and growing family in the western suburbs of Brisbane. I would like to place on record the condolences of the Liberal Party, along with those of members of the opposition and the Premier, to Ted's family and show our appreciation for his life of service to the people of north Queensland.

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (9.43 am): I rise to make a contribution to the condolence motion to mark the passing of one of my predecessors in the electorate of Hinchinbrook, Edward Charles Row, known as Ted. Ted Row held the electorate of Hinchinbrook for the Nationals from May 1972 to December 1989 when he chose to retire. Ted Row had succeeded his uncle, Sir John Row, in the Hinchinbrook electorate who had held the seat from 1960 to 1972 and was the minister for primary industries between 1963 and 1972.

During Ted Row's parliamentary career some notable achievements included appointment as a delegate to the Australian Constitutional Convention in 1975. Ted served on the panel of temporary chairmen of committees from 1975 to 1983 and was Chairman of Committees in the Queensland Legislative Assembly from November 1983 until his retirement in December 1989.

Ted Row had given service to his local community prior to his election to state parliament as a councillor on the Hinchinbrook Shire Council from 1962 to 1972. As a member of the Country Party, Ted Row had served as chairman of the Country Party's Hinchinbrook electorate council between 1962 and 1967. Ted Row had also served on the board of the then Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations between 1968 and 1972 and also served as senior vice-president of the Queensland Canegrowers Council between 1962 and 1972.

Ted Row was born in Ingham on 26 March 1923. As a cane grower in the Herbert River district Ted Row was active in his local mill suppliers committee and local Canegrowers organisation. He also served on the Ingham hospital board from 1953 to 1972 and was a member of the local bowling, aero and Rotary clubs.

As a relatively new member of this place, most members would be aware that I am not Ted Row's immediate successor in the electorate of Hinchinbrook. I did not know Ted Row personally but I recently contacted the former member for Hinchinbrook, Marc Rowell, to offer him the opportunity to provide a message for incorporation during this condolence motion for Ted Row, whom he succeeded in 1989. Marc Rowell provided the following message—

It is with great sadness that I learnt of the passing of Ted Row, who had been the Member for Hinchinbrook from 27 May 1972 to 2 December 1989. Ted had been a loyal supporter of the Country Party and later the National Party. He had served the Ingham and Tully districts in the Queensland Legislative Assembly carrying out a wide range of duties.

He was a strong advocate for the sugar industry prior to him succeeding Sir John Row on 7 May 1972, and this continued during his parliamentary career. I had the good fortune to be elected to the Queensland Parliament when Ted retired at the December election of 1989. Ted and his wife Connie had a sound understanding of the electorate and the people they represented. They both were aware of the pioneering spirit and major contributions that so many had made to North Queensland.

Ted will be sadly missed by his close friends and family. My wife Sandy and I pass on our condolences to them at the loss of Ted as will many who associated with him during his 84 years.

For my own part, it was interesting and instructive to read Ted Row's maiden speech in this place in September 1972 and consider it in comparison with my own in October 2006. Ted Row reflected extensively on the importance and achievements of the sugar industry to Queensland's economy and the contribution it makes to many regional communities. Like all National Party members for the electorate of Hinchinbrook, Ted Row's maiden speech extolled the many virtues of northern Queensland and its potential for development. Northern development as a means of decentralising the state was a prominent theme throughout Ted Row's first contribution to debate in this place. Ted Row also spoke strongly about the timber industry and the development of extensive pine plantation forests in the Hinchinbrook electorate near the townships of Kennedy and Cardwell making it the then timber capital of Queensland, sustaining many jobs and other industries.

Ted Row passed away peacefully on 4 July 2007 at the Canossa Care Home for the Aged in Oxley in Brisbane aged 84 years and is survived by his wife, Connie, his seven children and their families, including Eddie and Dulce Row who live in the electorate of the member for Lockyer. He was laid to rest at the Brookfield Cemetery on 9 July 2007 after a requiem mass at Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Church in Kenmore. I join with the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and all the members of this place in extending my sincere sympathies to Mrs Row and her family following Ted's passing.

Hon. KR LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (9.48 am): It is ironic that we are having condolence motions for two men, Ted Row and Tommy Burns, on the same day because the fights between the two men in this chamber were legendary. The fights were virtually about the fact that Ted was the Deputy Speaker and Tom was the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. If members want to go back to page 1000 of *Hansard* in 1987 they will see a magnificent debate. Tom was debating the fact that many of the places in the Valley were not exactly restaurants, they were other things. I allowed a little bit of leeway but unfortunately then Ted came into the chamber and tried to make Tom be relevant to the particular bill which was the gambling and vagrancy legislation.

It finally ended up that Ted ruled that not only should Tom be relevant but that Tom should always look at the Speaker when he was talking. Trying to make him do that was absolutely impossible and it became legend from there on, because never would we allow Ted to be Speaker when Tom was speaking as it was just an inevitable fight. I was at the funeral for Ted and it was amazing and fantastic to hear of his record in the community, his work in the hospitals, his work in the cane industry and of course his passion for Hinchinbrook and his passion for Mission Beach. I also congratulate Connie. She was a great partner for Ted and I wish that family all of the best. I extend my sympathies to the Row family.

Motion agreed to, honourable members standing in silence.

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Death of Hon. TJ Burns AO

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.50 am): I move—

1. That this House desires to place on record its appreciation of the services rendered to this state by the late Honourable Thomas James Burns, a former member of the parliament of Queensland and minister of the Crown.
2. That Mr Speaker be requested to convey to the family of the deceased gentleman the above resolution, together with an expression of the sympathy and sorrow of the members of the parliament in Queensland, in the loss they have sustained.

I understand that Angela and her family are with us today, and I want to acknowledge all family members in the gallery. As you know, Tommy Burns was one of those very special people and he was held in great esteem and affection in the Labor Party. To have his family and Angela here today is a very special moment. I want to acknowledge them at the outset.

Today I would like to pay tribute to the Hon. Thomas James Burns, a very eminent figure in the Australian political landscape for over 40 years who sadly passed away on 4 June 2007. Tom Burns as we all knew him—or Tommy Burns—was born in Maryborough on 27 October 1931. He was educated at Albert State School in Maryborough, Pinalba, Hervey Bay and the East Brisbane State School and Brisbane Grammar School. From 1951 to 1957 Tom served in the Royal Australian Air Force as a radio technician at Ballarat, Pearce, Sale and Amberley before moving on to be elected as a state councillor and to the state executive of the Electrical Trades Union until 1960. From 1960 to 1965 Tom served as a state organiser in the Australian Labor Party and from 1965 to 1972 was State Secretary of the ALP, and a very fine secretary of the ALP I should say. In 1969 Tom also served as federal Treasurer of the ALP and was federal President of the ALP from 1970 to 1973—an historic time for the party and Australia with the election of the Whitlam government in December 1972. We all know that he was also part of that historic visit that Gough Whitlam made to China when he was not just a pioneer but a leader in world affairs in making that special link with China, which was then subsequently followed by most of the world.

Tom was elected to the Queensland Legislative Assembly on 27 May 1972 as the member for the newly created Brisbane based seat of Lytton. From this time until his resignation on 31 May 1996, Tom served in many leadership capacities within the parliamentary Labor Party. He was the Leader of the Opposition from 1974 to 1978 when he famously led the Labor 11—or the cricket team—and he rebuilt the state team here. He was Opposition Whip from 1982 to 1984 and Deputy Leader of the Opposition from 1984 to 1989. Upon Labor's historic election to government in December 1989, Tom served as Deputy Premier until the government of this state changed hands in February 1996. In addition to being Deputy Premier, Tom served in many ministries under Premier Wayne Goss. From December 1989 to September 1992 he was minister for housing and local government and from September 1992 to October 1993 he was minister for administrative services and minister for rural communities. From October 1993 to December 1994 he was the minister for emergency services and minister for rural communities and consumer affairs, and from December 1994 to July 1995 he served as the minister for emergency services and consumer affairs and minister assisting the Premier on rural affairs. From July 1995 to February 1996 he served as the minister for tourism, sport and youth. As you can see, Mr Speaker, it was a very long and impressive and distinguished parliamentary and party career. In 1999 my government appointed Tom as chair of the Queensland China Council, a post he held until his passing. In 2001 Tom was awarded an officer of the Order of Australia for his contribution to Australia-China relations for over 30 years. As members are aware, a state funeral honouring Tom was held at St John's Cathedral on 12 June 2007.

The official record shows that Tom Burns devoted a lifetime of hard work and dedication to the people of Queensland and the Australian Labor Party, and it was indeed a great achievement. If anyone ever stood up for the battlers of this state—the workers—then Tom Burns did. But what that record does not show is the quality of the man. Tom Burns was a legend within the ALP and the broader Queensland community. He loved fishing and he loved people and people loved him. He was completely comfortable with everyone and would routinely go out of his way to do someone a good turn. He was a true person's person. He was as much at home sitting down to a banquet with China's leaders in Beijing as he was chewing the fat with a rail worker or stockman at some out-of-the-way bush camp. Tom was a larrikin in the best Australian sense of the word and a larrikin in the best Australian tradition, and that is why we all loved him. His smile was his trademark, his handshake was his contract and his friendship was valued by political allies and foes alike. With Tom Burns what you saw is what you got. He was a special person and we are all the sadder for his passing.

I have to say that when Tom retired—and I alluded to this in my formal remarks—the contribution he made in developing special links in China and Vietnam will hold this state in good stead for a long time to come. As I said at his state funeral, whenever I visited China with Tom, which I did on a number of occasions, he was much more appreciated and much more well known than I ever was, which gives you some idea of someone who had left public life but had developed such close links. I also told this story at the state funeral, and it is worth retelling to put on the record. Tom talked me into going to Nanjing to meet the Governor because he thought that HOK Sport had a chance of winning a contract because, as you know, it was building quite a lot of stadia across China for all sorts of soccer and other events.

At that time HOK Sport was 33rd on the list of people that had applied for the work. As you know, in China whenever there are applications for major projects bids come from all over the world. The Germans are very competitive, as are the French, the Italians, the Spanish and the English. People from all over the world tender for these things, including the Japanese of course. Tom thought it would be very strategic if we had a dinner with the Governor, which we did. People that HOK Sport had not been able to previously get to see were actually at the dinner. While I will not go into the appropriate amount of alcohol that was consumed by people—but only in the state's interest, because most people know I am not a big drinker—Tom more than held his own. He held mine as well! At the end of that long evening, the business that was done resulted in HOK Sport—not that evening but subsequently—winning the contract. That was the sort of ability that Tom had. He understood the Chinese community very well. He knew that HOK Sport had a good product. He knew that if we actually went there and did government-to-government business we could produce a result, and we did.

Whether it was HOK Sport, doing business in Nanjing or selling dairy cattle to Vietnam—and I went around with Tom and visited a number of the farms where he was so proud of the business that he had done—Tom Burns opened so many doors and was so well regarded that replacing him in China and Vietnam, frankly, will be impossible. We have not replaced him; we are obviously looking at how we try to replace someone of Tom's standing.

Moving to another part of Tom's life, I can remember when Tom was party secretary and then subsequently Leader of the Opposition and he set about encouraging young people within the party of which I was one. Tom was one of those people who wanted to ensure that the Labor Party was well represented. In the time that he led the cricket team—the 11—it was a dark hour for the Labor Party. We had very small numbers in this House. It was a very difficult time. We know exactly what that is all about, which is why we do not intend to go back there for some time—hopefully. It was a very difficult time. Tom led the party and he took the number of seats held from 11 to 23 in one election. That is an amazing result at a time when there was not much credibility, at a time when there was a politically dominant

party—the National Party under the late Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen. It was a very difficult time. Tom had enthusiasm, Tom had commitment and his passion was what encouraged other people to do amazing things. In a sense, Tom Burns kept the Labor Party alive in this state. He did that when he was an organiser after the split. He went out and travelled around this state along with other organisers such as Jim Keefer. They did a fantastic job as well. Tom had to go through that difficult rebuilding time after the split in the late fifties and early sixties. That was not an easy time. We really needed people of character and people of determination, and that is exactly what Tom had.

I have to say that Tommy was a very special person. I know the Leader of the House, Robert Swarten, was a very good mate of his and will talk at some length about this. However, it would be remiss of me if I did not say to you, Angela, and to all the family—and I want to mention Gail, Linda and Samantha and all the other family members—we all understand that when you are a senior person like Tommy you share your life with the party. Inevitably, the family is the one who misses out on a fair bit of that time. Tommy in a sense had two families—and I know Angela will not mind me saying this—he had his family at home but he also had the family of the Labor Party. Both his families loved him. Both his families certainly will miss him. I say for the record: Tommy, we loved you. You were a great guy and you will be sadly missed.

Hon. AM BLYTH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure) (10.01 am): I rise to second the motion moved by the Premier. When I joined the Labor Party as a young woman in the early 1980s Tom Burns was already a giant of the Labor movement and a giant of the Australian Labor Party. I remember watching Tom as a speaker at conferences and other Labor Party forums and I was very conscious then that I was watching a legend, watching someone who could call on a long and rich political history to illustrate his point or to put someone in their place when it was needed. He was someone whom I had grown up watching on television standing on the steps of Parliament House standing up for the things he believed in often after being removed involuntarily from this chamber. I was watching someone who had been part of the Whitlam story, someone who had taken Queensland and Australia into China. I knew that I was watching someone, as I said, who was a legend.

Tom was a man who when he made a commitment he stuck to it. The Labor Party, Queensland politics and Australian politics were one of the great abiding passions and commitments of Tom's life and he stuck with them through thick and thin. As the Premier said, he stuck through the long hard days of the Labor Party here in Queensland; he stuck through the days of despair when the ALP seemed doomed; he stuck through 17 years of opposition under an electoral system that offered very little hope of change. What Tom gave the Labor Party here in Queensland was continuity and leadership over many decades.

When he became the deputy to Wayne Goss in 1989 he became the first Labor deputy for more than three decades. What he gave to his Premier, Wayne Goss, was two decades of political representation under his belt and many more decades of experience right across Queensland and on the national stage. On the face of it, it seems an irony that Tom Burns, an unashamedly one-eyed Labor man, won so many friends on all sides of politics. He won those friends, in my view, because of his down-to-earth style, his very strong values and his genuine love of life. It seems equally ironic that Tom Burns, a man who won and held one of the most eastern electorates of our state right on the edge of Moreton Bay, was revered by so many as a great champion of the bush. Tom made it his business to know and understand what it was like to live in remote parts of Queensland. He made it his business to know and understand what it was like to be in the far western parts of our state even though he was at the very opposite side of our state. If Wayne Goss were here, I am sure he would advise the House that it is likely that Tom could be credited with single-handedly defeating Wayne's referendum on daylight saving. It is equally ironic that a knockabout bloke from Queensland could cut it with the most senior and influential Chinese leaders over the last five decades. As the Premier said, he was equally at home fishing in a dingy off Stradbroke Island or meeting with members of the central committee of the People's Republic of China.

I do not believe we can overestimate the importance of Tom's work in China and the relationship he built for Queensland. We have a unique relationship with this country that is emerging as one of the superpowers of this century, and we have it because Tom Burns personally committed to it and he stuck with that commitment. Despite different cultures, despite language barriers, the Chinese responded to Tom because of the very same characteristics that Queenslanders responded to: his warmth, his humour and his interest in them. He gave the relationship between Queensland and China the same thing he gave to the Labor Party: long-term continuity. As I said, he made a commitment to China. He made a decision on that first trip when he went with Whitlam that he would visit China as often as possible and keep building that relationship. I once asked Tom how many visits he had made to China and he laughed and said, 'I lost count so long ago that it doesn't matter.'

As the Premier said, Tom gave a great deal of personal commitment to this relationship and I add to the Premier's anecdote about the visit to Nanjing and the Jiangsu Education Department visit to Australia while I was education minister. Tom invited me to attend a reception for the delegation. Brisbane was their last port of call, having already been to Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra and also to a New Zealand city. Tom took me aside before the evening started and he said, 'Look, they're at

the end of their tour. They have been to a lot of these boring dinners and it is our job to show them Queensland hospitality and how to have a really good time because I want them to remember us when they go back.' Tom made it his business then to illustrate table by table that you can have just as powerful gan bei with Queensland beer as you can with Chinese mai tais. Sure enough, the delegation did remember us. Unbeknown to us at the time, they were actually inspecting each of these cities to award a very significant and lucrative contract for the training of literally hundreds of teachers. On the back of that reception QUT won that contract and have now trained several hundred Chinese teachers and will continue to do so long into the future.

I think it is easy in a condolence motion for us to make saints out of sinners. Tom Burns was not a saint and I think he would be appalled if we remembered him as that. I was very privileged to serve for a brief amount of time with Tom in this parliament. During the year that I served with Tom, a group of firefighters were outside of the parliament making a point in relation to a wage claim. Tom thought the best way to fix that was to go out and tell them what he really thought of them. He did so using a fine colloquial word that starts with 'w'. Later that year the Mundingburra by-election was held and at the very first house that I doorknocked in that election a very large, well-built, muscled man came to the door. When I said I was from the Labor Party, he said, 'Hang on, I've got a few mates.' He came back with three other very well-built, muscled men who had been watching the football and said, 'This girl here is from the Labor Party. We're firefighters and we've got a message we would like you to take back to Tom Burns.' So I diligently took the message and I gave it to Tom in exactly the terms they had given it to me. Tom took it in the spirit we would expect Tom to take it in, but I am not sure I won any votes in that house that day.

In my view, with the passing of Tom Burns Queensland has lost a legend. Many of us on this side of the parliament have lost a mate, but his family have lost much more. They have lost a husband, they have lost a father and they have lost a grandfather. I extend my deep and personal sympathies to them for this very great loss. I am proud to have known Tom Burns. I regard him as a great example of how to live your life in politics. He will be very sadly missed.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.09 am): I rise to speak in support of the motion of condolence that has been moved by the Premier and seconded by the Deputy Premier and to extend the sympathies of everybody on this side of the House to the family of the late Tom Burns. As the Premier indicated, Thomas James Burns was born in Maryborough on 27 October 1931. His parents were Thomas James Burns, who was a canefarmer, and Elfie Rock. Tom attended Albert State School in Maryborough and the Pialba, Hervey Bay and East Brisbane state schools. When his family moved to Brisbane he attended Brisbane Grammar School.

Tom joined the RAAF and served as a radio technician from 1951 to 1957. He also became a state councillor and state executive officer for the ETU and operated his own electrical service business at Kangaroo Point. Tom joined the ALP at 15. At 28 he was elected to be state organiser. Tom travelled all over the state rebuilding the ALP after the 1957 electoral split and building an intricate knowledge of every nook and cranny of rural and regional Queensland, which was to stand him in good stead later in his political career. Tom was elected state secretary of the Queensland ALP in 1965 and became federal president in 1969. In 1972, Tom was elected to the state seat of Lytton. After the electoral disaster of 1974 he became, as the Premier referred to, the captain of the ALP 11 here in the House. After standing down as leader in 1978, Tom continued in numerous shadow ministry roles and as deputy leader from 1984. Tom was elected deputy leader under Wayne Goss in 1989. After the ALP victory he continued in that role unopposed until his retirement in 1996.

Tom served in several portfolios during that time, including housing and local government, emergency services, consumer affairs, administrative services and tourism. But I am sure all of us from regional Queensland will remember him most as the minister for the bush—a term that he very famously acquired during the years of the Goss government. It was in his capacity as minister for the bush that I first met Tom Burns. I knew of him long before that, of course, as a follower of Queensland politics. I also knew of him because my grandfather took a very close interest in Tom's political career. He and Tom's grandmother were members of the same family—a family of 13 kids who grew up on the banks of the Burnett River in Gayndah. While I knew about the family connection, I never knew Tom. I had never met Tom until that protest movement when we were fighting the closure of the railway system under the Goss government.

I was leading the protest committee in Monto. Tom and his committee came to town and it was a fairly typical protest meeting. We were all there full of fire and brimstone and with some very vigorous speeches prepared. I stood up to make my address to the committee and Tom from the stage up the front, in that famous interjecting voice of his, quipped across the hall, 'You be nice to me, boy, we're family.' I certainly learned a heck of a lot about politics that day. I also learned a heck of a lot from the way Tom handled that whole issue and the respect that he was able to engender, even from those of us who were on the opposite side of the argument. Still today there are many people in regional Queensland who respect and admire the great job that Tom Burns did in his capacity as minister for the bush.

I did get to know Tom somewhat during a trade trip to China, of which I had the privilege of being part, with the Hon. Judy Spence, the now minister for police, and which Tom accompanied. During the couple of weeks of that trip I got to know the man apart from the public image that we all knew as the politician. I came to know that he was a very genuine person. Like so many other people of his generation, he was moulded and forged by the hard years of the Depression and the war. He was very genuine about the things that he undertook and the things that he said. It was a privilege to know Tom in that capacity. I can certainly confirm the comments that the Premier made that he was as comfortable talking to high-level Chinese delegations as he was sitting and having a beer with me—one of the hated Tories—in the bar afterwards. He was comfortable in every situation. I think that is something that everybody who knew him would recognise him for.

I last met Tom earlier this year at Parliament House. He was here having dinner with some members of his family. I happened to meet him on the balcony. I remember he scolded me for my record of involuntary absences from this House—not in the way that most people scold me for that but in the context of having a long way to go to keep up to him. He suggested that involuntary absences were a lot harder to earn nowadays than they were in the past. However, I beg to differ, of course, Mr Speaker. Tom was proud of his record in this House. He was proud of the fact that he stood firm in his arguments and he never backed down. That, too, is something that I think Tom is certainly well remembered for. I was very proud to meet the members of his family that night. He introduced me to some of the younger members of his family. He was never more proud than when he was introducing members of his family to other people. In the time that I did know Tom—and I know that other members who knew him better will confirm this—I came to know that his family were the most important thing to him and it was his family of whom he was most proud. I extend to you our sympathies and condolences today.

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.15 am): When Tom Burns passed away two months ago, we lost not only a legend of Queensland politics but also one of the bayside's most dedicated and unrelenting advocates. When I was elected as only the second member ever for Lytton following Tom's retirement in 1996, many people said that I had big shoes to fill. Although politics is often about nuance and compromise, there are few statements truer than that. Tom Burns cast a very long shadow over Queensland politics.

Tom Burns was a creature of the very adversarial nature of politics under the Bjelke-Petersen regime. The way Labor supporters and electorates were treated by Bjelke-Petersen characterised Tom's thinking. In fact, the seat of Lytton, created in the 1971 redistribution and filled by Tom at the 1972 general election, was a classic Bjelke-Petersen gerrymander. Most of the Labor parts of the old seats of Bulimba, Belmont, Wynnum and Hawthorne were bottled up in one ultra safe Labor seat. Bjelke-Petersen's behaviour paid dividends when in 1974 they won Belmont and Wynnum for a term.

Tom quickly established himself as synonymous with the electorate of Lytton. He built up an enormous reputation as a fighter for the battlers, both locally and elsewhere in Queensland. In his maiden speech Tom could not resist the temptation to get stuck into the government with accusations and interjections from Premier Bjelke-Petersen flying thick and fast. When the then member for Mundingburra, Tom Aikens, interjected, he was met with Burns's response, 'Go back to sleep. You've been snoring away for the last hour.' And then further, 'He was out with a blonde last night. He has to sleep it off here today.' Tom Burns was not a person to interject on.

Tom did not get kicked out during his maiden speech, but he got kicked out frequently. He made it an art form. Many of us will remember seeing much TV footage of Tom fulminating on the steps of parliament, usually in a safari suit of a very imaginative colour that only Tom seemed to wear. I can remember on another occasion when the opposition tipped a bucket on someone on this side of the House. Tom got up and said, 'I tell you what, I'll tip a bucket on you blokes over there and what I don't know I'll make up.' Tom played it hard.

Also in his maiden speech Tom thanked Darcy O'Dempsey, his campaign director. Darcy diligently served Tom for the next 24 years as his campaign director and with Tom built the Lytton ALP branches into a formidable team. They also worked outside the area to help areas that were not as well endowed with Labor Party activists and supporters.

Tom threw himself into representing the electorate along the bayside that he loved so much. It is true that he had a bondwood and fibreglass dinghy that he referred to as the *Electorate*. It sat outside his home on the mudflats at Wynnum North. Tom used it to fish and collect crabs from his pots. Tom was prepared to take on the big issues locally: the fight to stop a chlorine plant going into the port of Brisbane so close to neighbouring houses, the fight to end coral dredging in Moreton Bay, the fight to get a 24-hour outpatients clinic for Wynnum Hospital—something the other side never did.

Tom was a great supporter of local organisations and schools. He often spoke about the way schools in Labor electorates were treated by conservative governments and vowed to address the wrongs. A particular favourite was Darling Point Special School. Tom would do anything for the school and its kids not only as a local member but also in retirement. Tom worked tirelessly with the Wynnum ambulance committee under the stewardship of the late great David Lloyd. David, a Liberal Party member, but ironically the son of a state Labor member of parliament, greatly admired Tom, as did Tom

admire him. I should also mention the work Tom did with the Wynnum Leagues Club and the Wynnum Ex-servicemen's Bowls Club. He and leagues club chairman Arthur Lovell were a formidable team who delivered results frequently and where they counted.

One of Tom's proud achievements was the mangrove boardwalk at Wynnum North. A few years ago we named the boardwalk after Tom. He loved it as it was a wonderful, environmentally friendly way that kids, parents and grandparents could inspect and learn about our bay and understand the significance of the mangroves and its marine habitat. Tom was the fisherman's friend because he wanted to protect the habitat fish lived in so there would be sustainable fish into the future.

Tom had a very practical sense of achieving things for the workers. He did not have a lot of time for lawyers and sometimes one got the impression that any person who had a university qualification was, in Tom's terms, 'an academic'. It was not meant as a compliment.

It was the bread and butter issues that mattered so much to Tom. I can remember one evening in a meeting of his electorate executive committee, Tom was expressing his view about relative priorities for 'Labor lawyer' type people. When in government, it was Tom's natural inclination to treat the conservative opposition in exactly the way they had treated our side. On that evening he said of some of the Goss government's post-Fitzgerald legislation, 'The guys at the Cannon Hill meat works are losing their jobs. They're getting the sack, but don't worry, digger—you can tell them all they've got freedom of information and judicial review.'

With some notable exceptions, including the Premier and the Leader of the House, most of us here had our experiences with Tom as a senior minister in the Goss government and Labor Party elder statesman. Rarely a day goes by here now when one is not influenced by Tom's views and mannerisms. Many of us on this side of the House call each other digger. Tom did not invent the word, but he made it part of the Labor Party lexicon. Tom's phrase, 'Fair dinkum, digger, you want to wake up to yourself'—or whatever other appropriate phrase—was part of his daily language. We will keep using that here when we talk amongst ourselves and in some small way remember that Tom's presence and influence are still with us.

Tom continued to open doors for Queensland in China well after he left this place. He continued doing that work because he was such a visionary almost 40 years ago. Tom was part of the legendary Gough Whitlam-Mick Young delegation to China in 1971. They urged the recognition of the People's Republic of China. This was ridiculed by then Liberal Prime Minister Billy McMahon, who had the tables turned on him when the US Nixon administration did exactly the same thing that federal Labor was urging.

Tom had a small photo album that showed him photographed with 40 years worth of senior Communist Party and Chinese government officials. They knew him and loved him, and he used this to the maximum advantage of Queensland and Australia. Tom was not a fair-weather friend. He supported people and causes when they were unfashionable or when times were tough, and they never forgot it.

Tom joined the Labor Party at a very young age and became active and very prominent very quickly. The federal Labor Party administration, from the time of Evatt until people like Mick Young and Tom Burns took it over, was totally dysfunctional, much like the state Liberal Party today. It is almost comical to recall that the national executive almost expelled Gough Whitlam when he was deputy parliamentary leader. He was only saved by Tom's direct and very firm intervention with the Queensland delegates. Gough never forgot this. Tom also went through the 'cricket team' period from 1974 to 1977 and was the bulwark and foundation stone of the Goss Labor government, which was the first state Labor government in 32 years.

As a broadly based activist party with its goal to strive for the betterment of all people, there are inevitably conflicts within the party about what we should be doing, when and where. Tom put this dilemma and the responsibility into very sharp relief when he pointed out the consequences of disunity for the people who most need us in state Labor, the battlers.

On many occasions he would recall speaking with an old widow who had a stucco housing commission house in Inala. Upon visiting her he noticed that there was moss growing on the ceiling inside her house. He asked her why she did not ask for it to be fixed. She told him that she was too frightened to complain.

This was the treatment handed out by the Bjelke-Petersen regime and Tom had a very clear message for us on this side as well. It would not have happened if we had a Labor government, and that started with the expulsion of Gair during the split. Tom said that it was to his regret that the then Queensland central executive voted to expel Gair. Thirty-two years later when speaking of the moss on this woman's house as typifying the way battlers were treated under the conservatives, he said, 'We did that. We expelled Gair without trying to deal with the issues of disunity and caused Labor governments not to be elected for another 32 years.' Disunity is death, as they say, and Tom took the opportunity to drive that home on every occasion during the heady Goss years when some people sometimes thought the pace of reform should be quicker.

For a so-called 'hard' man, Tom was above all a big softie. He loved animals, including Rupert his dog, he loved people, he loved Queensland and he loved the Labor Party. Most of all he loved his wife Angela and his daughters Gail, Linda and Samantha. I want to pay particular credit to them, as in many respects—and as most people on both sides of the house would know—they made the greatest sacrifice in not seeing Tom anywhere near as much as he and they would have liked. In the days when he was party organiser with very few resources driving around the state, when he was state secretary or when he was national president. When he was Leader of the Opposition with very few resources or Deputy Premier in a brand new reforming government, the calls on his time were immense. We owe a great debt of gratitude to them for being so selfless in giving us Tom's time, which as Queenslanders we so desperately needed from him.

Angela, what great pride you and your family must have in this unique Queenslander. What great pride you must have in his role of shaping the modern Queensland, the Labor Party and governments. What pride you must have in his outstanding role in furthering Queensland's and Australia's interests in south-east Asia. What pride you must have in Tom as a supporter of kids at schools like Darling Point Special School, the people of the bush and housing commission tenants, their dignity and respect.

I would like to thank Tom Burns and his family for the outstanding contribution he made to Queensland life, not only for people like me and those of us here who know full well his greatest achievements, but also for people in the past, now and in the future who might never know the role Tom Burns played in changing government administration, particularly in housing, and his emphasis on the dignity of the person and the 'little people'. Most of them will never know Tom Burns or have heard of him. On behalf of those whose lives have been fundamentally changed for the better by Tom Burns's influence and policies, I say thank you for the 75 years—all too short—of his life. Vale Tom Burns!

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology) (10.26 am): I rise to support the motion of condolence for Tom Burns, the former member for Lytton, a cabinet minister in the Goss Labor government and, as I said at his state funeral, a family friend, a colleague, a boss and a mate.

May I also pass on to Angela his most wonderful wife, his daughters Samantha, Linda and Gail condolences not only from Judy and myself but also from our sons, who fondly remember Tom's kite flying lessons in front of the Burns's home, and his old friends, my mum and dad, Bonnie and Evan, who had known Tom since 1960. I add to that list my brothers and sister who also want to be remembered to you. They pass on their condolences.

Tom Burns was a Labor man who made his way into the Labor Party because of an understanding that the way to an equitable outcome for battlers and for those who had not been dealt all the picture cards in life was a Labor government. Regrettably, he had to wait until 1972 to see a federal Labor government and until 1989, when he was aged 58, to become a minister in a Queensland Labor government.

I know of no other Labor Party member who has his credentials. He was a party organiser, a state secretary, a federal secretary, a state president and a state deputy premier. He saw the aftermath of the split and dealt with the fallout of it by travelling the state, being fed and housed by Labor stalwarts like my mum and dad, and sleeping in my bed while I slept on the floor.

He rebuilt the organisation from the ground up, member by member, via an ingenious postcard system. He mailed back to party office a prospective member's details by postcard. He went to shearing sheds, got bogged on dirt roads in the gulf, got shouted at in public meetings and caused as much grief as he could to the Tories and the groupers while doing it. He campaigned in the pubs where the workers drank and he got into the remnants of the branches. He visited the shearing sheds, the railway workshops, the meat works—anywhere there was a worker, anywhere in the state.

On becoming state secretary he set about modernising the party. He went to the United States, the United Kingdom and European countries looking for ideas. One such idea was the cassette tape which could be played at branch meetings. Just ponder that for a moment! Another was boater hats made of polystyrene. Does anybody remember those?

The party was broke and he rebuilt the finances. He built bridges with business and he fought to keep radio station 4KQ, which later became a terrific financial asset to the party.

He was not particular with whom he crossed swords and mostly he won, except the time he told my mother that her women's branch was a bunch of old busybodies. He came off second best there, I can assure you.

Burnsie saw that there was only one game in town and that was in this place. Arguably he was one of the most influential Labor politicians of the time, as it was he who told the Queensland delegates to the federal executive not to come back if they did not vote to save Whitlam. Despite being part of the historic first Australian visit to China with Gough, a visit which was to influence him and others and endear him to the Chinese people till the day he died, he knew that the only way to really get a fair go for those he cared about so much was to get into parliament, which he did on 27 May 1972.

Tom won the seat of Lytton and held it until he relinquished it almost 24 years later to the day, which ironically enough was almost 11 years to the day that he died on his beloved and often skited about houseboat, which I might add almost drove Angela to the point of distraction before it was completed by Christmas last year. Angela told me the story of how—typical of him—he had her running around in the heat painting it because it had to be ready for Christmas.

The *Courier-Mail* at the time of Tom's maiden speech recorded him speaking with a 'machine gun rapidity' as he covered all manner of topics. This speech was to set the tone for the rest of his parliamentary career—his larrikin style, his Aussie language and old-style sayings, his use of parliamentary privilege to say true things about everyone from the Governor, the judiciary, various public servants and police officers down to the fishmonger at the bay. If it had to be said, he said it and sometimes it was sanitised by Hansard. I do not know how many members remember when he said in this House, 'I'll bet you \$5 to a bunch of grapes and you can keep the steak in your mouth.' He did not really say that. He had another word for grapes and it was something to do with goat droppings. But Hansard faithfully records it today that he said 'a bunch of grapes', so that is what he said.

Again he worked hard and again he stepped into the breach after the terrible hammering that came our way in 1974 when we were down to a cricket team. Some of those people who formed the cricket team had never been in parliament previously and became shadow ministers like Bill Prest. It was a tough task as the 11 members did not all agree. On one occasion one member disagreed with another over a transport bill by one claiming that he drove better drunk than sober and the other advocating that people who drank alcohol should be sentenced to jail. Burnsie at the time held a press conference out of the Colmslie Hotel—and I might add, Angela, that the McGuires also send their condolences—where he advocated that the way to ban people from drink driving was to ban petrol—a particularly rational statement! But unlike those who find themselves in this hapless position today, he won respect. He built a team, he developed policies, he worked hard and he won 23 seats at the 1977 election—which included people like Terry Mackenroth and Bob Gibbs. He in fact created the platform for Labor's return in 1989—just the way that he did in the Labor Party after the split. On this side of politics we owe him a huge debt.

Back in his state secretary days he met a Labor member, a very capable journalist named Jack Stanaway, who was to become his lifelong mate and press secretary. Tom stuck to Jack when Jack's health failed, and indeed they remained mates after Tom left parliament until Jack died in 1996—a friendship of over 30 years. Jack could write like Burnsie talked, although Tom never followed the script of written speeches. Jack used to lament the fact, saying that he had 'banged out a few pars'—'banged' being the operative word because people thought he typed with his feet—only to have Burnsie ignore them. I will take his advice; I will not follow a written speech from this point on.

He then became the state president of the Labor Party at a dark time in our history of federal intervention. The Premier knows all about that. That was a rebirthing of the Labor Party in Queensland, and Tom took it on the chin and we got on with life, and there was nobody happier in 1989 when we formed government. I remember them saying that we would have to get a case of lemons to get the smile off his face. Will you ever forget that interview that night when he just kept smiling and smiling as we won seat after seat? He told me later that that was the happiest moment of his political life. Finally we had got across the threshold to actually make a difference in people's lives, and that is what he did.

The first thing he did as the housing minister was the sorts of things that the member for Lytton just talked about. A great story that he told was of the battler that he met out in Boulia many years before as a party organiser who still kept his card in his pocket. He was killed in Stanley Street and they found his sandshoe about 40 feet up the road. As a result of that death Burnsie was contacted because he had no other relatives here. That dreadful incident stuck in Burnsie's psyche and when he became the housing minister he was the first minister to create seniors units west of the Great Divide. In all the 32 years that the Tories were in, never once did they ever think about keeping those people who had worked hard in the shearing sheds, who had never married and who had no other assets in the bush. That was a crowning glory of Tom.

The other thing that he did was set up tenant participation groups. People did not complain because they were frightened of getting chucked out of their houses, as the member for Lytton said. So he set up a tenant participation group which allowed tenants to give feedback on the decisions of government.

He worked well with backbenchers. Any backbenchers will recall that he would turn up to a show with you, he would go to a fete with you, he would support any backbencher and he would travel the state to do so—and drag Angela along. It is ironic that this week is the start of the Ekka. He loved the Ekka. He actually built the bridge for the Goss government to go into the Ekka, and we will be there on Thursday night.

In 1993 I joined his staff as a policy adviser following that great redistribution of one vote, one value. What a great idea that was! I ended up on his staff as a result of it. He gave me a job and I appreciated it very much. We had admin services at that stage. Then in October we went on to take emergency services. I see Lyn Hewlett in the gallery. She will fondly remember the first day we started.

He said, 'Right, you pair: Lyn, you start in Coolangatta; Schwarto, you start in Rockhampton. I want you to go to every fire station and ambulance station and I want you to give me a daily report.' It was a bit like going back to his days of the cassette. Within about a month he had a report of every fire station, every ambulance station and every SES in every area because there was a lot of turmoil at the time and we were trying to get ambulance officers through their ADs. It shows that he believed in listening to people on the ground.

He travelled around the state and visited rural communities. He left me behind on more than one occasion, sometimes because the jet had to be recalled to retrieve an organ for transplant. So he would leave me with a crowd complaining about closed railway lines or something, with no clothes and no way of getting home. He would leave me at the airport because I went to the toilet and I was not in the car. He once left without me because I got stuck in a lift at the Executive Building, saying, 'Fair dinkum, digger, you want to wake up to yourself,' as though it was my fault that the lift broke down.

I travelled overseas with him. What a joy that was! Burnsie never made decisions on the run—like hell he didn't! The day before we left he had lunch with the Chinese ambassador, who said, 'You must go to China, Mr Burns.' We were going to London, Glasgow and Ireland. But now we were going to China. Did we have any visas? No. Did I know anything about getting visas? No. But he said, 'You'll learn.' I have in my electorate office about six or seven of those printouts that you get for your passport, because you have to get a photo. Angela was particularly cooperative in getting her photo. Tom could never sit still. You had to put a quid in a machine at Liverpool station to get a passport photo. He was yelling out, 'You haven't put the quid in, digger.' 'Yes, I have, Tom; just sit still.' The next thing you know he is out. So I have these photos of him variously looking out. It took about five quid to get one decent photo.

At the Chinese embassy there was a turn put on there. They threw everybody out. Luckily I had a diplomatic passport and we got a visa to go to China, and the rest is history. We got to Glasgow and we were told of a terrible incident here with rural fires, and Tom cared so much about it that he made up his mind to come back. Guess who got the job of doing that? Guess who was least qualified to be calling airline companies in the middle of the night—it was about nine o'clock at night—to try to get us back the next day? By the time I had it all organised, I went to see him at the hotel. I vividly remember it; he and Angela were having breakfast. I said, 'It is all organised to go back,' and he said, 'We're not going, digger. I've been talking to Goss and he said, "Don't come back."' I had about a nanosecond of sleep all night and he said, 'You want to wake up to yourself, digger. You should have done that today. You've wasted all that time.'

I could go on and on and on about him, and I do not intend to do that. He was a very good mate. I feel as though I have lost a very close family member. Post politics we did not keep in touch with one another as much as we should have, although on the day to which the Leader of the Opposition referred I was walking out of the chamber and Tom was there with Samantha and her husband and Angela, and he yelled out 'Schwarto, I can see your gut coming out first.' He was irreverent right to the end. As I was walking out of the chamber he said, 'Fair dinkum, digger, I'm not related to you.' He never lost that great ability to be right on the spot with his comments. He was funny, entertaining and charming to be with.

One great regret that I will never have in my life is the day that I decided to drop over and see him on my way to a community forum. It was a month to the day before he died. We had a great conversation. I was trying to con him into taking a group of master builders to Vietnam and he agreed to do that. We talked about water, we talked about politics and we talked about family. One thing he said to me was, 'Digger, I don't want to end up in an old people's home being a burden on the taxpayer. It'll do me to go out there on the bay.' You got your wish, Tom, in that regard. We wish it had not been so soon. You are sorely missed by your Labor family, as the Premier pointed out.

Too infrequently in life we meet people who make a difference. Too infrequently we pause to actually understand what a difference people do make in our lives. Tom Burns is such a person. He made a hell of a difference in my life. He made a hell of a difference to the lives of those in the Labor Party. He is sorely missed. He is an icon of the Labor movement; an icon of the Labor Party. I miss him greatly; the Labor Party misses him greatly.

My dear old friend, wherever you are, rest in peace. But if you are with Stanaway one could only imagine what they would be saying now. Stanaway, three sheets to the wind, would be saying, 'Ah, but really and truthfully, Tom, the department ought to be looking after this.' And Tom would say, 'What is the point. I'll write it myself. I'll get on and do it. I'll get on and do what I've got to do.'

Angela, it is a very, very sad day for you but a proud day also. This place is all the better for him being here. We are better people for knowing him. As I say, wherever you are, old friend, rest in peace.

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—Lib) (10.41 am): I rise on behalf of the Liberal Party to join with the Premier, government members and the Leader of the Opposition to place on the record and pass on to the family and friends of the late Tom Burns our sympathies, condolences and the respect with which Tom was held on this side of the House. In fact, it is rare for a politician to be so respected on both sides of the House. Tom was a man of intense passion, integrity and humanity. He was a man who stood up for what he believed in and was not afraid to speak out on issues which others felt too timid to approach. He was

known by many as a friend to the battler, a larrikin to his mates and a formidable and worthy political opponent. Tom was a sincere believer in democracy, committing himself fully to his role as a member of parliament. He was one of the first in Queensland to push for gender equality in the workplace, believing that all citizens have a right to be treated equally and fairly.

Diplomacy was one of Tom's strengths. He will be remembered in Australian history for the instrumental role he played in fostering strong relations between Australia and China. In June 1971, as ALP national president, Tom, with Mick Young, then ALP national secretary, and Gough Whitlam, took the first Australian political delegation to the government of the People's Republic of China. This was a turning point in Australian diplomatic history as it led to Australia's adoption of the one-China policy and the changing of allegiance from Taipei to Beijing.

In 2001 Tom was awarded the prestigious Order of Australia for his contributions to Chinese-Australian relations over the previous 30 years. His contribution to international relations in the Asia Pacific was again recognised in 2001 when he was the first Australian of non-Chinese heritage to receive the Gold Magnolia Honorary Award from the Shanghai government and again in 2003 when he was awarded an honorary doctorate from the Queensland University of Technology for his work in China.

Tom was involved in many community organisations and professional organisations, two of which were the Queensland China Council as chairman and the Japan Karate Association of Australia. Both organisations have expressed their sadness at his passing. He passed away on 4 June aged 75—as every member of this House would agree, too young for a person who made such a large contribution. He is survived by his wife Angela, present here today, and his daughters Gail, Linda and Samantha.

I note his service in the Royal Australian Air Force in the 1950s, which has not previously been mentioned in this debate. He was also an old boy of Brisbane Grammar School, a school which a number of us on both sides of this House have a connection of one sort or another with. I know that the school community of Brisbane Grammar would extend to his family their condolences and sympathies as well. I think of Tom as captaining that ALP cricket 11 in 1974, the sort of situation that the vagaries of politics throw up to different people to do at different stages of the political cycle.

Most of all I remember Tom for the few occasions on which I personally met him. When I met Tom I experienced somebody of genuine human warmth; a real human being who did not really care too much that he was a stalwart of the Labor Party and I was a member of the Liberal Party. I do not think it mattered a bit to Tom. It certainly did not show in the warmth that he extended to me. I met him once when Mr Hollis was Speaker of this House at a dinner with a delegation that Tom had brought to Queensland and the final time that I met Tom was in a corridor of the old House here only a few weeks before he sadly passed away. He was showing a delegation of Asian, presumably Chinese, businesspeople the beautiful works in the old House here. As I walked past, Tom, who was doing his job with that delegation, stopped, excused himself and stepped aside to have a bit of a chat to me. He did not have to do that, as there was nothing in it for him, but it was the sort of personal warmth that I observed from Tom.

I attended his state funeral on behalf of the Liberal Party and again the theme that came through on that occasion was that here was a genuine human being, someone who was warm, someone who was caring and someone who had a lot more to him than being a cold and calculating politician. I noted particularly the references and the images that were displayed at the state service of him travelling through western Queensland and his obvious rapport with people from every part of the state and every occupation and social class.

To his family gathered in the gallery today, on behalf of those on this side of parliament who respect Tom equally to those on the other side, please accept our sympathies and condolences and the respect with which we held Tom for his personal qualities, his humanity and his warmth.

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.48 am): I move—

That the time set aside for the condolence motion be extended.

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (10.48 am): I second the motion.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (10.48 am): I first met Tom Burns as a candidate for the 1989 election running for an unwinnable seat. In Mount Gravatt we had 15 branch members, no money and, as far as the party was concerned, we were on our own because we were not in the winnable category. Despite all that, Tom Burns was prepared to put his energy and support into the Mount Gravatt campaign. He sent his branch members over to teach us about campaigning. People like Darcy O'Dempsey came over with a loud hailer and taught us how to do some old-fashioned street meetings. We learnt about letterboxing and mysteriously one night homemade signs, which were not particularly legal, saying 'A vote for the Liberals is a vote for the Nationals'—

Mr Lucas: Still is!

Ms SPENCE: And still is—appeared on power poles all over my electorate.

Tom would come to my fundraisers as a guest speaker. Of course one of his best assets and skills was as an orator. He was a great talker and motivator. He loved the Labor Party; he was steeped in its history and he spread his infectious enthusiasm for Labor ideals across the length and breadth of Queensland.

So on the verge of victory for Labor for the first time in 32 years he, of course, was at his best. I have to confess that the one message I found particularly hard to swallow in his campaign speech was that campaigning was meant to be fun. All I could see is that it was anything but fun and we were working ourselves to death during that campaign. However, some people did mention to me that I must have had some fun because I managed to get pregnant during that campaign.

Tom Burns was magnificent in parliament. As Deputy Premier he was the perfect partner for Wayne Goss because he brought a different style, a different constituency and a corporate memory to the job that most of us lacked. In those days there was still room for characters in parliament, and Tom was definitely one of them.

It was wonderful to sit here and listen to him speak. He had a confidence that he developed over a lifetime on the hustings and doing the hard yards in opposition. As a minister he breathed new life into his departments. He invigorated the Department of Housing. All of us remember the wonderful pet week that he initiated. He used to spend show week at the exhibition as a steward. Most importantly, he helped teach a whole swag of new backbenchers become very good local members of parliament. He was unstinting with the time that he was prepared to put into the backbench. Lunch in the Members' Dining Room with Tom Burns was a learning experience for me. Every day all he would order was a steak and sometimes chips. No fruit and vegetables were ever on his menu and woe behold anyone who served him up vegetables.

I had the good fortune to spend two weeks in China and Vietnam with Tom on a trade delegation, as the Leader of the Opposition has already mentioned. I did learn that Tom was prepared to eat scorpion, snake or anything else that was served up to him when he was in China. As we have heard from other members today, he was not bad in China at matching anyone with drinking. One of the things I think we must all remember about Tom is that he was charming company. He was lots of fun. He made those China trips enjoyable for everyone who spent time with him.

There are few Queenslanders who would match Tom Burns's contribution to Queensland-China relations. Many Chinese people who I know attended his funeral. Mr Ren, our Consul-General of China, attended Tom Burns's funeral. They certainly hold him in high regard. I want to table a list that Mr Schwarten put together of ministerial staff who worked for Tom because they all hold him in high affection and regard.

Tabled paper: List of Ministerial and Departmental staff who worked for the Honourable Tom Burns.

Mr Schwarten: And all should get a medal.

Ms SPENCE: And all should get a medal for putting up with him as well. One of those people is Kerry Humphreys, who has worked for me since I became a minister. She worked for Tom for over 12 years when in opposition and when he was the Deputy Premier. Kerry recalls how Tom's projects actually became everyone's projects. Like the time when he was Deputy Leader of the Opposition and on the radio talking about the home building industry and said that if anyone had a problem or had experienced problems with having their home built they should ring Kerry Humphreys in his office to let him know. So two days later, after people from all over Australia were ringing her, she could hardly talk. Just after he became Deputy Premier he was on the radio and announced that he was going to appoint an animal welfare officer but in the meantime people can just ring Kerry Humphreys and she will help them out. Apparently, it took him another three months to make that appointment.

It has been mentioned today that Tom was instrumental in establishing the Workers Heritage Centre at Barcaldine. He had all of his office working very hard. They were out there planting petunias, building bird aviaries, learning about bougainvilleas and organising and setting up displays. Kerry tells me that one morning when Tom came into work he had just driven past McDonnell and East and they had just closed the shop. He had seen all these mannequins in the window and came bursting in and said, 'Get in touch with whoever is organising the shop fittings and see if they will donate them for the Workers Heritage Centre.'

Tom said to everyone, 'If there is anything I can do to help, please do not hesitate to contact me.' The ministerial office got a lot of phone calls from people whom Tom had said that to over the years. Kerry remembers a time when one woman rang her and said that Tom had told her this—that had been over 33 years ago and she was taking up the offer. I think that is the kind of person Tom was. He engendered that enthusiasm and confidence. He gave us the ability to dream big and take on tasks and challenges we would never imagine we could.

I personally loved his enthusiasm, his passion, his warmth, his energy and his courage. The member for Lytton talked about the passion that Tom had and what a soft heart he had for people with disabilities. When I was a backbencher and he was public works minister I took him to Mount Gravatt State School to see whether we could get a bit of money spent on that school which had been sadly

neglected under the previous government. Very cleverly the teacher in charge of the kids with vision impairment had the children wobbling around the school, finding it very difficult to get around because there were no guardrails or proper paths for them in this very old concrete based school. Of course that really touched Tom's heart and he opened the chequebook and spent everything he possibly could making sure the lives of those kids were a little bit better. That was the kind of bloke that he was. To Angela and the girls, the family and friends, I would like to personally pass on my condolences. He was a great bloke and he is sadly missed.

Hon. RJ MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (Minister for State Development, Employment and Industrial Relations) (10.55 am): On Australia Day this year in Ho Chi Minh City the deputy mayor was invited to a function at the Australian consulate. He was invited to give the Australia Day address. But a few minutes into it he asked for their indulgence to talk about a special relationship. For the next 10 minutes he extolled the virtues of the special relationship between Vietnam and Queensland. The reason for that 10 minutes of indulgence was for the man we honour today. I was told last week that it was not unusual when they heard that Tom was in Ho Chi Minh City for the central government of Vietnam to fly a senior minister down from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City, about an hour flight, to sit down and have a cup of coffee with Tom to find out what he was up to and how they could help.

That is why the airlines were busy on 12 June, the day of Tom's funeral. The airlines were busy not just at the domestic terminal with all the people around Australia who came to visit but they were also busy internationally. As one of the people from Hong Kong said to me, 'I am devastated. He was a father figure to me.'

Queensland, as we have learnt today, stands taller in the region for the special brand of diplomacy that Tom brought. Meetings that could otherwise be really stuffy were suddenly animated because Tom developed what I consider to be perfecting the art of imperfection, behaving quite outrageously in a way that warmed everybody and relaxed everybody simultaneously.

I guess my purpose today, as the Deputy Premier said, is not to canonise him in eulogy above what he was in life but to set out for you a behind-the-scenes approach of the dealings I had with him in Vietnam. Quite rightly, members focus on 40 years of public life. But as I said, I want to talk about some of the little things in Vietnam that have made a huge difference in the lives of people but fundamentally have inspired others.

The great English poet John Donne in declaring that no man is an island also reminded us that the actions of one person do have a huge impact on the wider community. Tom believed that as Queenslanders in Vietnam we should not only be about trade and commerce but also be about people. I remember when the member for Springwood accompanied us and we came upon an orphanage in Harlong Bay. Whilst we were waiting to be shown around, Tom looked at the sign and noticed how much it cost to run the orphanage.

Tom demanded of us the monthly payment to run the entire orphanage. There were enough in the group who were able to pay for the food bill for the entire orphanage for the year. Tom asked the people running the orphanage if they would set aside enough money to celebrate one day—Queensland Day, which was coming up. So there were hundreds of kids I guess who had a special meal that day—Queensland Day—because of Tom Burns. But after the inspection he realised and we all realised that the kids there had nothing to do. All they did was sit around until they turned 16 and they were ushered out the door. Tom asked me and the member for Springwood if we would set about enlisting support from the business community for three things that he thought were fundamental—one was a TV set, the second was a DVD player and the third was some CDs to play on it, all of which were to teach kids how to speak English. At its heart what he wanted to do was make sure that when these kids were shown the door at 16 they might at least have a skill that would enable them to get a job in the hospitality industry in this tourist sector. This story has been replicated many times because there are many little schools and many little villages throughout Vietnam and northern Vietnam particularly that have things that we take as a basic right but they just never understood—books, pencils and chalk for the teachers.

My recollection was that Tom was not especially religious. I introduced him once to the nuns running a convent, orphanage and shelter in Da Nang. On the way we passed a Buddhist shrine and he stopped with the incense and paid abeyance. We later passed the Confucian Shrine and he did the same thing. By the time we reached the church, I said to Tom, 'Are you going to duck in and pay a visit?' He said, 'Yes, of course.' I said, 'Tom, I didn't think you believed in any of this.' He said, 'Fair dinkum, digger, when you get to my age you don't take any chances.' Not long after that we agreed that we would work on behalf of the sisters to support them in a small way, to support that special work they do throughout Vietnam. As I said before, the actions of one person encouraged the lives of others. Angela, Tom would have been delighted last week to have gone back and had his hair cut and shampooed at the convent. One benefactor who had learnt of Tom's work had been inspired to pay the tuition of a 25-year-old orphan who had lived there for 12 years. The tuition was in hairdressing and the nuns had established a salon next to the convent. The young lady—and this fits with what we have heard today—is hearing impaired and has no speech as a result. She has passed that course and taken on two other students who are equally handicapped. Today they have a chance in life—something that they never had.

When Tom died I emailed one of the sisters and asked her if she would have a mass for Tom. They did. I also asked for one more favour. Until now all of the little baby orphans that we have helped—every male orphan—regrettably I suppose has been called ‘Johnny’. We are now up to Johnny No. 5. I asked the sister, ‘Will you break with tradition, Sister, and offer a new name?’ I am pleased to announce, Angela, today that the next child—and I met him last week—is named Tom, but they got the email wrong and he has actually been christened ‘Tom Burns’. Last week I met the new Tom Burns. So I say to the House that when people are reading this in 30 years time, if they become aware of a person elected to the national assembly in Vietnam who in their first session in the place makes eight miscellaneous speeches, 31 speeches on bills, four speeches on matters of public interest, takes two personal explanations, six points of order, asks 137 questions, is remanded once and thrown out of the place twice, then I think they will find that the name fits the behaviour.

So to Angela and her family I say this: be proud of that legacy and be proud of the legacy that Tom has left in Vietnam and of course in China. There are kids today in Vietnam who will never know the name of that big tall guy with the funny accent who gave them a better go, but that makes all of those achievements all the more special. Today Tom belongs to memory, but there are many of us who preferred it when he belonged to us.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (11.04 am): I rise to speak in support of the condolence motion. Whilst I certainly was not in this chamber for very long with Tom, the experiences that I had with him both as a member of parliament and prior to that as a mayor bear out the comments that have been made to date. Tom was an old-style Labor man—the kind of person whom people in the bush revered and respected and, as has already been said, they knew that Tom understood their challenges, their disadvantages, their loves and their aspirations. My abiding memory of Tom is that he listened to people. I was at the meeting at Monto when the fight was on to keep the Monto railway line. I think it is a measure of the calibre of the man that that line is still there and that the future of that district will be enhanced because Tom listened.

The second memory that I have of Tom is when he was minister for emergency services and he was at the Gladstone botanical gardens talking to fires, ambos, rural fire brigade people and the SES. There were a number of bureaucrats who were incredibly attentive hovering around Tom who had pen and pencil and book. Tom would say something and they would furiously write it down. He would say something else and they would furiously write that down. It would be about the equipment that they needed. Tom would be saying, ‘You haven’t got one of those? We’ll fix that up’, and the people with the pencils would start writing. Tom was a minister—and I do not mean this disrespectfully—that many ministers of any persuasion can aspire to. Whilst the advisers may say to him, ‘Minister, we can’t do that,’ he would have none of it. If it appeared that there was a genuine need and it was something that a government should provide, he would give an undertaking that it would be provided. As previous speakers such as the member for Rockhampton have said, his word was his bond. The bureaucrats knew that if he gave the undertaking that it had to be delivered, they had better keep a note of it so that when he came back and checked later on it had actually been done.

The attribute that most sticks out in my mind was that he was a person for the people, he listened to the people and he acted in their best interests. The other thing that I remember when I first got into this place was the story—and I think the Premier relayed it in his first comments after Tom’s death here in this chamber when he noted that the condolence motion would occur after the internment service—that his boat was called the *Electorate*. Tom’s electorate staff could honestly say that, if he was not available to his constituents, he was out in the ‘electorate’ when he was, in fact, out fishing. I think that is an indication of the sense of humour of the person and also the fact that he needed time to himself to indulge in something that he loved very much—that is, fishing and being out on the bay. That was the way that he got his head straight. It has already been said to Angela and the family that they have lost a husband and a father and a grandfather. On the basis of my own experiences but more importantly on the basis of the comments of people in this chamber who knew him much much better than myself, they have also lost a friend and companion and our thoughts and prayers are with you.

Hon. FW PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Seniors and Youth) (11.08 am): Today I join with other members in paying tribute to Tom Burns, who is an icon of the Labor Party in Queensland and a prominent figure in terms of Australia’s relations with China. Tom was a very strong family man—a loving husband and a proud father and grandfather—who in his busy schedule always found time to devote to those he loved. His other family, as the Premier has alluded to—the Australian Labor Party—received more than its fair share of his valuable time. His role in the Labor Party and his many achievements on behalf of the party and similarly his central role in forging and developing Australia’s relationships with China have been well canvassed by other members. Tom Burns scaled the heights of the Labor Party in both its organisational and political wings. He did so with great ability, with great empathy for the working class people of this state and with great style. As a politician, Tom Burns was a natural and a force for the common good.

Today I want to speak briefly about the importance of Tom's contribution to the Labor Party at a time when the party needed it most, and that was when he was opposition leader here in Queensland from 1974 to 1978. They were tough times for the Labor Party, and its fortunes were at the lowest ebb when Tom Burns took over as Leader of the Opposition. I remember it well: the 1974 election saw only a few meagre number of members returned. I think there were 11 members in all—the 'cricket team'. When Tom Burns departed as opposition leader—while it would be another 11 years before the party was elected to government—he had picked the party up by its bootstraps and positioned it to carry on as a credible political force. The way Tom Burns turned the party around between the 1974 election debacle and the 1977 election when it doubled the number of seats it held in this House was testimony to his efforts, energies and abilities as a political leader and a political campaigner.

Tom worked tirelessly during those years to restore the fortunes of the party. Not only does the Labor Party owe him an everlasting debt of gratitude, I also believe so does politics more generally. He was able to put the Labor Party back into the political contest, providing vigorous and robust opposition on behalf of the people of Queensland to a government that certainly needed it. Tom's passion for issues of social justice was no better emphasised than by the way he turned around decades of neglect and stigmatisation of public housing and its tenants. His reforms and the enthusiasm with which he pursued them galvanised public acceptance of the need to treat people with the dignity they deserve. My colleague the member for Rockhampton, Robert Schwarten, carries on this legacy with the same passion as his acknowledged mentor.

Others have commented on his larrikinism and wicked sense of humour which delighted friend and political foe alike. For me, I will always remember Tom Burns as a communicator without peer. At grassroots level there was none better.

In the 1998 Mulgrave by-election it was Tom Burns among others who enticed me out of my enforced early political retirement. It was Tom Burns who crisscrossed the electorate with me during the campaign, speaking to anyone and everyone who listened to the Labor message. Labor won the 5 December by-election with a two-party preferred advantage of only 0.63 per cent—a narrow win to say the least. I have no doubt that Tom's capacity to connect with people on their terms played a significant role in securing those vital votes that gave Labor victory and the Beattie government a majority in its own right.

Like all who knew Tom Burns, I sadly mourn his passing, but I do rejoice in his contribution to the Labor Party and to the great state of Queensland. A larger than life figure, his legacy will endure. On behalf of my family and the constituents of Mulgrave, I extend my sincere condolences to Angela and her family.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (11.12 am): I would like to join my colleagues in the House in giving my condolences to Angela and her family and also paying respect to someone who, whilst on the other side of politics, we admired for his commitment to his party but particularly his commitment to the people of Queensland. Having a debate with Tom Burns in this parliament could at times be ferocious, but he also always came at you from the front and he was a person who I admired particularly because of his absolute commitment to his cause and to his team. Like Tom, I led a party of 11 in opposition and I understand only too well the commitment that he gave and the sacrifices he would have made to his family. He always showed a lot of courage in that time, and I certainly admire him for what he did during that particularly tough time for his party.

People have talked about his larrikin attitude. I would like to recount one thing that is so typical of Tom. When I was elected on 18 May 1991 it was my son's 21st birthday and the following day he was playing for the Queensland Reds against Fiji. I went into the dressing-room at Ballymore after the game and we celebrated those three occasions in the traditional Queensland footballers way of drinking a yellow can in what they call torpedo style. Unbeknown to me a *Telegraph* photographer snuck in and snapped me. I thought it was the end of my political career because an article duly appeared in the *Telegraph* that week. Two weeks later I was sworn in here—a very serious moment. I thought the incident was behind me but, as I was being sworn in, Tom Burns sang, 'I can feel a XXXX coming on.' I did not know whether to laugh or cry but it was typical of his attitude.

As I said, he was a great member of this parliament and he did a lot for Queensland. There are a couple of things that I want to place on record with regard to Tom Burns. One is the sincerity with which he applied himself to the daylight-saving issue. He was very genuine in what he did. Because of the travels that others have spoken about, he understood regional and rural Queensland and he fought that issue and he won that issue. Thanks should be put on record today on behalf of the people of Queensland who needed that support.

I also believe that he had a wonderful, old-fashioned courtesy about him. As a minister, he would write to us if he was coming to our electorate. You always got that letter sometime before, and I know he passed that practice on to those who worked for him and who followed in his footsteps.

The third thing that I want to put on record is his contribution to the show society movement in Queensland. He worked for many years as an honorary steward at the Ekka. When he came into government he continued to support the 114-odd shows of Queensland through the continuation of the show society's Showground Capital Works Subsidy. That was a system that allowed many show societies to build buildings and public facilities from toilets to grandstands to cattle stalls and so forth. It was very important to the show society movement. He never forgot where he came from and he continued to support that system. I think the show society movement would be forever grateful for what he did. Along with others in this House, I would like to pass on my sympathies to Angela and her family.

Hon. LH NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism) (11.15 am): I too rise to pay tribute to the late Tom Burns. My contribution to this debate on the condolence motion is to thank Tom for the Moreton Bay Marine Park. It was his idea and he made it happen. Ten years after its inception, we are now rezoning the Moreton Bay Marine Park. I am privileged to be the minister for environment at this time and, in recognition of the historic and contemporary association that Tom had with the bay, I appointed him to a stakeholder reference committee to give advice on rezoning the bay.

Tom was especially well qualified for this appointment. He had a better understanding of the bay than anyone I know. Since leaving the parliament, Tom took up oyster growing in the bay. He spent half his life on his boathouse anchored south of Dunwich. There, as well as everywhere else, he was a ball of energy with a great love for the bay.

True to form, he provided valued and spirited input to the stakeholder reference group. He brought passion to the committee and a great sense of historical perspective. Tom dug worms, pumped yabbies, went crabbing and fished from jetties, beaches, headlands and estuaries in Moreton Bay. He had great stories of the early days when the bay was hardly impacted upon by human influence. He had seen the changes that came with the development of a very sophisticated city on its shoreline. Some changes he saw were for the better but many were for the worse. He was saddened by the loss of mangroves, the drop in fish stock, the drop in bird population and the fall in water quality. He was particularly saddened by those who littered the bay with plastic and the like, especially those in the boating fraternity who disposed of their effluent overboard. He had a strong determination to end this foul practice by providing more effluent pump-out facilities on the bay. Members, I will continue working on this matter on his behalf.

But Tom was always an optimist. He firmly believed that with good management we could turn things around. He had a strong view that all it took was the application of good science, good planning, common sense and of course will. He was scathing of vested interests that argued that there had been no decline in the bay, that things were sustainable and that nothing needed to be done. He was a great visionary and he was of course on a mission. And now he is gone. Tom lived by the bay and died on the bay. He had very strong views about how to protect the bay.

Mr Speaker and members, I hope that we can come up with a renewed zoning plan for Moreton Bay that will contribute to a healthy, sustainable marine park for generations to come—a zoning plan that Tom Burns would be proud of. To Angela and your family, I give my sincere condolences.

Hon. DM WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (11.18 am): Tom was Deputy Premier during the time I served as Attorney-General. Of course, during the periods that Wayne Goss was absent Tom presided over cabinet. In that role, as in his life generally, he was careful but definite, self-assured but unprepossessing. I remember one cabinet meeting presided over by Tom which illustrates his modest but firm nature.

The proceedings of cabinet are, of course, confidential but, Mr Speaker, I am sure I can confide in you. One minister had brought a major submission to cabinet. Tom heard him out and said, 'This is a major reform which I am sure cabinet will support. So we'll leave it to next week when Wayne gets back.' But while modest, Tom could also be extremely forceful. Another minister told cabinet that he did not agree with the submission that his department had drafted but that he had brought it to cabinet in order to get the policy clarified in respect of an issue of detail that the submission related to. Tom said, 'We will send it back for a rewrite, then' and he said to the minister, 'You just tell them what you want and the best of British luck to you', which was a very famous saying of Tom's.

From Tom I learned much about patience, cooperation and endurance through political adversity. I never told Tom how much I admired him, because he already knew and if I did he would have just made a joke of it. I would, however, like to tell the parliament that in Tom's life we see a rare example of a man who was egalitarian but great, modest but decisive, idealistic but pragmatic. My condolences to Angela and to his family, who are however left, like the Queensland population generally, with inspirational memories of a good man.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (11.20 am): Down through the passage of time our short history has been marked by the significant contributions of many. Tom Burns is one of those. I remember when I first met Tom Burns here in early 1990 under the carriageway in front of the old building. He said to me, 'Young fellow, the one thing you want to remember in this place is to never forget your electorate. Work your electorate.' Those words still ring in my ears.

I say to Angela, the girls and the family, Tom was certainly a great man—a man who loved and respected you for who you are and for the contribution and the sacrifices that you made and who also loved the Labor Party. I think there is a message in that for both sides of the House. It is a message of loyalty, dedication and commitment to what we believe in, and Tom Burns demonstrated that.

Tom Burns is one of those fellows who was a true Australian in every sense of the word and he was a true Queenslander. We talk about liars, larrikins and legends. Tommy Burns fitted those categories to the full. He was not backward in feeding the drug into you, I will give you the mail. That was the liar part of him. We have all heard many stories here today about the larrikin part of Tom. The one thing I liked about the legend part of Tom Burns is that he stood up for what he believed in. He stood up for the small people and for the battlers who have been symbolised here in many speeches today. I think our history is better for the presence of Tom Burns not only in this parliament but also as a Queenslander and as an Australian.

The other thing that we can take from Tom Burns is his dedication to the people of the state and, as other speakers have said, his dedication to people in other parts of the world who are less fortunate than us. Tom championed the cause of many people who were less fortunate than us—people who have had fewer opportunities than we have had. Tom was always the champion for those people.

I remember years ago when on a visit to Barcaldine Patty Ogden said to me, 'Vaughan, Tommy's over there doing a bit of work at the centre.' I went over and I could not find him. I thought, 'I wonder where the hell he is.' He was in the drink. He was down in Burnsie's billabong. I do not know what he had on the bottom half, but he had nothing on his top half. He was down the creek painting the bridge in Burnsie's billabong. That was the commitment that Tom had to the Workers Heritage Centre and the Labor Party cause.

I am proud that I represent that part of Queensland and I am proud that I represent this part of history. Last year the tree at Barcaldine was poisoned and we saw the removal of the tree for preservation last Sunday. The work that Tom Burns did in trying to restore that part of history certainly symbolises what we are as Australians and the cause in 1891 when the Labor Party was formed and the other bodies that were formed as a result.

I can still remember Tom's commitment to his wife, Angela. I remember many a time I would walk through the Strangers' Dining Room and see Angela and Tom sitting at a table in the corner having lunch or dinner together. He had taken time out of his busy schedule as a minister or a Deputy Premier for Angela. That is another part of the true character of a great man.

On behalf of the people of Gregory, I thank you, Tom Burns, for your commitment to those people. He was a champion for the people of the bush. He was the minister for the bush, as the Leader of the Opposition rightfully said here today. I do not forget the things that Tom did. He was always accessible and he always had time for you. The part that I liked about Tom is that you knew that if he said yes he was going to deliver and you knew that if he said no he meant it. On behalf of my electorate, I thank Tom Burns for the good things that he did for us and for the things that he has done for the people of Queensland. I pay my respects to you, Angela, to the girls and the family. I hope the happy memories of Tom's life will be with you forever and a day.

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (11.25 am): I rise to speak to this condolence motion honouring Tom Burns. Much has been said in the media and in this place today about Tom's wonderful contribution to the Labor Party, to this parliament and to the people of Queensland. I have been asked by the grassroots members of the Labor Party and the broader community of central Queensland to pass on their heartfelt thoughts and best wishes to Tom's good wife, Angela, his three daughters Gail, Linda and Samantha, and other family members.

Tom's character—his knock 'em down, stand 'em up approach to life and politics—was what the grassroots people of Queensland admired and loved him for. From the workplace to the shopping centre, from small business to the local pub, from rural communities to the lounge room, Tom Burns—the man, the politician, the minister for the bush—was known and respected.

He was a true Labor man. I know that, on coming into this place and learning about the Labor Party in government and the expectations of the people, after 12 to 18 months I wanted to be like Tom Burns. I wanted to be there for the everyday people—the battlers, the working families—and to stand proud in representing the true spirit of the Labor Party. While I admit that I do not have the intellect, the wit or the gift of the gab of Tom Burns, I would like to think that I have at least the same passion for the ideals of the Labor Party and for those who elect us to this place.

On a personal level, I admired and respected Tom as a man and as a politician. He had a handshake that could be trusted. I remember the couple of occasions that he pulled me aside to avail me of his vast experience and knowledge with a, 'Now listen here, digger, you need to wake up to yourself.' I can tell members that I certainly learnt a lot from Tom Burns. He was a big man with a big heart who told it like it was. He could cut through the bull and get to the heart of any issue. That is an important trait in this job. Thanks, Tom, for the guidance and respect you gave to me. Rest in peace, digger.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (11.27 am): Tom Burns was a true, dedicated and decent Queenslanders. My first experience with Tom Burns was when I was campaigning as a 21-year-old to take over the seat of Carnarvon. I picked up the *Stanthorpe Border Post* one day and read about Tom Burns's visit to Stanthorpe where he had addressed the local branch of the Labor Party and implored the entire electorate of Carnarvon to never send a boy to do a man's job.

I remember walking into this place in 1989. I walked around that part of the chamber and as I was about to sign the roll a voice came from behind me saying—and it was Tom Burns and it was unmistakable—'There's a nice lad. If you do this right, mummy will give you an ice-cream and a packet of lollies.' That was my first real witness of Tom Burns in this place.

I will step back a couple of weeks from that and go to my first ever television interview. I remember sitting in Stanthorpe behind a table. This was at about the time I was elected. I was asked whether there were people I admired in politics. Of course, I went through the people on our side whom I admired. I said that I admired very much Sir Joh and a range of other people, and I also said, 'Tom Burns.' People who see that interview, if it is ever replayed, would find I appreciated quite an eclectic mix of people in the body politic. But I think the important thing is to have an appreciation of people for who they are.

It is true that what you saw with Tom Burns is what you got. You did not get a charlatan carpetbagger; you got a person who stood there and said what he believed. Whilst you might not have agreed with him necessarily, you knew what he said was something that he absolutely believed in. Sure, as we heard today, he was prone to a little bit of embellishment, and I suppose that that is the colour of politics. However, Tom Burns was also prone to passion, dedication and commitment. He was committed to this place, to his cause and to Queenslanders. That showed right throughout his parliamentary career.

It is great that we had a person like Tom Burns whose colour and passion were so visible. He yearned and then had a practical opportunity to do so much to advance the people of Queensland, whom he had sought and strived to help for a long period. In this place there are not as many differences as people might think. Whilst there might be political differences, I think that there is also a basic understanding, appreciation and passion to do things right for Queenslanders. It is the philosophy that guides us that might be a little different. Tom Burns may have had a different philosophy to me, but I certainly admired him for what he was. I admired him for the person he was and for the principles that he espoused, not only in here but also on the outside.

I say to Angela and the Tom Burns family that today we share your grief. We pass on our condolences to you and we also feel great appreciation for what this great Queenslanders did for so long.

Mr PD PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (11.30 am): It is my privilege to rise to support the motion of condolence moved on the passing of Tom Burns. My Bulimba electorate office has a brass plaque that states: 'Lytton Labor Hall, officially opened by Tom Burns MLA, Leader of the Opposition, 12/07/75.' My office is Tom's old office. Tom not only opened the Lytton Labor Hall but also used it as his electorate office up until the redistribution in 1985 at which time my predecessor Ron McLean relocated to that electorate office.

When Ron entered the office he said, 'Tom, this place resembles a Chinese brothel.' The office consisted of two very small rooms: a reception area and Tom's office which had been tastefully decorated with red and black wallpaper. Needless to say, it did not last long with Ron. Who would have thought that Tom Burns was a velvet wallpaper bloke! The wallpaper had Chinese writing all over it, so it must have come about through the influence of his Chinese mates. Perhaps he received mates' rates to have it put up.

Even though it has been over 20 years since Tom's electorate covered Cannon Hill, to this day all the older residents of my electorate refer to the Bulimba electorate office as 'Tom Burns's old office'. He certainly left a permanent mark on the landscape there.

When Tom turned 50, his staff decorated the office with streamers and balloons. Tom roared with laughter. They gave him a glittery hat that had '50' on it and Tom wore it all day. They tell me he even wore it into this chamber.

When Tom became the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, he was given a new office in this House, which had been refurbished. He was overawed by that flash new office, but it did not take him long to turn it into Tom Burns's office and personalise it with his own style of messiness. There were boxes and paper files everywhere.

Winning government in 1989 was one of the major highlights in Tom's life. You could not wipe the smile of his face, and I am sure that he still has it now.

I recall one instance when Tom was Minister for Emergency Services and I had the privilege of driving with him from Cairns to Bamaga. I know other members of this parliament will well remember that trip. Every person in every township turned out to meet Tom, shake his hand a say g'day. There were barbecues and drinks at night. Tom would usually retire early, leaving others there. Before he left

he would say, 'Fair dinkum, digger, you've got to look after them and make sure they have a drink', but before daylight Tommy Burns would be kicking on the door saying, 'Come on, the sun'll burn you out of bed. Let's get going. We've got to hit the track.'

One of my few regrets is that I never took Tom up on his offer to spend a day with him on his oyster lease, eating our fill of freshly shucked oysters and visiting his deadset guaranteed fishing holes. If there was one person who knew where to catch fish in Moreton Bay, it was Tommy Burns.

Tom was certainly a unique character. He was a larrikin, a defender of working men and women and a fisherman. However, above all he always remained a loving family man. I know that Angela, Gail, Linda, Samantha and the grandchildren will always miss him. We will never stop missing him. God bless Tom.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I conclude this motion of condolence for Tom Burns in my capacity as Speaker and the member for Townsville. I knew Tom for 37 years, having joined the Labor Party in 1970. My first great memory of Tom Burns involved attending a meeting at the railway refreshment rooms in Townsville at which Tom was the guest speaker. As some members have indicated today, there was no other person in the Labor Party—indeed, there has been no other person since—who could rally the troops as Tom Burns could in his position as state secretary. I remember the day when 100 members of the Labor Party met at the railway refreshment rooms at Townsville. Tom spoke and made us all so enthused in regard to what we should do that all 100 of us went out and worked our butts off on behalf of the Labor Party and what it stood for. Today I say to Angela and her family that those memories are very special to me.

In 1972, at the ripe old age of 25, I had the privilege of standing as the Labor Party candidate for the then seat of Townsville. Tom had first stood himself in that 1972 election. I remember Tom electioneering with me in the seat of Townsville. He said to me, 'You know, Mike, you can't win this election.' I did not think I could either because I was a young 25-year-old having a go, but I said, 'Why not?' He said, 'Unless you shave that beard off, you will never win an election.' I reminded Tom of that in July last year in China, which I will allude to in a moment.

When I was Minister for Emergency Services and preparing to attend my first estimates committee hearing, someone who knew Tom Burns very, very well said to me, 'Look, if you're concerned at all about answering a question that is put to you by the opposition, do what Tom Burns always used to do. He'd take at least 2½ minutes reminiscing about someone from the SES whom he had met. So if it is a question about the SES—or whatever it might be—just say that when you were in Charleville you met this guy from the SES. That'll take up 2½ minutes.' I am not too sure how many times I had to use that particular ruse.

Last year in Shanghai I spent three days with Tom when I was visiting Beijing and Shanghai in my capacity as Minister for Child Safety. I remember that they were three great days of reminiscing. On the first night we went to a restaurant. I cannot quite remember the name of the restaurant, but I know that Angela and other members of the family will. Tom took us to a restaurant that was called something Kitchen, which he said was his favourite restaurant in China. The people there knew him extraordinarily well. We sat down and ordered a few beers. I had my fairly young senior policy adviser with me. For the next three hours, Tom talked about the Labor Party. I remember looking at the young senior policy adviser of mine. He was incredulous that, for the three hours that Tom had talked, he gave a history of the Labor Party that in many ways mirrored what members from both sides of the parliament have indicated today.

I know that in many ways the motion of condolence that I will be very happy to deliver to Angela and the family in the not-so-distant future will be a wonderful record. It will be a great record of a great Australian Labor Party icon, Tom Burns. In my capacity as the Speaker and the member for Townsville, I express my very, very sincere condolences to you, Angela, and to your family on the loss of such a wonderful husband, father and grandfather, mate and colleague.

Honourable members, could you indicate your agreement by standing in silence for one minute.

Motion agreed to, honourable members standing in silence.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, in accordance with sessional order No. 4, the order of business would normally resume and question time would commence one hour from now. I am aware that the Leader of the House may wish at this particular stage to rise, and so I call on the Leader of the House.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Leader of the House) (11.40 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That notwithstanding anything contained in sessional orders for this day's sitting the lunch adjournment will commence at 1.40 pm and conclude at 2.30 pm and matters of public interest will commence at 2.30 pm and continue for one hour, at which time government business will commence.

Motion agreed to.

SPEAKER'S RULING

Common Procedural Issues

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I am conscious that some more recent members of the House may not be familiar with parliamentary rules, practice and procedure in the House. These members have been extended some tolerance. Unfortunately, it is also my opinion that some longer serving members need reminding of our rules as well. I am therefore going to spend a short time this morning recapping the basic but important rules of the House. In doing so, I recognise the rulings and statements of previous speakers, especially the statement by Acting Speaker Fouras on 24 May 2005, from which I have borrowed in part.

I draw to the attention of members standing order 251, which provides the general rule that when a member is speaking no other member may converse, make noise or disturbance so as to interrupt the member speaking. There are limited exceptions to this rule. Unfortunately, a number of members seek to use points of order or matters of privilege inappropriately to either interrupt other members or interrupt the order of business generally.

That takes me to points of order. A point of order is essentially a question as to whether the present proceedings are in order or allowed by the rules of the House or parliamentary practice and procedure generally. An attempt to allegedly correct the record, or allege that another member is misleading the House, or put the member's own position on a matter, or introduce another topic or material is not a point of order. A member's point of view is not a point of order and is merely disorderly. Persistent, deliberately disruptive or frivolous points of order being disorderly may result in a member being warned under standing orders 252 to 254. I make it very clear to members that I will be quick in warning members who abuse the rules by making frivolous points of order.

A genuine matter of privilege suddenly arising may be raised by a member at any time under standing order 248. To satisfy the requirements of standing order 248, a matter must firstly be a matter of privilege and secondly be a matter that has suddenly arisen and requires immediate redress. The reality is that few matters fall within the definition of a matter of privilege suddenly arising. Matters that may fall into that category include members being unable or prevented from entering the chamber, strangers being present in the House and interrupting proceedings, and required material not being available for the proceedings on foot. Unfortunately, as with points of order, some members attempt to use matters of privilege to allegedly correct the record, or allege that another member is misleading the House, or put the member's own position on a matter, or introduce another topic or material. These matters are not matters of privilege suddenly arising and it is simply yet another example of abuse of the rules. If any member believes another member has deliberately misled the House, then the appropriate procedure is contained in standing order 269. The member should write to the Speaker with all evidence available supporting the allegation. I will not allow other members to simply rise to allege a deliberate misleading of the House during the course of business. Persistent, deliberately disruptive or frivolous matters of privilege being disorderly may result in a member being warned under standing orders 252 to 254.

I strongly support the statements by the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee about the importance of members correcting their own errors at the earliest opportunity. A member who has the courage to recognise that they have done something wrong, whether deliberately or not, and take appropriate action is to be strongly commended and supported. I will allow members to rise at an appropriate point in proceedings to correct incorrect or misleading statements that they themselves have made in proceedings. I suggest that members attempt to confer with the chair for an appropriate time.

Finally, I remind members that the behaviour of one member in the House reflects on all members. Observers in the public gallery or those members of the public watching or listening via television or the internet gain a lasting impression of what they see or hear. I have asked the chairperson of committees and all temporary chairs to be vigilant but to be fair and to be consistent in enforcing the above longstanding rules of the House. I will be referring again to these notes when any member chooses to disregard the rules contained.

I want to complete my statement this morning by going from the general to the particular. It has come to my attention that some members are stating to others that they will be thrown out of the House today or this week. I want to warn all members in the strongest terms that, whilst important and very emotive issues will be before the House this week, I expect better of members than to deliberately set out to be disruptive and to be the subject of the chair's discipline. Indeed, I consider such an intention to be an abuse and a possible contempt of the House. I will feel at liberty in escalating such deliberate conduct to include reference to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee.

PETITIONS

The following honourable members have lodged paper petitions for presentation—

Palm Island, Death in Custody

Mr Speaker, from 602 petitioners, regarding the death of Mulrunji.

Gill Fishing Nets

Mr Swarten, from 2,046 petitioners, requesting the House to change the law so that gill fishing nets are a tool for commercial fisherman only.

Local Government Reform

Mr Springborg, from 3,259 petitioners, requesting the House to strongly oppose the forced amalgamation of Queensland Councils.

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

Local Government Reform

Mr Choi, from 101 petitioners, requesting the House to not consider any amalgamation of Redland Shire.

Integrated Transport Planning Framework

Mr Lee, from 56 petitioners, requesting the House to implement the recommendations of the Integrated Transport Planning Framework.

Public Dental Services

Mr Messenger, from 53 petitioners, requesting the House to urgently provide more funding and resources for better dental treatment in Bundaberg–Burnett and to enter in contracts with private dental health practitioners if necessary.

TABLED PAPERS

PAPERS TABLED DURING THE RECESS

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

12 June 2007—

- Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions Annual Report 2005-06
- Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee—Report No. 58, Meeting with the Queensland Ombudsman on 22 May 2007
- Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee—Report No. 59, Meeting with the Queensland Information Commissioner on 22 May 2007
- Response from the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport (Mr Fraser) to paper petitions (768-07, 779-07, 780-07, 794-07, 795-07, 805-07 and 806-07) presented by Mr Wellington (from 102 petitioners, 46 petitioners, 64 petitioners, 127 petitioners, 111 petitioners, 37 petitioners and 58 petitioners respectively) regarding the Maroochy Shire Council's proposal to develop a bioreactor landfill at Ferntree Creek Road, Kulangoor

14 June 2007—

- Island Industries Board Operating as Islanders Board of Industry and Service (IBIS) Financial Report for the Financial year ended 31 January 2007
- Industrial Gazette Notice advising that, in accordance with the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003, her Excellency the Governor has approved the payment of \$37 739 663.50 by the Workers' Compensation Regulatory Authority in 2007-2008 to the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations

15 June 2007—

- Report on an overseas visit by the Minister for State Development, Employment and Industrial Relations (Mr Mickel) titled *Ministerial Delegation to the United States & Hong Kong by the Honourable John Mickel MP 2-16 May 2007*
- Government Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (Mr Lucas) to Select Committee on Travelsafe Report No. 46 titled *Getting Tough on Drink Drivers*

19 June 2007—

- Response from the Minister for Education and Training Minister for the Arts (Mr Welford) to an e-petition (742-06) sponsored by Mr Lee from 509 petitioners requesting the establishment of a Queensland 'music for the future' arts program
- Report of the Second Review of the National Environment Protection Council Acts (Commonwealth, State and Territory) prepared for the National Environment Protection Council—John Ramsay Consulting, June 2007, pursuant to section 65 of the National Environment Protection Council (Queensland) Act 1994

20 June 2007—

- Response from the Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism (Ms Nelson-Carr) to a paper petition (822-07) presented by Mr Cripps from 707 petitioners requesting the removal of crocodiles identified near public facilities and populated areas

21 June 2007—

- Response from the Premier and Minister for Trade (Mr Beattie) to an e-petition (719-06) sponsored by Mr Fraser from 3072 petitioners regarding the NRL Grand Final

25 June 2007—

- Response from the Acting Minister for Education and Training Acting Minister for the Arts (Mrs Keech) to a paper petition (836-07) presented by Mr Shine from 1667 petitioners requesting a High School in Highfields

- Select Committee on Travelsafe—Report No. 47, dated June 2007, titled Report on the inquiry into Q-Ride
 - Select Committee on Travelsafe—Document, dated June 2007, titled Report on the inquiry into Q-Ride—Summary of conclusions and recommendations from Report No. 47
- 26 June 2007—
- Auditor-General of Queensland—Report to Parliament No. 3 for 2007 titled *Results of Aboriginal Shire Council and Torres Strait Island Council Audits for 2005-06*
 - Report by Sir Laurence Street, AC KCMG QC titled *Palm Island Death in Custody Cameron Doomadgee*
 - Primary Industries Standing Committee—Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals—Husbandry of Captive-Bred Emus, Second Edition, PISC Report 90
 - Primary Industries Standing Committee—Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals—Land Transport of Poultry, Second Edition, PISC Report 91
 - Primary Industries Standing Committee—Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals—The Camel (*Camelus dromedarius*), 2nd Edition, PISC Report 86
 - Primary Industries Standing Committee—Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals—The Sheep, Second Edition, PISC Report 89
- 27 June 2007—
- Response from the Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism (Ms Nelson-Carr) to a paper petition (823-07) presented by Mr Cripps from 314 petitioners regarding feral pigs in North Queensland
- 29 June 2007—
- Select Committee on Travelsafe—Report No. 48, dated June 2007, titled Investigation into the road safety implications of mandatory 12 hour shifts for Jilalan traincrew
 - Department of Main Roads document titled *Roads Implementation Program—2007-08 to 2011-12*
 - Department of Main Roads document titled *addendum to Roads Implementation Program—2007-08 to 2011-12*
 - Marine Incidents in Queensland—Annual Report 2006
- 2 July 2007—
- Response from the Premier and Minister for Trade (Mr Beattie) to a paper petition (834-07) presented by Mr Foley from 543 petitioners regarding daylight saving in Queensland
 - Response from the Minister for Health (Mr Robertson) to a paper petition (800-07) presented by Mr Hobbs from 20 petitioners regarding oral health services provided by Queensland Health
- 4 July 2007—
- Erratum to the Auditor-General of Queensland—Report No. 3 for 2007—*Results of Aboriginal Shire Council and Torres Strait Island Council Audits for 2005-06*, tabled on 26 June 2007
 - Report by D.J. OShea, dated June 2007, titled *Third Report: Compliance with the Integrated Planning Act 1997 by the Gold Coast City Council*
- 5 July 2007—
- Letter, dated 3 July 2007, from the Premier and Minister for Trade (Mr Beattie) to the Clerk of the Parliament enclosing a copy of a letter from the Commonwealth Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Treaties listing proposed international treaty actions tabled in both houses of the Federal Parliament on 13 June 2007 and the National Interest Analyses for the proposed treaty actions listed
 - Administrative Arrangements Order (No. 1) 2007 published in the Queensland Government Gazette, Friday 29 June 2007
- 6 July 2007—
- Response from the Minister for Education and Training Minister for the Arts (Mr Welford) to a paper petition (845-07) presented by Mr Gibson from 687 petitioners regarding Cooroora Secondary College
 - Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (Mr Lucas) to two paper petitions (820-07 and 830-07) presented by Mr Foley from 349 and 449 petitioners respectively regarding a request for a new boat ramp at Burrum Heads
- 9 July 2007—
- Electricity Industry Code (Third Edition effective 1 July 2007) made under the Electricity Act 1994 including Annexure A—Standard Connection Contract, Annexure B—Standard Retail Contract and Annexure C—Standard Coordination Agreement
 - Gas Industry Code (First Edition effective 1 July 2007) made under the Gas Supply Act 2003 including Annexure A—Queensland Gas Market Retail Rules
- 11 July 2007—
- Response from the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport (Mr Fraser) to two paper petitions (818-07 and 819-07) presented by Mr Wellington from 58 and 54 petitioners respectively regarding a proposed landfill site at Ferntree Creek Road, Kulangoor
- 12 July 2007—
- Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (Mr Lucas) to two paper petitions (824-07 and 844-07) presented by Mr Wellington from 199 and 38 petitioners respectively regarding the condition of Eumundi—Kenilworth Road
 - Response from the Minister for Health (Mr Robertson) to a paper petition (831-07) presented by Mr Foley from 244 petitioners regarding human cloning
- 18 July 2007—
- Report of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice (Mr Shine), dated 18 July 2007, regarding the circumstances and reasons for the Attorney-General's decision to present an indictment in relation to the death of Cameron Doomadgee
 - Ministerial response from the Minister for Police and Corrective Services (Ms Spence) to Public Works Committee Report No. 96 titled *Redevelopment of the Sir David Longland Correctional Centre*

24 July 2007—

- Response from the Minister for Health (Mr Robertson) to an E-petition (799-07) sponsored by Mrs Stuckey from 141 petitioners regarding Needle and Syringe Programs on the Gold Coast

27 July 2007—

- Service Delivery and Performance Commission—Report on Review of the Shared Service Initiative
- Freedom of Information—Annual Report 2005-06

30 July 2007—

- Report documenting Queensland Treasury Corporation Overseas Investor Program delegation, led by the Honourable Anna Bligh MP, Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure from 17 to 30 June 2007

31 July 2007—

- Certain attachments referred to in the report documenting the Queensland Treasury Corporation Overseas Investor Program delegation, led by the Honourable Anna Bligh MP, Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure from 17 to 30 June 2007
- Report to the Queensland Parliament by the Honourable Judy Spence MP, Minister for Police and Corrective Services on an overseas visit to Wellington, New Zealand, to attend Ministerial Council Meetings from 26 to 28 June 2007

2 August 2007—

- Response from the Minister for Mines and Energy (Mr Wilson) to an E-petition (724-06) sponsored by Ms Jones from 255 petitioners regarding energy source labelling
- Response from the Minister for Health (Mr Robertson) to an E-petition (825-07) sponsored by Mr Beattie from 5 petitioners regarding the sale of tobacco products

3 August 2007—

- Estimates Committee E—Report 2007
- Estimates Committee E—Additional Information Volume 2007
- Response from the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure (Ms Bligh) to a paper petition (832-07) presented by Mr Foley from 60 petitioners regarding the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam on the Mary River
- Response from the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure (Ms Bligh) to a paper petition (833-07) presented by Mr Foley from 25 petitioners regarding the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam on the Mary River

6 August 2007—

- Estimates Committee B—Report 2007
- Estimates Committee B—Additional Information Volume 2007
- Estimates Committee F—Report 2007
- Estimates Committee F—Additional Information Volume 2007
- Estimates Committee C—Report 2007
- Estimates Committee C—Additional Information Volume 2007
- Estimates Committee A—Report 2007
- Estimates Committee A—Additional Information Volume 2007
- Estimates Committee D—Report 2007
- Estimates Committee D—Additional Information Volume 2007
- Estimates Committee G—Report No. 1 2007
- Estimates Committee G—Report No. 2 2007
- Estimates Committee G—Additional Information Volume 2007

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by the Clerk—

Duties Act 2001, Fuel Subsidy Act 1997, Land Tax Act 1915—

- Revenue Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 99

Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995—

- Workplace Health and Safety (Codes of Practice) Amendment Notice (No. 2) 2007, No. 100

Statutory Instruments Act 1992—

- Statutory Instruments Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 101

Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000—

- Police Powers and Responsibilities (APEC) Regulation 2007, No. 102 and Explanatory Notes for No. 102

Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 2000—

- Vocational Education, Training and Employment Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 103

Industrial Relations Act 1999—

- Industrial Relations (Tribunals) Amendment Rule (No. 1) 2007, No. 104

Mining and Quarrying Safety and Health Act 1999—

- Mining and Quarrying Safety and Health Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 105

Bail Act 1980—

- Bail (Prescribed Programs) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 106

Witness Protection Act 2000—

- Witness Protection Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 107

Marine Parks Act 2004—

- Marine Parks (Zoning Plans) Amendment Zoning Plan (No. 1) 2007, No. 108

Transport Infrastructure Act 1994, Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994

- Transport Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 109

Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994—

- Transport Operations (Marine Safety—Parasailing) Standard 2007, No. 110 and Explanatory Notes for No. 110

Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994—

- Transport Operations (Marine Safety—Examining and Training Program Approvals (Commercial Ships and Fishing Ships)) Standard 2007, No. 111 and Explanatory Notes for No. 111

Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994—

- Transport Operations (Marine Safety—Hire and Drive Ships) Standard 2007, No. 112 and Explanatory Notes for No. 112

Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994—

- Transport Operations (Marine Safety—Bareboat Ships) Standard 2007, No. 113 and Explanatory Notes for No. 113

Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994—

- Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 2007, No. 114

State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999, Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995—

- Workplace Health and Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 115 and Explanatory Notes and National Regulatory Impact Statement for No. 115

Industrial Relations Act and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2007—

- Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 116

Child Employment Act 2006—

- Child Employment Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 117

Security Providers Amendment Act 2007—

- Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 118

Associations Incorporation and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2007—

- Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 119

Associations Incorporation Act 1981, State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999—

- Associations Incorporation and Another Regulation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 120

Building Act 1975, Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990—

- Emergency Services Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 121

Electricity Act 1994—

- Electricity Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 2007, No. 122

Gas Supply Act 2003—

- Gas Supply Regulation 2007, No. 123

Energy Ombudsman Act 2006—

- Energy Ombudsman Regulation 2007, No. 124

Forestry Act 1959, Nature Conservation Act 1992—

- Forestry and Nature Conservation Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 125

Water Act 2000—

- Water Resource (Border Rivers) Amendment Plan (No. 1) 2007, No. 126 and Explanatory Notes for No. 126

Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995—

- Workplace Health and Safety (Codes of Practice) Amendment Notice (No. 3) 2007, No. 127

State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971—

- State Development and Public Works Organisation Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 2007, No. 128

Health Act 1937, Health Services Act 1991, Pest Management Act 2001, Private Health Facilities Act 1999, Radiation Safety Act 1999—

- Health Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 2007, No. 129

Fire and Rescue Service Amendment Act 2006—

- Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 130

Ambulance Service Act 1991—

- Ambulance Service Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 131

Coal Mining Safety and Health Act 1999, Explosives Act 1999, Fossicking Act 1994, Geothermal Exploration Act 2004, Mineral Resources Act 1989, Mining and Quarrying Safety and Health Act 1999, Petroleum Act 1923, Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004—

- Mines and Energy Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 132

Environmental Protection Act 1994, State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999—

- Environmental Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 133

Lotteries Act 1997—

- Lotteries Amendment Rule (No. 2) 2007, No. 134

Wagering Act 1998—

- Wagering Amendment Rule (No. 1) 2007, No. 135

State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999, Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995—

- Transport Operations (Road Use Management—Driver Licensing) and Another Regulation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 136

Casino Control Act 1982, Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming Act 1999, Gaming Machine Act 1991, Interactive Gambling (Player Protection) Act 1998, Keno Act 1996, Wagering Act 1998—

- Gambling Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 137

Superannuation (State Public Sector) Amendment Act 2007—

- Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 138

Superannuation (State Public Sector) Act 1990—

- Superannuation (State Public Sector) Amendment of Deed Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 139

Architects Act 2002—

- Architects Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 140

Medical Board (Administration) Act 2006—

- Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 141

Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act 1998—

- Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 142

Chiropractors Registration Act 2001, Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists Registration Act 2001, Health Act 1937, Health Services Act 1991, Pest Management Act 2001, Pharmacists Registration Act 2001—

- Health Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 4) 2007, No. 143

Health and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2007—

- Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 144

Food Act 2006—

- Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 145

Electrical Safety Act 2002, State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999—

- Electrical Safety and Another Regulation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 146

Body Corporate and Community Management and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2007—

- Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 147

Body Corporate and Community Management Act 1997, Building Units and Group Titles Act 1980—

- Body Corporate and Community Management and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 148

Associations Incorporation Act 1981, Bills of Sale and Other Instruments Act 1955, Business Names Act 1962, Collections Act 1966, Commercial and Consumer Tribunal Act 2003, Cooperatives Act 1997, Funeral Benefit Business Act 1982, Introduction Agents Act 2001, Land Sales Act 1984, Liens on Crops of Sugar Cane Act 1931, Liquor Act 1992, Motor Vehicles and Boats Securities Act 1986, Partnership Act 1891, Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000, Residential Services (Accreditation) Act 2002, Retirement Villages Act 1999, Second-hand Dealers and Pawnbrokers Act 2003, Security Providers Act 1993, Tourism Services Act 2003, Trade Measurement Administration Act 1990, Travel Agents Act 1988, Wine Industry Act 1994—

- Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development (Fees) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 149

Building Act 1975, Integrated Planning Act 1997, Plumbing and Drainage Act 2002—

- Building and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2007, No. 150

Legal Profession Act 2007—

- Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 151

Legal Profession Act 2007—

- Legal Profession (Transitional) Regulation 2007, No. 152

Legal Profession Act 2007—

- Legal Profession Regulation 2007, No. 153

Legal Profession Act 2007—

- Legal Profession (Tribunal and Committee) Rule 2007, No. 154

Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991—

- Supreme Court (Legal Practitioner Admission) Amendment Rule (No. 1) 2007, No. 155

Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991—

- Uniform Civil Procedure Amendment Rule (No. 2) 2007, No. 156

Public Trustee Act 1978—

- Public Trustee Amendment Regulation (No. 4) 2007, No. 157

Nature Conservation Act 1992—

- Nature Conservation (Protected Areas) Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2007, No. 158

Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995, Environmental Protection Act 1994, Forestry Act 1959, Marine Parks Act 2004, Nature Conservation Act 1992, Queensland Heritage Act 1992, Recreation Areas Management Act 1988—

- Environmental Protection Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 159

Land Act 1994—

- Land Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 160 and Explanatory Notes for No. 160

Land and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2007—

- Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 161

Legal Profession Act 2007—

- Legal Profession (Barristers Rules) Notice 2007, No. 162

Legal Profession Act 2007—

- Legal Profession (Society Rules) Notice 2007, No. 163

Legal Profession Act 2007—

- Legal Profession (Solicitors Rules) Notice 2007, No. 164

Public Service Act 1996—

- Public Service Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 165

Lotteries Act 1997—

- Lotteries Regulation 2007, No. 166

Lotteries Amendment Act 2007—

- Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 167

Government Owned Corporations Act 1993—

- Government Owned Corporations Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 168

State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999—

- State Penalties Enforcement Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 169

Parliament of Queensland Act 2001—

- Parliament of Queensland Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 170

State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999—

- State Penalties Enforcement Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2007, No. 171

State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971—

- State Development and Public Works Organisation Amendment Regulation (No. 4) 2007, No. 172

State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971—

- State Development and Public Works Organisation Amendment Regulation (No. 5) 2007, No. 173

Mineral Resources Act 1989—

- Mineral Resources Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 2007, No. 174

Nature Conservation Act 1992—

- Nature Conservation (Protected Areas Management) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 175

Forestry Act 1959, Nature Conservation Act 1992—

- Forestry and Nature Conservation Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2007, No. 176

Environmental Protection Act 1994—

- Environmental Protection (Water) Amendment Policy (No. 1) 2007, No. 177

Prostitution Act 1999, Weapons Act 1990—

- Police Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 178

Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000, Summary Offences Act 2005—

- Summary Offences and Another Regulation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 179

Summary Offences and Other Acts Amendment Act 2007—

- Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 180

Local Government (Community Government Areas) Act 2004—

- Local Government (Community Government Areas) Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2007, No. 181

Community Services (Torres Strait) Act 1984—

- Community Services (Torres Strait) Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 2007, No. 182

Community Services (Torres Strait) Act 1984—

- Community Services (Torres Strait) Amendment Regulation (No. 4) 2007, No. 183

Aboriginal Communities (Justice and Land Matters) Act 1984—

- Aboriginal Communities (Justice and Land Matters) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007, No. 184

Plant Protection Act 1989—

- Plant Protection Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2007, No. 185

Justices of the Peace and Commissioners for Declarations Act 1991—

- Justices of the Peace and Commissioners for Declarations Regulation 2007, No. 186

Jury Act 1995—

- Jury Regulation 2007, No. 187

Nature Conservation Act 1992—

- Nature Conservation (Protected Areas) Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 2007, No. 188

Water Act 2000

- Water Resource (Burdekin Basin) Plan 2007, No. 189 and Explanatory Notes for No. 189

Public Trustee Act 1978—

- Public Trustee (Fees and Charges Notice) (No. 1) 2007

MINISTERIAL PAPER TABLED BY THE CLERK

The following ministerial paper was tabled by the Clerk—

Minister for Police and Corrective Services (Ms Spence)—

- Response from the Minister for Police and Corrective Services (Ms Spence) to a paper petition (729-06) presented by Mr Beattie from 1552 petitioners regarding the death in police custody of Mulrunji Doomadgee at Palm Island in November 2004

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Aurukun Bauxite Project

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (11.48 am): I want to announce to the House today a significant boost for the Aurukun bauxite project. The \$3 billion Aurukun bauxite project that has been proposed by Chalco, the Aluminium Corporation of China Ltd, has just passed two important milestones. I am delighted to announce that the Aurukun bauxite project has been granted significant project status by Queensland's Coordinator-General, Ken Smith, and that the Indigenous land use agreement with the native title holders and the Aurukun Shire Council has also been formally registered. The formal native title agreement will enable Chalco to conduct its feasibility study on the Aurukun deposit.

It is an important day in the development of this project and I acknowledge Chalco representatives who have joined us in the public gallery for today's announcement. Welcome to the parliament.

Ms Bligh: They deserve a medal.

Mr BEATTIE: They do deserve a medal, Deputy Premier, for many reasons. I thank them for their patience today in the gallery. The Chalco representatives are the project's director, Mr Liang Zhong Xium, and the business adviser, Ms Chen Wuhong. The Chalco proposal aims to open a massive new bauxite mine at Aurukun, build a new port nearby and ship the bauxite to a new alumina refinery at one of three suggested sites on the east coast of Queensland: Townsville, Bowen or Gladstone. It is one of the biggest developments ever proposed in Queensland. There is a lot of competition amongst my colleagues for where it should be located.

Significant project status will enable the Queensland government to play a key role in coordinating the complex decision-making process involving federal, state and local governments. The Chalco project is expected to create 2,300 jobs during a three-year construction period and more than 600 permanent jobs for regional Queensland, including Aurukun and east coast regions. The potential economic benefits include an increase in bauxite and alumina exports worth more than \$200 million a year. It would also generate significant revenue from royalties and taxes.

Chalco must now assess the environmental, social and economic impacts of its proposal and prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for each part of the overall project. I seek leave to incorporate in *Hansard* more details of the announcement.

Leave granted.

Significant boost for Aurukun Bauxite project

The \$3 billion Aluminium Corporation of China Limited (Chalco) aluminium project passed two important milestones today.

Premier Peter Beattie told State Parliament the Aurukun Bauxite Project had been granted significant project status by Queensland's Coordinator-General.

"The Indigenous Land Use Agreement with the native title holders and the Aurukun Shire Council has also been formally registered," Mr Beattie said.

"This formal native title agreement will enable Chalco to conduct its feasibility study on the Aurukun deposit."

Mr Beattie said the significant project status would enable the State Government to play a key role in coordinating the complex decision making process involving Federal, State and Local governments.

"The Chalco project is one of the biggest development proposals in Queensland's history," Mr Beattie said.

"It is expected to create 2300 jobs during a three-year construction period and more than 600 permanent jobs for regional Queensland including Aurukun and east coast regions.

"The potential economic benefits include an increase in bauxite and alumina exports worth more than \$200 million per year. It would also generate significant revenue from royalties and taxes.

"Chalco must now assess the environmental, social and economic impacts of its proposal and prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for each part of the overall project."

The Chalco proposal involves:

- Development of a mine at Aurukun with a capacity of 6.5 million tonnes a year of dry beneficiated bauxite;
- Construction of bauxite loading facilities, including jetty, wharf and associated port facilities at Boyd Point north of Aurukun to accommodate 70,000 tonne Panamax vessels;
- Shipping of bauxite from the Aurukun mine to a refinery on the east coast of Queensland at either Townsville, Bowen or Gladstone;
- Development of an alumina refinery with an initial capacity of 2.1 million tonnes a year and related facilities including residue storage and bauxite/alumina handling and port facilities.

"There are potentially a large number of local, state and commonwealth agencies responsible for considering approvals for the projects and we know the approvals process will be complex," Mr Beattie said.

"This assessment will be supervised on behalf of the Queensland government by the Coordinator-General."

7 August 2007

Mr BEATTIE: Again I acknowledge the presence of our Chalco representatives.

Local Government Reform

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (11.51 am): Later today the minister for local government will introduce groundbreaking legislation which will transform the landscape of local government in Queensland. The Local Government Reform Implementation Bill 2007 will create stronger councils for a growing Queensland. All boundary recommendations made by the independent Local Government Reform Commission in Queensland have been accepted by my government. We have also approved 22 of the other 25 recommendations made by the commission to improve local government.

Legislation to facilitate this major reform agenda is needed immediately to provide certainty for affected communities prior to the March elections next year. A decision on electoral arrangements for new councils is required by 27 September to allow the Australian Electoral Commission to prepare electoral rolls and it is not possible to alter this date. We must act now to assure future certainty for a strong and prosperous local government system in the Smart State.

Key changes to local government will include the reduction in existing councils from 156 to 72, a reduction in the number of mayors or chairpersons from 156 to 72, a reduction in the number of councillors from 1,094 to 454—a total reduction of 724 politicians.

Over the past 50 years Queensland's population has almost tripled, growing by more than 2.5 million people. Our cities, towns, suburbs and communities have all changed. However, our system of local government has not. Current local government boundaries are more than 100 years old and do not reflect growth in our population, changes in demographics or shifts in our communities. Councils recognise this need themselves, with many participating in the Size, Shape and Sustainability initiative. Unfortunately, due to the voluntary nature of this process and the mixed level of commitment by councils, the expectations of achieving serious reforms were not met. This is why my government established this process back in April and appointed a fiercely independent commission to undertake the difficult task.

I would like to thank and put on public record my appreciation of the chair, Bob Longland, and commissioners Di McCauley, Bob Quinn, Terry Mackenroth, Sir Leo Hielscher, Tom Pyne and Kevin Yearbury.

I table for the House the report of the Local Government Reform Commission volume 1 and the report of the Local Government Reform Commission volume 2.

Tabled paper: Report of the Local Government Reform Commission—Volume 1, dated July 2007

Tabled paper: Report of the Local Government Reform Commission—Volume 2, dated July 2007

Over the past three months they have worked extremely hard. They have studied the work undertaken by councils as part of the Size, Shape and Sustainability program as well as numerous submissions from interested stakeholders, local governments and members of the public. They have provided a blueprint to create stronger councils for a growing Queensland.

Since the report was released a little over a week ago, the minister for local government, Andrew Fraser, and I have travelled around the state and have already met with mayors and councillors from approximately 68 affected councils. One of the major issues has been concern over the issue of internal boundaries. As a result, we decided that in line with their wishes the need for internal divisions could be decided on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the new councils. Based on the suggestions and further analysis, 26 councils will go to next year's election with divisional boundaries and 46 will be

undivided. We also rejected the recommendation that councillors serving in a full or part-time capacity should remain with the relevant council. The state government will establish an independent tribunal to set salaries for all mayors and councillors in all local government. Salaries will determine in effect whether the councillors are considered full-time or part-time. The third recommendation rejected by cabinet related to suspending small boundary matters being experienced at Hope Vale and Wujal Wujal in the Cook Shire Council. The commission suggested these matters be resubmitted by the councils after the March elections. However, we believe these matters can be resolved prior to the 2008 election.

Towns and shires that may have been facing a bleak future will now have a unique chance to consolidate the strength of their communities and create new jobs and opportunities for the future.

Queensland Police Service

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (11.55 am): I am delighted to see that policing in today's society has been appropriately acknowledged by my government. As we all know, policing is a tough job. Our police officers across the state are charged with keeping Queensland a safe place to live so that we can continue to enjoy the lifestyle we have become accustomed to. We owe them a debt of gratitude for their service which is why I will join my cabinet colleague, Police Minister Judy Spence, in supporting the Pride in Policing march on Sunday. I encourage Queenslanders to show their support as well.

As I am sure the House is aware, the government reached agreement yesterday with the Queensland Police Union regarding new pay scales for our Police Service. The new deal, announced by the Deputy Premier and Treasurer Anna Bligh, along with Police Minister Judy Spence, makes Queensland police pay scales highly competitive with other Australian states.

I would like to thank the QPU for working towards the resolution which came after five days of intense discussions. For these matters to be resolved, both the government and the union had to shift some ground and we thank the QPU for its willingness to do so. In essence we met half-way. This is a positive result that will help the Queensland Police Service and shows my government's commitment to the service.

I seek leave to have details incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Mr Speaker, the offer is based on a 4% pa wage offer over three years with a number of structural adjustments to classifications for key staff. There are also some substantial additional benefits, which will also improve police efficiency.

- An increase in night shift penalties from 10% to 15%.
- Allowances for Sergeants and Senior Sergeants who are in charge of stations and sections.
- Automatic progression for Constables once they have reached their top pay point and have completed the relevant skill requirements to Senior Constables.
- Advanced promotional opportunities for Police Prosecutors.
- A significant locality allowance for officers working in specified indigenous communities.
- Enhanced allowances for Special Emergency Response Team officers to ensure that these officers stay with the Queensland Police Service.

I am confident these new rates will reduce turnover in key areas of our police force Mr Speaker, and the agreement reflects the Government's commitment to maintaining a well staffed and highly skilled police force in Queensland.

Irwin, Constable B

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (11.56 am): I would like to pay tribute today to Constable Brett Irwin, the 33-year-old police officer who tragically lost his life in the line of duty. Last month Constable Irwin went to a Keperra residence on Brisbane's northside to issue a warrant when he was shot and killed. He was young man at the start of a promising career and this incident resulted in a tragic loss of life. Along with the police minister I attended his funeral and I believe that it is appropriate that I incorporate in *Hansard* a tribute to this young man and to the police who every day put their lives on the line. I seek leave to incorporate this tribute in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Constable Irwin was inducted into the Queensland Police Service just over 12 months ago and had spent his first six months of duty at Ferry Grove Police Station before a rotation to Fortitude Valley. His professionalism and excellent rapport with his peers saw him transferred back to Ferry Grove Police Station after his confirmation as a member of the service. Constable Irwin served only a short career with the Queensland Police Service but made an impression on fellow officers, work colleagues and members of the public who crossed his path. He was not a stranger to community service. Prior to pursuing his dream to become a police officer, Constable Irwin served honourably in the Australian Defence Force for eight years. He was also a keen runner and cyclist who loved the outdoors and spent time camping, fishing and four-wheel-driving. For his loved ones, his death was sudden and unexpected and the tragedy has touched the hearts of many Queenslanders. There was an overwhelming outpouring of public support for Constable Irwin's friends and family, with hundreds of messages received on a dedicated website established by the Queensland Police Union. The young constable was farewelled with full police honours on 26 July 2007 at St Stephen's Cathedral, Brisbane. Mr Speaker, I would like to put on record the condolences of this House and of all Queenslanders to Constable Brett Irwin's family, friends and colleagues. His death was a stark reminder of the dangers and unpredictability police officers face every day as they work to keep Queensland a safe place for all of us.

Queensland Economy

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (11.57 am): Growing concern that Australia's homeowners are facing the fifth consecutive rise in interest rates this week has brought out the worst from the Commonwealth government. The Howard government's strategy is clear. It is in a terrible position. Poll after poll, including the Newspoll in the *Australian* and also ACNielsen, shows Australians have lost faith in a Prime Minister increasingly seen as dishonest. The federal government believes it can get itself re-elected by attacking the states. That desperate strategy is on display again this week. This time the federal government is making the bizarre claim that somehow the threat of increasing pain for families and mortgages is the fault of state governments. But on any test it is clear that the Queensland government has demonstrated its commitment to successfully and carefully managing the economy. We are sound economic managers. The Prime Minister does not have to take my word for it. Let us look at the words of the Governor of the Reserve Bank who said earlier this year—

It would be generally agreed by most people that infrastructure for investments of various kinds needs to be done ... Balance sheets of governments in this country, by and large, are in very good shape. They will not have any trouble borrowing money from the lenders of the world for a reasonable project ... How inflationary is that? I do not think it will feed directly into the consumer price index per se.

In other words, if there is a rate rise this week it is the fault of the Prime Minister—no-one else. In Queensland we are well on the way to delivering this state's biggest, most important infrastructure program in its history and, yes, we are borrowing well within our means to pay for those vital projects, including the water grid, hospitals and so on. Queensland has had seven successful years of cash surpluses and we have kept borrowings low. We have maintained a AAA credit rating with Standard and Poor's since 1992. Last financial year we delivered 95,200 new jobs in Queensland, more than a third of the nation's total. In the year to June our economy grew at 5.5 per cent, more than twice the national rate of 2.5. It is rank hypocrisy by the federal government, which has done nothing to build much-needed national infrastructure, to attack the Queensland government for planning and building the roads, rail facilities, hospitals and schools our community needs. I challenge John Howard to do this: tell the people of Queensland which piece of this vital infrastructure program he would axe.

Mr Gibson: Traveston Dam!

Mr BEATTIE: Come clean with Queenslanders and name the projects that he wants us to put a stop to. Let me make it clear while we are talking about the Traveston Dam that the Prime Minister has told me that he supports it. I am really delighted with that interjection. I am absolutely delighted with that interjection. Any other interjections that those opposite wish to make I would like to hear as well. Those opposite think we can live without water.

Home WaterWise Rebate Scheme

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.00 pm): The water tank rebates have hit the \$100 million mark. This program has been incredibly successful. On 1 July last year this government introduced the Home WaterWise Rebate Scheme to support Queenslanders who are doing their bit to fight the drought by purchasing water-saving products. I seek leave to incorporate details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Mr Speaker, as I said, on July 1 last year this Government introduced the Home WaterWise Rebate Scheme to support Queenslanders who are doing their bit to fight the drought by purchasing water-saving products.

Since then, the public response has been enormous.

Indeed, it has been the most popular consumer rebate scheme in Queensland's history.

I am pleased to announce in the House today that more than \$100 million in rebates has now been paid to the public.

With around 7000 applications continuing to be received every week, over 170,000 rebates have been paid in total.

Mr Speaker, as of close of business yesterday, the number of rebates processed for payment include:

- Over 89,000 rainwater tanks worth over \$87 million;
- Over 57,000 washing machines worth almost \$11.5 million;
- Almost 12,500 dual flush toilet suites worth almost \$1.9 million;
- Nearly 14,000 shower heads valued at almost \$339,000;
- Over 7,000 pool covers/rollers worth almost \$1.5 million; and
- More than 7,000 garden product rebates worth over \$350,000.

Mr Speaker, one in every eight households in the Brisbane City Council area now has a water tank, up from one in 20 only three years ago.

The Government is working hard to secure south-east Queensland's water supply through the \$9 billion Water Grid.

But we cannot achieve water security without the commitment of South-East Queenslanders who continue to reduce their demand through water-saving measures supported by the Home WaterWise Scheme.

Mr Speaker, my Government will continue to fund this scheme into the future, with a total of \$100.8 million committed to the Home WaterWise Rebate Scheme in 2007-08.

Asia Pacific Screen Awards

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.00 pm): I seek leave to incorporate my ministerial statement in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Mr Speaker, I am delighted to announce a Queenslander is designing the signature trophy for this year's Asia Pacific Screen Awards on the Gold Coast.

Joanne Bone, the only Queenslander to win the coveted Ranamok Award, will be designing something unique for this very special event on November 13.

Rather than a statuette or medallion, Joanna will be creating a trophy that is symbolic of our prized multicultural diversity.

The event will unashamedly showcase Queensland as the film events centre of Australia, joining the Brisbane International Film Awards, the Movie Convention, the Screen Producers' Association of Australia Conference, and the Inside Film Awards.

It will also highlight Queensland's many incredible tourism and film-making attributes to viewers around the world, and it will promote Smart State talent, just like Joanne's.

The Asia Pacific Screen Awards is an initiative developed by my Government, through Queensland Events, and it will be our region's equivalent to the Academy Awards.

To provide an indication of the calibre of this awards night, the head of its judging panel is acclaimed actress and humanitarian Shabana Azmi.

She is a Goodwill Ambassador for the UN and received the Gandhi Foundation International Peace Prize in 2006.

These awards have been formally endorsed by UNESCO and involve CNN International and the International Federation of Film Producers Associations.

In fact, Mr Speaker, the UNESCO Award for outstanding contribution to the promotion and preservation of cultural diversity through film will be presented by a UNESCO representative at the Gold Coast event.

There will also be special television programs produced in association with CNN International, and these will be broadcast globally across our region, as well as to the United States of America and Europe.

Grant McLennan Fellowship; Billy Thorpe Scholarship

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.00 pm): I seek leave to incorporate my ministerial statement in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

I wish to update the House on two of the Smart State's initiatives that are developing our creative pool of talent in the music industry.

The first is the inaugural Grant McLennan Fellowship—a \$20,000 travel bursary which has been presented to songwriter Greg Charles.

This 27-year-old from Toowoomba was selected by the judges from a strong field of entries.

On the judging panel were members of The Go-Betweens, including Robert Forster, Adele Pickvance and Glenn Thompson.

My Government established the Fellowship in honour of their friend and founding member of this internationally acclaimed Brisbane band who died on 6 May last year.

Greg is a worthy recipient of the first Grant McLennan Fellowship, Mr Speaker, which will enable him to spend up to two months in New York, learning and developing his songwriting talent.

Mr Speaker, Arts Queensland is also progressing a \$10,000 Scholarship in memory of Brisbane raised Billy Thorpe, who died on 28 February this year.

Arts Queensland is working with Billy Thorpe's Estate to develop the scholarship's guidelines and it expects entries for the first award to be called in 2008.

Queensland Museum, Historic Icon

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.01 pm): On behalf of Queensland we have acquired an historic icon and donated it to the Queensland Museum. I seek leave to incorporate my ministerial statement in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Mr Speaker, the ceremonial trowel that laid the foundation stone of this magnificent Parliament on 14 July 1865 will live another day.

In March, I advised the House that after being hidden away in a private collection in Melbourne, our successful bid of \$8,500 at auction had ensured this artefact's return to the people of Queensland.

I am pleased to announce the trowel will go on display in the foyer of the Queensland Museum, where it will be acknowledged as a significant addition to the museum's collection.

There will also be opportunities to incorporate the trowel in ceremonial and celebratory events planned for our 150th birthday celebrations in 2009.

This historic symbol has special significance as we look forward to celebrating 150 years since separation as a colony from New South Wales.

Our State's key cultural institutions, like the Museum, and also the State Library of Queensland, will be getting involved in these milestone birthday celebrations.

In 2009, the Library will unveil The Edge—a \$7.9 million redevelopment of the Cultural Centre Auditorium.

This will include programs to encourage children and young people to develop their creativity.

The Library will also launch the Queensland Memory Project, giving Queenslanders an online window into our State's history.

Indigenous Partnership Agreement

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.01 pm): I want to table for the information of all members the agreement we have reached with the mayors in relation to Indigenous matters. Before I do that, I want to say that in an historic first a community cabinet was held in the Indigenous community of Yarrabah during July. I was also able to join Minister Pitt and 13 of the 19 Indigenous mayors representing Queensland's Aboriginal and mainland Torres Strait Islander communities to sign the historic Indigenous Partnership Agreement. The further two communities, Palm Island and Mornington Island, have signed since. Negotiations are continuing with the mayors of the remaining four communities.

While in Yarrabah I also announced the first practical step in the implementation of the new agreement—land tenure reform for these communities. The mayors have made it clear to me that land tenure must be reformed before we can fix the chronic lack of housing and other community infrastructure. Legislative amendments to be introduced into parliament later this year will set in place new arrangements for land ownership, management and tenure that will enable leasing options of up to 99 years for housing bodies, residential leases of up to 99 years, leasing options of up to 99 years for significant commercial developments, and renewable 30-year commercial leases.

The Queensland Resources Council also came to Yarrabah to sign a landmark agreement to boost Indigenous employment in the booming resources sector. I table for the information of the House the Indigenous Partnership Agreement and also the 'Queensland Indigenous economic development and employment—making it real'.

Tabled paper: Document, dated July 2007, by the Queensland Government, titled 'Indigenous Partnership Agreement—An agreement between Queensland's Aboriginal and mainland Torres Strait Islander communities and the Queensland Government'.
Tabled paper: Copy of a document, dated July 2007, by the Queensland Government, titled 'Queensland Indigenous economic development and employment—making it real'.

Copies will be distributed to all members. I seek to incorporate more details in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

As I said in an historic first—a Community Cabinet was held in the Indigenous community of Yarrabah during July.

I want to thank the Mayor of Yarrabah, Vince Mundraby, his council and the people of Yarrabah for their warm welcome and constructive approach to the first ever Community Cabinet meeting held in an indigenous mainland community.

During the two days of the Community Cabinet, the Ministry had a unique opportunity to hear first-hand of the issues and aspirations of local people.

I was also able to join Minister Pitt and 13 of the 19 Indigenous mayors representing Queensland's Aboriginal and mainland Torres Strait Islander communities to sign the historic Indigenous Partnership Agreement.

A further two communities—Palm Island and Mornington Island—have signed since and negotiations are continuing with the mayors of the remaining four communities.

This partnership commits the Queensland Government and each of the communities to take responsibility for major changes to improve outcomes for Indigenous Queenslanders living in remote communities.

It is about the government and the communities working together to provide better services, support changed behaviours and share responsibility.

While in Yarrabah I also announced the first practical step in the implementation of the new agreement—land tenure reform, for these communities.

The mayors have made it clear to me that land tenure must be reformed before we can fix the chronic lack of housing and other community infrastructure.

Legislative amendments to be introduced into Parliament later this year will set in place new arrangements for land ownership, management and tenure that will enable:

- leasing options of up to 99 years for housing bodies;
- residential leases of up to 99 years;
- leasing options of up to 99 years for significant commercial developments; and
- renewable 30 year commercial leases.

The Queensland Resources Council also came to Yarrabah to sign a landmark agreement to boost Indigenous employment in the booming resources sector.

Finally I want to thank the schoolchildren of Yarrabah—particularly the school's prep class—who made such an impact on those of us who had the opportunity to meet them. I look forward to taking Cabinet to more of our indigenous communities in the future.

Building the New Queensland

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.02 pm): For the past nine years my government has been busy building the new Queensland. It is a more prosperous Queensland, a fairer Queensland and a more caring Queensland than the one most of us grew up in during the Bjelke-Petersen years. The new Queensland was the theme of a speech I delivered at the ALP conference in July this year. I seek leave to incorporate a transcript of my speech and the remainder of my ministerial statement in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

As I said for the past nine years my Government has been busy building the new Queensland.

It is a more prosperous Queensland, a fairer Queensland and a more caring Queensland than the one most of us grew up in during the Bjelke-Petersen years.

The New Queensland was the theme of a speech I delivered at the ALP State Conference on 1 July this year.

Mr Speaker—mine has been a real Labor Government and it has been a compassionate Labor Government.

We have increased funding for people with disabilities by 283 per cent in just nine years.

Since the new department of Child Protection was established four years ago we have tripled the budget for child protection to \$551.3 billion.

We are revitalising health services in Queensland, including mental health services. As I said at the ALP State conference, under the National Party:

Mental health was like disabilities, like child abuse ... it was a box that no-one really wanted to go and lift the lid off ... People didn't really want to deal with it.

But Labor Governments do deal with things like mental health. Our most recent State Budget provided a record increase of \$528.8 million over four years to assist Queensland with mental health.

We are building a new Queensland and we are building a better Queensland. It's a proud record of achievement.

I had a lot more to say about this new Queensland in the speech to the conference.

The New Queensland

TRANSCRIPT OF SPEECH BY PREMIER PETER BEATTIE

ALP STATE CONFERENCE

SUNDAY 1 JULY 2007

Introduction

Beattie: Thank you very much for that kind introduction. Together we've built a new Queensland. I want to talk to you about that today. I also want to talk to you about our future. But first I want to thank you. As Anna indicated we won our fourth term last year but we couldn't have done it without the people in this room. You are the Labor Party. You are the backbone of this Government and I want to thank every one of you. Thank you very much.

(applause)

Beattie: I also want to thank a number of people. I want to thank Milton Dick. I know being Party Secretary is tough. I was there once. I'm delighted I'm not there any more. Milton was a magnificent campaign director and I think, if you look at the history of campaign directors and State Secretaries in this State, a number of them have made very significant contributions, and of course I'm excluding yours truly. Tommy Burns was one, Wayne Swan... there is a list of them. Milton is the latest of successful party secretaries. He was a magnificent campaign director and I hope this party has enough foresight to put him into the Parliament where he belongs. Milton Dick. Well done.

(applause)

Community Cabinet

Beattie: There'll be a few home truths today. I want to thank my Cabinet. As Anna indicated we've had over 100 community cabinets—in fact, we're having our next community cabinet in Yarrabah to deal with indigenous issues to ensure we can help indigenous Australians, particularly young indigenous Australians, reach their full potential. That means every one of my Cabinet Members have had to give up their Saturday nights in many cases, but Sundays and Mondays to do it, and not one of them has ever complained. They might privately, behind my back, have not smiled as much as I do, but they have been absolutely magnificent. We've got four ministers other than myself who were part of the original team in 1998 and they are here today. I'm going to ask the four of them to stand up. Anna Bligh.

(applause)

Beattie: I'll have a bit more to say about Anna later. Thank-you. Robert Schwarten who's the longest serving Minister for Public Works in this State's history.

(applause)

Beattie: And I should say Robbie comes from a really good Labor family and his dad Evan's not very well at the moment and I know our thoughts are with you Robbie. Judy Spence, who on 9th July will become our longest serving police minister.

(applause)

Beattie: And Rod Welford of course, who's been in a number of key portfolios and he has done them all well.

(applause)

Beattie: As you know one of the hallmarks of my Government has been renewal, and that's never been easy. In that time, in the nine years, we've had 18 ministers who've gone through the Cabinet in addition to the current Cabinet—18, and the original ones are the ones I just mentioned. If you don't renew then you don't refresh and you don't survive. But I want to acknowledge the whole Cabinet. I would like them to stand up and would you please acknowledge my Cabinet.

(applause)

The New Queensland

Beattie: I said at the beginning I wanted to talk about the new Queensland and that's the Queensland that we all built together. If you think about it, just think about this for a minute. If you think back to what it was like in the '80s when all your friends and relatives in Sydney and Melbourne used to laugh at us. Remember we were the joke of Australia. They used to laugh at us because we were corrupt. Remember they laughed at us because our education system wasn't any good. They laughed at us for all sorts of silly reasons, but we're not the centre of their jokes any more—they are envious of us because of the new Queensland that we built as a party. You should be very proud of it. In fact, they don't laugh at us any more, they just move here in droves to be part of the action. Look at what's going on? Perhaps I could slow it down a little.

(applause)

Leading Australia

Beattie: I want to talk to you about the new Queensland that's been built—that the Labor Party built. If you look at those nine years, as Anna indicated, they've been marked by a very strong, robust economy, low unemployment, a record spending on essential services such as health, education, police, and the social services. Remember the years when the National Party refused to fund the most vulnerable people in our community, when our funding was well below the national average. Remember those years?

We've progressively lifted that expenditure while maintaining our competitive tax position. Let's look at how strong this economy has been. If you look at our economic growth rate in the last financial year just finished it's about 5.5 per cent. That's the eleventh year in a row that we've led Australia—been higher than Australia—and it's done on the backs of the workers of this State, and the trade unions who are here today should be very proud of their members for what they've done. Well done. Without you we couldn't have done it.

(applause)

Economic Management

Beattie: Unemployment as Anna said is 3.5 per cent. Look at the national situation. The national average is 4.3. Before we came to office we had a higher level of unemployment than the national average and now it's the other way around. I guess Kevin Rudd probably hates us because we make John Howard look good. That's what we do. If you took Queensland out of the national equation it would look very ordinary. If you took Queensland and Western Australia out—and I see the Prime Minister loves to beat up on the states—well I say to the Prime Minister without the states you would be very ordinary, very ordinary indeed. I get annoyed when I see him talk about economic management and questions Kevin Rudd's ability to do it. Why wouldn't Kevin be able to do it? Because the state Labor governments are doing it.

Let me tell you a little bit more about growth. Our forecast economic growth rate—and there's a lot of talk about growth by the Prime Minister—exceeds those predicted in Japan, Germany, United States and the United Kingdom for next year, and the Queensland economy should also outperform 25 of the 30 members of the OECD. Now, in short that is the result of good, sound economic management from a Labor Government and that's what Kevin Rudd can do for this country.

(applause)

Beattie: I should add, that's on the back of the worst drought that Queensland's ever had in the South East corner. That even makes the figures more robust.

Managing growth

Let's talk about managing growth because this new Queensland that we've built has required an enormous amount of foresight. That's one of the reasons why we are planning well into the future and I'll talk about that—but when we get pressured about the need for infrastructure just understand what pressure we've been under over the last nine years, and we've dealt with that pressure. The Census figures came out this week and it shows that Brisbane is the fastest growing capital city. It's up 21 per cent in 10 years. The Sunshine Coast, and just listen to this, has grown 36 per cent and the Gold Coast has grown 32 per cent. That is the growth in population. It is just phenomenal. And that's why there's pressure for infrastructure. In fact overall in the past ten years Queensland's population has risen by 20.2 per cent compared with the national rate of 11.5. So we've responded every step of the way and in the budget that Anna brought down a few weeks ago we'll be spending \$14 billion on infrastructure in the next 12 months. That's in the next 12 months. That's to deal with that growth.

(applause)

Capital Works

Beattie: This is the biggest capital works program in Australian since Federation. I'll just give you a quick breakdown. In the next 12 months we'll spend \$5.8 billion for Transport and Main Roads. That is \$100 million a week. We will spend \$2.5 billion in water infrastructure; \$690 million for Education, Training and the Arts; \$635 million for Health; \$487 million for housing and \$2.8 billion for energy. Now we'll do that overcoming the challenges that face us on skills shortages—and the unions understand this very well—because you are partnering with us to deal with it. We'll do the work notwithstanding the fact there will be some overheating problems, because there is so much work going on, but we will do it. And yes, we'll have our hiccups and we'll have our problems, but we will do it. In fact over the next 19 years we'll spend something like \$82 billion to build tomorrow's Queensland. We are building it today. You'll notice that in the Budget there were some sensible borrowings. But we should not be afraid of some sensible borrowing. We've got the strongest economy in Australia. You'll get some of the conservative opponents who'll say, 'Oh, no, we shouldn't do borrowings.' It would be really nice if the Federal Government stopped bragging about the surplus and invested in the future infrastructure of this country—that would be a nice outcome.

(applause)

Labor Builds for the Future

Beattie: Remember Clem Jones and his borrowing for Brisbane. Clem Jones is one of the legends of the party. He borrowed in the 60s to sewer Brisbane. Remember those little outhouses we used to have? Probably only Bill Ludwig and I will remember.

(laughter)

Beattie: The rest of you may not. Maybe Dick Williams does as well.

(laughter)

Beattie: But those of you who remember those little outhouses, Clem borrowed to get rid of them. And those of you who remember the 60s, remember the outcry, how dreadful it was that Clem Jones was borrowing this money to sewer the city. Well, it was the smartest thing he ever did. He built the modern Brisbane and we should acknowledge that. He's in the tradition of Labor builders and so are we.

(applause)

Building the Water Grid

Beattie: And yes we are going to deal with the worst drought on record. Yes, we're spending \$9 billion on the Water Grid and yes, that'll be 400 kilometres of pipes and we've already laid 61. We first started on this back in December 2005. We sought expressions of interest for pipes and we only had one company that applied and now we've got people from all over the world wanting to build those pipes because they can see this as being a magnificent engineering opportunity as well as providing water. In fact this week we'll be advertising for expressions of interest to secure pipes for the remaining Water Grid work and other proposed projects such as the 110 kilometre pipeline from the Fitzroy River to the Gladstone State Development area and the proposed Wivenhoe to Toowoomba connection, so yes, we will build that infrastructure, and yes, we will have our challenges but yes, it will create a lot of jobs as well for this economy.

A Real Labor Government

For those nine years we have been a real Labor Government. I know from time to time the party has had government's at all sorts of levels around Australia and there has been a bit of frustration about is this a real Labor government—we've been. We have been. And I want to talk to you about that because that's the new Queensland we built because we're a true Labor Government and we're a compassionate Labor Government. I want to share some of this with you because often these things don't win votes but they are about what we believe, a fair go, and we believe in compassion, and I want to share this with you.

Support for Disability

Let's talk about disabilities. These were the forgotten people under the National Party, forgotten people for generations and we've dramatically increased spending on disability services with spending jumping an incredible, think about this, 283 per cent under my Government—283 per cent. That's what it's gone up.

(applause)

Beattie: In real terms what does that mean? If you look at the yearly expenditure before we came to government nine years ago it was just \$187 million that was spent on disability services. That compares with \$717 million allocated in the last Budget. Now that is overcoming that sad National Party legacy but we've got a long way to go, we've got a lot to make up. Let me tell you what this means on a per capita basis. On a per capita basis spending on disability services has risen 218 per cent from \$54 in '97/'98 per capita to \$172 for each person next year. It has dramatically increased. And it's not just disability services.

Boosting Child Protection

Let's talk about child safety—another neglected area for generations. Australia's first stand alone department for child protection has been established. Now we didn't run away from this. We obviously worked with the CMC to make sure we improved protection for our children.

We've implemented all 110 of the CMC's recommendations and since the new department was created four years ago the child protection budget has tripled to \$551.3 million. We tripled the budget to protect our children. That's what a Labor Government does and that's what we did.

(applause)

Beattie: Now Departments like this rely on their staff. All the unions here know this. So what does it mean for the staff? Staff numbers have been increased by 90 per cent to over 2,300 to deliver those services. And the result? Last year a Children's Commission survey—it's an independent commission—found that 97 per cent of foster children felt safe in their placements and 98.9 per cent felt their carer treated them well. We've come a long way but we've got more to do. With this solid foundation in place we are now putting extra focus on babies and toddlers with a \$10 million "one chance at childhood" initiative announced in the Budget, so we're going to continue to do more. We've also attacked areas, of not just need, but areas of neglect by the Federal Government.

Housing

You heard Robert Swarten speak earlier. This year we are delivering a record Queensland housing assistance package of \$719 million including a massive \$479 million capital program. We've never spent that sort of money on public housing before and it's long overdue.

But what we need to do is to get Kevin to do the same thing at a national level and we can realistically help people in need, to make sure they've got a house, and that's fundamental Labor values.

(applause)

Beattie: But one thing we also need to do is to make sure that we keep housing affordable. The Deputy Premier will introduce legislation into the Parliament in August, and I won't give you the detail of this, but it is about making housing affordable—trying to give Australians a go, to give Queenslanders a go and to try and keep that Australian dream alive. I just say to the party keep an eye on the affordability package because this is about giving everyone who wants to get a house a chance to get one.

Revitalising Health

Let me talk about health. Stephen Robertson's done a magnificent job as Minister for Health and as a former Minister for Health I know how tough it is Stephen. Well done Stephen.

(applause)

Beattie: Even if sometimes mate, the worst thing you've got to deal with is me.

(laughter)

Beattie: Since June 2005 Queensland Health has recruited 1,036 extra doctors and 3,167 extra nurses and we need every single one of them.

(applause)

Beattie: We've also had an extra 1,126 extra allied health professionals and yes, we will sort out the EB. We will sort out the EB. We're still working on it but we will sort it out.

Spending on health has increased 150 per cent since we were first elected.

Mental Health

So let's deal with another area of National Party neglect—mental health. Mental health was like disabilities, like children abuse...it was in that box that no-one really wanted to go and lift the lid off. Because mental health has had a stigma in the community. People didn't really want to deal with it.

Labor Governments do deal with things like mental health. We've increased funding across the mental health budget. Our most recent State Budget provided a record increase of \$528.8 million over four years to assist Queenslanders with mental health issues. The huge funding injection includes \$198.3 million for new and improved mental health infrastructure.

It means our total investment in mental health will have increased by a massive \$895 million by the time it's finished in just over five years. It is the most significant increase in mental health ever. Ever.

(applause)

Education and Training Reforms

Beattie: But this new Queensland that we are building and have built with your support is also about education, about giving people opportunities. And we know how fundamentally important education is to the Labor Party.

We've managed to reverse the brain drain. The people who left this state because of Bjelke-Petersen are coming back. They're doing science, they're doing research, they're doing the sort of things—the creative industries—that we believe are important.

Our Education and Training Reforms for the Future...They have reformed senior schooling and integrated new technology into classrooms. We are trusting teachers to have their own computers. For a long time that would never have been possible. We actually value our teachers. They are fundamentally important to the Smart State. We value them and we treat them accordingly.

(applause)

Introducing a Prep Year

Beattie: This year we also introduced the new full-time universally available Prep Year in all state and non-state schools. Prep Year is fundamentally important for literacy and numeracy for our kids. We didn't have it—the rest of Australia did—what a disgrace. Well, now we have a Prep Year, and that's exactly what we should have had.

(applause)

Beattie: We're also delivering the lowest middle year class sizes in the country which Queensland years 4-10 class size targets reduced from 30 to 28.

Training

From the union point of view traineeships and apprenticeships is the key to what I'm about to say now. Queensland has about 7,500 school based apprenticeships and traineeships. You know what that represents—that's almost the total number in the rest of Australia. And that's our obsession about apprenticeships and traineeships—giving kids a chance. And if you look at what we've done, we're leading the way in reforming vocational education and training.

We've got a billion dollar Queensland skills plan. It'll be one of the most flexible, modern, integrated education and training systems in Australia. And let's look at apprenticeships.

The unions often raise this directly with me and my Ministers. Let's look at apprenticeship and traineeship numbers. These are at record levels under my Government with an estimated 84,500 apprenticeships and trainees in training as at 30th September 2006. This means the number of apprentices and trainees being trained in Queensland has grown by 83 per cent since 30th June 1998. That's what a Labor Government does to train kids for the future.

(applause)

Beattie: Over this time the number of apprentices in traditional trade areas has grown by 87 per cent and User Choice funding for apprentices and trainees has increased 106 per cent from \$67.5 to \$139.5 million. What does that all mean? That means that in traditional areas, in service delivery, training, skilling—we are a core Labor Government that every member of the Labor Party can be proud of. We have Labor principles to the core. We stick by them every single day we're in office.

(applause)

Industrial Relations

Beattie: Which brings me to industrial relations, because this was one of our failures. Before I talk about that let me go back to where it started. The Howard Government's WorkChoices program has had a big impact on Queensland. It removed many basic employment conditions for many Queensland workers and reduced the size of the State jurisdiction from 70 per cent of the workforce to around only 40. We failed in our challenge to the High Court. We challenged it because we thought it was unconstitutional and it was unfair. And one of my great regrets as Premier is that we lost that case. We're never going to give up having a system that is fair to Queensland workers.

(applause)

Beattie: To protect Queensland workers we have established a Workplace Rights Office headed by a Workplace Rights Ombudsman to deal with unfair, unlawful or otherwise inappropriate employment practices. We have provided additional protections for minors to ensure they have access to the fair and equitable unfair dismissal regime in the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission.

From January 1 next year we will establish a low cost jurisdiction in the Magistrates' Court to deal with actions for breaches of common law contracts of employment. We've established the Fair Go Queensland advisory service. We are going to make it as difficult as possible for Mr Howard's laws to abuse Queensland workers.

(applause)

Beattie: In addition employees of 21 Statutory bodies caught by WorkChoices will be protected by a bill that that was passed on the 23rd April this year. Queensland, as I said, is going to continue this fight. I just say to workers in this state there's only one way you can get rid of WorkChoices—vote for Kevin Rudd.

(applause)

Workplace Health and Safety

Beattie: Another area of concern for the movement is about workplace health and safety. I want to talk to you about that. We've made significant reforms to the Queensland workers' compensation system, the workplace health and safety services in the state. That was spelled out at a meeting we had with unions on Thursday. In the last two years we've legislated to increase death benefits for workers dependents, increased lump sums and boosted the time a job for seriously injured workers is held open from six to 12 months.

The Government is again working with stakeholders on ways to further enhance the benefits paid to Queensland's injured workers. This contrasts with the Howard Government's attack on the benefits available to injured workers in the Federal Comcare scheme. I say to Queensland employees, Comcare will not look after you or your interests.

It's very simple. The Federal Government abolished workers' rights to claim for injuries occurring in travelling to and from work and for injuries occurring during lunch breaks away from the worksite. Here in Queensland we've also increased and better targeted the work place health and safety resources. Here is what we will do and have been doing.

We've increased the number of inspectors because two conferences ago you said we should, so we have. We've increased the number of inspectors from 147 full-time equivalent to 250—that's a 70 per cent increase in inspectors and we will continue to do so. The result has been a steadily decreasing rate of severe work-related injuries—it's down 9 per cent. Fatality rates have also decreased—they're down 38 per cent, but the loss of one life is the loss of one life too many and that's our philosophy and will continue to be.

(applause)

Beattie: I've talked about what we've done over the last nine years, how we've implemented party policy and how we've built the new Queensland.

Facing Challenges

Let me now deal with the challenges ahead. The first challenge is the one I referred to before about the affordability of housing. You'll be hearing more about that. The second relates to climate change. And on your desk along with the nine-year report you'll see Climate Smart 2050. It's about our climate change response. It's about ensuring we protect the economy, protect jobs, but also protect the environment.

I want to remind everyone here—we banned broad-scale clearing of vegetation. That decision is cutting greenhouse gas emissions by an estimated 20 million tonnes a year and let me tell you that was a tough decision. Remember all the protests we had? Remember the hundreds of people who came and protested and said we were mad?

Well, they don't do it anymore because this is one of the smartest things we did to protect Queensland's future. And the Prime Minister went around saying, 'Look, we've met the Kyoto targets.' How did he do that? Because we stopped broad-scaling clearing of trees, that's how he did it and he tried to claim credit for it. He didn't even put one dollar in it—not one dollar. Yet we had the guts to do it because it was good for Queensland.

(applause)

Energy Policy

Beattie: Energy is an important part of our economy in terms of jobs, but climate change and energy policy can and do work together. The policy we've released increases the generation component from gas from 13 to 18 per cent by 2020. It increases the renewables from 2 to 10% by 2020. It means that we will develop clean coal technology. You saw how the coal companies were so willing to come forward with an investment of \$600 million, with a bit of persuasion, and we've put \$300 million of our own into it.

We'll also be pursuing geothermal—for those of you who don't know, that's simply injecting water into the earth's surface, turning it into steam, and using that to generate energy. We're doing the same with solar gas. The list goes on. This is a balanced policy. You've heard me talk about it. I won't go through it today.

Uranium

Let me make it clear—Queensland's future does not include uranium enrichment at Caboolture or anywhere else in this State, Prime Minister.

(applause)

Beattie: More to the point I say to the Prime Minister, if you insist on pursuing uranium enrichment we will have a referendum under the legislation we passed and the people of Queensland can express their view. There will be a referendum on it.

(applause)

The Coalition

Beattie: Now let me come to our immediate future and the long-term future. And I want to deal with this because we've won four elections and that has been something of an achievement for all of you, and I thank you for that. But it gets really tough from here on in, it gets really tough. My view is that Jeff Seeney and Bruce Flegg won't be there much longer in their leadership roles. I don't need to tell you why.

(laughter)

Beattie: Yeah, I'm disappointed to. Because frankly if I was voting I'd vote for Bruce and I'd vote for Jeff. I really would, because they are good friends of ours.

(laughter)

Beattie: We couldn't do it without them.

(applause)

Beattie: Be under no illusions about this, Lawrence Springborg is sniffing around—he wants to make a comeback and we look forward to that. And John-Paul Langbroek will be the Liberals' leader. They couldn't be worse than the current pair. That will be more of a challenge for us in the lead-up to the election. It will be a little harder.

Challenges for the Party

Also there will be other challenges like the re-distribution, and the party needs to think about this. This redistribution will not be easy. We don't often find ourselves confronted with a difficult redistribution and in my opinion this one will be. What that means is that we have to face this with maturity.

Yes, there will end up being, in my view, a number of our sitting members facing one another. And that requires maturity. I've been fortunate in the eleven and a half years that I've been leader of this party that the leaders of the organisation have been able to work these things through. This will be the most difficult of redistributions.

It means commonsense will have to prevail. Yes, there'll be a few retirees, I have no doubt about that. That happens every election. But we need to make sure that we encourage good candidates to nominate. Renewal is absolutely essential if we're going to be a long-term government.

As I've said, we've had 18 ministers come and go in nine years. Yes, we do need to see some renewal, but there needs to be acknowledgement for those members who are making a contribution. My view is very simple. Those members who are working incredibly hard, and that includes all my Cabinet, all my Cabinet ... All those members who are working incredibly hard should be fully supported.

(applause)

Stability is strength

Beattie: I just ask the party to be sensible about how we negotiate these things and I'll be talking to individuals about that. Because stability has been our strength. Discipline has been our strength. You win in government when you've got good policy, which we do, which we do ... good policy means good government. But if you've got discipline to go with it and you've got renewal you can stay for a long period of time provided you work at it.

As we all know the Labor Party is not the individual play thing of any individual, any individual group, or any individual leader. Its collective responsibility is to think about the good of the movement for the future. And that's not always easy. We will have those challenges and I will work those through with you. That brings me to a few other matters. The Labor Party to me is like a family. We've got a few dysfunctional members.

(laughter)

Beattie: Let's not name all the dysfunctional members.

(laughter)

Beattie: I must say I'm not particularly worried if any of you scream, or swear, or yell, or whatever. I'm a little tolerant about these things. I got thrown out once you might recall, for three months... I was critical of the party, but I didn't swear. I didn't swear. Be clear about that. But when you've got a family like the one we have, you have to manage the sort of things that I've talked about before. And I want to say this seriously to the party because I love this party. I love this state and I love this party, because you've done a great thing for the people of this State.

Howard Stayed Too Long

John Howard stayed too long as Prime Minister. He stayed too long for this country. I will not do that. Some time in the next year before we meet here at the conference I will have to make a decision as to whether I lead this party into the next election. That will be a difficult decision for me because the Labor Party's been my life. And when I sit down and make that decision there are two things that will influence me—what's good for Queensland and what's good for the Labor Party. They're the two tests. We've got a very talented young woman who I believe will be the premier of this state one day.

(applause)

Beattie: In fact, if you think about it, Premier Anna Bligh has a certain ring to it.

(laughter)

Transition and Renewal

Beattie: Transition and renewal is important and therefore before we meet again in 12 months I will have to make that decision. It is not an easy one. As I said I will be thinking of this party first. You've honoured me for eleven and a half years to be leader. As a kid it was one of the things I dreamed of. There's no higher honour you can give a member of the Labor Party than allow them to lead the party and I thank you for it.

(applause).

Queensland Coalition

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.03 pm): I want to draw attention to one matter. In my speech on the new Queensland, which I have just incorporated in my previous ministerial statement, I made reference to the fact that, in my view, neither the Leader of the Opposition nor the Leader of the Liberal Party will be around for much longer.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I do want to make mention of that in case they think I am incorporating something they did know about. I did talk about this publicly.

In making reference to Dr Flegg I was delighted to wish him a happy birthday—he is not here now—for his first 12 months in the job, and that happens to be 7 August. The reason I know that is that he put out a self-congratulatory statement acknowledging the fact that he has survived for a year. It is extraordinary that he has actually survived for one year. The most extraordinary thing about the statement is that in it he says in congratulating himself—

That is why I've publicly made unity and working together the No. 1 priority since I became leader.

In 12 months he has made this his major priority. I dug out a few clippings. This is the success of his unity: 'Coast Libs hit out at Flegg', 'Coalition spat drives on', 'Flegg defies his traitors'. It gets even better, I have to say—'Leadership vote now', 'Coast MPs in dark on Flegg flick', 'Knives poised for challenge', 'Shadow shrouds coalition portfolio', 'Flegg hits out at faction foes over email slur', 'Libs on the brink of open warfare'. I am glad the Leader of the Liberal Party made unity his top priority! I would have hated to have seen it as the No. 2 or No. 3 priority. The headlines continue: 'Coalition fighting the enemy within', 'Secret plot to oust Flegg'—

Ms Bligh: When he applies himself to something he really applies himself.

Mr BEATTIE: When he applies himself he does it unbelievably well. The headlines continue: 'Coalition friction over who is the boss', 'Libs leadership a festering sore for the coalition'. I table the clippings for the information of the House.

Tabled paper: Bundle of newspaper articles relating to the leadership of the Liberal Party.

I have to say that when the Leader of the Liberal Party puts out a statement congratulating himself I would have thought that putting unity as his No. 1 priority was not the smartest thing he could possibly have done. It is called leading with your chin. The most amazing thing about this is that I understand the leadership numbers are four all. There are eight Liberals, as we all know.

We have the member for Kawana who is set to desert the sinking ship to fulfil his ambitions to become the mayor. He was on ABC Coast FM last week. The member for Kawana, Steve Dickson, was asked, 'People are saying you will resign your position as the member for Kawana to contest the mayoral position of a supercouncil on the Sunshine Coast. Will you or won't you?' His reply was, 'Let me make it very clear, John, I will keep my options open.' Just in case members think I made that up, I will table that for the information of the House. Everyone else can make a judgement about it.

Tabled paper: Transcript of interview with Steve Dickson MP on the ABC Coast FM breakfast program with John Stokes on 3 August 2007.

The reality is that there is a faction within the group supporting the Leader of the Liberal Party called 'ABN'—that is, 'Anyone But Nicholls'. That accounts for two of that group. There are two others wandering around who are old Santoro voters. I have to tell you, Bruce, they tell me that you are waiting until you can be sure that anyone can win other than Mr Nicholls, the member for Clayfield. I do not know. All I can say, Bruce, is good luck. Congratulations—it has been one year. I am afraid, digger, you probably will not get to two, but good luck!

Water Infrastructure

Hon. AM BGLISH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure) (12.06 pm): This government's unprecedented efforts to secure south-east Queensland's water supply are proceeding at a rapid pace and I want to take this opportunity to update the House. Across the water grid we are reaching significant milestones. The length of pipe laid has reached triple figures. At last Friday, 101 kilometres of the 450 kilometres in total is now in the ground, representing 22 per cent.

On the Western Corridor Recycled Water Project, work is advancing steadily on yet another front—construction of the advanced water treatment plant at Luggage Point, where tomorrow 100 truckloads of concrete will be poured to form the base slab for the plant's raw water tank. The Premier and I recently witnessed the final stages of pipe laying for the Bundamba-Swanbank project at Ebbw Vale in Ipswich. In coming weeks purified recycled water will flow through that pipeline into the Swanbank Power Station, saving millions of litres of valuable drinking water a day.

All up, almost 62 kilometres of the 200-kilometre pipe in the western corridor project has been laid, 30 per cent of the total. We are one-third of the way there. Pipe laying on the southern regional water pipeline to connect us to the Gold Coast is 40 per cent complete, with more than 35 kilometres already in the ground. At the Gold Coast all of my cabinet colleagues recently had a firsthand inspection of the tremendous progress on the desalination plant. The self-elevating platform is now driving pile casing in the ocean off Tugun, with marine boring to start on Thursday. The plant buildings that will house the reverse osmosis equipment are 27 per cent complete.

On another front, the Coordinator-General today will release the final terms of reference of the environmental impact statement for the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam. This process involved considering more than 260 submissions from community groups, government agencies and individuals. Some 112 changes and additions have been made to the original terms of reference as a result of the consultation on the draft. Queensland Water Infrastructure, the company established by the state government to deliver the dam, will now press on with preparing the environmental impact statement, which is expected to be released for further public comment by October. The federal Minister for the Environment and Water Resources had advised that he was satisfied at this stage that stage 2 of the proposed dam did not require a separate referral and assessment process under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

I am sure members will join me in congratulating the people of south-east Queensland for their inspired water-saving efforts in the face of the worst drought in the region's history. Whether it is collecting water for gardens by using buckets in the shower or doing one less load of washing a week, households have tailor-made their own solutions to help beat this drought. Average consumption in the south east is now down to 135 litres per person per day—well ahead of Target 140. So successful have households been that the QWC has now asked the 12 councils under level 5 restrictions to help it decide whether south-east Queenslanders can be spared the prospect of outdoor watering bans as level 6 restrictions are formulated.

Level 6 restrictions will shift the focus to business, particularly those small and medium sized companies that must do more to play their part by demonstrating how they can make savings of up to 25 per cent or bring their operations into line with world's best practice. I look forward to their cooperation. I also advise the House that I recently announced on behalf of the government a strategy to address housing affordability in Queensland, and I seek leave to table documents about that strategy for the information of the House.

Leave granted.

Tabled paper: Document by the Department of Infrastructure titled 'Queensland Housing Affordability Strategy'.

Local Government Reform

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport) (12.10 pm): Later today I will introduce the Local Government Reform Implementation Bill. The Beattie government's historic program of reform for councils across the state has as its central objective the provision of a more streamlined, sustainable system of local government for the modern era. Reform can ensure stronger councils have the financial capacity and resources to meet the challenges of the 21st century, but to achieve that councils will require continuing financial assistance from both the state and federal governments. Today I announce a funding package to assist those councils affected by amalgamations to make a smooth transition toward more effective, sustainable local government.

The funding package for local government reform will be \$27.1 million and includes allocations for staff support packages, local transition committees and specific transition requirements within affected councils. This is a wise investment—an apt injection of funds to not only establish solid local government but to prevent the very real requirement to bail out many existing councils which face financial uncertainty into the future. Funding includes \$12 million for the staff support package and further funds for business system reviews, change management, community engagement, the administrative costs of local transition committees and interim CEOs. The comprehensive three-year staff support package will ensure job security for council employees. Just as the government is determined to reform local government, it is determined that the 37,000 Queenslanders who make a living working in this sector can continue to do just that. The support package will include a local government workforce code of practice to protect and support job security.

Funding has been included toward the costs associated with the transition such as legal and other statutory costs, as well as to replace or upgrade existing financial systems and also to specifically support the new councils beyond March 2008. The government will provide funding support for the establishment and ongoing costs of the local transition committees. These committees will be established as soon as possible and remain in place through to the March local government elections. The first task of the local transition committees will be to appoint an interim CEO for the new council. The government will provide funding for these interim CEOs during the transition phase to the value of \$70,000, the amount requested by the LGAQ. Interim CEOs will be critical in ensuring the transition for new councils over the initial six-month period. The independent Local Government Reform Commission has reported back with wide-ranging and thorough recommendations for structural reform which have been accepted lock, stock and barrel by this government. These are essential reforms to give Queensland the modern, sustainable local government system it requires for its growth into the future. It is now imperative that the government provides the appropriate funding to ensure the reforms are implemented as smoothly and as efficiently as possible.

Queensland Police Service

Hon. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (12.13 pm): I am pleased to join the Premier to announce that the government has reached an in-principle agreement with the Queensland Police Union of Employees for a new three-year deal covering pay and conditions. The union has accepted the government's offer of a four per cent pay increase per annum over three years which will see the government provide \$465 million for the enterprise bargaining agreement plus allowances and restructuring. This deal means that Queensland Police Service officers are now amongst the highest paid in Australia. It was reached after intensive negotiations in recent days and both sides have had to shift ground. I would like to thank the Queensland Police Union of Employees for its professional approach during talks and its willingness to meet us halfway on what is a fair and reasonable offer.

There will be changes to the pay scales of most police. For example, there will be a specified locality allowance for police working in Indigenous deed of grant in trust communities in the state. There is a significant increase in penalty rates for police working night shifts from 10 per cent to 15 per cent. There will be new senior pay points for sergeants and senior sergeants who are not officers in charge and for assistant watch-house officers. Constables who have reached their top pay point and have completed the relevant skills requirements will automatically progress to the rank of senior constable. Significantly, there will be enhanced allowances for Special Emergency Response Team officers to ensure that these elite members stay with the Queensland Police Service.

I will give the House some examples of the pay increases police will enjoy by the end of the agreement. Constables at level 4 will get \$275 more a fortnight and will be paid more than \$52,500 a year. Constables at level 5 will get \$330 more a fortnight and will earn more than \$63,000 a year. Sergeants at level 3 will get more than \$380 extra a fortnight and will earn more than \$73,000 a year. Senior Sergeants at level 2 will get more than \$430 more a fortnight and will earn over \$82,000. This agreement reflects the government's commitment to maintaining a well staffed and highly skilled Police Service in Queensland and the respect that we have for the valuable job they do in keeping Queenslanders safe.

Today I also join the Premier in commenting on the fact that the Queensland Police Service is mourning the deaths of two of its officers—one who was killed during active duty as a Queensland police officer and the other who was a former Queensland police officer of 16 years who was killed while working in Iraq. Constable Brett Irwin and former Sergeant Brendan Hurst were both regarded by their families, friends and colleagues as men committed to helping others. At 33 years of age, Constable Irwin was just one year into his service as a Queensland police officer when he was shot dead while attempting to serve a warrant on a man at Keperra. We have every reason to believe that Constable Irwin had a promising career ahead of him, already being considered for plain clothes roles just 12 months into his service. When I met with his colleagues at Ferny Grove Police Station, I was overwhelmed by their praise for a young man who, by all accounts, was an asset to the Queensland Police Service. The unpredictable and tragic nature of Constable Irwin's death in the line of duty is a reminder to us all of the constant dangers our police are faced with as they undertake their day-to-day activities to protect the public of Queensland. Former Sergeant Brendan Hurst was another fine example of an officer who spent many years serving the people of this state. He left the Queensland Police Service late last year and was killed by a roadside bomb in Iraq where he was training local police. The fine calibre of some of the officers in the Queensland Police Service today could well be attributed to the shared experiences and teaching skills of former Sergeant Hurst.

Health System

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Health) (12.17 pm): When it comes to health, Queenslanders do not need the Howard government to pork barrel handpicked marginal seats to deliver improved funding of public health services and they do not need a Canberra takeover of state-run hospitals. Queenslanders just need the Prime Minister to face up to the responsibilities the Commonwealth already has. If he were really serious about health, Mr Howard would immediately address his government's funding shortfall for public hospitals. Under the Australian Health Care Agreement, funding public health services, including hospitals, used to be a fifty-fifty split between the states and the Commonwealth. Mr Howard has trashed that partnership so that now for every dollar going into public health services in Queensland the Beattie government invests 65c while the Howard government's contribution is a pathetic 35c.

By the end of the current agreement, which expires next June, Canberra will have underinvested in the health of Queenslanders to the tune of \$2.6 billion. Calculated on a district level, over the last five years Mr Howard has short-changed Cairns by \$150 million, the Sunshine Coast by \$152 million, Brisbane's north side by \$270 million, the Darling Downs by \$139 million, Townsville by \$194 million, Ipswich and West Moreton by \$129 million and central Queensland by \$97 million. The other major failing of the Howard government which impacts on the day-to-day operation of our hospitals has been aged care. On average, every single day our public hospitals are forced to care for around 468 patients who should not be there. That is 468 acute care beds that should be available to our emergency departments to address real problems like ambulance ramping and EDs going on bypass because they cannot access the beds they need in our hospitals.

Every day our hospitals admit an average of 7,718 patients, but we could admit more Queenslanders in need of hospital treatment if finally the federal government opened up more nursing home places. It is blatant cost shifting by Mr Howard which is clogging one in 20 acute care beds in our public hospitals. If the Prime Minister really wanted to make a difference in health, he could do so literally overnight. All he needs to do is accept the need identified by the Australian aged-care sector to properly fund high-care places in nursing homes, which would have a real and immediate impact on how our hospitals can cope with ever-increasing demand.

National Housing Affordability Summit

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology) (12.20 pm): I recently attended the National Housing Affordability Summit in Canberra organised by the federal Labor Party. It was so refreshing to see our Labor alternative Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, looking for new thinking on housing in a time when getting a roof over your head has never been harder for many Australians.

Under Prime Minister Howard, supported by those opposite, we have watched the critical collapse of the private rental system, and Queensland has lost over \$400 million in real terms of housing funding from the Commonwealth government. Waiting lists for public housing have blown out across the country. It is not surprising. In 2002 the average private rent paid in Queensland was \$185 for a three-bedroom house. Today it is \$280. Rents have risen 47 per cent while at the same time average weekly earnings have risen only 24 per cent. What is missing from the market today are stable affordable homes for working families to rent.

What we heard on the day were real proposals regarding affordable housing as well as discussion from industry figures on how to achieve this. We are already starting to see considered policy flowing out of the summit from Kevin Rudd, with the proposal for a Commonwealth residential infrastructure fund already announced. Contrast this approach to Minister Mal Brough, who on the same day as the summit impulsively announced that he was walking away from the 50-year-old Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement—

Mrs Sullivan: Shame!

Mr SCHWARTEN: Shame all right—and putting public housing funding out to tender. I never thought I would live to see that day. After years of underfunding public housing right across the nation and with the private rental market in a state of collapse, the Brough solution is to walk away and ask the private market to solve the woes. We have seen how that has worked in the last few years. I can tell Mr Brough that there is no money to be made in housing the sick, the poor, the infirm and the aged. The private funds are only interested in funding projects where they can make money—and so they should be. Under Brough's proposal there is no more money for maintaining or housing poor and vulnerable public housing tenants and they are being cast adrift.

I congratulate the Labor leadership of Kevin Rudd, the future Prime Minister of this country, Wayne Swan and Tanya Plibersek, who will be the next housing minister—and the current mob does not even have one—on bringing the summit together.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I condemn Mal Brough and the member for Toowoomba South, who is interjecting, for their support for putting public housing out to tender.

Queensland Workplace Rights Ombudsman

Hon. RJ MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (Minister for State Development, Employment and Industrial Relations) (12.22 pm): Queensland employees and employers continue to show their dissatisfaction, distrust and apprehension of John Howard's WorkChoices legislation. Since 2 July, Queensland's new Workplace Rights Ombudsman's office has received nearly 1,200 inquiries from Queensland workers and employers who are confused, unsure and worried about their rights and obligations under the seriously flawed federal legislation.

As at the end of June, of the more than 800 employment inquiries referred to the federal government by my department, it had been advised of only four outcomes. In the past two weeks, my department has followed up nearly 200 of these outstanding queries. Contact with these people revealed a staggering one-third were dissatisfied with the process and resolutions achieved. The Ombudsman's office has investigated 107 cases where it appears blatant cases of unlawful, unfair, inappropriate industrial relations or work related matters have occurred.

One example of Queensland workers and an employer being disadvantaged by WorkChoices is a labour hire company which chose to pay its employees a fair wage. This Queensland firm is losing custom to another labour hire firm operating under a federal Australian Workplace Agreement not subject to the 'fairness' test. Other examples include a staff newsletter saying AWAs would be introduced and every employee wishing to continue employment must sign it; an employee not signing an AWA being dismissed; unnecessary and unfair termination payment delays; inaccurate, or potentially defamatory, separation certificates statements; and employers requiring young workers to pay for uniforms, training and other costs historically required of employers.

Because of WorkChoices, 20,000 Queensland child-care workers, mainly women, have missed out on the benefits of the 27 June 2006 Queensland Industrial Relations Commission decision awarding them a range of increases to be implemented by September next year. It is now over a year since the QIRC decision, and because they are now under federal jurisdiction WorkChoices has cost these workers up to \$31.80 per week to date and will cost them as much as \$51.10 per week by 1 September 2008. These federal WorkChoices issues show Queensland workers and employers have a strong need for an independent workplace rights champion.

Indigenous Partnership Agreement

Hon. FW PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Seniors and Youth) (12.25 pm): Last month an historic community cabinet meeting, the first in an Aboriginal community in Queensland, was held in Yarrabah. This very successful event brought the community and government together in a mutually beneficial way and I must convey my thanks to the Yarrabah mayor, Vince Mundraby, his council and the entire community for making everyone feel so welcome.

The cabinet meeting was a great opportunity for Indigenous Queenslanders to have their say and speak directly to ministers and departmental heads. It also provided the ideal backdrop for the signing of an historic Indigenous Partnership Agreement with 13 Indigenous communities. This agreement fulfilled a promise made by the Premier in February to work with Indigenous communities to find a way forward to improve the lives of Indigenous Queenslanders. I am pleased to inform the House that since that meeting the mayors of Palm Island and Mornington Island have also signed the agreement. The Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships is now continuing to negotiate with the mayors of Aurukun, Seisia, Doomadgee and New Mapoon about the agreement.

The priorities for immediate action under the three-year agreement include land tenure, housing, alcohol abuse, child safety and chronic disease. The agreement will be implemented on the ground through local Indigenous partnership agreements that identify priority areas for each community. We have already signed one Local Indigenous Partnership Agreement with Mornington Shire Council and discussions are continuing for others. Also, I will convene twice-yearly round tables to check progress and reset priorities as necessary.

I am also pleased to announce that my department has finalised the appointment of five regional directors for the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships. Four of the five appointees are Indigenous and all come with a history of working closely, and in partnership, with Indigenous communities. These appointments are part of this government's ongoing commitment to improving the overall wellbeing of Indigenous communities and to give practical effect to reconciliation.

Commonwealth-State-Territory Disability Agreement

Hon. FW PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Seniors and Youth) (12.28 pm): Securing sufficient funding for specialist disability services in Queensland is one of my most important jobs, so it is timely to update the House about recent developments in our funding negotiations with the Commonwealth government.

Late last month—on 25 July—I attended a conference in Sydney involving disability services ministers from across Australia to discuss a fourth Commonwealth-State-Territory Disability Agreement, or CSTDA. In some good news for the disability services sector, I can report that the negotiations have achieved a commitment by all Australian governments to work together towards a multilateral agreement for funding. These negotiations come after the states and territories presented to the Commonwealth in late June a strategic plan for investment in the sector. The plan proposes a commitment by all governments to increase funding by \$3.4 billion nationally over five years. The plan is based on the investment needed to maintain and expand services to keep pace with future growth, as well as the capacity to reduce unmet need. State and territory ministers have left this investment plan on the table, after Sydney, to give the Commonwealth more time to consider it.

Before the meeting I also provided the Commonwealth minister, as requested, with a plan of Queensland's capacity for increased investment. This plan was to be considered by the Commonwealth for dollar-for-dollar funding. I was disappointed when we received advice from the Commonwealth that Queensland's plan would not be considered for matched funding, particularly as there was no explanation about why it was rejected. It seems the Commonwealth government is more concerned about its declining electoral stocks than it is about properly funding disability services. If the Commonwealth persists with its rejection of Queensland's funding submission, we will lose almost \$400 million of matched Commonwealth funds over five years. I intend resubmitting Queensland's proposal to the Commonwealth and will continue fighting for a fair deal.

While it is true that we made progress in Sydney, I still have concerns about how the Commonwealth has conducted itself during these negotiations. I can assure the House that I will be seeking to achieve the best financial and policy outcomes for Queenslanders with a disability.

TRAVELSAFE COMMITTEE

Membership

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Leader of the House) (12.29 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That the member for Chatsworth, Mr Bombolas, be discharged as a member of the Travelsafe Committee and the member for Bulimba, Mr Purcell, be appointed as a member of that committee.

Motion agreed to.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Leader of the House) (12.30 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That notwithstanding anything contained in standing and sessional orders for this week's sitting, that—

- (a) the debate of general business in accordance with Sessional Order 1(c), normally occurring on Wednesday evening, occur from 7.30 pm this evening with the Adjournment debate to be moved no later than 10.00 pm;
- (b) government business take precedence from 7.30 pm Wednesday evening in lieu of general business; and
- (c) the Local Government Reform Implementation Bill that will be introduced later this day be declared urgent and allowed to pass through all stages at this week's sittings.

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.31 pm): I second the motion.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (12.31 pm): This motion is an outrage. Again we see this parliament misused for the benefit of the government. Again we see this government trying to deny the people who are affected by its flawed processes. They are not being given a chance to even consider the legislation that is going to have a profound impact on their communities.

This is so typical of this process from day one. It has been completely devoid of democracy and completely devoid of any consultation. The government even went out and threatened the mayors with all sorts of retribution if they consulted their communities. Now it comes in here and it is going to use its numbers to prevent the communities even reading the legislation before it is forced through this House. No doubt we are going to see the gag applied. Members of this parliament are not even going to get a chance to stand up and speak on behalf of the communities that they represent. This is an outrageous misuse of this parliament and it is a continuation of the processes that we have seen right from the start.

If ever there were legislation that should lie on the table for two weeks, it is this. This legislation should lie on the table so that the mayors, the councillors and the communities have a chance to read it and have a chance to understand what is being proposed for them and their communities. This legislation will fundamentally change those communities for years to come. The government does not understand that. It has run this dishonest line that it is somehow all about the number of politicians. It is about communities; it is about families; it is about women and kids who spent 24 hours on a bus coming down here so that they could get their point across to arrogant, ignorant ministers who will not listen.

This motion is a continuation of the uncaring, arrogant attitude of this government and we will oppose it. We will oppose it in this parliament, as we rightfully should. Any member of this parliament who has half an ounce of heart and soul and who cares for the people who are going to be impacted by this legislation will join with us and defeat this motion that has been moved by the Leader of the House.

Mr SPEAKER: I call the Premier, who reserved his right to speak.

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.33 pm): This is a common-sense motion.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I should start by saying that I know that some members have come in here intending to deliberately get thrown out this week for political purposes.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Warrego, you are on a thin leash at the moment. As a shadow minister, I am sure you do not want to be.

Mr BEATTIE: As I said, I know that some members have come in here with the deliberate strategy to get thrown out. That is fine. They want to make a political point. I just ask them to have some respect for the parliament.

This motion is a sensible one. The independent commission made recommendations in relation to boundaries which my government has accepted. This motion helps to facilitate the provision of that legislation through this parliament so that we can have elections in March when they are scheduled.

Importantly, one of the recommendations that the government has taken on board—because the commission recommended that all councils be undivided—is to consult with councils and, where they agreed, if they wanted to be divided, we allowed them to be. The consequences of that—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: If the members opposite want to hear a constructive debate, let us have it. If they want to wreck the parliament, then that is a different thing.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The members opposite can hardly come in here and talk about democracy if a member is trying to make a contribution and they continue to disrupt it. They have no respect for the institution.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I indicate to all members of parliament, as I have already this morning, that if they wish to persist in ignoring the standing orders of this parliament that members have agreed to they will be dealt with in the appropriate way.

Mr BEATTIE: Very simply, the point I am trying to make is this: the independent commissioners said that each of the councils should be undivided. When the minister and I toured this state, a number of councils told us that they wanted an opportunity for divisions. We said that if they could reach agreement then there would be divisions. If they could not reach agreement then the minister would have to make a decision, and he brought to cabinet on Monday some recommendations.

The consequences of having divisions is that somebody has to draw them up. That is why the commission recommended that there be no divisions, because it was easier not to go through the process of drawing them up. That meant that, in the commission's view, in the next four years you could draw up divisions for those councils that wanted divisions. However, because we wanted to consult with councils about divisions and about being divided or undivided, the consequence of that is, where you have divisions, you have to get an independent process in place to do it. There are some time impediments here, and they are real time impediments.

The first one is that we have a joint role between the Commonwealth and the state. Senior people within the government—and I am talking about the bureaucracy—have appropriately met with the state Electoral Commissioner. The advice we got from the federal Electoral Commissioner and the state Electoral Commissioner is that if we do not have the divisions done by 27 September rolls cannot be put in place to have local government elections with divisions in March next year.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The only way the opposition will get rid of me is if I resign. If I waited for it to get rid of me, I would be here for 100 years.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: If I rely on the members opposite to win, if I rely on them to come up with anything constructive—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, that was a comment on their incompetence, not anything else. I make the point that if they wanted to apply some logic instead of being half-smart for just one minute, they would understand—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: They are not interested in a debate about local government; they are interested in politics. I say to Queenslanders: judge the opposition's behaviour when we are trying to explain the reason for this. They make inane interjections and carry on with nonsense. They want to disrupt the parliament; they do not want a debate of any kind. We could have this bill before this parliament for 20 years and we would still not get a sensible contribution from them in a debate, because they are not interested in debates; they are only interested in playing silly politics.

Let me finish this point. The Commonwealth and the state electoral commissioners cannot provide divisions for a March election unless they can get the divisions done by 27 September. That means that we have to pass the legislation this week so that they can have the divisions completed by 27 September so that the rolls can then be made up. It is logical. There is no argument against it. It is absolutely clear.

We are saying that every council in Queensland should know that the opposition's position today is to oppose divisions. That is the actual effect of what the members opposite are trying to do. If they oppose this motion, they are opposing divisions. Let there be no doubt about it: they are opposing divisions if they oppose this motion. Let me make it clear: my government is determined to give divisions to those councils that unanimously agreed. Those members on the other side are trying to prevent the mechanism to make that possible. We are not going to let that happen. We are going to give those councils that want them those divisions.

Now that the decision has been made by the independent commissioners—and later this year the Electoral Commission will be making decisions on everybody's boundaries, as they do federally—we need to provide certainty in this regard for all councils so that they know what is going to happen. We need to ensure that we have certainty not only from a job point of view but also from a council of point of view and a divisions point of view, as well as the actual election of local government.

I know that change provides instability and uncertainty. The only way we will get certainty is to get on and pass the legislation, and that is what we are going to do. I make it clear that this is about building stronger councils for a growing Queensland. We will deliver this for the future of the state. Those opposite want to oppose it; we will do it for the good of the state.

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology) (12.40 pm): There is not one Queenslander, not even in the tiniest outpost of the state, who is not aware of what this legislation is all about. If those opposite are incapable of having read it through prior to today, they ought not to be in this place. The reality is that this is a matter of enormous moment. It is something that every Queenslander knows about, as evidenced by what has been said. People who have travelled to Brisbane by bus know about the legislation and what it contains. It has been explained every inch of the way. It is obvious to everybody—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Again I say that if you wish to carry on like this we can be here all day and all night—if you so wish. The Leader of the House is wrapping up the debate on the motion. I think we should hear that and get on with question time.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I reinforce what the Premier said. There are no surprises in any of this stuff. The reality is that the opposition wants to dingo a way out of the debate. That is the reality. It wants to put it away for another day. I say bring on the debate. Let us have the debate in the interests of Queensland. Let us get the divisions out there so that we can have certainty in places like Rockhampton.

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

AYES, 55—Attwood, Barry, Beattie, Bligh, Bombolas, Boyle, Choi, Croft, Darling, English, Fenlon, Finn, Fraser, Gray, Hayward, Hinchliffe, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Jones, Keech, Kiernan, Lavarch, Lee, Lucas, McNamara, Mickel, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, O'Brien, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Purcell, Reilly, Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Weightman, Welford, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Male, Nolan

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

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Members have alerted me to the fact that the Minister for Police and Corrective Services has brought some coffee into the chamber. Minister, you do not have a special exemption in that regard and we are not going to make that a general rule. I ask you not to bring coffee into the chamber in the future.

I also indicate that other items that are necessarily on the agenda will now need to be brought up this afternoon by individual members. It is now time for questions so can I also say to members, and I am aware that this relates to a couple of members, that the tabling of reports will need to be done a little later in the day. It is now question time and I call the Leader of the Opposition.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Local Government Reform

Mr SEENEY (12.49 pm): My first question without notice is to the Deputy Premier and Treasurer. Yesterday, 70 women and children protested outside the executive building about the destruction of their communities resulting from her government's forced amalgamations, which is being justified by a dishonest use of a QTC report. Some of those women and children only just got home this morning, having spent 26 hours on a bus. Can the Deputy Premier understand what motivates women to go to such lengths to fight for the future of their families? When she becomes Premier, can they expect any change to her government's uncaring and arrogant approach to their communities?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. I understand some of the passion in this debate that comes from places such as the ones that the women arrived from yesterday, as well as other places right across the state. Yes, of course I do. I have said that publicly. In fact, I said it on a program with members opposite—

An opposition member interjected.

Ms BLIGH: I understand that some of them were from Aramac, but I am not sure that that was all. They might have been from other places. However, as the member for Callide knows, I have been on the public record saying that, of course, I have a great understanding of how important people's local communities are to them. One does not have to live a long way out west or north to care about one's local place. People have a great sense of who they are and where they come from.

A number of people have raised this issue with me, particularly people from Noosa. I have told them that it is my understanding that the day after the election of local governments in Queensland next March, Noosa will continue to be their address. Indeed, that will be the case for residents of all the small towns in western Queensland. All of those towns and all of the places that people come from will continue to exist. My sense of my local community is not reduced simply by an administrative boundary or the electoral boundary of local government.

Do I understand that there is a fear in some communities, particularly those that have very low populations, that a change in boundaries might have some effect—

Mr Johnson: What is your house going to be worth after all this is over? What's your house going to be worth?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I say to the member for Gregory that you will be here for a day, possibly two or three days, or no days. I am not going to take the constant interruptions in the way that you are proposing to do it.

Ms BLIGH: I want to draw the member's attention to the fact that there has been no change to the boundaries of the City of Brisbane, which is already a very large and very efficient council. It has been for over a century under all sides of politics, and therefore nothing that is being considered by the parliament this week will affect anything to do with my house, and any suggestion is complete nonsense and misinformation.

I think it is unreasonable to characterise this debate as one in which all the care and compassion is on one side. This is a debate that we should be able to have about the merits of local government arrangements without characterising those people who have an interest in clear boundaries that are ready for the challenges of the next century and without people's motivations and their capacity for compassion being brought into account. What it means, for example, right up through the Surat Basin is that all of the big challenges for development over the next 20, 30 or 40 years will now be managed by four regional councils, not 15 or 16 shire councils. They have big challenges ahead of them, negotiating with multinational global mining companies.

Local Government Reform

Mr SEENEY: My second question without notice is also directed to the Deputy Premier and Treasurer. I refer the Treasurer to what Kevin Rudd said earlier this week about council amalgamations, and I will quote it because I think it is instructive for all members of the government. Kevin Rudd said, 'The best pathway forward if there are to be amalgamations is for them to be voluntary. Secondly, I've always said that when it comes to achieving economies between local authorities, that's best done by shires pooling together, either through voluntary amalgamation or through the common purchase of key and critical infrastructure services.' As the Treasurer and as the anointed Premier, does the Treasurer support Kevin Rudd or does she support Peter Beattie's forced amalgamations lock, stock and barrel?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. I am sure Kevin Rudd will be pleased to know that he has the support of the member for Callide along with the 49 per cent primary vote in the Newspoll today.

An honourable member: We didn't know you'd anointed her.

Mr Lucas: No, he's anointed her.

Ms BLIGH: Yes, I think I have just had the kiss of death. There is nothing unusual in individuals in any political party having different points of view on any issue. Kevin Rudd's position on this is well known.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms BLIGH: That is right. Mr Rudd's position on this is clear. The Premier's position on this is clear. And I will be supporting the legislation that the minister for local government brings in this afternoon when I get a chance to vote for it later this week.

What is the real position on that side of the House? Those opposite would have you believe that they are a unified force on this. The Liberal Party is so opposed to these amalgamations that one of its members was going to resign their seat and run as mayor on the Sunshine Coast, and he is sitting next to the member for Noosa. They must be having some interesting conversations at the moment. It is absolutely clear that, while the National Party, to its credit, has a very strong and unified voice on this, the Liberal Party, as always, does not have a clue where it is. It does not know whether to stand up for common-sense, important electoral reform that is overdue—

A government member interjected.

Ms BLIGH: One of them might have been at the march on Friday but another one was giving a radio interview saying that he wanted to be a mayor in a supercouncil. As always, Bruce is out the front leading and the others are all somewhere else.

We put forward an independent commission of very well qualified people. On behalf of the people of Queensland they have brought forward a report which stands up to any scrutiny in terms of its merits. We will be supporting those boundaries. In terms of the debate earlier as to when and how we should debate the boundaries, I draw to the member's attention that they have had these boundaries, which will be the subject of the legislation later this week, since they were brought down on the Friday before last—more than a week ago. By the time this is debated on Thursday, you will have had these boundaries for 13 days. If you are unable to form a view on how you are going to vote on that legislation, then you should not be where you are.

Those opposite would have you believe that if we gave them another two weeks they would change their mind and vote in support of the legislation—as if they have not already got a closed mind and a closed view on this. This side of the House knows where we stand on this issue. It is important electoral reform and we will support it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Glass House, I remind both sides of the House that questions are to be asked of the relevant minister, as is appropriate according to the standing orders. I remind everyone of that particular rule.

Commonwealth Government

Ms MALE: My question without notice is directed to the Premier and Minister for Trade. Can the Premier explain to the House why the Commonwealth government is failing Queenslanders?

Mr BEATTIE: I certainly can, and I thank the honourable member for the question. I congratulate the deputy on her fantastic answers before. I do not know why she is getting the Leader of the Opposition to give her dorothy dixers.

Mr Seeney: It is a waste of time asking you. We may as well ask the real boss.

Mr BEATTIE: Don't get excited.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: It would not make any difference whom you asked. Yesterday's revelations that internal Liberal Party polling shows the Howard government—

An opposition member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Just behave yourself; you do not need to be rude. Internal Liberal Party polling showing the Howard government is in desperate political straits is no surprise to anyone who is part of a state government around Australia. Liberal Party pollster Mark Textor found that John Howard is seen as increasingly rattled and not responding well under pressure. He also reported significant disillusionment with the Liberals on the issue of broken promises and dishonesty. For months now the negative, destructive policies of a desperate Prime Minister have centred on just one strategy, and that is to attack the states—all of them—as an attempt to divert attention away from his policy failings. Now the Prime Minister is running advertisements to do it. Queenslanders, in our view, will judge the Prime Minister on his record. Today I will provide a brief outline to this House about that record. The fact is that the Commonwealth continues to fail Queenslanders.

Let us just look for a minute at health, roads and disability services. The Queensland government is having to meet increasingly larger proportions of expenditure for the provision of essential services. We are carrying that burden. There are no more essential services than public hospitals. Across the nation population growth, an ageing demographic and welcome but expensive leaps in medical care and technology have put pressure on the country's 700 public hospitals. The Commonwealth requires the states to match its contribution on a fifty-fifty basis. Here in Queensland we have responded by increasing our contribution by 111.9 per cent since 2002-03. Disappointingly, over the same period the Commonwealth contribution has increased by only 32.8 per cent. We are carrying the burden. No wonder there is pressure on our hospitals.

The Commonwealth is also failing to support medical research in this state. In 2006 we received the lowest level of per capita funding for health and medical research in the country—except for Tasmania which has no medical research institutes at all. Conversely, my government has invested over \$530 million in infrastructure, research programs, skills programs and commercialisation support in the sector since 1998.

Let us look at roads. Since 1996-97 the Queensland government has increased its funding from \$500 million to \$1.857 billion, a 271 per cent increase. The Commonwealth's funding has increased to just \$580 million over the same period, which is a pathetic figure. For disability services, we have increased our contribution by 280 per cent since 1998-99. Over the same period, the Commonwealth increased its contribution by only 89 per cent. We are being cheated by the Commonwealth. It is about time Queensland was funded properly.

Local Government Reform

Mr HOBBS: My question is to the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure. Already in Tambo, as a result of the minister's Queensland Treasury Corporation analysis and subsequent forced amalgamation decisions, the local bank is reassessing whether it can continue operations, the Post Office has raised serious concerns about the loss of business in the town and the banks have started lowering property valuations. Does the minister have any understanding of the devastating impact forced amalgamations will have on small businesses, families, working people and local jobs in those small communities?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. The demonstration of his staggering economic capacity stands for all to see. Let me make a couple of comments about some of the issues that are motivating our decision to take these electoral reforms forward. We are motivated by a view that Queensland will continue to experience high levels of growth both in population and in industrial expansion well into the next couple of decades.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Warrego, if you continue to interject like this I will be warning you and taking necessary action.

Ms BLIGH: We are equally strongly of the view that that will present challenges to all levels of government: the federal government, the state government and local governments right across the state. It is our view that we need to be prepared for those challenges. The current structure of local government simply does not prepare us for those challenges. Some decisions will have to be made by some very small organisations that will be negotiating, as I said earlier, with multinational mining companies or with some of the largest property developers in the country who can out-lawyer them, out-gun them, out-spend them on some of their planning decisions and tie things up in courts forever. That is not in the interests of the local economies of those areas nor in the state's interests.

We have a strong view that what will happen to all of these new regional councils is what has happened to other amalgamated councils that were amalgamated over a decade ago: they have gone from strength to strength. I look forward to a debate here in 10 years time when we can actually stand up and talk about the growth in those economies and the growth in jobs.

The hypocrisy of the conservative side of government on this is staggering and breathtaking. On 3 September this year it will be 19 years to the day when a national referendum gave all Australians the opportunity to consider whether local government should be recognised in the Constitution of Australia. So important did the Liberal and National parties consider that question that they advocated a no vote. It was prosecuted federally by Peter Reith. Local government was not so important to those opposite then when they had a chance to enshrine it in the national Constitution of this country.

It was the Labor Party that thought local government warranted that sort of recognition. That was defeated because people on the side of politics of the member for Warrego actively brought that referendum down. The Local Government Association of Queensland could only be said to have raised a lacklustre campaign on behalf of the proposition. When those opposite come in here and hold themselves high and mighty and talk about the importance of local government and how John Howard or someone should come in and save them, they should just remember that they are 19 years too late.

Commonwealth Funding

Mr FINN: My question is to the Premier and Minister for Trade. Can the Premier explain to the House why the Queensland government has been forced to pick up the increasing cost of vital services as the Commonwealth government actively withdraws from its responsibility?

Mr BEATTIE: That is a very good question. The answer is that unfortunately we have no choice. The sad irony in all this, which Australians have not missed if you look at today's poll in the *Australian* which indicates that the opposition federally is in a very good political position, is that the Commonwealth is failing comprehensively in areas of its own responsibility.

Let us deal with those areas. Take public housing for example. It is an area of real pressure as interest rates have risen four times under the current federal government, yet the Commonwealth's contribution represents only 28 per cent of the Queensland government's housing assistance programs—only 28 per cent, as the minister for housing knows. At a time when rising housing costs and a tightening rental market have put pressure on many families, increasing household stress, the Queensland government's contribution is \$961.2 million to housing assistance—three times more than the Commonwealth agreement stipulates. That is our commitment to housing.

But late last month the Howard government unilaterally announced changes to the housing agreement which would result in a cut in funding to the state government of approximately \$195 million each year. As the minister for housing said, it is going to put the poor out to tender. That is what it is going to do. We are shouldering this loss and continue to maintain some 55,000 public houses.

At the same time, the Commonwealth has also indicated it will withdraw funding for vital Indigenous community housing organisations from mid next year. By the way, for the benefit of the opposition, I note that Mr Brough is putting his Indigenous legislation through federal parliament all in one day—today. So let us not have any hypocrisy here from the opposition.

Let us look at the environment. Not even in an election year has it been immune from federal government cuts. The Howard government has cut funding to our World Heritage areas from \$4.5 million to \$2.7 million. That is its track record on the environment. It has also failed to fulfil its longstanding \$10 million commitment to acquire land of high conservation value in Cape York.

Mr Speaker, you will recall that in the late 1990s the Prime Minister sought Queensland government action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20 million tonnes by restricting clearing of vegetation. My government committed to this proposal in good faith only to have the Commonwealth fail to meet any of its share of the \$150 million assistance package for landholders impacted by the arrangements but then went out and said it had met Kyoto—but only because we did it.

Despite the lack of support, the Commonwealth Treasurer has claimed credit for reducing greenhouse gases by ending tree clearing. The Howard government's failure to fund vital research in clean coal technology should stand as a searing indictment of its failure to understand and step up to the challenges posed by climate change. Instead of making stilted announcements on YouTube cynically targeting marginal seats, the Prime Minister should get back to the business of governing. He should drop the cheap political point scoring and get on with meeting the needs of Australians.

This federal government is not only failing in its responsibilities but also not providing the states with the necessary money to provide the services that we should. Why is our health system under pressure? Population growth and a lack of funding from the Commonwealth. If the Commonwealth is serious then let us get the \$1 billion it has short-changed us under the health care agreement.

Time expired.

Local Government Reform

Mr ELMES: My question without notice is to the minister for local government and planning. Noosa, as the minister knows, has been rated in the top 10 financially secure councils in Queensland. It is also the first local authority in Australia to be recognised as a model sustainable community. When the minister made his secret visit to Noosa he said that if there were 156 councils in Queensland like Noosa there would be no need for local government reform. Why has the minister gutted the mums and dads and kids of Noosa and imposed amalgamation on us?

Mr FRASER: Mr Speaker—

Mr Elmes interjected.

Mr FRASER: I thank the member for Noosa for his question. I would like to go back to one of the premises of his question which is that I somehow conducted a secret meeting in Noosa some weeks ago.

Mr Elmes interjected.

Mr FRASER: The reality is that it was so secret that the media was there for the entire time that I was talking with community groups from across Noosa.

Mr Elmes interjected.

Mr FRASER: More to the point, it was so secret—

Mr Elmes interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Noosa, you have asked the question and you have interjected four times in the last 30 seconds. Let the minister answer the question.

Mr FRASER: So secret was this meeting that the member for Noosa was huffing and puffing and running around outside the meeting for the whole time. As if anyone would call the meeting that I conducted with the community groups across Noosa a secret meeting. It was in no way a secret meeting. It was an undertaking I gave to go and talk with community representatives across Noosa. As the record of that meeting will show from the media that was present, I do not think one could describe it as in anyway a government fan club at that meeting.

The point of the matter is this. The independent Local Government Reform Commission considered all the submissions provided to it. As an independent commission it made a recommendation that it believes is the best result for the people of the Sunshine Coast as a whole, as a region, as a significant part of the state which is to join those councils to provide for the sort of clout that is needed on the Sunshine Coast for it to be an advocate not only to the state government and private enterprise but also to the federal government.

In the end, the point of the matter is this. At a state and federal level independent commissions set the boundaries and we should all accept the umpire's decision. In this regard, the independent Local Government Reform Commission has provided recommendations. As we have said as a government,

this does not come without its difficulties for us. This does not come without its political difficulties for the government. But we have had the courage to stand by the process we set up at the start and that is accept the umpire's decision and look to the future.

Mr Elmes interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Noosa, you are interjecting on the basis that you do not want to be in the chamber. If you do want to be in the chamber—

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Excuse me, I have the floor here not you, Leader of the Opposition. I am saying to you that you have asked the minister a question so let the minister answer the question. You will have time to debate the bill that will eventually be before the parliament. I call the minister for local government and planning.

Mr FRASER: The independent commission has made its recommendations. It is incumbent upon all of us to look to the future and do not what is easy but what is right. That is what this government has resolved to do. I say to the member for Noosa and the other people in the Liberal Party: if the recommendation of the Local Government Reform Commission in relation to the Sunshine Coast is so abhorrent why does the member for Kawana want to leave this place and run as the mayor?

Interest Rates

Ms NOLAN: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Mr Howard has claimed that the states are responsible for inflationary pressures that may lead to a rise in interest rates. Can the Deputy Premier please respond?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question and for the opportunity to raise this matter in this parliament. We have seen an increasingly desperate Prime Minister resort to every devious, tricky manoeuvre in the book. He is mean and tricky. Some people are certainly starting to reach that conclusion.

His most recent act of desperation has been to blame the states for what he believes may be an interest rate rise later this week. We have not even had the interest rate rise. Before we have it he has gone out and blamed the state infrastructure programs for putting inflationary pressure on the economy.

Does this stack up as an economic theory? In the view of the Queensland government, absolutely not. We have an absolute commitment to the view that increasing economic productive capacity is the key to moderating inflation. Members do not have to take our view for it, however. This material has been in the public domain for the last day or so but I think it is worth repeating. The Governor of the Reserve Bank, Mr Glenn Stevens, said earlier this year—

It would be generally agreed by most people that infrastructure for investments of various kinds needs to be done. Balance sheets of government in this country, by and large, are in very good shape. They will not have any trouble borrowing money from the lenders of the world for a reasonable project. How inflationary is that, he asked? I do not think it will feed directly into the consumer price index.

So the Governor of the Reserve Bank is of the view that spending on infrastructure and borrowing for infrastructure will not feed into the consumer price index. Even if there is some economist out there who has the opposite view to the Governor of the Reserve Bank—that is, that somehow borrowing for infrastructure is driving inflation into the economy—I think it is important in the Queensland context to remember that in the last financial year, 2006-07, we expected to borrow a total of about \$740 million in a budget of over \$30 billion. We have not borrowed for infrastructure. We have been able to fund it straight off budget for the last seven years. So the borrowing that we are contemplating is just that—contemplated borrowing not borrowing undertaken.

So any suggestion that the Reserve Bank will take that into its decision is equally a nonsense. I can tell members what we know is not causing inflationary pressure. Nobody could suggest that it is the infrastructure program of the Howard-Costello government that is driving inflationary pressure because do members know why? They do not have an infrastructure program. Mr Costello is entering his 12th year as the Treasurer of this country. He has had more than a decade as Treasurer of this country. There are very few people on either side of politics who get that chance and get it in times of such prosperity. He will retire with a legacy of no nation-building infrastructure. He has squandered the opportunity that he had—budgets in surplus and he built nothing.

South East Queensland Regional Plan

Miss SIMPSON: My question is to the Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure. As the minister responsible for the SEQ Regional Plan the Deputy Premier and her government have announced that special legislation will be introduced to protect Noosa from high-rise development. The same protection will not be extended to the rest of the coast. I ask: what will the Deputy Premier do to protect the residents of Maroochy and Caloundra from inappropriate development after the creation of the amalgamated council?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question because it gives me an opportunity to talk in some accurate detail about what it is that the government has indicated it will do in terms of legislation. We have identified that there are some parts of Queensland that are of such iconic national and international significance that we believe they should be protected. What protects those that are protected now is a local government planning scheme that identifies where development can and cannot happen. Importantly, in some places they have been lucky enough to have local governments that are prepared to enforce their own planning schemes. That is by no means the majority of local governments.

We have indicated that we will make those planning schemes, after consultation with the relevant local governments, a schedule to the act so that they will have the force of state law. We have further indicated that there would be a set of criteria, including things like unique natural environments of national or international significance, that would qualify councils to be in this category. We have said that councils can apply. If they believe that their areas of responsibility have such status that it warrants the protection of state legislation and if they believe that they are unable to enforce their own planning schemes then we would be happy to consider and assess those applications.

I do hope, given we are getting close to half way or more through question time, that the birthday present for the Leader of the Liberal Party is not going to be that he does not get a question in question time today because it seems to me that he ought to be allowed to come out and play on his big day. On a first anniversary he should not be bypassed by all of the National Party backbench.

The Premier outlined in some detail earlier some of the recent headlines we have seen in newspapers. During the break there were some instructive radio interviews. I would not want members to miss this particular one. Madonna King asked the Leader of the Opposition—

Where is the concern over Dr Flegg coming from?

Mr Seeney: The concern has been expressed to me by a number of people.

An opposition member interjected.

Ms BLIGH: The Sunshine Coast can apply.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms BLIGH: They do not want to hear this. They do not want us to know what Mr Seeney said when he was asked about Mr Flegg's leadership. Mr Seeney was asked—

Does Bruce Flegg have your 100 per cent.

Mr Seeney: Whoever is elected leader of the party has my support.

Madonna King gave him another chance—

Bruce Flegg has been elected the Leader of the Liberal Party. Does he have your 100 per cent support?

Mr Seeney: Well, while he is the Leader of the Liberal Party, absolutely. It is up to the Liberal Party to decide who the leader is.

Have they not made that decision?

Mr ELMES: I rise to a point of order. I would like the Deputy Premier to answer the question.

Mr SPEAKER: You are one of the new members that I was referring to this morning. There was a question asked previously. As a new member you heard what I said this morning. I would advise the member for Noosa to go and read the standing orders and to know the standing orders.

Local Government Reform

Mr PEARCE: My question is to the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport. There are reports of local government CEOs telling ratepayers that because of amalgamations projects funded under current budgets will not go ahead. Would the minister please advise the House as to the expectations of the government with regard to progressing projects started and/or funded this financial year and whether or not these projects will be completed under new council partnerships?

Mr FRASER: I thank the member for Fitzroy for his question. It is a concern that he has put to me previously and a concern that I am happy to expand upon for the benefit of all members of the House, because it is a concern in many parts of the state where in particular councillors and CEOs are making all sorts of comments about what will be the nature of the next period of time. I want to be really clear about the nature of the transition process that is envisaged through the local government reform process, and that is this: all councils, all councillors and all mayors remain in office through to the next election, as they would in any case. It is incumbent upon each of those councillors and the councils collectively led by their mayors that they stick to the course of action that they had previously budgeted for, that they stick to the budget that they had adopted as a council and that they conduct themselves in a way that recognises the equity of the fact that the people in those communities have paid rates for a considerable period of time but more to the point will continue to pay rates to their existing councils through to 15 March.

In that regard, it is the first order of business that all councils, including those that are facing change through this process, are required to observe their undertakings, observe the budgets that they have put in place and ensure that the projects that they have allocated and funded are pursued through to the election and beyond. This is also a matter that has been raised with me in the context of Gold Coast and Logan, and I know that both the minister for tourism and the member for Waterford have had this concern. This is a matter that the Premier and I directly raised with the mayor of the Gold Coast in that the people in that area transferring between two local government areas after 15 March have in fact paid rates faithfully to the Gold Coast City Council and will continue to do so through to 15 March. In that regard, let us be very clear: the Gold Coast City Council has an obligation to ensure that it sticks to its budget, sticks to the program of works that it had and ensures that the money it has gained from those ratepayers is invested appropriately and as it had decided.

I know that the member for Fitzroy has encountered this in parts of his electorate as well, and I want to be especially clear about the fact that we believe that all councils operate on the principle of business as usual through to 15 March, as they would in any case. It is incumbent upon those councils to make sure that they honour what they were elected to do, and that is serve those communities. Beyond that time we will be providing for all projects, all obligations, all contracts, all partnerships and all undertakings to transfer across to the new entity. So there is no dodging this. The obligations, the liabilities, the undertakings and the programs of works that have been signed up to and are being progressed by those councils will transfer through to the new council to provide for a continuity in the provision of services and a continuity in the provision of infrastructure in those communities. I do not believe that any single ratepayer across Queensland would expect or demand anything less than that.

Local Government Reform

Ms LEE LONG: My question without notice is to the Premier. With reference to the government's rushed enforcement of local government amalgamations—against the wishes of the majority of those who are being amalgamated, I might add—I ask: will these amalgamations be just a stepping stone to full regionalisation and, if so, what is the proposed time frame for this to take place?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the member for Tablelands for the question. As the member knows, a couple of years ago this Triple S program was started where we asked councils to voluntarily amalgamate. Out of that process we ended up with four councils that were prepared to amalgamate—four out of 157. At a cabinet meeting in February when we were considering the future of the state it became clear that the government needed to take appropriate action to get amalgamations and results; hence, the independent process that we have started. As the member knows, we appointed Bob Longland, the former head of the Electoral Commission—he is well regarded by both sides of parliament—to head this up. In other words, the seven commissioners came down with recommendations in relation to the independent boundaries. They recommended a reduction in the number of councils down to 72. My government has accepted those recommendations from the independent commissioners.

Coming back to the heart of the member's question, what we have done is simply accept the recommendations of the independent umpire—that is, that commission. There is no plan beyond that. That is it. What we had hoped to do was to try to get councils to do this voluntarily. That failed. That failed because of all sorts of political and other reasons which members in this House completely understand. The reality is this: will this provide stronger local government? The answer is yes. Will this, in a sense, in the long term—and members of this parliament need to be acutely aware of this—probably undermine the current authority of state governments? The answer is probably yes. The answer to that is probably yes, but that will be something that will take years, maybe even decades. My successors in this role will probably regret the fact that my government embarked on this, because it will empower local government to give it the strength and the clout that it is entitled to have.

As the Deputy Premier said before, if we look at a number of the mining corridors throughout this state such as the Surat Basin and the Bowen Basin we need strong regional councils that can negotiate with the coal companies and that can negotiate with the state government and the federal government and that have the clout to give the services they want, because look what is happening to the infrastructure in those communities. The reality is that we need to make sure local councils can demand a greater input to ensure that they get a better outcome from housing, roads and so on from the Commonwealth government and also from the mining companies. The reality is that we need strengthened regional government to demand a better outcome for the communities of this state. Future generations will applaud these decisions as the right ones for Queensland—absolutely. While I know some of the current generation will be critical, future generations will thank us. What we see in this plan as released by the independent commissioners is the full plan. That is it. There is nothing more. Out of that we will get strong regional councils which will deliver better outcomes for ratepayers.

Health System

Mrs SMITH: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, I refer to suggestions that the Howard government should take over the Gold Coast Hospital and I ask: can the minister advise John Howard what he should do to help improve health services on the Gold Coast?

Mr ROBERTSON: I thank the member for the question and I would be more than happy to, because before people get too excited about the prospect of the alleged benefits of a federal takeover of Gold Coast hospitals they should consider the Howard government's performance in those areas of health where it already has existing responsibilities, because if John Howard was fair dinkum he would write the Southport and Robina hospitals a cheque for \$175 million and post it today. That is how much Canberra and John Howard have short-changed the Gold Coast over the life of the current Australian Health Care Agreement.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: I am sorry that the member for Toowoomba South is such an apologist for John Howard, but that is the simple reality. As I said earlier, for every dollar invested in health services in Queensland the Beattie government now invests 65c while the Howard government's contribution is a pathetic 35c. On that basis, the Gold Coast is being diddled out of \$75 million in funding by Canberra in 2007-08 alone. That is a whopping \$175 million since 2003 because John Howard will not pay his fair share to public hospitals on the Gold Coast. Imagine how many more doctors, nurses, beds, operations and aged-care places that money would provide for on the Gold Coast if Canberra paid its fair share. Imagine how many! But in contrast the Beattie government recognises the increase in demand for services on the Gold Coast and has acted to provide relief. We have increased the Gold Coast Health Service District budget from \$361 million last year to \$405.5 million this year. We have increased doctor numbers from 351 to a record 508 since June 2005—a 44 per cent increase in two years.

Mrs Stuckey: How many did you lose?

Mr ROBERTSON: Thank you for the interjection. We have more beds and we are building additional bed capacity through emergency department upgrades at Robina and Southport hospitals.

Let me say this to the Primer Minister today: to be fair dinkum on health all you need to do is accept your existing responsibilities and restore the balance in health funding to ensure the Gold Coast gets the matching Commonwealth funds it is due. Another good place to start is to provide the Gold Coast with the Commonwealth funds and acute care nursing home places it needs to free up on average 40 beds per day occupied by aged and frail patients who should be in aged care. That 40 beds occupied by people who should be in aged-care homes would go a long way to addressing access block; it would go a long way to addressing ambulance ramping on the Gold Coast if only John Howard would accept his existing responsibilities on health care rather than going off on tangents. All that is doing is feeding the cynicism about pork-barrelling in this election year. The answer is very simple for the Gold Coast: John Howard, be fair dinkum and pay your fair share.

Local Government Reform

Dr FLEGG: My question without notice is to the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure. I refer to her government's decision to restructure and merge the multibillion dollar local government sector in world-record time before council elections next March. I ask the Treasurer: has she done a cost analysis? What is the up-front cost of merging dozens of human resources functions, IT systems, payrolls, the enormous costs to reprint stationary and logos, and the sheer scale of relocating thousands of people and their resources? How much does her analysis reveal will be the up-front merger costs and will she release her cost analysis to the parliament?

Ms BLIGH: I am very pleased to see that the member for Moggill does have a question on his anniversary—happy anniversary. It has been 12 outstanding months and I hope we see many more to come.

If the member had been listening to the minister for local government this morning, he would know that we have allocated just over \$27 million that will go directly to councils for those costs that we calculate will be required for things such as he identified to bring those councils together. Obviously the scale of this project is very large. It is a big and bold reform. We have made those funds available because that, at the moment, is our estimate of what the costs are likely to be. We anticipate that over time it will mean there will be councils that we do not have to bail out from going broke. So is there a long-term saving to the taxpayer? Yes, there is.

I thought that the member for Noosa was going to ask for an extension of time because he wanted to hear a little bit more of my answer in relation to the Sunshine Coast. In relation to the member for Noosa I say that it would appear that he woke up maybe a couple of weeks ago and threw off the bedclothes and found a long, green streak running down the middle of his body because until very recently he has been a very pro development member of the Noosa community. It was actually the member for Noosa who supported a very big project involving some thousands of residents at Kin Kin. That is inside the south-east Queensland.

Mr Elmes: There were no residents, Minister.

Ms BLIGH: Then there were 3,000 visitors.

Mr Elmes: I stood up for the Kin Kin community.

Ms BLIGH: He has stood up for the Kin Kin community that is outside the urban footprint. The Noosa Shire Council knocked it back. They appealed it. Let us listen to this because it is a very important point. The Noosa Shire Council knocked back this development under its planning scheme. The member supported it; the Noosa Shire Council knocked it back. They were then subject to an appeal by a very large international developer and the mayor of Noosa asked the state to call it in because they were worried about the legal costs. They wanted us to protect them. Guess what? We did. We protected Noosa's planning scheme from the member. We are here to help and when there are people who are prepared to breach the south-east Queensland plan and to go against the local planning scheme, the state will stand up for the local values and that is what we did and we will do it again because Noosa could not have done it. They asked for our help. They got it. You would not deliver to them. Happy anniversary.

Time expired.

Indigenous Community Housing Organisations

Mr WELLS: My question is addressed to the honourable the minister for public works and housing. I ask: what is the financial position of the Commonwealth funded Indigenous community housing organisations in Queensland and what will happen to the many properties they own?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I thank the honourable member for the question. I hope the Minister for Emergency Services has got an ambulance on board for the member for Noosa. I am very concerned about his blood pressure.

If hypocrisy and deceit were cash, then Mal Brough would be a billionaire. The reality is that we have him telling the states that they need to lift their games but he makes it up as he goes along. For example, he says there is less public housing in Queensland than there was before. There is actually 10,000 more in the last 10 years. We help 230,000 Queenslanders every year. He uses that as a judgement to say that we are going to put poverty out to tender—an absolutely outrageous sentiment. If we have a look at his own backyard we find that there are 96 Aboriginal housing organisations under direct Commonwealth funding that are a scandalous mess and which he intends to walk away from and guess where he intends to try to push them—straight onto the back of the state. This is something the Commonwealth is very good at doing: transferring their ventures on to others. They range from a five-bedroom mansion up on the Sunshine Coast complete with lap pool to a hovel in Mount Morgan. I reckon that about a thousand of those 2,000 houses are uninhabitable.

Members are worried about local government, but they owe the Mount Morgan council \$32,000 in back rates for a start. God knows how much they owe around the state. They range from Winton to Bundaberg—they are in all the opposition's electorates. The answer has been to walk away from them. On the one hand the Commonwealth is saying, 'We are not going to give anything to the states. We are going to put it out to tender to the man in the moon who can look after poverty,' but on the other hand it says, 'We are going to transfer all of these houses that the man in the moon obviously has been looking after all these years.' This is because it does not pay any rent; it does not do any maintenance; it has no control over whether they are hovels or mansions. The Commonwealth just shells the money out and lets them go. It does not have any management whatsoever yet it has the hide to criticise us. It says, 'Take over all of those,' and states at the same time, 'We will take \$195 million off your bottom line.'

The reality is that this is desperate stuff by desperate people. There is no two ways about this. A serious impost on local and state government is around the corner, as of July next year—and it has already started. The one in Rockhampton, for example, takes in Mount Morgan and goes to Winton. Further, Bundaberg tells me that they have no funds whatsoever; all the funding has been cut from them. They are destitute; they are going to close the doors. The people in those houses will be evicted. They will end up on our public housing waiting lists. There are all sorts of ownership problems with the houses. No maintenance has been done on them in many years. In Mount Morgan alone there are 23 houses, 15 with inhabitants and eight with nobody living in them. Of the 15, half of them should not have people living in them either. This is the same federal government that is out there telling the states that they are not doing a decent job.

Emergency Services Volunteers, St Lawrence

Mr MALONE: My question without notice is to the Minister for Emergency Services. St Lawrence is a small, historic but proud town in my electorate on the highway between Rockhampton and Mackay made mostly of council workers and their families. Does the minister know that these council workers volunteer their time to provide ambulance, fire and rescue services for the accidents that occur regularly on the highway, both day and night? I ask the minister: who is going to provide these vital emergency services when his government's forced amalgamations wipe out the council jobs and the town of St Lawrence becomes a ghost town?

Mr ROBERTS: I thank the member for the question. The first thing I want to do is to praise the many volunteers who provide services to the Ambulance Service across the state. In the short time that I have been minister I have had the opportunity to meet many of our first responders and our volunteer ambulance officers and to see the services they provide.

In terms of the amalgamations, the minister for local government and planning has made clear the purpose of the government in this respect. I do not believe that our emergency services will be impacted negatively at all by these changes. In fact, the changes will provide an opportunity for emergency services to be strengthened. Strengthened local councils will provide an opportunity for them to provide support to our local emergency services. That includes our local ambulance committees, our rural fire services and so on. I am confident that, whether it be in the member's electorate or anyone else's electorate, the volunteer services that are provided by our first responders—our local ambulance committees or people who provide support to any of our emergency services—will not be affected. In fact, there will be more opportunities, I believe, for those services to be strengthened.

Mr SPEAKER: Members, question time has expired.

Sitting suspended from 1.40 pm to 2.30 pm.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Toowong Community Medical Centre

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport) (2.30 pm): In September 2005 in my electorate office I met with representatives of the Toowong Community Medical Centre from within my electorate. Public reports today seek to suggest that I have in some way improperly acted as an advocate for a health organisation, which is now under investigation.

In March this year I received correspondence from National Party Senator Ron Boswell, to which I immediately replied. I seek leave to incorporate in *Hansard* the text of a letter I wrote to the chief health officer, the letter I received from Senator Ron Boswell in March 2007, my reply to Senator Boswell and Senator Boswell's subsequent correspondence to me.

Leave granted.

Andrew Fraser MP
State Member for Mount Coot-tha
22 September 2005

Dr Gerry Fitzgerald
Chief Health Officer
GPO Box 48
BRISBANE Q 4001

Dear Dr Fitzgerald

I have today met with Madonna Abella and Jorge Rodriguez of Health for All which is headquartered in my electorate of Mount Coot-tha.

The Toowong Community Medical Centre, which is operated by Ms Abella and Mr Rodriguez, operates from within my electorate. I am advised that the Centre presently does not have a doctor, and this is causing obvious problems to the large patient register which accesses medical services from the Centre.

I understand that Health for All presently has a number of applications presently before you for approval.

I undertook at our meeting today to request that such applications be dealt with appropriately and efficiently.

I am cognisant of the need for thorough examination of all applications and appreciate the need to ensure due consideration is afforded to each request before you.

I trust that Ms Abella and Mr Rodriguez will be further advised in coming days.

Yours sincerely

ANDREW FRASER MP

March 2007

Mr Andrew Fraser
Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport
PO Box 15031
CITY EAST QLD, 4002

Dear Mr Fraser

I am writing to you on behalf of Maria Coop, who appears to have been the victim of an elaborate fraud which has cost her around \$160,000.

Madonna Abella and Jorge Rodriguez allegedly forged a number of letters to convince Ms Coop to invest money in a medical clinic at Toowong to be staffed by doctors recruited from the Philippines.

She was shown a number of letters—two of which I attach—to convince her that the scheme was legitimate. I have also attached letters from the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union and McLaughlins Solicitors confirming that these letters are forgeries.

Ms Coop was also shown copies of letters of support from a number of Members of the Queensland Parliament, including yourself. I have attached a copy of the letter on your letterhead. I would be grateful if you could confirm whether or not it is authentic.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely

(sgd)

Senator Ron Boswell
Leader of The Nationals in the Senate

Senator Ron Boswell
GPO Box 228
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Dear Senator

I refer to your letter of 8 March 2007, received in my office on 12 March 2007.

I confirm the authenticity of the copy of the letter text I sent to the Chief Health Officer on 22 September 2005. A copy from my files is attached, which I certify as accurate.

I met with Ms Abella and Mr Rodriguez that same day in my Electorate Office. As is my preferred practice, I completed my undertakings that same day: in this instance, by writing to the Chief Health Officer.

In doing so I point out to you, in the clearest terms, the following:

1. In no way does my letter purport to be a letter of support or general reference to either Madonna Abella, Jorge Rodriguez, Health for All or the Toowong Community Medical Centre.
2. The letter does not request anything of anyone on behalf of Madonna Abella, Jorge Rodriguez, Health for All, or the Toowong Community Medical Centre.
3. The letter merely—and plainly—asks the officer Chief Health Officer to deal with the application “appropriately and efficiently”.
4. The letter is explicit about the need for “thorough examination of all applications” and states my cognisance of “the need to ensure due consideration is afforded to each request before [the Chief Health Officer]”.
5. My correspondence was deliberate in avoiding any advocacy whatsoever on behalf of any party.
6. I have a distinct memory of the meeting being somewhat strained as I declined to provide extensive undertakings to act as an advocate despite crude entreaties by the attendees as to why I should so act.
7. I declined to act as an advocate during that meeting, pointing out that determinations of medical registrations and other matters were administrative and/or technical matters in which I had no role to play, nor would I seek to otherwise influence the matter.
8. I would directly challenge any notion on your part that my letter is any way contributory to any alleged malfeasance on the part of Madonna Abella, Jorge Rodriguez, Health for All or the Toowong Community Medical Centre.
9. I caution you on any attempt to suggest otherwise and make explicit to you that I would consider all legal options regarding any such suggestion by you.
10. Finally, I would urge you in the strongest terms to provide any evidence of fraud or other criminal activity to the appropriate authorities without delay. All documents you have collected to this point should be included in any such referral, including this correspondence.

Yours sincerely

(sgd)

ANDREW FRASER

29 March 2007

Mr Andrew Fraser
Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport
PO Box 15031
CITY EAST QLD, 4002

Dear Mr Fraser,

Thankyou for your prompt reply to my letter of March 8 regarding the concerns of Ms Maria Coop.

Thankyou also for confirming that your letter of September 22, 2005 is authentic and that it was written in good faith.

Ms Coop has advised me that she has taken this matter to the police and that the Fraud Squad is investigating. However, she is concerned about the length of time and apparent slow progress of these investigations.

Anything you could do to help expedite this process would be appreciated.

I will also write to Attorney General and the Police Minister seeking their assistance.

Again, thankyou for your correspondence and your continuing efforts to see this matter brought to resolution.

Sincerely

(sgd)

Senator Ron Boswell
Leader of the Nationals in the Senate

Mr FRASER: The letter I wrote to the chief health officer explicitly stated that I was 'cognisant of the need for thorough examination of all applications' and appreciated 'the need to ensure due consideration is afforded to each request'. The correspondence speaks for itself, as does the fact that today, nearly five months after I wrote to a National Party senator, it is a National Party candidate, who currently serves as a councillor, who is pursuing this matter.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Local Government Reform

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.31 pm): Last Friday saw the biggest demonstration in Brisbane since the Vietnam war. Between 12,000 and 15,000 people marched to protest against the government's proposal to force amalgamations on councils. All of those people know the devastating effect that this proposal will have on their communities, just as the people who demonstrated in Barcardine the week before and in Port Douglas a couple of days ago know the devastating effect amalgamation will have on their councils.

Those 15,000 people who marched in Brisbane came from communities fairly close to Brisbane. They came from places such as Noosa, Redcliffe, Pine Rivers, Beaudesert and Boonah. They were also joined by bus loads of people from far-flung communities who wanted to offer their support—from as far away as Aramac and Isisford. All over Queensland communities are under threat from a proposal that will devastate them. This government continues to show an uncaring and arrogant attitude towards those people.

The whole process has been designed to shut out any consultation, any consideration of the communities, any opportunity for the community to have their say. The process has been devoid of democracy from the start. Not only that; the government has gone to extraordinary lengths to ensure that councils are not able to consult their community. Councillors and mayors are being threatened with retribution—personal retribution in one instance—to prevent them from consulting their communities. In stark contrast to the huge amounts of money that this government spends on polls and advertising to try to justify and promote their political decisions, it is prepared to go to extraordinary lengths to prevent councils from doing that.

Of course, the big question is why. Why on earth is this government in such a rush to destroy local government, to destroy local communities? Why is there such a rush to force this legislation through the parliament this week to bring to an end 100 years of local government? I think in this House we have well and truly illustrated that there is no impending financial catastrophe about to hit local government. The argument has been dishonest and misleading from the start. The QTC documents have been used dishonestly and have been misrepresented in an attempt to try to justify this argument. Despite a massive advertising budget, they fail to do so.

This whole issue is about local communities. It is about local people who are concerned about the future of their communities and who want a say in their communities. I have said in this House a number of times that local government is not about politics and it is not about politicians; it is about local people having a local say; it is about a local voice and a local choice. I think the architects of this proposal fundamentally fail to understand the local government issues and they fundamentally misunderstand the course on which they have embarked.

There are some horrendous examples of what is being proposed and some examples that really illustrate the massive impact that amalgamation is going to have. Probably the best example is what will happen on the Darling Downs where eight councils will be merged into one. Seven small communities will lose their representation as their councils are forced to merge with the large urban mass of the Toowoomba council. Out of those eight councils, the community will be allowed to elect six councillors in total to somehow provide representation to that huge area. That is simply unworkable. Last week in Highfields I met with a group of 35 or 40 mayors and councillors. They are only just starting to deal with the enormity of the task that lies in front of them to try to make some sense of the practicalities that they have to address between now and next March.

There are other ridiculous examples such as the one in my electorate that I want to mention. Taroom shire has been effectively cut in half by this proposal. The northern part of the Taroom shire has been put into the Banana regional council. The southern half has been put into the Dalby regional council. Taroom is geographically encompassed by a circle of ranges. That natural boundary forms the boundaries of the Taroom shire. It is a financially strong shire. It has a great community attitude and a great community feeling. To cut that shire in half and allocate half of it to one regional council and the other half of it to another regional council is something that the people of Taroom just cannot comprehend.

Taroom lies in the middle of the Surat Basin. The mining development that was spoken about this morning in parliament will happen around Wandoan and Taroom. It will happen in the area where this so-called new boundary will run. The new boundary will cut the Surat Basin development in half. It is just completely absurd. It contradicts completely all of the stated aims. All of the repeated claims that the Premier and the minister make are not borne out in fact.

Another good example is what has happened to Beaudesert shire. The Beaudesert shire has lost all of the growth areas. It was one of the more financially strong shires of the state. It has lost all of the growth areas to Logan City. The rest of it has been amalgamated with the Boonah shire. So we end up with a Beaudesert shire that is weaker than it was originally. That is in complete contradiction to all of the stated aims of the process.

I believe the people involved in local government now need an opportunity to put their case. They need an opportunity to have the more outrageous parts of this proposal heard by somebody who will care and who will listen. It is simply just not arguable that somehow or other the commission has drawn these boundaries and everything is right about them. Of course there needs to be some sort of right of appeal. There needs to be somebody who will review the decision—somebody who will listen, for example, to the people of the Darling Downs and the people of Taroom and allow them to have their case heard. The people of Noosa should be able to put their case to somebody, because the minister is clearly not listening, the Premier is clearly not listening, the government is clearly not listening.

While it is probably not going to happen that we are going to go back to the situation that we had before, there is an urgent need to review some of the more outrageous parts of this proposal. It is something that I believe has been cloaked in dishonesty from the start. It has been a political agenda from the start. We are not going to get any fairness or any justice from the politicians who have been involved in that political agenda from the start. This has been a political agenda—an ideologically driven agenda—that has taken absolutely no notice of any of the submissions that were made in that farce of a process that led up to it.

We now need some sort of review process that allows shires like Taroom, Noosa, Isisford, Blackall, Barcaldine and Aramac to put a case forward to have their particular situations reviewed. They know that this is a one-off opportunity. They know that once their communities are destroyed and the community fabric is unravelled, it will be very difficult to re-establish it. They know how important that is. That is why 15,000 people came to march in the streets. It was the biggest protest march since the Vietnam days. It puts everything else that has happened since I have been in this parliament to shame. Since the Beattie government has been in power we have seen protest marches on a fairly regular basis, but nothing comes close to matching what we saw on the streets of Brisbane last Friday.

Even given the size and scale of the march, in my view it pales into insignificance when compared with the effort made by the women and kids who spent 26 hours on a bus to come down here yesterday, stand outside the Executive Building and protest. They spent 26 hours on a bus. What motivates people to do that? What motivates people to spend 26 hours on a bus with their kids to come here and try to get their point of view across to the government? I can tell the House what motivates them. It is their concern for their communities. They are frightened about the future of their communities. They know that the impacts of this proposal will be profound on their communities and they are prepared to fight for the future of their communities.

The women of the communities are the ones who understand the concept of community. They understand the value of community. They understand that once it has gone, it is very difficult to recreate. They are prepared to put in that sort of effort. Members of the government should notice that effort. They should understand it and comprehend it. They should care about it, because this morning in the parliament it has been shown that there is no care in the government's response.

Indigenous Communities

Mr O'BRIEN (Cook—ALP) (2.41 pm): Recently there has been a lot of discussion about the continuing plight of Indigenous communities and the intervention by the federal government into remote Northern Territory communities. Often I wish there was more emphasis on the positive things that happen in remote communities, although it is true that drastic action is needed to give people in remote northern Australia safety, opportunity and prosperity. The Queensland government is doing its fair share to address those issues, especially in my electorate in Cape York Peninsula and the Torres Strait. I will quickly highlight a couple of more recent initiatives.

The new Indigenous Partnership Agreement establishes a new framework for dealing with those communities, not just in my electorate but right across Queensland. The agreement acknowledges that more needs to be done to close the significant gap between the quality of life and opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders and the wider community. Immediate priorities are to deal with land tenure and access, housing, alcohol and other substance abuse associated behaviours such as violence, child safety and family wellbeing, chronic disease, education and training, employment, policing and community governance. The agreement is for three years from 2007 to 2010

and each community will negotiate its individual local partnership agreement. Local Indigenous partnership agreements will be reviewed every six months and progress towards each goal will be recorded. Specific goals will be established in each community. I have spoken to a number of community leaders and they are pleased that there is agreement on the principles of the way forward. They are looking forward to getting down to brass tacks and finalising their individual community plan.

The Department of Child Safety is doing its fair share. It is increasing its presence on the ground in remote communities. The department is building residential safe houses in Pormpuraaw, Kowanyama, Aurukun and Weipa in my electorate. Housing and office accommodation will also be established for Child Safety officers on Cape York so that they are closer to the communities that they look after, rather than being based in Cairns and flying in.

Child Safety officers will deliver services from branch offices located in Weipa to look after Aurukun and Napranum, Cooktown covering Hope Vale and Wujal Wujal, and Thursday Island for the Northern Peninsula Area. This year's budget also contains money for additional police in remote Queensland communities. To its credit, the Commonwealth will provide some funding for housing to support those additional officers.

I get around Indigenous communities a fair bit. Regularly I speak to the people and their local leadership. If one issue is raised constantly it is housing. A lack of appropriate housing is the cornerstone of the difficulties that the communities face, both here in Queensland and in the Northern Territory. I do not want to stand here today and put the boot into the Commonwealth for its performance in providing public housing over the past 10 years. The Minister for Housing has done a good job in reminding people that the Commonwealth ripped \$400 million out of public housing when it came into office.

The Commonwealth has put its funding into rent assistance to assist people who need to gain housing in the private market. By and large this works well in cities and provincial centres, and has added to the investment in housing in those places although, clearly, in most places demand is outstripping supply. Unfortunately, however, the policy does not provide for housing in Indigenous communities where there is virtually no private investment.

Clearly, two changes need to be made to assist in addressing this fundamental issue. Firstly, the Commonwealth and the states need to look at land tenure arrangements. As I have said in this House on many occasions, this is the fundamental issue that is affecting economic progress in those communities. I do not want to interfere with people's traditional rights, but the crux of the matter is that Aboriginal people are land rich and cash poor. I do not want to be in a position to take their traditional rights away from them. I want to see government sit down and agree with them on a way forward so that they can use that land for housing subdivisions and to create an economic future for themselves.

Clearly, the Commonwealth has to come to the table with more money for housing. There are plenty of other practical things that we can do such as assisting with the road network, and I will continue to pursue that matter rigorously.

Inala Electorate, Funding for State Schools

Ms PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (2.46 pm): The State Schools of Tomorrow is the major component of the \$1 billion Tomorrow's Schools package announced by the government in the 2006-07 budget. \$850 million out of that package is allocated towards a major initiative of school renewal and modernisation.

Last week, the education minister, Rod Welford, visited Durack State School in my electorate to announce a record \$50 million education boost for Inala schools. This \$50 million will enable the local community to help plan for the future of state education and transform schools into 21st century teaching and learning environments. The aim of the program is to focus on modernising and equipping the schools with the exceptional facilities, resources and technologies that support a broad range of new or increased educational opportunities.

Many schools in Inala were built over 50 years ago when schooling was very different from what it is today. The announcement of this new money is a milestone for the Inala community. Five local schools will be modernised: Durack State School, Richlands East State School, Serviceton South State School, Inala State School and Glenala State High School. This announcement recognises the Beattie Labor government's commitment to education in Inala.

I am delighted that schools in the Inala-Durack region are the very first in Queensland to benefit under this program. This is our chance to match education to the specific education needs of our community. Some of the modernisation we could see in our schools includes creating a prep to year 12 education campus incorporating a child-care centre, building a high-quality auditorium for all schools in the community to utilise and, one that I am very keen on, stronger partnerships with TAFE at Glenala State High School.

One of the benchmarks of a Labor government is a commitment to education and providing our children with opportunities for the future. Education is a core commitment of any Labor government. Last September I was elected as the new state Labor member for Inala. I recall attending school speech nights at the end of last year and stating to the graduating class that education is about opportunity. It is about giving the young boy or girl from Inala the exact same opportunity through education as a young boy or girl from Hervey Bay, the Gold Coast, Cairns or Clayfield. However, as I walked through the schools I was amazed that some of our classrooms were reminiscent of the 1960s and 1970s because under the National Party government barely any funding, if any at all, went to the schools in my electorate. Walking through Serviceton South State School, I did notice that there was not much change in the classrooms and facilities from when my father taught there in the seventies. It was like stepping back through time. Over recent years, with the growth in the western suburbs, brand-new schools have been built at Forest Lake and at Springfield.

In February this year I mentioned to the education minister, Rod Welford, that I would like to invite him to visit schools in my electorate. I mentioned to him that we need to enhance and renew our Inala schools. I would especially like to take this opportunity to thank the education minister for coming out to Inala to make this important announcement. His vision and his commitment to education will see him go down in history as one of the truly great Labor education ministers. This announcement reflects the Labor government's key commitment to education.

Over the coming months the Inala community will be consulted in relation to the program of modernisation. One of the key elements of tomorrow's schools is a strong partnership between schools and communities. This new injection of funding to our schools will revitalise our schools and open them up to new technology. Our new schools will make every family and child living in Inala proud. It will mean that children will have more pride in coming to their schools and their teachers will have better resources and better classrooms. It will ensure that our schools can best serve students for decades to come.

The added bonus will be a complete transformation of Glenala State High School—a school that can and will be a centre of excellence, a centre of skills based learning and training. This new Glenala high school will mean that our local business community in the south-west can network with the local school community to plan what skills are needed in our growing area over the next 20 years. This announcement today will mean that any young child living in Inala has the opportunity to learn and, importantly, at the end of their education have a chance to get a job.

Earlier this week I addressed the students at Glenala high school on this new program. When I mentioned the \$50 million of new funding and the fact that they were going to receive a new school there was a hushed silence for a few seconds and then there was just loud applause. The students of Glenala high school will benefit from this major initiative. This new money will mean a new beginning for the students in Inala and Durack. This new money is a commitment to education. The opportunities for our young people are now enhanced. We are planning for the future. This is great news for Inala. This is great news for the children living in Inala. Our future schools modernised and redeveloped will bring added growth and respect for our region.

Local Government Reform

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (2.52 pm): Today democracy has been cast aside and the dictatorship officially begins in Queensland. I refer to the introduction of the local government legislation to abolish 74 hardworking local governments which have done nothing wrong other than work hard for their communities. That legislation will be introduced in the chamber this afternoon.

The government does not want the communities to have a say. It has decided to legislate so that if councillors conduct referendums they will have to pay a fine of \$1,100-odd each. I would suggest that caucus ought to put in some money to pay for the ACNielsen push polling that it did. If it is good for one, it should be good for the other. The result of the ACNielsen push polling was that the community did not support forced council amalgamations.

Let me make a significant announcement here today: the Prime Minister has just announced in the federal parliament that he will allow the Australian Electoral Commission to fund and run referendums that local governments wish to run. So there you go: have a go at that, boys and girls on the other side. Thank heavens we have a government in this nation that will allow people in the communities to have some say in their future as to where they are going and what they want to do.

This dictatorial government is frightened to let people have a say. The Prime Minister is not frightened for the people of Queensland to have a say. He is prepared to fund and to run referendums in those council areas, and you just try to stop it! The reason of sustainability which the government has given for forced council amalgamations is simply not true. The government said that it had to move before councils go broke. It is untrue. This morning during question time the Deputy Premier talked about the government having to move. It is untrue. McGrath Nichols, the international receivers and administrators, assessed the weak category councils and its report said that none are insolvent or likely to become insolvent in the forecast period of the two to 10 years that we are talking about. Even if they

did, there is ample time to get themselves out of it. The report also said that the finances of those councils are better in some instances than some of the high-flying Australian companies on the Australian Stock Exchange.

Mr McNamara: Name them, then.

Mr HOBBS: They are named. They are in the report. If you read the report you will see that. I am sure you would like to read it.

The government deliberately cooked the books to make some of those categories harder and weaker, so therefore it looks worse than what it is. The government has deliberately done that. In today's report the Auditor-General found some interesting things about this government's finances. The report states—

The impression gained during the audit was that not only was the performance information reported to Parliament of limited relevance for external stakeholders, but also that this performance information was not used extensively by the government and departmental officers responsible for resource allocation and monitoring activity.

It is because it was worth nothing. It is because the government was cooking the books again. The Auditor-General goes on to state—

I note the Treasury Department advocates that a cost-benefit approach be adopted with accountable officers having discretion to decide what supporting systems are required to provide them with information to ensure their obligation in this regard is adequately met.

Guess what? A cost-benefit analysis of these council amalgamations has not been done. We are talking about \$86 billion worth of council assets—Queensland Rail is worth only \$10 billion—and the government has not even done a cost-benefit analysis. We heard the figure of \$27 million for this year suddenly pop out of the air. There is going to be an enormous cost. Multiply that by three or five and we might get somewhere near what the cost will be.

There is also going to be a social cost, because the teachers will not be there and the kids will not be there. There will be a flow-on effect in the closure of banks et cetera in those smaller towns. It has taken years and years to build them up and all the government is doing is trying to destroy them. It has done no economic study, no academic study and no social study into this. Why with an \$86 billion operation would the government not at least do a cost-benefit analysis? It is like buying a company and not looking at the books. What is it going to cost the community?

Terrorism

Mr McNAMARA (Hervey Bay—ALP) (2.57 pm): The events of the last three weeks involving Dr Mohamed Haneef have put our anti-terrorism laws and the institutions and the people who administer those laws under the spotlight. Regretfully, while the laws as drafted appear adequate—and I note that we are going to debate a little later in the week some amendments which I will not discuss—and the task for which they were designed is an important one and they have been adequate, the same cannot be said of some of the other players in this saga, most notably the federal immigration minister, Kevin Andrews.

Members of this House are of course aware that in 2001 the Commonwealth parliament lacked the constitutional power to legislate for acts of terrorism. The Australian Constitution, not surprisingly, does not contain an express power to make laws to prevent terrorism. This parliament, along with the other state parliaments of our nation, agreed to provide the Commonwealth with a reference power pursuant to section 51(xxxvii) of the Australian Constitution authorising the enactment of national legislation covering acts of terrorism.

Along with all other members of this place who were here at the time, I was proud to support the passage of the Terrorism (Commonwealth Powers) Act 2002 and the Terrorism (Preventative Detention) Act 2005. I have no doubt as to the seriousness of the threat posed to Australian lives and property by global jihadist terrorism, nor of the necessity of that threat being met by a consistent, aggressive and coordinated Commonwealth response.

As a former criminal defence lawyer, I certainly understand the fundamental importance of the presumption of innocence in our judicial system. The detention in custody of someone who has not been charged offends the notion of the right to liberty and, indeed, habeas corpus. However, I also acknowledge that the investigation of terrorism is different from other criminal offences in that often, and hopefully, no act of violence will have yet occurred but the parties may be spread globally. The motivation for the act is not money but rather twisted religious interpretation, and the parties to the planned act may be people with no criminal history.

The trade-off of these precious legal rights in order to prevent or solve terrible acts of mass murder is the price that I think we must pay. So notwithstanding the outcome of the Haneef case—the charge against him of providing support to a terrorist organisation being withdrawn—I still support the need for and the provision of laws as passed in this House and the powers referred to the Commonwealth by this parliament.

However, if public support for our anti-terrorism laws is to be maintained, then the bungling incompetence and political interference in the process exhibited by the Howard government in general and the immigration minister in particular must cease and never be repeated. While the Federal Police have made mistakes under pressure and the Commonwealth DPP's handling of the matter clearly misled the magistrate as to the nature and strength of the evidence against Dr Haneef, the real scandal in this matter is the repeated public intervention during the legal process by the Howard government and particularly Mr Andrews using selective parts of the evidence and plain untruths in order to influence public opinion to create fear and suspicion ahead of a federal election.

Terrorism is the most serious business that parliaments and governments can consider. It is literally about life and death for the people we serve. It is a job for serious people. Undoubtedly, national security will be and should be one of the critical issues on which Australians will make up their minds at the coming federal election. Incredibly, the Howard government, which looked the other way when \$290 million of Australian wheat farmers' money was channelled into Saddam Hussein's pockets despite repeated warnings and then led us into the open-ended foreign policy disaster that is the Iraq war, will attempt to portray itself as having a safe hand on national security. What rubbish! Now we have witnessed Kevin Andrews's buffoon-like attempts to make political capital out of the Haneef case. His ham-fisted efforts should not be dismissed as just the usual we would expect from another dud Howard government minister. He is, after all, the failed minister who brought us WorkChoices.

The problem is that national security matters too much to be used as a plaything for an election. Public support for these laws is critical to our safety, but Mr Andrews cannot help himself. The day before Dr Haneef left Australia Mr Andrews said that as he had revoked Dr Haneef's visa he had no choice other than to leave Australia at the earliest possible opportunity. And on the day after Dr Haneef left Australia, Mr Andrews offered the public view that his 'hasty' departure raised questions about his innocence. Mr Andrews released selective parts of the transcript of the record of interview and even after he was gone continued to maintain that Dr Haneef's daughter was born a month before he was detained at the Brisbane airport when, in fact, as was clearly on the public record, she was born six days before. He is a disgrace and should resign.

Local Government Reform

Mr ELMES (Noosa—Lib) (3.02 pm): I stand here today and speak on behalf of about 50,000 people in the Noosa shire. All of us—every single one of us—feels the way a person would if someone broke into their home one night and started to destroy the things that they felt were of value and that they had built up during their life. That is how my community feels.

Mr Hoolihan interjected.

Mr ELMES: The member for Keppel is showing that he is not quite the decent human being I would have thought he would have been. He has spent enough time in regional Queensland to have some understanding.

Mr HOOLIHAN: I rise to a point of order. I find those remarks objectionable and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr ELMES: I withdraw, Mr Speaker. The mayor of Noosa and I led a march in Brisbane last Friday. About 15,000 people took part in that march. When we got outside the gates of Parliament House I turned around and looked down George Street and all I could see were green and blue balloons going as far as the eye could see all the way back to South Bank. All of these people had come to Brisbane to demonstrate their commitment to their town. With them were people from Aramac, Isisford, Ilfracombe, Redcliffe, from the Pine Rivers shire and from shires and communities across Queensland, all taking a last opportunity to implore the members of the Queensland parliament to please do something to protect their homes and give them an undertaking that they can have back the right to vote at a referendum and to decide their own future. That is what this legislation has taken away; it has taken away the right to vote. The government is about to take away the right to debate and for some communities the government is taking away the ability for those people and those communities to survive.

I have correspondence that has been sent from people in my community to Kevin Rudd and I would like to read a couple of quotes from the letters he is sending back. In those letters he states—

We do not support forced amalgamations of local councils without due consideration of alternate means to achieve efficiency improvements and best practice in local governments. I have indicated my position against the current forced amalgamation proposal and have asked the Queensland Premier to review his council amalgamation proposal to include consideration of non-amalgamation options for sustainability and reform of local government in Queensland.

This morning in this place there was a condolence motion for Tom Burns, a great Queenslander, a great member of the Labor Party and a great member of parliament. My grandfather, as I mentioned in my maiden speech when I came into this place, was also a member of the Labor movement. I would like those members who are listening to me today, particularly on the other side, to go back in their history books. I would like them to think about the roots and beliefs of the Labor Party. I would like them to think about those people in Queensland who are looking to this government to lead, to show them some

understanding and provide them with some certainty for the future. If any member on that side has any intestinal fortitude, when the time comes for this vote to be taken they will join the coalition and vote to overturn this legislation and make sure that we provide some certainty for Queenslanders.

The Noosa shire has shown its position over and over again—it showed it with the march of 15,000 people, it showed it with the 31,000 submissions it sent to the Local Government Reform Commission and it showed it a couple of years ago in a petition against forced council amalgamations which was signed by 18,747 people in one day. That came about because Terry Mackenroth, one of the commissioners, made a speech to—guess who?—the Property Council. He told the Property Council that we should amalgamate the three local councils on the Sunshine Coast. There is an opportunity here for some leadership, there is an opportunity here for some soul, and I really hope, on behalf of the coalition but more particularly on behalf of all Queenslanders, that there are some people opposite who will do the right thing when the vote is taken.

Northern Economic Triangle

Ms JARRATT (Whitsunday—ALP) (3.07 pm): A sleeping giant is waking in north and north-west Queensland. The Beattie government is laying important groundwork that will see this area of our state grow and develop into an internationally recognised economic precinct showcasing world-class mining, mineral processing and export projects. During last year's election campaign the Premier unveiled a cunning plan to establish a new industrial and economic hub based around the triangle of Mount Isa, Townsville and Bowen. To be known as the Northern Economic Triangle, this region is set to become Queensland's next great zone for industrial development and minerals processing.

Last week during the Major Projects conference the Premier unveiled the Northern Economic Triangle Infrastructure Plan 2007 to 2012 which sets out a plan to integrate the activities of the triangle and to implement strategies to support stronger regional linkages and the competitive advantages of individual economic centres and sustainable communities. Mount Isa is the centre of one of the world's richest deposits of mineral resources including copper, lead, zinc, silver, gold and phosphate. The economic triangle strategy aims to sustainably exploit these resources by diversifying and expanding the area's mining and mineral base while also addressing the identified impediments, including a need for improved power supply and transport infrastructure.

The Townsville-Thuringowa region is set to benefit from the plan through a focus on broadening the area's economic base by building on Townsville's established position as an international centre for base minerals processing and value adding. There are wonderful opportunities for Townsville through the implementation of the Port of Townsville Master Plan which aims to guide expansion of the port to cater for a significant increase in trade to and from the region.

From my electorate's point of view the most interesting and exciting part of the Northern Economic Triangle infrastructure plan is the bit that relates to Bowen and describes how the Beattie government plans to work towards establishing Bowen as a major new industrial precinct for large-scale industries, including chemicals production, minerals refining and metal smelting. Key to these plans is Bowen's strategic advantage in the availability of suitable land for industry and a largely under-utilised deep water port. In Bowen there is opportunity to develop a greenfields site for industry development with access to both a secure water supply and the port of Abbot Point.

Already the government has supported the Water for Bowen project which aims to deliver water to Abbot Point and Bowen through a 130-kilometre channel and pipeline from the Burdekin River. On 1 December 2006 the Water for Bowen project was declared a significant project for which an environmental impact statement is required. This process is well underway. I have every confidence that this project, to which the government has contributed significant funds, will eventuate and will underpin the suitability of the Abbot Point industrial precinct for future development. Another important factor in the success of the industrial precinct is the capability of the port of Abbot Point to cater for expansion. Abbot Point is one of the few places on the Queensland coast where deep water comes close to land and large tracts of adjacent land are flat and undeveloped.

As if to herald the capacity of Abbot Point to cope with future industrial demand, the Ports Corporation of Queensland, which owns and operates the existing bulk coal loading facilities at the port, is currently constructing its stage 2 development and has sought government support for a stage 3 expansion. I am pleased to note that the \$770 million stage 3 extension has been allowed by the Coordinator-General subject to certain conditions, chief of which is the realisation of the missing link rail project. This is another project supported by the Beattie government that will underpin the future of the Bowen district.

I am pleased that industry commitment has been forthcoming in relation to this important project. Queensland Resources Council Chief Executive Michael Roche recently announced that seven major coal exporters would underwrite early works costs undertaken by QR on the way to delivering this project. This is good news indeed. Perhaps the only fly in our ointment, and an issue acknowledged in the net infrastructure plan, is the need for competitively priced power to north and north-west

Queensland. The nearest baseload power station to the triangle area is currently in Gladstone. With the Premier's commitment to the construction of a clean baseload power station for Queensland in seven years, the lobbying to have that station located in north Queensland has begun.

Last week I joined the member for Thuringowa, the mayor of Townsville, a representative of the Bowen council and the chairman of Townsville Enterprise to consider a strategy and put in place a plan to lobby the Minister for Infrastructure to have our first clean coal baseload power station located at Collinsville. With ready access to a secure coal supply and close proximity to the power grid, Collinsville is well placed for the baseload power generation that would supply Townsville and north Queensland with a competitively placed and reliable source of energy.

Local Government Reform

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (3.12 pm): I rise to speak about the proposed government boundary changes. In doing so I want to refer to information provided in an advertisement by Calliope Shire Council. I think it is pertinent because it illustrates some of the frustration of local authorities throughout Queensland with the process and not necessarily the people. The advertisement states—

In November 2006 the Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation released its strategic plan to cover the five-year period from 2006 to 2011. In the plan, the Department's Director-General, Mr Michael Kinnane, said:

'Our vision for the next 5 years, sustainable communities through collaboration, captures our commitment to build relationships across our diverse stakeholder group. We will use these partnerships to deliver on the ground outcomes for all Queenslanders.'

In the foreword to that document, the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport ... stated:

'One of the key challenges for this Department will be to work closely with Councils to ensure Queenslanders have open, transparent and accountable local governments.'

Clearly the document had political support.

The Minister reinforced this in his article in the February/March 2007 edition of the *Council Leader* (a Local Government Association of Queensland publication):

'Importantly there is no set agenda to force neighbouring councils into amalgamation or boundary changes ... If that becomes a clear option a public referendum must be held.'

That was in February-March 2007. It continues—

In the strategic plan, the Director-General clearly articulated that it was a 5-year strategy.

'This Plan will become the Department's blueprint as we work towards 2011.'

On collaboration, the plan emphasised that:

'The Department is working in close partnership with the LGAQ and professional associations.'

The reform agenda was to:

'Encourage the long term viability of Councils through the Size, Shape and Sustainability (SSS) initiative.'

The plan is an excellent 'easy-read' document. The Director-General, in introducing himself at regional forums, placed great emphasis on the strong values of the Department under his stewardship, particularly:

'Integrity—we are honest in everything we do.

Trust—we can rely on each other.'

...

Unfortunately, that five-year strategic plan had a life of about five months because on April 17, 2007, the Department proudly championed the 48-page 'Local Government Reform' document which features:

- Forced amalgamations
- No consultation with the LGAQ in its development
- No consultation with the professional associations in its development
- No referendums
- A three-month review of all 157 Councils.

I know that the councils in my region knew nothing of the axe that was dropped in this chamber in April until the day it occurred. It is my understanding that Paul Bell and the CEO of the Local Government Association were advised of what was intended that morning at about 9 am. Councils that in good faith went through the Size, Shape and Sustainability process—believing they had the support of this government, believing they could trust the government, believing they could trust those in leadership in that portfolio—put a great deal of time, effort and resources in the Size, Shape and Sustainability process for nothing.

It is in great measure the preconceived notion of trust, openness and transparency that has engendered in many councils the sense of frustration and betrayal we are seeing now. It will have an effect on communities, especially smaller communities. The loss of five or six children at a school because a local council job or some other job in the community has gone can mean the closure of that school. It happened in my community when State Development purchased land for industrial development. Schools were under threat because half a dozen moved out. It has a domino effect on western Queensland towns.

I am much more hard line. I believe the plan of the Labor government—Peter Beattie and Andrew Fraser—is to empty western Queensland where there tends to be a more conservative view of government. I think it is a reprehensible way to treat people. The frustration and anger that is being voiced in demonstrations across this state are an indicator of the depth of feeling in communities that in general are hospitable, flexible and able to tolerate bad decisions.

Local Government Reform

Mr HOOLIHAN (Keppel—ALP) (3.17 pm): In relation to those people of western Queensland mentioned in the same mouthful by the member for Gladstone, I suggest that she goes out and meets some people from western Queensland to really know what occurs. The ad that she read from I will mention later in my speech. It relates to Calliope Shire Council. Surprise, surprise, the president of the Central Queensland Local Government Association is the deputy mayor of Calliope Shire Council. We have to question what was just said in light of that.

Whether we were bought up or grew up or were kicked in the behind and told to get up, we all learnt that it is morally wrong and dishonest to take or use the money or goods of another for our own purposes. We learnt that it is also dishonest to acquire money by threats. They are offences under our criminal law known as stealing and extortion.

Some mayors and councillors have treated ratepayers' money as their own slush fund and have spent that money willy-nilly to promote themselves as the bastions of democracy, such as the member for Warrego, which I will deal with later. They were really just dishonest. I have information that they sometimes did not even pass valid motions to spend the money. There were many mayors and councillors who supported reform. If the member for Gregory pays some attention to some of the local governments in his electorate, he will support that comment. My remarks are not directed to those forward-thinking people.

It is not only the mayors and councillors but regional bodies of local government that should hang their heads in shame, starting with promotional bodies such as RAPAD which represents 18 rural councils and was the bagman for the \$25,000 which was requested or subtly demanded from each of the rural councils. Some of that money was even used to encourage people to desecrate cenotaphs on 8 June. It was not only rural councils but other councils were requested to contribute money to this fighting fund by the member for Warrego. I ask all members to assess his actions from the report in the *Tablelands Advertiser* tabled during the hearings of Estimates Committee E. I would suggest that his actions are contemptible for a person who claims to be a shadow minister for local government. Perhaps he feels that those councils are his constituency only, but it will be a big education for him to talk to the many members of local government who also find his actions objectionable.

Being a ratepayer, I will use my area as an example of the 'slush fund' mentality. The member for Gladstone just mentioned the Calliope shire. That is part of the Central Queensland Local Government Association. A full-page advertisement against reform was placed in the *Courier-Mail* during May purporting to be under the hand of the Calliope shire and the Central Queensland Local Government Association. Surprise, surprise, but again no approval was sought or given by some individual council members of the CQLGA and the ratepayers of Calliope ended up paying the bill. If some members want to check that, they can check with Gladstone Mayor Peter Corones or Mount Morgan Mayor Gavin Finch or the mayor of Rockhampton.

Since the reform provisions were first mooted, our local council, the Livingstone shire, has spent ratepayers' funds with gay abandon at the whim of the mayor. There was a Clayton's poll for which no-one really knows the full cost to supposedly ascertain people's wishes. Why a Clayton's poll? The questions were really push polling and many ratepayers were just disenfranchised. They simply were not polled. Two of the people who were not polled were the member for Rockhampton as a ratepayer and one of the electorate officers of the member for Fitzroy. It would have been quite simple to forward a poll form to all of those people as the rate notices arrived either on the same day or the day before, but that wasteful duplication alone would have cost at least \$10,000 for around 20,000 voters.

The same council and the Central Queensland Local Government Association are at it again, wasting thousands of dollars on some supposed rally on 12 August. It is about time that they woke up to themselves. Maybe these smaller councils that want to act like a de facto Premier will not be able to advance their grandiose schemes. In this House on 19 April in reference to some small local mayors, I referred to the Slim Dusty song *Big Frogs in Little Puddles*. It was gratifying that *Sunday Mail* journalist Terry Sweetman, relating to the political nature of local government, used the same simile, albeit 'big fish', to refer to some of the mayors and councillors involved in the current debate. I have suggested to the minister that every cent spent by a council or any constituent body be recoverable as a debt by any ratepayer payable jointly and severally by any council or association member who voted in favour of spending money which was really only being spent on the 'politics of the warm inner glow' by big fish or big frogs. They should grow up and represent the people who elected them and not promote themselves. It could get very costly.

Time expired.

Local Government Reform

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (3.22 pm): It is with much pleasure that I rise to speak this afternoon in this matter of public interest debate on the issue of forced amalgamation of local authorities. I represent a huge tract of western Queensland and I was appalled to hear a product of western Queensland, the member for Keppel, make reference to bodies like the Remote Area Planning and Development Board and other local authorities in terms of the way in which they have expended ratepayers' money in the past. Nobody agrees more than I do that there has to be reforms in local government, but at the same time those reforms have to be done in a properly constituted way where the people involved are taken with them and not pushed to the side and treated with contempt as this government has done.

From day one this government deprived the people of Queensland the right to have their say by legislating to remove the referendum option out of the legislation—something that we would never, ever witness in another Western democracy. However, this has happened in this state. There was a woman marching in the crowd here last week rallying against forced amalgamations. Somebody said that this was about a dictatorship. It is a dictatorship when this happens. This lady said that she came to this country to get away from one of those regimes. She had come from Zimbabwe. Where had she moved to? Queensland, to cop a bit more of the same. I hope not.

Mr Hoolihan interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: Shame; exactly. The member for Keppel is laughing. I have respect for the member for Keppel. I know his background and where he comes from. I really believe that many people on the other side of the House do not concur with what this government is doing. I just wish that they had the intestinal fortitude to stand up and say, 'No, enough is enough!'

We have talked about the Remote Area Planning and Development Board. Over the time that that board has been constituted we have seen nothing but progress and development in western Queensland. We have seen that board interface with government, with ministers, with people outside businesses, the whole bit. It is nothing but a success story and one that is the envy of many other jurisdictions in this state. The real issue today relates to people's rights. Those women and other people who came down from western Queensland on buses overnight to stand in front of the Executive Building and march did not come down here for the ride. They came down here because they believe that they are being cheated and frauded by a government that took their rights away from them.

It is the smaller shires that are facing amalgamation while the bigger remote shires have been left as they are, and I applaud the commission for leaving those shires as they currently are. Some of those smaller shires that are not on the main track and now will not be stand-alone operatives have lost their rights. Their voice has gone. Many of these people are working-class families who live in a house that might only be worth \$40,000 or \$50,000. Now with a centralised council at Longreach, Barcaldine, Blackall, Roma, Charters Towers or wherever it may be, we have a situation where these people are genuinely concerned about their future. They are council workers. They are kangaroo shooters. They are shearers. They are pastoral workers. They are people who just reside in those towns and have done forever and a day and are a very integral part of those communities.

The flaw in this whole situation is that they have been robbed of an opportunity to be able to stand up and be counted for what they believe in. This morning I interjected on the Deputy Premier in relation to what her home is going to be worth after this debacle is all over, but she sidestepped the issue and went on to something else. For those people out there their homes and businesses will be worth not too much at all. I appeal to the minister, who is in the House, through the transition period and through the period of change as we progress after the 15 March elections in 2008 that if there are problems he shows some heart and some compassion to put it right. Today I heard that the federal government is putting money forward for a referendum to be held in relation to these local authorities, and I applaud that. That shows leadership from the federal government—something this government did not do. That is going to prove to the people of Queensland and this government why this should have been done in the first place!

Stafford Electorate, Infrastructure

Mr HINCHLIFFE (Stafford—ALP) (3.28 pm): I am pleased to advise the House on the success of my ongoing representations on behalf of the Kedron State High School community in response to the potential impacts of the Airport Link and northern busway projects. Last month the Deputy Premier joined me at Kedron State High School to announce \$3.5 million that has been provided to Education Queensland for the predicted disruptions, including the temporary loss of one of its playing fields. This funding commitment was announced, as I say, by me and the Deputy Premier at the school on Friday, 20 July 2007. This amount of \$3.5 million will allow improvements to the educational environment at Kedron State High School. I am very pleased to be involved in ongoing discussions with principal Myron McCormick and the P&C about the school community's needs and wants, particularly with regard to the creating of an indoor sporting facility for Kedron High.

The \$3.5 million will not replace impact mitigation measures such as acoustically lined work sheds, dust suppression systems, noise barriers and traffic management plans. The Queensland government has stipulated that the successful tenderer will be legally obliged to develop and implement a plan to minimise construction impacts on the schools and the wider community. The mitigation costs will be built into the project. Once the contract is awarded they will complete a detailed design and environmental management plan for each project and mitigation measures will be finalised.

If additional funding is required to enhance facilities at the school throughout construction, then requests will be considered as part of Education Queensland's existing capital program. I am committed to ensuring that the high-quality and, indeed, well-regarded education offered at Kedron State High School will be maintained throughout the construction of these very important projects, and I am confident that if the whole school community and, indeed, the government and other players work together to maximise the potential for this funding, we can make Kedron State High School into an even stronger school with as little disruption as possible.

Airport Link and the northern busway are two of the largest infrastructure projects planned in the first phase of the state government's South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program. Together these projects are expected to reduce traffic congestion in Brisbane's northern suburbs, improve travel time and reliability, increase travel options, improve air quality, reduce overall road traffic noise and enhance pedestrian and cycling facilities—and I note this in particular—including the Gympie Road crossing to Kedron State High School and the access to the Kedron Brook bike and pedestrian paths for the school and the whole community. Further, the Deputy Premier has asked—and I note this is important for another part of the school community in the area—Education Queensland to investigate creating a new drop-off and pick-up zone outside Woolloowin State School as part of the mitigation measures for that school.

I look forward to having further meetings with teachers, administrators, families and other staff members at Kedron State High School and Woolloowin State School as well as all the relevant government and non-government stakeholders as we continue to work towards our common goal—that is, to continue to provide the best educational opportunities and learning environments possible for our children.

On that point, I want to extend my appreciation to the Deputy Premier and, indeed, to the Minister for Education for listening to the concerns of the Kedron State High School and Woolloowin State School communities. I also want to extend my appreciation to the officers of City North Infrastructure who, along with the government, have listened and responded to community concerns. Most of all, I want to extend my appreciation to the people who make up the school communities that have been affected. I want to thank the school administration at Kedron State High School, especially principal Myron McCormick. I want to thank the P&C Association, especially the president of the Parents and Citizens Association, Adrian Quinn. But I particularly want to thank the teachers and staff, especially those members of the QTU and other unions who took stop-work action at a cost to themselves in terms of their pay packets to draw attention to the school community's concerns about the impacts.

There is a long way to go in dealing with the impacts of this major project, but everyone is working hard for the students and, as I say, is committed to the common goal of continuing to provide the best educational opportunities and learning environments possible for our children.

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

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM IMPLEMENTATION BILL

First Reading

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport) (3.33 pm): I present a bill for an act to provide for the implementation of structural reform of local governments, and for other purposes. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Second Reading

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport) (3.33 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The bill I present today will position Queensland councils to manage the challenges of a growing Queensland. In April, the Beattie government made one of the most difficult but absolutely critical decisions of recent history in forging ahead with an across-the-board reform of Queensland's local government system.

This program of reform was launched because it is the right thing to do. We must build stronger and more sustainable councils for a stronger Queensland, to cope with our nation-leading growth. We must do the right thing because to do otherwise—to do nothing—is not an option. The bill I present today does exactly that. It does the right thing.

We can no longer continue to operate local government within boundaries which were established in a very different Queensland—a Queensland of more than a century ago when the journey between Mackay and Townsville took several days and the trip from Brisbane to the Gold Coast took a day; a time before the advent of contemporary communications; a time before the advent of modern transportation; in short, a time before Queensland was the go-ahead, vital leader of the nation in terms of economic growth, population growth and innovation.

The Beattie government established the independent Local Government Reform Commission as a genuine, legitimate, transparent and open mechanism to achieve the sensible and timely reform required. Ultimately, that is what has occurred. The reform commission has recommended structural change that presents us with a local government network for the Queensland of the new millennium. It is a blueprint for the future.

The reform commission has presented us with recommendations that usher local government into a new era—a modern era—to ensure it is able to keep pace with Queensland's continually evolving status as the national powerhouse. This is a passionate issue. People are—in some areas—understandably nervous and passionate because this involves change and change can be difficult.

This was not a decision that was entered into with blinkered eyes—we fully anticipated that this would not be a popular decision with every single shire. Human nature would not allow that. But, similarly, it was not a reluctant decision. It is a bold step for any government to take. This decision-making process has been the catalyst for passionate protest in some areas. I have personally fronted many crowds across the state in recent months. But the government is also equally passionate about taking an antiquated, unsustainable, unnecessarily out-of-step system of local government and transitioning it into the modern Queensland. The reform this bill implements is absolutely critical.

We are privileged to live in Australia's go-ahead state. Everybody, it seems, wants to live here. Every week our population swells by 1,500 and 1,100 of those people flood our borders either from other states or from overseas. But what each of these ratepayers—the established ratepayers, new residents and ratepayers of the future—are asked to live with is a network of councils from Pine Rivers to Port Douglas, Cooloola to Cairns that has for far too long remained entrenched in history. It is not good enough that we expect ratepayers to reside in the nation's fastest growing state with a tired system of local government.

Our century-old council boundaries have meant many of our councils are unable to guarantee their ratepayers the service and infrastructure they require and deserve into the future. These boundaries have meant that many councils have, possibly through no particular fault of their own, become unsustainable because the system is unsustainable. If we were to simply turn a blind eye and remain in the status quo, two, three or five years from now it is a certainty that several would simply run out of steam and plunge into a financial neverland. Then—when we were to reach this avoidable situation—jobs would be lost, basic but essential services would be compromised, millions of dollars would have been lost.

Both privately and publicly mayors the length and width of Queensland have spoken to me about the need for reform—the need to haul Queensland out of the previous century. Local government itself wants reform. That is why local government itself instigated the voluntary reform program almost two years ago. However, it was obvious—dramatically obvious—that very little was going to happen.

Discussing the future and actually preparing for it—by adopting ideas instead of talking about them—are two very different things. That is why the government stepped in to take leadership to establish the reform commission to investigate amalgamations of councils where they should occur at this pivotal point, at this crossroads at which local government finds itself. The Australian Local Government Association itself commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers to review councils throughout the nation. That study found between 25 and 40 per cent were in an untenable financial position and unable to guarantee funding for vital infrastructure into the future.

The Queensland Treasury Corporation's review of the finances of the majority of those councils which had been involved in Size, Shape, Sustainability found more than 40 per cent were in a weak financial position or worse—by their own admission, by materials they prepared and they provided for review. Additionally, the Queensland Auditor-General's annual report into the finances of councils for 2005-06 showed 59 Queensland councils had audit issues in the moderate or high-risk categories. The report also showed that long-term viability remains a significant issue for the local government sector with an aggregate deficit of \$290 million for 68 councils in that period.

The Auditor-General's latest annual report into the financial status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councils is similarly not encouraging. It shows nearly two-thirds of the state's 32 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councils were given an unacceptable financial rating and it is clear from this latest

report that these councils, and more importantly the members of the communities that they serve, face an extremely uncertain future if their financial situations are not addressed. It shows there are a significant number of councils that have failed to show tangible improvement in governance, financial performance, timeliness and quality of financial reporting, debt management, the management of commercial activities and basic record keeping.

Ratepayers across the state deserve to know this type of information in regard to the financial status of their councils just as they require and deserve reform. The reform commission has recommended that the number of councils in Queensland be reduced from 156 to 72, not including Brisbane city. This is a major and essential transformation and the bill provides for the implementation of this recommendation.

The recommendations include sweeping, essential and historic change to coastal Queensland—to the Fraser Coast, Burnett, Mackay and Whitsundays, the Sunshine Coast and the far north. They include critical, overdue change to the Torres Strait, to the Toowoomba region and to the resources corridor the length of the state's centre. Rockhampton will become a major regional local government and the twin cities of Townsville and Thuringowa will become one of the state's strongest local governments.

The recommendations leave largely untouched our western region. There are no boundary changes to 37 councils and no amalgamation of large western councils due to the Local Government Reform Commission's view that structural reform would not lead to any significant service delivery or capacity benefits. Electoral composition of councils reduces the number of councillors and mayors in Queensland from 1,250 to 526—a reduction of 724.

While the reform commission recommended all councils should—apart from the Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council and Torres Strait Island Regional Council, they propose—conduct their election on an undivided basis, the Queensland government recently announced that local governments will be able to conduct their elections on a divided or undivided basis. Based on the analysis of the responses from those councils, individuals and groups, the government has decided that 26 councils will conduct their 2008 elections on a divided basis. The bill provides for not only divisions for these councils but a clear process for the Electoral Commission to draw these divisions.

The agreement between state and national electoral commissions means that this legislation must be passed as a priority. The independent Electoral Commission will be able to draw boundaries for divisions, as was the request of these councils, before the 2008 election. These are recommendations the government is adopting wholesale—lock, stock and barrel. They will be overseen by an already established State Transition Committee and, in each of those areas affected by amalgamation, local transition committees will smooth the process. This will be—as it has often been throughout the reform commission's deliberations—an open and transparent process. The committees are constituted in this bill.

As promised, council workers will not lose their jobs. Only elected officials—mayors, councillors and CEOs—will be affected by the reforms this bill implements. The government, like the community, places great value on the 37,000 people who make their livelihood in the local government sector and we are determined that they will continue to work in local government.

This bill includes provision for a local government workforce transitional code of practice. The staff support package guarantees job security through to 2011. It also includes provisions for honouring of contracts, retraining, support and no net loss of jobs across the sector. In consultation with unions we will also address the issues of retaining jobs where employees currently work. Further, we are proceeding on the basis that this government will do everything in its power to ensure that council workforces are considered as local government employees and not constitutional corporations and therefore not subject to the Howard government's laws.

The state transition committee is charged with guiding and supporting local transition committees and interim CEOs up until the 2008 elections. The director-general of the department of local government and planning will act as arbiter and be empowered to intervene where necessary. As minister, I will be given intervention powers to ensure that the integrity and schedule of local government reform is not jeopardised. In order to assist the transition of existing councils to new arrangements and to ensure the integrity of the electoral process to establish new local governments, the Electoral Commission of Queensland will conduct the 2008 quadrennial local government elections.

The bill also provides for a Local Government Remuneration Tribunal that will bring Queensland into line with other states which have moved to the use of an independent body to determine remuneration for local government elected officials. The remuneration tribunal will be established to determine the remuneration levels of local government elected officials. This will divest councils of the responsibility for setting fees for councillors and mayors. The establishment of a tribunal brings local government in line with the Commonwealth government, which uses a remuneration tribunal to set allowances and salaries for senators and members of the federal parliament.

The bill also contains provisions to ensure councils must not conduct a poll in relation to any reform matters. The provisions also ensure that, if polls are undertaken, the cost of the poll may be recovered from elected representatives responsible for organising the poll. This will act as a significant deterrent so that ratepayers' funds are not wasted. There is also the option of a fine upon an individual councillor which will be payable to the relevant local government.

Additionally, the bill aligns the separate systems regarding local law reviews and consolidates the review periods to ease the pressure on local governments during the transition period and assist new local governments rationalise their local laws following structural change. The redundancy review of local laws and the review of anti-competitive provisions within local laws are now scheduled for 2010 under this bill.

The bill I present today will also be complemented by further legislation to ensure the planning initiatives of areas with a unique combination of significant growth and iconic features can be protected into the future.

Vital new council boundaries are to be in place by the next scheduled local government elections for 15 March next year; otherwise Queensland will be lumbered with the same system of local government for another four years and the consequences of that would be not only dire but unacceptable.

I acknowledge that these are difficult times but future times would surely be even more arduous under our old system of local government. Under the new system that will be adopted I am confident the new character, the new shape of local government in this state, is the right one. It is a new system for a new Queensland. It is a system which will take us forward. It is a stronger system. It is a system which will ensure each and every Queensland ratepayer is able to garner the absolute best from stronger councils—each and every council in each and every corner of this great state. This builds stronger councils for the growing state of Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (3.46 pm): I move—

That the debate on this shameful and disgraceful legislation be adjourned.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): Order! I call on the member for Warrego to retract his statement. It is unparliamentary language. There is a format to be used.

Mr HOBBS: I did not know that 'shameful' or 'disgraceful' were—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Warrego, I warn you. I call on you to adjourn the debate.

Mr HOBBS: I will adjourn the debate.

Debate, on motion of Mr Hobbs, adjourned.

RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN EMBRYOS AND PROHIBITION OF HUMAN CLONING AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Health) (3.47 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Research Involving Human Embryos and Prohibition of Human Cloning Act 2003. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Second Reading

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Health) (3.47 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

This bill amends the Research Involving Human Embryos and Prohibition of Human Cloning Act 2003 to mirror recent amendments to the Commonwealth Research Involving Human Embryos Act 2002 and Prohibition of Human Cloning Act for Reproduction Act 2002.

The bill gives effect to the undertaking made by all the states and the Australian Capital Territory at the Council of Australian Governments' meeting on 13 April 2007 to introduce corresponding legislation into their respective parliaments to maintain a national approach to regulating human embryo research and cloning.

The amendments arise from recommendations of the Legislation Review Committee chaired by the late Honourable John Lockhart, former justice of the Federal Court. The committee comprised highly qualified and experienced individuals from the fields of law, science, medicine and ethics and all state and territory governments were consulted on the composition of the committee.

The review committee undertook an extensive review of the Commonwealth acts, consulting widely with the community and with state and territory governments. Ethicists, scientists, IVF specialists, religious leaders and the community were all invited to make submissions and the committee met individually with many leading experts. The committee carefully weighed the ethical and moral concerns raised during consultation with the strong community support for research that has the potential to help people with debilitating or currently incurable conditions.

The amendments in this bill raise important moral and ethical questions upon which members should be able to vote according to their conscience. Accordingly, the Hon. Premier has approved a conscience vote by government members. The honourable Leader of the Opposition has also allowed a conscience vote by members opposite.

To inform debate on the difficult scientific concepts involved, Queensland Health recently hosted an information session by experts in the field for all members of parliament. I understand that the presentation was well attended and I thank members for their interest. Presentation materials have been circulated on disk to all members of parliament. I will also be circulating an additional guide to the bill to assist and inform members.

The bill will amend the Research Involving Human Embryos and Prohibition of Human Cloning Act to expand the range of research activities which may be carried out under licences issued by the National Health and Medical Research Council's Embryo Research Licensing Committee. This is a rapidly developing area of technology and it is important that Queensland keep pace with the potential therapeutic applications of research, as well as changes in community attitudes and standards. Specifically, the amendments will allow, under licence, the creation of embryos for research purposes by means other than fertilisation of a human egg by human sperm.

The NHMRC Embryo Research Licensing Committee will be able to issue a licence, for example, for the creation of an embryo using techniques such as somatic cell nuclear transfer. The amendments will also permit the fertilisation of animal eggs with human sperm under licence, but only for the purpose of testing sperm quality for assisted reproductive technology, or ART, purposes.

I stress that the bill retains important safeguards. Universally unacceptable activities remain prohibited, with maximum penalties of up to 15 years imprisonment for noncompliance. Prohibited activities include: cloning a human for reproductive purposes; making heritable alterations to a human embryo; and creating or developing a chimeric embryo, which is a human embryo into which the cell of an animal has been introduced.

To further ensure cloning techniques are used for research purposes only, it will be an offence to allow an embryo to develop for more than 14 days. This is when the rudimentary nervous system—the 'primitive streak'—first appears. It will also be an offence to permit an embryo created for research to be implanted into the body of a human or an animal under any circumstances. These offences will carry maximum penalties of up to 15 years imprisonment for noncompliance.

I take this opportunity to seek leave to incorporate the remainder of my second reading speech in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

As is currently the case, the NHMRC Embryo Research Licensing Committee will be able to issue licenses only for research approved by a Human Research Ethics Committee. Research must also be conducted in accordance with the NHMRC's Ethical Guidelines.

Mr Speaker, perhaps the most controversial aspect of the Bill is that it will allow for the creation of embryos using somatic cell nuclear transfer, or SCNT.

The purpose of SCNT is to create an embryo clone from which embryonic stem cells may be derived for research.

Members may recall that SCNT was used to create 'Dolly' the sheep.

However, attempts to use this technique to clone a human will be prevented by the prohibitions I've just mentioned.

SCNT involves removing the nucleus from an unfertilised egg cell and replacing it with the nucleus from another cell, usually a somatic cell.

Somatic cells are tissue cells, other than reproductive cells, such as skin or muscle cells. The egg cell with the inserted nucleus is then stimulated by either an electric or chemical stimulant, to induce the cell to fuse with the new nucleus and develop into an embryo.

The embryo may then be cultured to the blastocyst stage, that is, a 5 to 7 day old embryo, from which embryonic stem cells can then be removed and used for research. It is hoped this will aid the development of cellular therapies, which is why this process is often referred to as 'therapeutic cloning'.

SCNT leaves the embryo in a state from which it can no longer develop; that is, the embryo is effectively destroyed.

This raises important ethical issues about the status of an embryo created in this way.

The Lockhart Review Committee viewed embryos created through SCNT as being different from those created through fertility treatment, for two reasons.

First, the aim of SCNT is to derive embryonic stem cells for research and in the future, therapeutic treatments. In contrast, embryos created by fertilisation of a human egg by human sperm are created by couples for the purposes of having a baby.

Second, embryos created through SCNT are made up almost entirely of DNA from the donor of the somatic cell. Consequently, the Committee viewed embryos created through SCNT as akin to an extension of the person from whom the body cell was taken. In contrast, embryos created by fertilisation of a human egg by human sperm using ART have a mixture of DNA from the mother and the father.

To reflect the Committee's view, the Bill prohibits the creation of embryos by fertilisation of human egg by human sperm for research purposes.

Excess ART embryos may continue to be donated by couples to researchers licensed by the NHMRC Embryo Research Licensing Committee.

Using SCNT will enable the creation of embryonic stem cell lines to generate patient-matched stem cells for research and the possible development of specific cellular therapies to overcome problems such as tissue rejection.

In addition, SCNT will allow the creation of embryonic stem cells with specific targeted diseases, which will assist scientists to obtain a better understanding of diseased cells and may also lead to the identification of drugs and treatments for diseases.

Excess ART embryos are not suitable for this type of research. They are created for the sole purpose of having a healthy baby and are unlikely to have the diseases being studied.

Also, while pre-implantation genetic diagnosis of ART embryos can detect some conditions that result from changes in a single gene, for example cystic fibrosis, such testing cannot detect more complex diseases such as Alzheimer's disease and multiple sclerosis.

In addition, the stem cells derived from these excess ART embryos would not be a genetic 'match' to the patients for whom potential cellular therapies are being developed.

Importantly, the use of SCNT techniques to create embryos will also assist in developing a better understanding of how embryos develop and how cells differentiate.

By better understanding how primitive cells behave, scientists may one day be able to stimulate adult stem cells into reverting to more primitive states and thus circumvent the need to create or destroy an embryo.

Mr Speaker, an important practical consideration in this debate is what status the Queensland legislation will have in relation to the Commonwealth Acts.

The Government's legal advice indicates that the Commonwealth has constitutional authority to legislate comprehensively in this area under the external affairs power, due to international concern about embryo stem cell research and human cloning.

Accordingly, due to the operation of section 109 of the Commonwealth Constitution, Queensland legislation in this area which is inconsistent with the Commonwealth legislation will be inoperative to the extent of the inconsistency.

The practical effect of this advice is that those activities currently banned in Queensland will still be able to be carried out in Queensland by persons issued with a licence by the NHRMC Embryo Research Licensing Committee under the Commonwealth legislation.

Further, the offence provisions of the Queensland Act would not apply to any research activity licensed under the Commonwealth Acts but prohibited in Queensland.

However, both the existing Queensland Act and the Commonwealth Acts would continue to operate to prohibit unlicensed research using human embryos, cloning of human embryos, including unlicensed cloning for therapeutic purposes, and other prohibited practices for which a Commonwealth licence has not been issued.

Mr Speaker, wherever possible, governments have a responsibility to promote high quality and ethically sound scientific research and medical practice.

This Bill will do this by allowing important and potentially beneficial research to be conducted in order to obtain a better understanding of disease and how cells differentiate.

This may ultimately have a profound and positive effect on the ability to treat a range of human conditions and diseases such as spinal injuries, heart failure, Parkinson's disease, motor neuron disease and multiple sclerosis.

The Bill will ensure that further advances in this field of science are made within a responsible regulatory framework.

Finally, Mr Speaker, the Queensland Act requires the Minister to review the Act as soon as possible after December 2005, and stipulates the review may be undertaken as part of the review of the Commonwealth Acts.

Queensland participated in the Lockhart Review, which undertook extensive community and stakeholder consultation. Consequently, the Government considers the Lockhart Review is adequate for the review of the Queensland Act.

The Bill inserts a similar provision, requiring a review of the Act within three years of the amendments commencing, and providing that this review may be undertaken as part of the review of the Commonwealth legislation.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Langbroek, adjourned.

MINING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. GJ WILSON (Ferry Grove—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy) (3.52 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend acts administered by the Minister for Mines and Energy, and for related purposes. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Second Reading

Hon. GJ WILSON (Ferry Grove—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy) (3.52 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

This Mining and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2007 seeks to amend the Petroleum Act 1923, the Mineral Resources Act 1989, the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004, the Geothermal Exploration Act 2004, the Coal Mining Safety and Health Act 1999, the Coal and Oil Shale Mine Workers' Superannuation Act 1989, the Mining and Quarrying Safety and Health Act 1999, the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995 and the Explosives Act 1999 to address operational and administrative issues identified from industry submissions, internal Department of Mines and Energy reviews, and joint industry and departmental review processes.

The bill is voluminous. However, the amendments reflect the ongoing dialogue between the department and industry to improve the operation of these acts. The bill also recognises that legislation cannot be static. Legislation requires regular review to ensure ongoing relevance.

In March last year, the then Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Water conducted an evaluation of the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004 and the Petroleum Act 1923 in consultation with the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association—APPEA, one of the key petroleum industry representative bodies—Santos Ltd, Origin Energy, LPG Australia (Queensland Branch) and the Australian Coal Seam Gas Council. The review identified a number of operational and compliance provisions that could be made clearer, less onerous, easier to comply with, or have better legislative support. The amendments will address these issues.

Amendments to the safety provisions of the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004 include clarifying the definitions of operating plant to which safety management plan requirements apply. This is primarily to limit the extent of the definitions which had been too wide with respect to matters such as fuel gas storage facilities, cylinder distribution and pipelines. The definition of pipelines, for example, will now be restricted to transmission and distribution pipelines and will exclude pipe work in shops or homes which are covered by regulation and Australian Standards such as AS5601.

The amendments also clarify who the defined 'operator' is under the legislation and extend the obligations of executive safety managers to ensure safety management plans are developed in consultation with employee representatives and that resources are provided to monitor and implement the plans. Changes have also been made to remove duplication in terms of authorisation and operating plant safety management plan requirements for gas work on major projects and to make it an offence for a person at a workplace to require workers who are unlicensed to undertake gas work. I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of my second reading speech in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

A new section 673A, inserted into the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004, requires that operators must give notice that an operating plant is about to be commissioned or is to begin operations. This is required to prevent operations commencing before they are assessed for safety, and has been proposed in response to a particularly dangerous drilling rig that was working for some time in this State.

The content requirements for safety management plans have been upgraded to specifically include a 'change management' process and to address risk issues associated with general workplace health and safety.

Allowance has also been made for the adoption of generic safety management plans by smaller industry players. This will relieve them of the burden of preparing a more detailed plan, without compromising safety.

Increased safety obligations have been placed on the 'Executive Safety Manager'—generally the chief executive officer of the operating plant organisation. The requirement for reporting incidents has also been more clearly defined to ensure that reports are made.

In the area of licensed gas fitting work, a new section prohibits a person instructing another to undertake unlicensed work. This is in response to a number of incidents of illegal gas fitting. The sections covering compliance directions and dangerous situation directions have been strengthened, to require notification of completion of the required work.

Under the section providing for immediate suspension of a gas work licence, allowance has been made to continue such suspension while other action, such as prosecution or permanent cancellation, is taken.

In terms of measurement, allowance has been made for the very small escapes of petroleum which can be lost during shutdowns and which cannot realistically be measured.

The section prohibiting the use of a fuel supplier's containers by another fuel supplier, which had a sunset clause, has been extended indefinitely, as safety issues have been clearly identified.

There are other minor safety amendments which basically clarify intent. Amendments to the Coal Mining Safety and Health Act 1999 and the Mining and Quarrying Safety and Health Act 1999 reflect the recommendations arising from the recent review of the Mines Inspectorate. They will allow the introduction of a career path within the Mines Inspectorate by allowing the appointment of inspectors with nominated powers matching their competencies. As the competency of the inspector increases, so the powers can be increased and the inspector can become eligible for promotion.

The amendments also provide for changes to the membership of the respective Advisory Councils to allow smoother and more continuous operation of the Councils.

Other amendments to the Coal Mining Safety and Health Act 1999 and the Mining and Quarrying Safety and Health Act 1999 provide for the appointment of additional officers, known as authorised officers, who will be vested with appropriate powers to assist in the investigation of safety and health issues at mines. These authorised officers, including investigators, hygienists and ergonomists, will provide a broader mix of skills to the inspectorate.

The amendments also provide for penalties for failing to meet safety and health obligations to be increased in line with those under the provisions of the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995. When the legislation was originally enacted, the penalties were aligned with those in the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995; however, that legislation was subsequently amended to increase the penalties.

Re-aligning the penalties will ensure that penalties imposed by the courts under each Act will be similar for similar offences.

The Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995 amendment will correct an inadvertent jurisdictional anomaly between the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995 and the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004 with respect to the regulation of safety issues on petroleum tenures, particularly those relating to construction of plant and pipeline construction. The scope of the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004 in respect to safety issues has been restricted to commissioning and operation of plant located on petroleum tenures.

Construction and workplace health and safety matters during construction of plant, that were not intended to fall under the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004, will now fall under the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995. However, key standards called up in the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004 that relate to the long term integrity and safety of the plant will prevail.

The proposed Explosives Act 1999 amendment will align the penalty for breach of the general duty of care when handling explosives with comparable offences in the Dangerous Goods Safety Management Act 2001.

The Geothermal Exploration Act 2004 amendment has been included to allow for the renewal of a geothermal exploration permit. Implementation of the Geothermal Exploration Act 2004 demonstrated the need for a limited renewal term of the exploration permit to allow more complete exploration of identified geothermal areas to occur. The amendment will allow up to three years to be added to the initial term of the exploration permit, providing the holder of the exploration permit further time to assess any geothermal resource and possibly apply for a production tenure. The amendment will also align the renewal policy with that existing for mineral and petroleum tenures.

Amendments are proposed to the Geothermal Exploration Act 2004, the Mineral Resources Act 1989, the Petroleum Act 1923 and the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004, to allow for the provision of minerals, petroleum and geothermal information to other government departments, such as the Environmental Protection Agency, without fee. The amendment recognises the need for the exchange of information between government agencies in the administration of the minerals, petroleum and geothermal industry.

Mr Speaker, the administrative processes required of industry to comply with legislation are often not readily available to them. The opportunity has been taken to include in the Geothermal Exploration Act 2004, the Mineral Resources Act 1989, the Petroleum Act 1923 and the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004 a power for the making of directions on how information is to be provided in forms and other material required under the legislation.

The directions will be published and will give certainty to industry as to how they do business under these Acts. The amendments will give legislative support to the directions, their publication and their enforceability.

Mr Speaker, I said earlier that the multiple miscellaneous amendments to these Acts result from ongoing consultation between the Department and industry stakeholders. This will continue.

In addition, I remind the House that a number of major reviews have recently commenced, namely: the review of the Mineral Resources Act 1989; the legislative framework for geothermal energy production; the framework for carbon dioxide geosequestration; and the mines safety legislation.

These reviews will be reported on in due course.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

LAND COURT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. KG SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Premier in Western Queensland) (3.56 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Land Court Act 2000 and other acts administered by the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Premier in Western Queensland, and for related purposes. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Second Reading

Hon. KG SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Premier in Western Queensland) (3.56 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

As Attorney-General, I am determined to ensure that the courts are supported to the extent possible to fulfil their vital functions. I am determined to improve access to our courts, and therefore access to justice, for all Queenslanders.

I resolved to respond to the calls from heads of our respective court jurisdictions for extra resources. Since my appointment in November, two additional positions have been created in the Magistrates Court. The Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2007, currently before the House,

includes provision for a pilot of new positions of judicial registrars for the Magistrates Court. The purpose of that pilot is to provide additional and appropriate resources for dispatching the business of our Magistrates Courts. As part of my commitment to ensuring that the courts are adequately resourced to perform their functions, I have prepared this bill to reallocate judicial resources to where they are needed.

The Chief Judge of the District Court in her annual report for 2005-06 reported that 'the decrease in available judicial resources, and the demand of the increasing workload in Brisbane and other centres—a demand met by sustaining the number of circuits to most places—has had an effect on the timeliness of disposition of the court's criminal workload'. Her Honour's report also demonstrated that over five years the court had dealt with a greater workload with fewer judge weeks available.

The District Court has a wide civil and criminal jurisdiction and hears most appeals from the Magistrates Court. As the Planning and Environment Court, the decisions of the court underpin the successful planning and development of the state. I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The District Court attends 36 circuit centres, in addition to the places which have a permanent judge.

I was concerned that the District Court was crying out for additional resources.

As a result of this Bill, the District Court, which delivers justice across Queensland to tens of thousands of Queenslanders, will receive a second extra judge this financial year.

At the same time the District Court has had concerns about its capacity, the members of the Land and Resources Tribunal have indicated consistently that it has extra capacity.

This remains the case even though the Government has acted to confer additional jurisdiction upon the Tribunal and has ensured that members are appointed as part-time members of the Land Court.

One of the previous members has already been appointed to the District Court—Her Honour Judge Kingham. This did not affect the ability of the Tribunal to finalise its workload.

The Land Court is also a busy court, with an increasing workload. The Land Court is a historic entity, more than one hundred years old.

There has previously been a close connection between the Land Court and decisions in relation to resources.

The Land Court and the Land and Resources Tribunal have been co-located for a number of years and share a combined registry.

Over time, as the exploration for coal has occurred over pastoral interests, the work of the Land and Resources Tribunal and the Land Court has come closer together.

This Bill achieves a reallocation of resources to provide a more efficient justice system for the people of Queensland.

In essence, the bill amalgamates the Land and Resources Tribunal into the Land Court.

The Land Court will alter in some ways as a consequence.

Firstly, in recognition of the significance of the resources industry to this State, knowledge of mining or petroleum issues will be added as a criterion for appointment to the Land Court.

Secondly, as a result of this Bill, the Land Court will have more than sufficient resources and personnel with relevant expertise to dispose of mining matters expeditiously to support Queensland's booming mining sector.

Further in order to ensure that the interests of the indigenous community are properly taken into account, a new Cultural Heritage and Indigenous Land Use Agreement Division will be established, with provision for the appointment of indigenous assessors.

In addition, knowledge of indigenous issues will be added as a criterion of appointment to the Land Court.

It is anticipated that there will be a significant role for a judicial registrar with mining expertise to provide relevant and prompt decisions.

The Land and Resources tribunal itself will be kept until 31 December 2011. This is because of what are known as the Alternative State Provisions.

Between 18 September 2000 and 31 March 2003, mining tenement applications were made which were subject to the Alternative State Provisions jurisdiction which deals with certain matters under the Native Title Act 1993 (Commonwealth).

The Government is determined to ensure the validity of those rights and interests. This Bill ensures their validity and ensures that the Tribunal remains in existence in order to fulfil functions as necessary. Members of the Land Court will be able to sit as members of the tribunal for this purpose.

Over the next few years, consideration will be given to other amendments required to support the alternative state provisions jurisdiction.

My Cabinet colleague, the Minister for Mines and Energy, is currently consulting on the review of Queensland mining legislation.

This review demonstrates the commitment of the Queensland Government to ensure that the resources industry is served by up to date and effective legislation.

I encourage participation in that review.

The Bill contains provisions dealing with the entitlements of existing members of the Tribunal.

These provisions have been drawn having regard to the need to ensure that the principle of judicial independence is properly preserved. This is so even though there is a view that the relevant convention does not apply to Tribunal members.

The members will be offered alternative positions, and are given time to accept them.

In the case of the President if the offer of appointment to the District Court is accepted, the Bill ensures that there will be compensation payable in the event of any financial loss.

I do not consider that the President is being offered a less significant appointment.

Appointment to the District Court means joining a distinguished group of judges, who provide honourable service throughout the State dealing with very serious matters, be they civil, criminal, planning or appellate.

The Bill also establishes the framework for a new system of cost assessment in civil matters. It will provide for rules of court to be made for this system. Ultimately, the form of the system will be developed by the courts.

I understand that it will involve the use of approved costs assessors, drawn primarily from the practising legal profession.

Those assessors will have a realistic idea of what is reasonable and necessary in the preparation of a legal proceeding.

A final amendment contained in the Bill is to allow retired magistrates to be appointed to act as Magistrates. This will supplement the existing pool of magistrates available to sit in the Magistrates Court, which is the busiest court in Queensland, and allow for timely disposition of current heavy workloads.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr McArdle, adjourned.

COMMUNITY SERVICES BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 13 March (see p. 899).

Hon. KR LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (3.59 pm): The Community Services Bill 2007 is basically a replica of the Community Services Bill 2006, which lapsed because of the 2006 state election. That bill emanated from an extensive community consultation process undertaken by the government with the community services sector. The bill follows principles adopted in the Disability Services Act 2006. The opposition supported the Disability Services Act and presented many concerns of the non-government organisations. We believe that there is no indication of any significant community opposition to the principles that the government has adopted, and the opposition will therefore support this legislation.

Basically, the Community Services Bill 2007 follows the principles adopted in the Disability Services Act 2006, which was debated for a long time in this House. Because of the extensive period of time that the bill has been out in the community, the bill has come out of extensive community consultation processes designed to update the interrelationship between government and non-government sectors in relation to the provision of financial assistance to community service organisations that was previously provided under the old Family Services Act 1987.

The basic parts of the bill, we believe, provide mechanisms for the following: the determination of standards of services to be delivered by funded service providers—quite obviously, everyone would have to agree that that is something that must be done—the approval of funded service providers, which are very extensive in non-government organisations; the determination of contractual relations between funded service providers and government; the material that must be provided in order to be approved as a funded service provider; the process for cancellation of approved service provider status on certain events including a show-cause process; the provision of assistance by government to approved service providers; the compliance notices to ensure that funded service providers meet appropriate criteria; the capacity to suspend the provision of financial assistance in appropriate cases; the power for the department to monitor the provision of services including the appointment of authorised officers empowered to enter premises on warrant and where appropriate seize items et cetera requiring answers to questions; the power to appoint an interim manager to an approved service provider in order to ensure the continued provision of assistance to clients of the service provider; mechanisms for the review of decisions relating to provision of assistance to approved service providers through the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal; the process for the screening of employees of the Department of Communities and the relevant machinery provisions.

In supporting the legislation, we are obviously aware that we must ensure the systems and processes for giving these organisations assistance are supported by clear, comprehensive and contemporary legislation. The proposed new legislation is obviously intended to be consistent with the other laws affecting the delivery of human services so that we can provide a legislative base for strengthened consumer safeguards and also the service standards, the accountability and the monitoring mechanisms.

It is noted by the opposition that the Community Services Bill furthers this important reform process and aligns the legislation underpinning the delivery of government assistance to community services with other key parts of the human services sector such as housing and disability services. This alignment brings significant benefits to both community organisations and the clients of services provided by these organisations.

In presenting the opposition's thoughts about this particular legislation, I do not want to refer to relevant cases because I believe this is more of a general bill presenting the outline. However, I would like to refer to *Report to Parliament No. 2 for 2007: Results of performance management systems audit of management of funding to non-government organisations*. I would like to refer to this report, because

one of the concerns we all have is how we monitor what the government is doing, how we monitor what the department is doing, and how we monitor whether this department is fitting in with the whole-of-government approach.

Quite obviously there are concerns—concerns that have been reported by the Auditor-General—and some concerns which I referred to in estimates, and in fairness to the minister he gave me the answers that he believed were correct. However, it is relevant to realise that the Auditor-General has concerns. He has said that the audit he put forward examined the frameworks and systems used by the Department of Communities, the Department of Child Safety and Disability Services Queensland to shape and sustain their relationships with non-government organisations. He believes that there are three parts to all grants which can be looked at: firstly, a government either gives or donates money to worthy causes such as scientific and charitable foundations; secondly, the department can shop for or procure specialist social services such as disability, counselling and health services for individuals or families in need in our community; or, thirdly, the department can invest through providing infrastructure or training to build and strengthen our local communities.

What the Auditor-General believed from his audit was the following—

It was evident from the audit that there was no whole-of-government framework or coordinated approach to funding and maintaining relationships with the NGO sector.

That is clearly a real concern if in the second paragraph of an auditor's report that is what is said. What he is saying is that regardless of what this department is trying to do the whole of government does not have the facilities for this to be done. The report states—

While some programs were advised by the agencies as being based on the government's policy statements of partnering with the community and strengthening NGOs, the systems used for the financial and accountability processes appeared to imply that the programs were more about buying service delivery capacity rather than investing in the NGO sector.

I know from being a minister of this department that it is very hard for a minister to monitor those types of comparisons, but if we are going to talk about performance management then an Auditor-General has the ability, or should have the ability, to say that this department is not just spending and getting its accounts and its invoices in place but that the department may not be doing the correct thing as far as its own performance management is concerned. I believe that performance management is very important and something which an Auditor-General should be allowed to comment on.

The Auditor-General states in this report—

I believe there is enormous scope across government for greater collaboration and movement towards common standards, and for a reduction in the amount of red tape and compliance activities.

The difficulty with saying in this report that this was needed is whether the department and the government were able to do it. The Auditor-General stated—

There was ... limited evidence of adequate systematic evaluation of programs and service delivery which is driven by the risk profile of the NGOs being funded. A substantial constraint for each department was not having the right information systems in place to inform evaluation, subsequent decision making and final resource allocation.

The Auditor-General said that for him there was an emphasis on compliance rather than accountability. With regard to recommendations for the departments, he states—

The recommendations propose improvement in measuring and aggregating NGO service delivery performance and financial information.

So what we would be saying to the minister is that we definitely need this type of legislation. It is important that the organisations know how they must structure themselves before they apply for funding and how they must structure themselves to get funding. But if it is that the department and the whole of government does not have suitable computer services and ICMS to be able to monitor all of these criteria, then obviously there is a difficulty. The Auditor-General further states—

Based on the audits at the three departments—

which I mentioned before—

it is my opinion that there is substantial opportunity for sector wide improvement in the governance arrangements, management systems and public reporting of funding to NGOs.

Having asked that question in estimates, I know that the minister has given me an answer and that the department has its own proposals for how it is going to improve its funding and monitoring. But quite obviously we have to look at it and understand whether this has been carried out. As the Auditor-General states—

To enhance governance in funding administration to NGOs it is recommended that the overarching whole-of-government policy framework for grants and subsidies administration is updated to ... clearly acknowledge the various objectives of government in its funding of NGOs; encompass contemporary funding practices and relationship models with NGOs ...

He further says that to promote leadership and accountability there must be agreement on an agency leadership model for engagement with NGOs. The respective roles and responsibilities of agencies for their engagement with NGOs must be documented. The Auditor-General continues—

To streamline funding administration procedures for Ministerial delegations, it is recommended that ... a clear statement of policy supporting Ministerial delegations for grants be developed and effectively communicated to staff ...

What does the minister believe is happening within the department? What is happening with ICMS? There are many criticisms coming from within the department and all bodies about what is happening with ICMS. The Auditor-General's conclusion was quite emphatic. He stated that the existing information systems across departments relating to funding administration to the NGO sector cannot support robust performance monitoring, reporting and evaluation practice. The Auditor-General says of the whole of government that the limitations of the existing systems underpinned by paper based reporting creates inefficiencies and inhibits the provision of useful and timely information. He says that until departments are able to implement effective information systems based on sound and consistent platforms, seamless engagement with the NGO sector will not be possible.

We must remember that the three sections that this first report refers to are disabilities, communications and the third one that the minister looks after. At a whole-of-government level, the government is not maximising its use of existing data and reporting the information to improve sector-wide understanding. The difficulty is that today we are presented with the fourth report to parliament in which the Auditor-General is asking: are departmental output performance measures relevant, are they appropriate and are they a fair representation of performance achievements?

If we look at the first two paragraphs, first of all he states that the specification of outputs, the setting of performance targets and the analysis of performance results is a key requirement for determining the allocation of scarce public sector resources by government in the annual budget and appropriation process. He states that the objective of this performance management systems audit was to assess whether the systems and processes in place at the selected departments support accurate and reliable reporting of output performance information to parliament. He states that trying to assess the relevance and appropriateness of output performance measures and whether the measures presented in public documents fairly represent the performance of the government's output is his concern. Then he states that his opinion is that he found a lack of clarity across the sectors about what are relevant and appropriate performance measures and, in all fairness to the minister, I would say that this is a statement about the whole of government rather than about his own department. Remembering, of course, that this department is one where this really needs to be monitored and programs need to be in place. It is not just within the department, it must also monitor what is happening at a whole-of-government level.

The Auditor-General states that the departments have not developed clear objectives for each of their outputs and there continues to be minimal alignment between the measures reported in the department's strategic and operational plans, the MPS and their annual reports. The Auditor-General states further that the reporting of performance information is a cornerstone of parliamentary accountability and should not be considered just a compliance exercise. He states further that performance information tells the parliament and the community what government is planning to do and what it achieves and that performance information should be balanced, addressing the department's key activities and should report both the good and not-so-good achievements. That is the basis of performance monitoring by the Auditor-General.

Up until now in Queensland in all governments all we have seen is an Auditor-General report that the invoices and the statements all match each other and the payments are correct. We have never had performance monitoring where an Auditor-General can go into a department and say, 'This amount of money has been spent. However, there is a section here which is not receiving any funding and this is where I believe funding should be aimed at.' Or he can say, 'This funding should not have been sent to that department.'

Better performance information is needed for the department, the minister and all stakeholders, including parliament, for a more informed government. In all fairness, that does not just refer to the minister's department, but to the whole of government. The Auditor-General states that clearer public sector guidance on the requirements of the performance management framework is required. Until then it will be difficult for the Auditor-General to issue an audit opinion on the relevance and appropriateness of reported performance measures and whether this information fairly represents a department's output performance. The impression gained during the audit was that not only was the performance information reported to parliament of limited relevance for external stakeholders but also this performance information was not used extensively by the government and departmental officers responsible for resource allocation and monitoring activity.

We support the minister's legislation. I congratulate him on the community consultation that he has gone into, but I would like him to comment on what he believes the Auditor-General's report refers to.

Ms PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (4.15 pm): The new Community Services Bill 2007 will replace the outdated Family Services Act. This new legislation will apply to all non-government organisations who receive funding and other assistance from the Department of Communities. I would like to place on the public record the commitment of the minister for communities, the Hon. Warren Pitt, his dedication to his portfolio and the strong relationship that he has fostered with both the community sector and the

disability sector over the years as minister. I also understand that a lengthy consultation period occurred with the community sector as part of the process in the preparation of this bill from August until October 2005 and that the views of the community sector have been incorporated into the bill before the House.

Non-government organisations provide a backbone to our local community. Many of the workers in my community go beyond the call of duty with many working on the weekends and after hours to help families and especially those families in need. The non-government organisations provide a range of services from neighbourhood centres, community safety services, support for seniors, young people, homeless people, as well as domestic and family violence prevention. The electorate of Inala is home to many organisations that help those in need or those people who simply need to meet up once a month such as to attend a seniors meeting. I would like to take this opportunity to mention a few here today.

The Inala Community House encompasses a network of activities centring on community support. It provides newly arrived migrants with support. In addition, it provides child care, after-hours school care, assistance for the Community for Children's initiative and the administration of the Inala Community Chest. I would like to thank Michelle Meredith who does a brilliant job at Inala Community House and I place on record my appreciation and thanks to her.

The Hub Neighbourhood Centre run by Karen Moore provides a centre for all ages in the area, running social lunches, young mothers' clubs, trivia nights as well as seniors outings. Mission Australia in the Inala electorate partners with Griffith University in providing the highly successful Pathways to Prevention Program. The Australian Red Cross has recently moved to Inala, helping to train newly arrived migrants in job assistance. The minister for employment and industrial relations recently awarded \$32,000 to assist in that program. St Vincent de Paul works tirelessly helping families with food and accommodation needs. The Salvation Army recently opened up an over 60s club called Alani over 60s. I would like to thank Ethel Murray who approached my office in relation to setting up this very worthwhile organisation. As members can appreciate, with socialisation becoming a big issue in communities, it is very important for the senior members of our communities to actually meet together and foster communication.

This legislation recognises the valuable role that community organisations play in our communities across Queensland. I would also like to make mention that this month a new domestic violence service centre will open up in Inala in Carole Park to provide support and assistance to those women and children who are victims of domestic violence. I would like to express my appreciation to the minister for housing, Robert Swarten, and the minister for communities, Warren Pitt, for together making the money available for this very worthwhile and much needed centre in the Inala electorate. Between the two ministers, \$500,000 has been allocated for this very, very important initiative.

This bill recognises that as our modern world changes organisations also need to respond to change. The bill provides a contemporary legal basis for the Department of Communities to give assistance to community organisations. One of the important elements of the bill is in relation to standards. Part 2 of the bill enables the minister to make standards for the provision of community services for improving the quality of community services provided by funded service providers.

All community organisations will be very clear about what standards they will now need to meet. The bill also provides a mechanism for those organisations that face serious concerns about their service delivery. Although this does not happen on a regular basis, provision has been made to deal with funded organisations that cannot and will not meet their obligations under the act. The bill provides a range of mechanisms that can be utilised such as issuing a compliance notice or issuing a show-cause notice or even recovering unspent or misused funds or requiring relevant information or documents to be produced. There is a range of measures that enable the funds to be directed to where they are needed most.

The minister stated in this second reading speech that most Queenslanders will use community services in one form or another at some stage in their lives. To assist the delivery of these vital services the Department of Communities currently provides funding to approximately 860 community organisations. In addition, the minister added that funding provided by the Department of Communities to these organisations ranged from hundreds of dollars to more than \$2 million. In 2005-06 the department's investment in community organisations totalled more than \$150 million. The principles of this new bill will enhance the community's capacity to be cohesive, inclusive, active, resilient and adaptable. With those words, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (4.20 pm): I am pleased to rise and speak briefly in the debate on the Community Services Bill 2007. As the minister said in his second reading speech, it is largely the same bill that was introduced prior to the election last year. I commend the minister on proceeding cautiously to make sure that all of the issues that may arise were considered. I know there has been wide community consultation regarding it and some further changes made to reflect that consultation.

There are an enormous number of community groups in all of our communities that provide services to people in all sorts of forms. I know as a local member—and I know all other members would be the same—we rely on those groups when doing our job. When people come to us for assistance in

many cases it is not to the state government that we go but to a non-government organisation delivering a service that may or may not be funded by the state government. It may be assistance in obtaining crisis accommodation or assistance with a relationship breakdown or assistance for a victim of crime. It could be a range of issues. It is those non-government organisations that are delivering the services to our communities.

To be honest, in many cases they are far better equipped to be able to deliver those services than any state government will ever be. Regardless of who is in power, I think the non-government organisations, because of their dedication, their passion for the issues involved, their proximity to the communities that they serve, are far better equipped to deliver those services than the state government. It is a much easier, better and more efficient way of delivering those services to fund those non-government organisations to deliver those services.

I know that it is a maze for a lot of organisations trying to access funding of any sort. Hopefully this bill will go some way to clarifying where funding is available, to what sorts of organisations and what strings are attached. I know that on a daily basis my office is approached by any number of organisations looking for where they may be able to access funding—whether it is from state government, federal government, local government in some cases or indeed from a number of philanthropic organisations that give money to a range of services. Hopefully, this will clarify where the state government stands.

In my own electorate there are a number of facilities and a number of organisations that are delivered through a combination of funding models. In many cases, the very best service delivery is where we have non-government organisations in partnership with not only the state government but, in some cases, the federal government and local government in the area. I know local governments in my area contribute a lot of in-kind assistance to a lot of non-government organisations. That is a role that largely goes unnoticed in those smaller communities when it comes to local government—whether it is hall facilities or whether it is assistance with labour or a range of different things that the local governments provide to those organisations. It is that partnership that really does provide the very best model in the delivery of community services.

I have often said that probably the only good thing that comes from poker machines is the money that is provided to our community groups. I know that there is ongoing debate about how much money is being ripped out of some communities through gambling. When I have been to different organisations which have received grants I often say that the one good thing that comes out of gambling is the funding available.

There are a lot of people in our communities who need assistance. There are a lot of people who access services from a whole range of organisations. I am sure that this bill will help to address the issue of accessing the funding that is available from the state government through the Department of Communities. Hopefully this will strengthen those organisations in doing the very good work that they do right across Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms van LITSENBURG (Redcliffe—ALP) (4.25 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Community Services Bill 2007. I particularly wish to highlight the service quality and client safety aspects of the bill. This bill provides a contemporary legal basis for the Department of Communities to give assistance to community organisations. It provides for greater transparency and certainty about how funding and other assistance can be given to community organisations by establishing a process of community organisations to become eligible for assistance, clearly identifying the types of assistance that can be provided to community organisations and when and how this assistance can be delivered.

This bill also ensures that there is clarity and certainty about meeting community expectations in relation to quality, safety and accountability of service delivery by establishing a monitoring and enforcement framework which can be triggered by noncompliance with the bill or prescribed requirements under the legislation, progressively stronger options for dealing with serious concerns about a funded organisation's service delivery and providing for standards of provision of community services to be made by the minister for improving the quality of community services.

This bill is comprehensive and all encompassing but it is the aspects of quality of service and child safety that I would like to highlight today. Part 2 sets out the standards for the provision of services for improving quality. More than 800 organisations are currently funded by the Department of Communities and provide high-quality community services for the people of Queensland. This vital work is integral to the delivery of human services in this state and these organisations are commended for the important services they provide. These services in Redcliffe include ones such as Youth Space, Meals on Wheels, Red Cross, Breakaway Inc., ROPE, the neighbourhood centre, Mereki and many other effective services that do a very good job in the community and make huge improvements in the lives of ordinary people.

These community organisations have a wide range of clients including vulnerable people such as children. The Community Services Bill will enhance the delivery of these services by providing a platform for improving quality and encouraging client safety. Under the bill the minister may make standards for the provision of community services by funded organisations. The standards are currently being implemented administratively by the department.

Sufficient time will be allowed for organisations to implement the standards before they take effect. A copy of the draft standards is available on the Community Door web site at www.qld.gov.au/ngo. The regulations supporting the act will contain minimum prescribed requirements that the department reasonably expects funded service providers will meet in delivering safe, quality services. The prescribed requirements will act as transparent criteria for the use of particular compliance powers in the bill and will include requirements for the delivery of safe and accountable community services.

Where concerns arise with funded organisations, they are generally resolved cooperatively. The bill formalises this process and recognises that the department should work together with the funded organisation to meet their common goals. In those limited cases where action is required, the bill enables remedial measures to be taken by the department. This may involve issuing a compliance notice or a show-cause notice to an organisation. The organisation is then given the opportunity to remedy the matter or to provide a response. The bill contains a range of powers to enable the department to investigate concerns as well as powers to require relevant information or documents to be produced or premises to be searched with a warrant if consent is not granted. In serious cases, the department may appoint an interim manager, cease funding or commence prosecution. The bill also empowers the department to recover misused or unspent funds. These measures will provide a range of tools to assist in quality improvement initiatives and client safety.

Consultation with the sector revealed strong support from community organisations for the compliance measures in the bill. They realise the responsibility they have to provide quality services they are funded for, and when one organisation defaults all organisations lose. The department is committed to providing ongoing assistance and support to ensure services that are delivered are safe and accountable. This is a very comprehensive bill which has taken a lot of thought and preparation. It will enable effective organisations to continue their good work and it will give establishing organisations a better grasp of what service provision is all about and will give them a safety net. I congratulate the minister for his excellent work in preparing such a comprehensive bill that is so widely supported by community groups, and I commend this bill to the House.

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (4.31 pm): I am pleased to add my voice to the debate on the Community Services Bill, a bill designed to provide a relevant and modern legal framework to support the significant contribution made by community or non-community organisations, which I will refer to as NGOs. If government is the backbone in terms of service delivery to our communities, then community organisations must surely be the lifeblood because of the specific, targeted and localised support they provide for individuals and families. The Queensland government injects a significant amount of funding into these community organisations to help them with their crucial roles, funding which the minister advised totalled more than \$150 million for the 2005-06 financial year.

NGOs provide a diverse range of services—everything from housing for youth, the elderly, the homeless; support services for our seniors; counselling and assistance for victims of domestic violence; support and advocacy for those with disabilities and their carers; and the list goes on and on. These organisations are often a lot better placed to deliver essential services on the ground to local communities because they are just simply closer to their communities than government and are therefore better positioned to identify and directly respond to the needs of individuals and families. It is that local contact and that local knowledge.

In Fitzroy, particularly those small towns encompassed by my electorate, non-government organisations often play a pivotal role as the single point of contact for the delivery of a vast array of services, support and assistance. For example, the Wowan-Dululu Community Volunteer Group is an NGO which has been servicing the needs of towns such as Dululu, Gogango, Goovigen and Wowan and many of the rural properties in the area and has been operating since 1992. From its multipurpose centre, the group provides such services as domiciliary nursing, respite care, home help and maintenance, home meals, a visiting doctor and immunisation clinics. It hosts visits by child health and rural women's health as well as other allied health professionals. It is really recognised in the area as a very powerful little group of people providing much-needed essential services for the community. I get a lot of positive feedback from the people who benefit from the service, in particular those elderly citizens who are able to stay on the land and be serviced by this organisation. It runs a support group for those with diabetes and education and information sessions on a variety of issues such as suicide prevention and breast cancer awareness. It operates a community gym, a plus-50 group for seniors, craft sessions and offers internet access for the community. As members can see, it is very active in the community and one organisation that is well recognised, respected and appreciated.

Similarly, in the mining towns of Dysart and Middlemount the local community development officers play a key role as providers of a range of information and support services important to individuals and families of these isolated communities. Organisations like these provide the cornerstone for many small rural and isolated communities whose residents might not otherwise have access to such services. There are of course hundreds of other community organisations across central Queensland, many of which are single purpose—that is, they focus on one particular group or aspect of their community which needs support and assistance. But whatever their purpose or the scope of service they provide, these organisations are integral to sustaining and building strong communities by supporting and assisting individuals and families in maintaining and improving their quality of life.

The Beattie government recognises the important contribution these organisations make and has been moving to bolster their capabilities in the delivery of quality services through its Strengthening Non-Government Organisations Strategy. This \$24 million four-year strategy involves a range of measures, one of the most significant being the bill before the House today. In line with our commitment to ensuring Queensland's legislation remains modern and relevant, there was a need to overhaul those sections of the Family Services Act which refer to funding for non-government organisations. As the minister made clear in his second reading speech, there has been no significant change to these sections since the act took effect in 1987—that is, some 19 years ago. Today's NGOs are more professional and more focused in their structure and administration and there is a need to better reflect the contemporary relationship that exists between these groups and the Department of Communities. As we move on and the department learns to assist these community groups in a much more professional way, these groups also need to come with government and be prepared to put themselves in a better position with regard to accountability and delivery of services.

The Community Services Bill will do just that by providing a relevant and up-to-date legal framework to support that contemporary relationship. The key aspects of this legislation are certainty and transparency. This legislation will deliver a clear and certain process for determining which organisations are eligible for assistance from the department and will be known as approved NGO providers. The legislation will provide a clear set of principles for how the department and those community organisations can work together to continue to provide high-level quality services for the state. The legislation will provide clarity and certainty on the types of assistance the department can provide. As a result, there is a lot better understanding and a lot better acceptance of what the relationship can be between the two entities.

The legislation will also deliver a transparent legal basis for service agreements between funded organisations and the department. Those service agreements are very important with regard to the level of service and quality of service that is provided. I think one thing that has been a little slack in the past is that service agreements have really failed to acknowledge and meet the needs of the community and the service that they are meant to provide. It is vital that the Department of Communities has a clear and transparent structure through which it is able to fund non-government organisations.

This was brought home to me in recent months by the experiences of one organisation within my electorate which had been unable to secure funding to support the welfare of the work it undertakes. Pastor Stewart of the Gracemere Baptist Fellowship approached me late last year to discuss the growing need for welfare assistance for families in the town of Gracemere and district. Gracemere is going through an enormous boom at the moment. In the last couple of years 1,500 homes have been approved and another 1,500 serviced blocks will be coming online. Even in those communities where there is a lot of money being spent on new homes, there are still families who are struggling and need that support.

The local Aboriginal population has grown in recent times and, as a consequence, there is now a large number of low-income families who sometimes require emergency funding to assist them with things like food and electricity bills until Centrelink payments and/or work pay packets come through. I know of the level of need because there are only four offices between the Gracemere Baptist Fellowship and our office, so quite often we have people coming into the Fitzroy electorate office looking for support. Thankfully, we are able to guide them down the road.

The need for welfare assistance has been highlighted by the success of the Baptist Fellowship Community Care store, Gracemere's Hidden Treasure, which opened two years ago. The popularity of this store, which sells second-hand clothing, furniture and household items at significantly discounted prices as well as providing items free of charge to needy families, is clear evidence of the growing need in this community. As the only welfare outlet in the town—the town of Gracemere is some 20 minutes away from Rockhampton; as members know, a lot of disadvantaged people find it hard to travel as they do not have motor vehicles and have to catch buses—it is vital and provides an outstanding service to the people of Gracemere and district.

The fellowship has attempted to meet the requests that come before it as best it can. However, the number of requests being received is stretching its financial capacity. That is why I am speaking about it here today in the hope that we might get some recognition in the future with regard to trying to secure emergency relief funding for the fellowship. We have gone through the formal process and have not been successful in the past. I am hoping that this legislation and the new structure will be of benefit to that organisation.

The lack of a structured application and funding eligibility process makes it difficult, if not impossible, for an organisation like the Gracemere Baptist Fellowship to access emergency relief funding so that it can purchase food and provide financial aid to the needy. The minister confirmed in his second reading speech that his department's expectations about what organisations should do to become eligible for assistance are currently not clear under the Family Services Act. I am hopeful that this legislation will provide the structured framework needed to ensure that organisations such as the Gracemere Baptist Fellowship can become approved service providers—that is the problem; they are

not approved service providers—thus providing them with a clearer path to applying for and securing departmental funds to help address identified needs within their local communities. When they play such a vital and important role and are doing such a great job for the community, we need to be doing whatever we can to give them assistance. I do not think they expect a hand-out as a lot of organisations expect these days. They are genuine and committed in the service they provide. As I have said, it would be good if we could, as a government, provide a helping hand—and that is what we are about.

Another key aspect of the legislation is that it will enable the development of a set of service standards for community organisations. That is a good thing. In achieving such standards, the government will deliver on one of the main aims of its Strengthening Non-Government Organisations Strategy. Today's community organisations acknowledge the need for a more professional and focused approach to service delivery and many are already embracing that philosophy. If there is a group out there already doing that, it encourages others to come on board and make improvements right across the system.

To get it right, there is a need to formalise the standards—minimum benchmarks for delivery of services—that all organisations must meet to ensure the professionalism and transparency of these organisations. I understand that these standards will address such issues as accessibility to services, safety and wellbeing of users, financial management and accountability—all important things in today's world. Just as Queenslanders expect the government to meet certain benchmarks in the delivery of services to the community, there is also a need for today's NGOs to ensure that the services they provide are of the highest quality and are delivered in a safe, accessible and accountable manner. I am pleased to see that these standards will be implemented through a staged transition which will ensure organisations are able to appropriate changes in processes and structure to enable benchmarks to be met. We have some out there doing it and we will see others try to come on board because they want to have the same credibility as other organisations in the community that are providing these types of services. These are all very positive steps to ensure that our NGOs are the best and are operating in a way that not only the government but also the community would expect them to operate.

The bill will strengthen the ability of the Department of Communities to step in and effectively respond to serious concerns. This is not about government giving itself greater powers to override community organisations; this is about protecting the rights of some of our most vulnerable citizens as well as ensuring transparency and accountability in the use of public funds. None of us in this place would have any argument about that. That is all positive stuff and it is good to see that it is formalised in legislation, because then we know it will be delivered as we expect it to be delivered.

As I said, the benefits of this legislation are transparency and accountability. That is a good thing for government, it is a good thing for NGOs and it is also a good thing for the community. It is not just about the NGOs themselves but about the processes of government in dealing with the NGOs because they have to be accountable and transparent as well. We need to provide certainty in how the department delivers its funding and other assistance to community organisations. There is no point giving organisations funding if they are not delivering it in the way they are required to according to their approved application. In the past I have seen on occasions that money has been given to provide a service and that service has not quite been delivered according to the approved grant.

As a government, our role is to lay down a strong support foundation for these community organisations so that they can continue the vital work that they do in our communities. As we know, they provide the building blocks for ensuring our communities are strong, healthy and sustainable. I think this legislation will give them that strength in their organisation. Most importantly to me, it will give them accountability and credibility in the community and, therefore, the respect and support of the people who support these organisations through donations and things like that. I say to the minister: well done.

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (4.47 pm): I rise to speak to the Community Services Bill 2007. This bill is about bringing the Family Services Act 1987 up to date. The Department of Communities funds approximately 860 community organisations under the Family Services Act. These groups cover a wide range of services from neighbourhood centres to support for seniors, from community safety services to youth justice and domestic and family violence prevention.

The Atherton Neighbourhood Centre in my electorate is an example of how much can be achieved by dedicated people working hard for their community. It began several years ago with a small group of women deciding that something needed to be done and it has grown to a large operation with 40 to 50 staff ranging from full-time to part-time staff to volunteers. It involves a very wide range of community support activities and has just taken on a role in drug and alcohol relief. The Atherton Neighbourhood Centre also played a very important role during the Cyclone Larry recovery period.

The Mareeba Information and Support Centre is another organisation that helps meet some of the pressing needs of the people who are in vulnerable or fragile circumstances. Organisations such as the ANC and MISC and their colleagues across the state make a truly significant contribution to the social welfare of Queensland, and it is a contribution that is coming under more and more stress as the burdens grow.

I take the opportunity to point out the need for the tablelands to have better access to referrals for active intervention services, ideally via a service spoke from the RAI hub established in Cairns. I am advised that for demographic reasons the tablelands has some of Queensland's most complex child-care cases. It is essential that these needs are addressed as a matter of urgency.

Along with established issues such as domestic violence, we are faced with new and growing issues such as housing accessibility and affordability. It is such a basic need—that is, a family to have a roof over its head—that it is hard to believe that in far-north Queensland, in what is supposed to be a First World country, there are waiting lists in the thousands. For example, recently in Atherton a family had to move out of a rental property. They came to me when they could not find any other accommodation at all after they had been looking for two months. I discovered that there was not just one family in crisis, but five. There was mum and two children plus four other members of the family, all of whom were single parents with families of four children, three children and two children each, all faced with having to live under a bridge. The only other alternative was to try to find other families to move in with. That was becoming more and more difficult for them.

A similar situation exists in Ravenshoe where another family has also had to leave a rental property. In that case the family had lived there for decades and it involves a mother who, I am told, is 105 years of age. She, too, could find herself under a bridge, such is the shortage of rental accommodation in the far north. It is hard to imagine any more stressful situation for a family to be in than to be unable to find a home. Yet that is the case for so many at present.

Among the changes being introduced in this bill are those aimed at establishing a process for community organisations—or NGOs—to become eligible for assistance from the government and clearly identifying the types of assistance that can be provided. This is intended to improve transparency and certainty about how funding and assistance can be provided. I think it is important to distinguish between making funding and assistance processes more transparent and making sure that there is enough funding and assistance to go around. Even a crystal clear process will not help one extra family if the amount of resources is insufficient. I would like the minister to look into how disability respite services are being delivered in Mareeba.

However, on a nicer note last week I was pleased to attend the opening of an arm of Child Safety in Atherton, which will assist Indigenous families who get caught up in the Child Safety net. This office is staffed by Indigenous people who understand the families they will be working with. The week before I also attended the opening of a preschool Indigenous organisation, also set up in Atherton, which is attracting Indigenous mothers and their young children. This organisation is giving these mothers and children a head start before the children go to school. This group is linked with the primary school and also the Miden Health Clinic, which operates next door. The health clinic sends someone to talk to these mothers and children about basic health matters, such as covering mouths when coughing and sneezing and the importance of washing hands. I believe these organisations are providing steps in the right direction in assisting our Indigenous population in Atherton and the wider tablelands Indigenous community to become better educated and to lift their standard of living. I also believe that these groups should be supported and sufficiently resourced as it is organisations such as those that will make a difference to the lives of the Indigenous population of the tablelands.

It is the practice of governments to talk about how they have increased budget allocations, of how record amounts are being spent on this, that or other problems. But the problems are often growing faster than the amounts dedicated to them. Yet at the same time leisure and pleasure facilities, such as sporting fields and art galleries, continue to soak up government dollars. It is impossible to look at some of the edifices in Brisbane and justify the expenditure on them to a family who is forced to live in a crowded tiny flat, in a tent, out of the back of their car, or even under a bridge.

The bill before us also includes amendments that deal with meeting community expectations about the quality, safety and accountability of service delivery. This is a very important issue as the continual drive for so-called efficiency has the potential to see resources allocated in ways that end up delivering weaker services, all for the sake of a dollar or two. Clearly, the quality, safety and accountability of service delivery are important goals. But I repeat: if the resourcing remains at the lowest of levels, then the on the ground differences for the people who need it the most will be negligible. I support the bill.

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (4.54 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Community Services Bill 2007. The explanatory notes accompanying the bill advise that the objective of the bill is to help build sustainable communities by facilitating access by Queenslanders to community services. Currently, the Queensland Department of Communities provides funding to approximately 860 community organisations under the Family Services Act 1987. Funded organisations provide a wide range of services that support some of the neediest people in our communities in a range of difficult circumstances.

The intention of the bill is to provide a clearer basis on which these community organisations can enter into agreements with the Department of Communities for the delivery of these services on a contractual basis, with clear guidelines establishing contractual obligations and responsibilities. The bill is designed to provide for the contracting out of service delivery to a range of non-government

organisations but establishes a funding framework that is more transparent and places more of a focus on establishing greater certainty in the way that assistance is extended to community organisations. I am pleased that the bill provides for a framework to assist and support community groups to make clear and accountable decisions when dealing with public moneys and that the bill maintains the capacity for criminal history checks of the service providers engaged by the Department of Communities. These measures should promote confidence in the activities of community organisations in the wider community.

It is important that there is confidence in these community organisations that deliver important services to our communities. Many of those services do not always have immediately tangible or observable results. The delivery of these support services to the needy in our community cannot always be fully appreciated by those individuals not receiving the services. The reality is that many of these support services are critical to those people who receive them.

I would like to talk about some of the community organisations that deliver these community support services in my electorate. The Hinchinbrook Community Support Centre and the Cardwell Shire Community Support Centre are typical of the types of community groups that are engaged by the Department of Communities to deliver support services to the community. The Hinchinbrook Community Support Centre is based in Ingham. The centre delivers support services to the Hinchinbrook shire and has a mission to empower the community through support, information, education and meeting individual needs. I can testify to the personal commitment to this mission by the staff at the Hinchinbrook Community Support Centre, all of whom I have found to be very strongly motivated by the ideal of assisting those in difficult circumstances. I have had the good fortune of working with them on a number of occasions both in relation to the needs of individuals in the local community and addressing the needs of the community at a more general level.

The Hinchinbrook Community Support Centre delivers services in the areas of community and individual support, relief for individuals and families, accommodation support and assistance to individuals and families, and youth outreach and support services. I would like to expand on the last service that I mentioned. Youth outreach and support services are particularly important for young people today, because the issues that they face are becoming more and more complex. There is no doubt that the traditional challenges that young people face continue to be a worry. By that I mean alcohol and several soft drugs, such as cannabis. I note and draw to the attention of the House the growing body of evidence linking the use of cannabis to mental illness. We must raise awareness of this situation and highlight the very serious ramifications of what is still unfortunately considered to be a relatively harmless recreational drug.

The Hinchinbrook Community Support Centre has also taken a keen interest in the issue of housing shortages in the Hinchinbrook shire, both in terms of available rental properties and social and community housing. Recently, a rental housing options forum was held in Ingham, the primary issue raised at the meeting being the shortage of housing in Ingham. Owing to the high cost of living in larger centres, many people are moving to small rural towns. That has had a direct impact on rental properties and various public housing programs. Local real estate agents in the Hinchinbrook shire attended the forum and indicated that there are very few vacant rental properties on their books within reasonable price ranges and that each day they receive several calls seeking a property to rent. A number of construction companies are working in the area as well. They have impacted on the availability of rental properties. Employees are being housed locally, which means that there are fewer rental properties for other people who are wishing to take up residence in Ingham.

It was decided that a growth strategy was required by the Department of Housing to address the shortage of public housing in the Ingham district. I have written to the minister for housing about that matter, but it relates to the Department of Communities because many families caught in difficult accommodation circumstances often turn to the Hinchinbrook Community Support Centre for assistance.

Another issue that I would like to raise with the minister is in relation to the issue of community support services and the future of the limited hours child-care services delivered by the Cardwell Shire Community Support Centre in Tully. I wrote to the minister about this issue and the minister was kind enough to visit the Cardwell Shire Community Support Centre on 5 April this year. Between my representations and his visit, he will be familiar with the circumstances of the support centre. The minister's visit was greatly appreciated.

The minister will recall that the management committee of the community centre indicated at the time that it would be likely that the limited hours child-care service would not be maintained and, in fact, they have made a decision that the service will close in December of this year. The issue relates to the financial viability of the service and the inappropriateness of child-care services being delivered in the same facility as the other community support services that are offered through the support centre. The difficulty arises due to the fact that the demand for child-care services is acute.

No doubt the minister will recall the size of the facility that is currently located at 54 Bryant Street. The facility is far too small to continue to offer all the above services, particularly the child-care services, as the demand for services in child care continues to increase. Certainly the minister would have been

able to appreciate that when he was on site in April. Indeed, the number of community support workers in the area of the building dedicated to the delivery of community support services may actually be in breach of workplace health and safety standards.

As discussed with the minister at the meeting in April, there is a view that the old Tully preschool site offers an excellent opportunity for space to be acquired to house community based services such as those currently offered through the Cardwell Shire Community Support Centre now that the site is surplus to the needs of Education Queensland following the introduction of the prep year. At the time the unknown factor was the process that would be undertaken to dispose of the old Tully preschool site and when this would be completed. The site was originally provided to the Queensland Department of Education by the Cardwell Shire Council for the establishment of the preschool.

The Cardwell Shire Council lodged an expression of interest in the old Tully preschool site. It was concerned that the site would be lost as a community asset. The Cardwell Shire Council had already committed significant funding to the construction of an outside school hours care facility on Education Queensland land at Tully State School and had certainly provided significant support to the existing community support centre over many years. Given that at the time there was considerable uncertainty in relation to the local council amalgamations, Cardwell Shire Council was reluctant to commit to the acquisition of another significant asset in the area.

On Wednesday, 30 May 2007 a meeting was held between the management committee and staff of the Cardwell Shire Community Support Centre and parents using the child-care services, known as the Parents of Tully Limited Hours Action Group. Representatives from the Cardwell Shire Council and the Department of Communities were in attendance. I was asked to chair the meeting.

The parents expressed their concern about the closure of the limited hours day care services. The management committee of the support centre outlined their reasons for the decision not to offer child-care services beyond December 2007. The meeting then discussed possible courses of action to ensure that there is not a significant child-care shortage in Tully. Ultimately, the management committee of the support centre, the parents action group and I were focused on the end result, being the ongoing delivery of community support services and child-care services to the Tully district and its community. In the end, the Cardwell Shire Council was declared a preferred tender and the old Tully preschool site was offered to it, but at the market price for the land, despite the Cardwell Shire Council's ongoing significant support for the community support centre and the council providing the land to Education Queensland in the first instance.

It is unfortunate that the Cardwell Shire Council has had to expend those funds. I thought it would have been more appropriate for the Department of Communities to assist with the ongoing delivery of both community support services and child-care places to the Cardwell Shire community by organising for the land and the facility to be returned to the council without incurring a large cost as the services provided to the local community in the Tully area by the community support centre are vital.

I thank the staff and volunteers who work at both the Cardwell Shire Community Support Centre and the Hinchinbrook Community Support Centre for their important work in the community. In many circumstances their efforts provide families with support and assistance at times when there appears to be little hope. Placing those few remarks on the record, I am pleased to support the bill.

Mrs KIERNAN (Mount Isa—ALP) (5.04 pm): I am pleased to add my voice to the debate on the Community Services Bill 2007. The Department of Communities funds a diverse range of community organisations, including a significant number of Indigenous managed non-government organisations. The department has a history of working cooperatively with Indigenous managed community groups in providing funding and support to a range of organisations that deliver a variety of services across the state.

In my electorate there are many success stories. However, there is also an awareness that some organisations are struggling. A key strategy, the Strengthening Indigenous Non-Government Organisations project, is currently being rolled out by the Department of Communities to support Indigenous managed organisations. Spanning three years from 2006 to 2009 and with a budget of \$1.3 million per annum, the program focuses on refining tools and processes to ensure that they meet the needs of Indigenous service providers and provides intensive organisational support for those providers. Unlike the federal government, we are in there walking with community organisations and not setting them up to fail.

Under this project, seven regional project officers have been employed to provide practical organisational support to Indigenous managed organisations, funded by the Department of Communities. To date 40 organisations have received one-on-one support. In addition, last year a virtual office CD-ROM, Valuing Organisational Improvement and Community Excellence—VOICE is the acronym—was developed to provide non-government organisations with templates, samples and guides in relation to their day-to-day operations. More than 5,000 copies have been distributed throughout Queensland and, indeed, Australia.

The 2006 machinery of government changes, which incorporated the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships into the portfolio, will further enhance and strengthen the Department of Communities' established relationship with Indigenous managed non-government organisations. Indigenous managed NGOs were consulted during the development of this draft bill in 2006 and, most recently, in 2007 alongside the transition of the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships into the portfolio. Representative organisations consulted during the development of the bill indicated that they were satisfied that these arrangements would not result in any unnecessary burden placed on community organisations as the result of the changes to portfolio responsibilities.

Consultation with Indigenous managed NGOs and peak Indigenous representative organisations has informed the development of the principles of the administration of the bill, which now recognises the importance of past issues for Indigenous managed non-government organisations. Clause 5 of the bill, which contains the principles to guide the administration of the act, now includes the principle that community services are provided in a way that has regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tradition and custom, and recognises the historical disadvantage experienced by Indigenous communities. Those principles for the administration of the act will emphasise the importance of considering the alignment of human services and community needs and priorities in Indigenous communities.

In my own electorate where approximately 23 per cent of my constituents are of Aboriginal peoples, I have set up communication and forum mechanisms whereby there is a close working relationship between me, the department and the community. I congratulate Minister Pitt and his department for the work that has been done on this bill and, in fact, for the many positive changes that are taking place right across the state.

Mr WETTENHALL (Barron River—ALP) (5.09 pm): I rise to support the Community Services Bill. This bill modernises the relationships and arrangements between the state government and the hundreds of community organisations which are assisted through the Department of Communities. It is timely that this happens because the current legislative framework which governs those relationships is now 20 years old and not much has happened to it during that time.

There is an enormous number and variety of organisations that are assisted through the state government and the Department of Communities, and many of them exist in my electorate of Barron River. Other members have taken the opportunity presented by the introduction of this bill to reflect on some of those organisations and the great work that they do, and I intend to do the same.

One of the great privileges of becoming a member of parliament, I have found, is the opportunity it gives members to meet with a vast array of people whom we would not otherwise have the opportunity to meet, and to discover and learn about the great work that they do in our communities. Many of them are volunteers, whether they be volunteers in a director/service provider capacity helping people directly or whether they do so indirectly by serving on committees or boards of management. All of them give freely and generously of their time, their energy, their commitment and their skills.

Even though I thought I knew a few of them and knew a little about what they did, as I said, it has been a great eye-opener and a great privilege to have had the opportunity as a member of parliament to meet with them to get a greater understanding of the vital role that they play in our communities. I want to acknowledge and congratulate every single one of them not only in my electorate but also in the Cairns region. The Department of Communities provides many services on a regional basis across the cities and towns of far-north Queensland and throughout our state. It is not only volunteers but also staff who are involved in those organisations. I think it is fair and true to say that for most of them, if not all of them, they do not work in the community sector for the money. They work there because of their dedication and their commitment to the needs of their community and to the special needs of the individuals that they serve.

The introduction of this legislation gives us a welcome opportunity to acknowledge their great work and their commitment. Ultimately, the government's program for strengthening non-government organisations is about building the capacity of the sector. It is about building the skills and providing career paths for the people who work in the sector. The arrangements that will be introduced by this bill will certainly provide for that.

The object of the bill is to provide a framework for the department and community organisations to work together to provide the best possible quality services for all Queenslanders. It provides a clear process to determine which organisations are eligible for assistance from the department. I think it is an important point to emphasise that all of those organisations that are currently receiving funding from the department will automatically become eligible for funding in the future. There were concerns initially held about the prospect of having to resubmit and reinvent the wheel. That is not going to happen. I think that represents the strength and comprehensive nature of the consultation that the minister and the officers of the department have undertaken throughout this state. Not only does this legislation have the broad support of the community services sector; as we have heard from the speeches of members of parliament on both sides of the House, it has the support of the members in this place. That reflects the inherent good features of the bill but it also reflects the comprehensive consultation process that has

been undertaken by this bill. It is an appropriate point perhaps to acknowledge and congratulate the minister for overseeing that, and for developing this modern piece of legislation that will set the framework for many years to come for the relationships between government and the community services sector.

The bill clarifies the kinds of assistance including funding, leases and incentives that the department provides, and provides a transparent legal basis for service agreements to be concluded between the department and entities. It provides a basis for the minister to administratively set standards for community services and to make those relevant and adapt them to the individual circumstances of each organisation. It enables regulations to be made which set out the requirements that the department may reasonably expect all funded service providers to meet. Most importantly, it ensures the wise, proper and appropriate use of public funds and the quality and safety of the services that are provided.

The bill also provides for a way in which to deal with concerns about service delivery. While it encourages a cooperative approach, it provides for remedial measures in circumstances where problems may arise and significantly provides for a stepped approach so that problems can be identified early and be nipped in the bud, but where there are ongoing problems it can provide a graded mechanism to deal with them. The options that are provided under the legislation for the department to deal with those include mechanisms to enable information and documents to be produced and for various other enforcement measures. Significantly, the bill also enables reviews and appeals to enable parties to have a decision of a department reviewed and appealed to the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal.

There are a couple of organisations in my electorate that I want to mention because at the moment they are undergoing an exciting developmental phase. The first is the Kuranda Neighbourhood Centre. As a result of the good work of the members of the committee and the staff of that centre, and the support that they have received from departmental officers from the Department of Communities in Cairns and from the minister, the Kuranda Neighbourhood Centre has now been fully redeveloped and construction is well underway for a brand-new neighbourhood centre in Kuranda.

Kuranda is a small community about a half-hour drive from the centre of Cairns with people from a wide variety of backgrounds who live there with a range of needs. I want to congratulate the staff and the volunteers at the Kuranda Neighbourhood Centre for the excellent work that they have done in supporting their community and in building the capacity of their community to respond to the very specific problems of that area.

Kuranda is one of those places that sometimes falls off the map. The people of Kuranda will often take the opportunity to remind people of that. It is a small community. It is a dormitory suburb of Cairns. Sometimes it is viewed as not quite Cairns and not quite tablelands. I think the new neighbourhood centre in Kuranda will go a long way to meeting the needs of that community. It is a very exciting period of time, and the community and the volunteers and the staff of that centre have been very patient in waiting for this time to come. They have been operating out of very cramped circumstances, but they have never lost sight of the need for the services that they provide. They and the people of Kuranda are going to be rewarded with a purpose-built centre which will be ready for occupation later this year.

That is a very significant new range of services that will be offered. Not only will it enable the services that are already provided to be delivered in a more efficient way, in more comfortable and more appropriate circumstances, but it will also provide a platform for the range of services to be expanded in the future.

Since becoming elected to parliament I have worked with the Kuranda Neighbourhood Centre in identifying some of the projects that might be worked on in the future. One, of course, is identifying a shortage of social housing in the Kuranda area. It is an example of how an existing service can identify need in the community and build capacity to bring resources into that community.

The other organisation that I want to make mention of is the Marlin Coast Neighbourhood Centre. Last year the minister announced funding of \$1.5 million to build a brand-new neighbourhood centre on the Marlin Coast. That was a very welcome announcement. The Marlin Coast Neighbourhood Centre has provided a range of services for seniors, young families, playgroups and organisations of that kind, but it had become constrained in its ability to deliver those services and expand them because of its location and physical facilities. The minister, to his great credit, recognised that. The group had been lobbying for some time and flagging its intention to expand the range of services that it would provide. The announcement of \$1.5 million for a new service was very warmly received. I have been working closely with that neighbourhood centre since I was elected to identify a suitable site for its construction. I am very hopeful that we have achieved that and that that will enable the detailed design work for our new neighbourhood centre to get underway and for it to be built as soon as possible.

Those are just two examples of organisations working hard in my community to deliver much-needed services. There are others, of course, that the Department of Communities funds that will benefit from these new arrangements. There are after school hours centres. One is run by the Freshwater State School Parents and Citizens Association of which I am the vice-president. There are a

number of others around my electorate that are run through their P&Cs. All of those organisations can look forward to their relations with the government being enhanced by being put on a modern basis as a result of the introduction of this legislation.

I conclude by focusing on one feature of the bill that I particularly want to mention and that is the fairer processes that it will provide for community organisations. The bill provides a modern, contemporary legal basis for the Department of Communities to give assistance to community organisations including fairer and more transparent processes for government decision making. The Family Services Act 1987 is currently used by the department as the basis of its funding relationship with community organisations. Reflecting the fact that that act is now 20 years old, it does not clearly identify who makes what decisions, nor does it clearly state how the department can ensure strong performance by government funded service providers and quality outcomes for their clients.

In contrast, the new bill provides a contemporary process for merit based reviews of significant decisions by the department and provides a right of appeal of these significant decisions. That acknowledges that government does not get the decisions right all the time. It provides a fair process for organisations to have those decisions reviewed and/or appealed. That will certainly help improve the quality and accountability of decision making by the department.

There are five significant decisions open to review and appeal, namely, refusing an application to become an approved service provider; refusing an organisation's application to cancel its status as an approved service provider; cancelling an organisation's status as an approved service provider, suspending or cancelling assistance for not complying with a compliance notice; and appointing an interim manager. The review and appeal process involves two steps. A community organisation can formally request an internal review where a more senior officer or the director-general reviews the original decision. If the concern is not resolved after the internal review, the organisation can apply for an external merit based review. The Community Services Bill enables the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal to be the external review body.

Subject to passage of the bill, an application fee for an external review will need to be set by the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal. Those fees currently range from between \$56 and \$223. It is anticipated that the application fee that will apply for reviews under the Community Services Bill will be at the lower end of that scale. One would not expect an application fee within that range to be any real impediment to an appeal being lodged.

I note that most of the stakeholders who had their say on a draft of the bill in 2006 agreed that the new processes for reviews and appeals would protect the rights of organisations which are parties to significant decisions and improve the quality of transparency of decision making by the department.

The bill modernises the basis for the relations between government and community organisations. It lays the basis for their continued development and enables them to flourish and continue to provide much-needed services in our communities. I congratulate the minister and his department on the consultation and development of the key features of the bill and I commend it to the House.

Mrs SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (5.27 pm): I rise to support the Community Services Bill 2007 and add my congratulations to the minister, the Hon. Warren Pitt, and his staff for their commitment to this portfolio. In any community there are a number of groups—and we have heard from other members about the groups in their areas—which provide valuable services and Pumicestone is the same. I have a number of groups in the electorate that I represent which are non-government organisations funded by state government and they have done a sterling job. So, why are these changes necessary? Well, the Department of Communities currently provides funding to these organisations under the Families Services Act 1987. This act is outdated and, as the minister has stated, does not clearly set out how the department can contribute to the strong performance of all service providers and ensure quality outcomes for the clients who use their services. However, the new laws will not start operating until the department and the sector have systems and practices in place to support their implementation.

New laws will provide an up-to-date, transparent legal framework for supporting the worthwhile work done in community organisations. The bill also provides a clear process for determining which organisations can access public moneys and they, in turn, will be referred to as approved service providers. Of course, accountability is necessary and the process must ensure the best quality of services and the safety of clients.

This bill received statewide consultation last year and feedback certainly told us that the changes were a positive step in the right direction. Under this bill, community organisations will have more certainty, particularly in their ongoing funding, but there will be measures in place to ensure that money is spent on what it was granted for. Groups in my electorate that provide alcohol and drug services, youth development and support, family support, child care and services for the homeless are just some

of the services that will benefit under these changes. New legislation will apply to all non-government organisations receiving state government funding. I want to add my sincere thanks on behalf of a grateful community to those volunteers and paid staff of those groups who have helped to provide services for those people who are in need.

As the member for Barron River has just said, these people are not in this workforce sector for the money. They do it because they want to help people; they want to make a difference. With regard to the comments made by the previous opposition speaker, I would like to place on record that the lack of public housing is not the fault of the state government.

Ms Jones: The federal government has taken \$400 million out.

Mrs SULLIVAN: I will have to take that interjection. My colleagues are certainly aware that our policies are working well. Unfortunately, that cannot be said for the mean and tricky Liberal federal government.

Since the election of the Howard government in 1996 over \$400 million has been stripped from the federal housing budget. This is at a time when the demand for affordable housing and public housing is at an all-time high. I wonder whether the member for Hinchinbrook could calculate how many houses \$400 million would have built for those who are finding it difficult to afford rent and are not in the position to buy their own homes. These people and others have been told by Howard recently that they have never been better off. I know what people who are homeless would say to that. This bill will allow greater flexibility for recognising alternative standards that some non-government organisations may be required to meet. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (5.30 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Community Services Bill 2007. This is a very complex piece of legislation. Under the Family Services Act 1987 the department provides funding to 860 community organisations. At the outset I point out that the most important aspect of this piece of legislation is what it will provide for communities. Many people in our communities are not aware of their entitlements.

I think about the multipurpose centres throughout our state and the work that is done by our allied support staff in Queensland Health, other government agencies and other organisations to provide services to those in remote and regional areas of Queensland. The important function of this legislation is to provide for the more needy citizens of our communities. Most times these people are not able to travel to take advantage of these specialist services. I say to the minister that I think a lot of advertising still needs to be done to bring to the forefront of people's minds exactly what these multipurpose centres throughout the state provide.

Funding non-government organisations is a very creditable policy. Communities are assisted and enhanced through the work of these organisations. There are a lot of these organisations out there. We could name them all. There are organisations like Red Cross, Anglicare and the list goes on. There are hundreds of such organisations in reality. They are doing magnificent work behind the scenes.

I do not like mentioning names but one person I will mention is Barbara Anderson in Longreach. She is a tireless worker for disadvantaged people through the central west and far west. This is a woman who has dedicated hours and hours to the plight of others. I believe that the funding these organisations receive does not go unnoticed when we see people of the calibre of Barbara Anderson and others like her who work in these organisations. They identify and bring to the fore the plight of people who are less fortunate. I really believe that the dedication and commitment of these people has to be recognised further down the track. I talk with these people on a regular basis. They will have a word to me on the side. This is all about representing people who might need assistance. It can be done in a quiet manner rather than doing it in a manner that these people are not accustomed to and do not want.

The other aspect of this piece of legislation is the inclusion of Indigenous communities in this state. That is an area that is crying out for support and assistance. I heard the member for Pumicestone make reference to this in relation to public housing. Public housing is the issue at the top of the list for our Indigenous communities. It is something that I am passionate about. I certainly hope that we will see some breakthroughs in this regard. I do not believe that it is an issue that we should be playing politics with today. We should be out there identifying how we can get genuine outcomes for these people and get these people into their own houses. That is all that most people in this country ever want. They want to be able to live in their own home or have something that they can call their own. Indigenous people are no different.

The other thing I will make mention of in relation to Indigenous communities is that the Auditor-General's report No. 3 came down today. It made recommendations in relation to some of these communities. I think collectively—that is as a government and as an opposition—there is a lot of work to be done. Together I believe we have to be passionate about making a difference.

Legislation like that which is before the House today with regard to non-government organisations shows that there are people out there who want to make a difference and do it in a voluntary capacity. There are a lot of areas that we could identify where these people could assist and where I believe we could get better value for our dollars. We have people who genuinely want to make a difference on a voluntary basis.

I touched on a couple of organisations a moment ago. There are a lot of people out there who do not understand precisely what they are entitled to. That is the sad fact of the matter. I say to the minister that I really think that a lot of times people are too proud to seek assistance through whatever quarters are available. I think we need to expose, whether through the print media or whatever, the assistance people can access and how they can access it without putting themselves at the forefront. A lot of people are very private and do not go out saying, 'My family needs help here or help there.' I think we have to respect people's privacy but let them know that we can get them assistance.

As the minister says in his second reading speech, a number of organisations which have received funding from the department over a number of years have asked whether they will need to start from scratch and resubmit information already lodged with the department. The minister goes on to say that he is pleased to clarify that under the transitional arrangements set out in this legislation community organisations which are currently receiving funding from the department will automatically be deemed to be approved service providers.

I think that is a very rewarding part of the legislation. A lot of service providers out there now think they have to start from scratch. That is another part of the legislation. Through the Department of Communities and under the Blueprint for the Bush project we could do further advertising about exactly what services are open to people and how they can take advantage of these services. These services provide medical services and health care for aged persons and persons who are too proud to ask for a bit of assistance. This piece of legislation is certainly going to go a long way to getting outcomes for the needy and those we are not aware of through non-government organisations operating in conjunction with government. It is with pleasure that I do support this piece of legislation and trust that it is going to have great benefits and outcomes for a large number of Queenslanders and that more people than we realise will be able to take advantage of it.

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (5.38 pm): I rise in support of the Community Services Bill 2007 which facilitates access to community services for Queenslanders who require them. This has been one of the main aims of the Strengthening Non-Government Organisations Strategy which worked towards increasing the ability of key community organisations funded by the government to improve services to their clients.

As Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Child Safety, the Hon. Desley Boyle MP, I have had the opportunity to visit many non-government organisations which provide valuable services to children and their families. I realise the extraordinary work they do, with sometimes limited time and resources, to assist those people in the community who have had difficulties in their lives.

A lot of those workers in these organisations go above and beyond the call of duty to give their private time and to use their own resources. Members of this House will also be familiar with all of the great people in their electorates who provide services such as Meals on Wheels, neighbourhood centres, community safety services and support for seniors, young people and homeless people through to services in areas such as youth justice and domestic and family violence prevention, many of whom give their time voluntarily to help others. I commend them all for the great work they do.

The Department of Communities alone currently provides funding under the Family Services Act to approximately 860 community organisations. Each of these organisations vary in terms of size, structure and the location of where the services are provided. The amount of funding provided to these organisations is also wide ranging, and this is expected to double over the next financial year. Members will appreciate the vital role that these organisations play at the local level in improving the quality of life in Queensland communities.

This bill is about updating the Family Services Act in style and content to reflect the contemporary relationship that exists between the Department of Communities and community organisations, improving transparency and certainty, identifying decision makers, and providing checks and balances regarding performance and outcomes for clients. It is vital that the systems and processes for giving organisations assistance are based on clear, comprehensive and up-to-date legislation. It will also serve to establish a process for community organisations to become eligible for assistance, clearly identify the types of assistance that can be provided to community organisations and when and how this assistance may occur.

The Minister for Communities wants to ensure that these funded organisations meet current community expectations with regard to quality, safety and accountability of service. I have always believed that there is room for improvement in enhancing cross-government approaches to issues facing Queenslanders. There are always commonalities between many of our government departments in the way in which they deal with a range of issues, big and small. This government is one of the best governments in Australia in putting in place strategies to do this at the political level. Better cross-

government approaches mean that savings are made, duplication of services is reduced, services become more efficient and effective, communication across departments improves and mistakes are minimised, funding for important services will indeed go further, and gaps are more easily identified.

It is important that these cross-government approaches also include working in cooperation with the non-government sector in a flexible way. I am pleased to say that the new Community Services Bill continues the reforms of the new Disability Services Act and aligns this legislation with other key parts of the human services sector such as Housing and Disability Services. Quality and accountability of services provided by government funded agencies will have a consistent framework. This bill brings greater transparency and certainty about how funding and other assistance can be given to community organisations by the department. I congratulate the minister for the work that has gone into this bill, and I commend the bill to the House.

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (5.42 pm): I rise to add my support to the Community Services Bill brought to the House by the communities minister, Warren Pitt, and wish to commend him on the consideration and compassion he has brought to the development of this legislation, as indeed he brings to all of his ministerial responsibilities. The primary responsibility of government is to help people. Ironically, given that public regard for government has diminished in recent decades, the extent to which government actually does help people by providing disability services, public health, advocacy services and the like has in fact increased massively in recent decades, and we do that to a large extent by funding community based non-government organisations.

In Ipswich these organisations are myriad—Allara Association, FOCAL Extended, the Ipswich Women's Centre Against Domestic Violence, the Ipswich Regional Advocacy Service, Ozcare and St Mary's Employment Group. There are more than I can begin to name. As this network of social services grows both in number and in resourcing, it is timely that the government works with the sector to move from the historically ad hoc funding basis to establish professional standards of accountability and service provision. That is what this bill does. As the explanatory notes outline, the bill will achieve this by establishing a process for community organisations to become eligible for assistance and clearly identifying the types of assistance that can be provided to community organisations. On the other side, it improves government's ability to deal with funded organisations that are going off the rails by establishing a monitoring and enforcement framework which can be triggered by noncompliance with the bill and giving the minister power to set standards for service provision.

To outline the need for such changes, I want to deviate for a moment from those formal guidelines to tell members a story, perhaps the likes of which they will be familiar with from their own experiences in their own electorates. The story is of an NGO in Ipswich that went badly off the rails. In the late 1990s the Ipswich Women's Health Centre was one of the best community based organisations in the district. It had a great committee of strong local women from a range of backgrounds, including health, a senior female police officer and generally there was an accountant and a solicitor, as any good committee should have. It was ably run by an outstanding local woman, Cathy North. It was well funded thanks to the provision that had been made for it by the then Treasurer and member for Ipswich, David Hamill, and it provided a range of services, such as sexual assault counselling and other things, to Ipswich women from a range of backgrounds.

Despite this being what one would think was a really strong, well-resourced and well-organised community based organisation, in 2002 things started to go bad as a new element of radical feminists, largely from Brisbane, began to influence this organisation which, while certainly feminist, had been more moderate in its outlook. These women came along and began quite actively to change the service's focus from service provision to quite blatant political activism. A new far more radical coordinator took over, but after concerns about her performance and the direction in which she was taking the centre the committee terminated her employment.

At the AGM this coordinator brought a group of radical friends from Brisbane. They moved a motion of no confidence in the longstanding committee, elected a new committee—ignoring the constitutional provision for nominations to be received a fortnight out from the AGM—took over the organisation, reappointed the old coordinator and within a very short space of time ran it into the ground. It was, as the member for Hervey Bay says, a good old-fashioned stack. By March 2003 Queensland Health had defunded the service amid allegations of fraud and declining service provision. Queensland Health was forced to bring the service into the department, where it continues to run today after an enormous amount of work on the part of Cathy North, Ruth Gregory and others. So it has today at great expense to the taxpayer been resurrected and is again a terrific Queensland Health-run organisation in Ipswich.

I tell this story not just for its own sake but because it reveals the fundamental vulnerability of community based organisations. While all this unfolded, Queensland Health was unwilling to intervene until service provision was affected, but by then, despite my entreaties and the entreaties of the committee, it was clearly too late. At the time I wrote to the then health minister suggesting a number of changes around the funding and administration of these important service providers. The suggestions I made centred on a closer, more transparent and more professional relationship between the funding department and the NGO. I am pleased to see the gist of those suggestions being applied in this bill today.

NGOs continue not just to provide services but to be central parts of the fabric of our community. Those people who work in them and who voluntarily give their time on management committees are, in the vast majority, good people serving those who are often more vulnerable in our community. The model of community based service provision is, however, often small scale and vulnerable. It is easy for NGOs to simply let their management obligations get on top of them or, as was the case with the Ipswich Women's Health Centre, to be swamped by pernicious elements. For that reason, this bill's aim of strengthening non-government organisations is vital if government is to meet its core responsibility of helping people. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr HINCHLIFFE (Stafford—ALP) (5.48 pm): I rise in support of the Community Services Bill, which has been a key initiative of the Strengthening Non-Government Organisations Strategy of the Beattie government. The Strengthening Non-Government Organisations Strategy was launched in August 2005 and a \$26.9 million budget was approved and allocated over a four-year implementation period. The strategy has genuinely engaged the whole of the community services sector and a huge amount of credit must be given to the Minister for Communities, the Hon. Warren Pitt, for that outcome.

The minister is warmly recognised by the sector for his strong commitment to non-government organisations and the delivery of quality services for Queenslanders when they need them most. The strategy comprises a range of collaborative activities between the Queensland government and the community and disability sectors and is being led by the Department of Communities. The aim of the strategy is to look at better ways of providing practical support to the non-government organisations delivering services funded under the Communities portfolio.

In addition to the Community Services Bill, for example, the Building Links Funding program and the multitenant service centre pilots are encouraging sharing and collaboration between non-government organisations and other stakeholders in the community and disability sectors. To date, the Building Links Funding program has provided over \$1.2 million to 45 organisations to develop business case proposals for collaborative activities or to implement planned collaborative activities.

A range of workforce development initiatives is helping to respond to workforce shortages and to skill sector workers to better respond to clients. One of these, the Communities-VET Partnership, is a statewide program that is delivered collaboratively by the Department of Communities and the Department of Education, Training and the Arts. When the program was developed it was expected that over a four-year period approximately 1,000 community and disability workers would participate in a variety of training and development opportunities. Sector workers throughout this project are able to receive recognition of prior learning and work experience, undertake additional training to obtain formal qualifications and develop skills that will help them and their organisations meet client needs.

Figures at March this year showed that 165 workers had completed recognition of prior learning, with 91 of these workers achieving a full qualification through this process. A further 189 workers are currently completing recognition of prior learning in their workplaces. This program is exceeding target expectations as sector workers from various sector occupations embrace the opportunity to have their skills recognised or learn more about the community and/or disability services sector. This is evidenced by the large number of expressions of interest in joining the program—indeed, some 1,150 workers since February 2006.

The Online Resources initiative has seen the development of a web site, the Community Door, which supports non-government organisations with their internal business systems and to improve their service delivery to clients. For example, the web site includes tools, information resources on aspects of management, funding and reporting, as well as providing links to many useful web sites, case studies on collaborative practices and free subscription for three years to Management Support Online, a resource that provides a comprehensive suite of information, online skills development, tools and resources to help community organisations improve their business processes and service delivery.

The Strengthening Rural Communities Strategy funded by Blueprint for the Bush is another closely aligned strategy for the Strengthening Non-Government Organisations Strategy and is providing grants and support funding with a value of over \$23 million for three years from 2006 to 2009 to help rural and remote communities and non-government organisations. For example, \$5.4 million over three years has been allocated to support consortia of organisations proposing to establish five rural multitenant service centres located in the Blueprint for the Bush catchment area.

Five regional centres—Dalby, Lockhart River, Burdekin, Charters Towers and Longreach—were recently announced as being successful in securing initial funding of \$17,500 to develop business plans for the development of these rural multitenant service centres. Further funding of up to \$1 million would be available to each location to meet the costs of establishing the combined service centre. While these particular measures address the needs of rural and remote communities, the Community Services Bill, as part of the Strengthening Non-Government Organisations Strategy, will provide a modern framework for funding to well over 800 services up and down the length and breadth of Queensland.

In my electorate in the inner northern suburbs of Brisbane, the services attract their fair share of funding. This occurs due to a couple of key reasons. Firstly, our local community has traditionally housed a large number of socioeconomically challenged people. Age pensioners, people living with disabilities, people living with mental illness and families, at times blossoming and at other times surviving despite dysfunction, are all well represented in my electorate as I know they are elsewhere. Secondly, the nature of inner northern suburbs real estate also means that a large number of important statewide community organisations have their headquarters in my electorate. Organisations such as Mission Australia, the Queensland Police Citizens Youth Welfare Association, and the Queensland Homicide Victims Support Group are providing services to communities across the state and have their headquarters in my electorate.

Another organisation based in my electorate but providing an invaluable service to people across Brisbane, particularly in the northern suburbs, is the Young Parents Program. In the next couple of weeks the Young Parents Program will celebrate its 21st birthday. Twenty-one years of supporting teenage and other young mothers is very worthy of celebration. As I am sure many members in the House will agree, having a child is an extremely trying experience for all of us, even when that blessing occurs when we are emotionally, socially and economically ready for it. The young mothers and fathers assisted by the Young Parents Program often are having children in much more trying circumstances, sometimes without the support of their families and almost always without a peer group who can understand their situation. These parents need support desperately. I am sure all members will join me in congratulating the Young Parents Program on their 21st birthday. On behalf of the Young Parents Program, its clients and the whole of the Queensland community, I commend the bill to the House.

Ms DARLING (Sandgate—ALP) (5.56 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Community Services Bill 2007. The bill has been developed as a result of the hard work of community and disability service organisations in collaboration with the government. The Strengthening Non-Government Organisations Strategy has been a thorough process and a consultative process, designed to bring out the best in our services by establishing high standards and providing clear and transparent processes for taxpayer-funded organisations. This bill is a key plank of the strategy.

I know that the organisations in the Sandgate electorate that receive funding from the Department of Communities will benefit from the clarity that the bill provides. For example, Jabiru Community Youth and Children's Services Association receives funding from the Queensland government to support a variety of services that it offers. Jabiru is expanding its services in response to the need for professionally run programs in the not-for-profit sector. While Jabiru started off as a youth and family support service, it has found that its outside school hours care service has boomed. Because of the high standard of care and operation required in child-care centres dictated in part by the licensing and accreditation regime, local parents and citizens committees have been approaching Jabiru to run their outside school hours care services. It is not a sector of service that Jabiru sought to expand, but the quality of their approach attracted the local community and is very much supported by families in the area.

This bill will serve to endorse the already high standards of many community organisations like Jabiru and provide the guidance needed by many and the accountability demanded by the service recipients and taxpayers of Queensland. I take this opportunity to congratulate Ken Morris and the team at Jabiru for the great range of services it provides to the families of Bracken Ridge and surrounding suburbs. Jabiru offers early intervention and family support services and a unique schooling program for high school students who would struggle in a mainstream school environment. The Department of Communities currently provides over \$258,000 per annum for both of these services. In fact, the Jabiru team regularly discuss and build innovative programs to meet the contemporary needs of the community.

The Sandgate and Bracken Ridge Action Group, known as SANDBAG, is a well-known and well-loved non-government community group. I can testify to the dedication and commitment of the staff and the committee members of SANDBAG. Maggie Shambrook and her team not only keep the doors of the Sandgate Community Centre open for business but also host and auspice many other community organisations. SANDBAG receives \$167,113 per annum in funding to provide community development and support services at the centre. It also receives other funding from the department of employment and training, for example, for its work-ready programs.

At its Bracken Ridge offices, SANDBAG also provides counselling and support services for victims of domestic violence and family violence. Recently, the minister and I visited the counsellors to discuss their needs. I know that the minister was very sympathetic to the pressures they are under. I will continue to represent the needs of my community service organisations with the minister. Although there are many other non-government organisations in the Sandgate electorate that will benefit from these reforms, I wanted to highlight the work of two of the major community service providers in the electorate.

I congratulate the minister on driving this reform in such a collaborative manner, including the comprehensive consultation that was undertaken with the community services sector throughout the development of the bill. The Community Services Bill 2007 has the broad support of the community

services sector. Peak sector bodies and statewide and representative organisations understand that the proposed legislation will provide greater clarity and transparency in processes and provide the Department of Communities with appropriate monitoring and enforcement powers to address serious concerns about service delivery. Sector support for this important feature of the Community Services Bill—the provisions that protect the interests of vulnerable clients and the integrity of public funds—is particularly acknowledged by the Queensland government. This support is the result of extensive community engagement during the development of policy proposals through to consultation on a draft bill.

Consultation occurred initially with the sector in late 2005 through statewide information and engagement sessions on the Strengthening Non-Government Organisations Strategy initiatives, which are supported by the bill. The department then undertook consultation on a draft community services bill in 2006 via the Queensland government's ConsultQld web site. In addition, between April and May 2006 targeted regional forums on the draft bill were attended by key representative organisations and local governments and included a diverse cross-section of community organisations from remote, regional and metropolitan locations and Indigenous managed organisations. The regional forums were held in Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Hervey Bay, Chermside, Mount Gravatt, Ipswich, the Gold Coast, Maroochydore and Toowoomba.

I congratulate the minister and his department on these reforms and for making sure that our essential non-government organisations participated in the reform process. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHOI (Capalaba—ALP) (6.01 pm): I rise to speak today in support of the Community Services Bill 2007, which is an integral part of the election promises that this government made in 2006. I thank the minister for his foresight and perseverance in introducing this bill.

This government has established a great record of helping community groups no matter where they are in Queensland. Community groups, whether they are in the middle of a major CBD like Brisbane or out there in the remote, isolated rural parts of Queensland, are the heart and soul of the areas where we live. Just about every part of our lives, whether as an individual, as a spouse, as a parent, or as a family group member, is touched by the work of our local community groups.

Sometimes we think of community groups as being groups such as the local Neighbourhood Watch group or the PCYC where the kids in my electorate go to learn to play basketball, gymnastics or martial arts. Then there are also the street stalls held where the ladies from the local CWA, or the Salvos, the Lions or the Rotarians offer homemade treats and handmade items for sale in order to raise money for the particular local groups that they support by volunteering their time. Or perhaps when we think of community groups it brings to mind raffle tickets purchased at our children's local sporting club to help them fundraise for the club's much-needed expansion.

Last month in my electorate of Capalaba we commenced fete fever, which will continue over the next few weeks. Just about every school in my electorate will put on their annual fiesta. At each school there are food stalls, activity stalls, craft stalls, plant stalls—the list is endless. But none of these events would be possible without the support of local community groups. Again, these are just some of the ways in which community groups effectively touch our lives every day. This bill supports these community groups and all the other groups that are already established in Queensland together with any new organisations that will put forward proposals to become one of the 860 community organisations that receive funding from the Department of Communities.

Of course, in each community group or organisation a structure is needed in order to ensure accountability. In these modern times non-government organisations have to become accustomed to preparing their accounts for full auditing and accounting every year. The recent associations incorporation legislation, which was introduced by this government, has done away with the requirement for full auditing for groups with total income and assets of less than \$100,000. It also revoked the compulsory audit for community based associations with assets of \$100,000 or less. That is wonderful news to a lot of community groups and is just another example of this government getting on with the job of helping community groups and helping Queenslanders.

With this legislation, the Department of Communities is implementing its Strengthening Non-Government Organisations Strategy, which is a fundamental part of the Beattie Labor government's commitment to building stronger communities and to improving the quality of life for all Queenslanders wherever they are. It is also an acknowledgement that at times NGOs provide more direct, better face-to-face services to those in our communities who require our help. Currently, some 860 community groups are assisted by the government through regular funding and one-off grants.

A quick perusal of the latest information available on the wonderful programs that this initiative is now supporting shows that this government is remaining focused on the welfare of the people of Queensland. For example, there is the Blueprint for the Bush for the rural sector, which focuses on transport initiatives and community projects; support for the human services industry in the form of retraining and providing options and choices for those people who may not be aware of the fantastic opportunities that are available in this vital area of service industry; and Access Arts, which is a brilliant initiative that sees students undertaking a 40-week training program to become facilitators in Sound

Circles, which are workshops with a creative theme that allows participants to express themselves through performance based mediums. Again, through funding by this government, support is provided at each step of the program as it develops through to completion.

In my own electorate, the Horizon Foundation is a leader in its field of providing opportunities for young people—and older, of course—with disabilities to enter into meaningful employment through community access programs and training initiatives. The foundation also provides the general public and private sector with a range of quality projects and services, including employment related programs, business services and even a timber manufacturing business and training courses. The foundation was responsible for the Redlands Arts Council web site, which is a joint project that saw coordinators and students from Horizon working with the president and other volunteers in the organisation to come up with the initial unique home page that is instantly identifiable and also developing all the links and associated pages to the web site. The project went all the way through to completion and is still available today.

It is local stories such as those that make our community groups and the services that they provide unique and special to each of the areas that they service. In essence, that is what this bill seeks to support, develop and build upon. This bill will provide a system that will enable steps such as a process for organisations and groups to become eligible for assistance by identifying the options available; a suitable accreditation process for those seeking to become recipients of departmental assistance; and measures that will enable enforcement of the provisions, which is important, with penalties for noncompliance applying, including in those cases where warranted an appeal to the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal against a departmental decision.

This bill will establish a system that is reviewable and accountable so that concerns about either the abuse of clients or the misuse of funds can be addressed immediately. The positive effects of all of these amendments is, of course, a fair and reasonable system that supports community services statewide, including their involved members, volunteers and workers. It is a step forward and another example of the government moving forward to secure Queensland's future.

This bill confirms this government's commitment to looking after Queenslanders. This bill also shows that the Labor government is getting on with its job. Once again, I would like to congratulate the minister on introducing such important legislation. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr LEE (Indooroopilly—ALP) (6.10 pm): Today I genuinely welcome the opportunity to speak about why new legislation for community services has been developed. Currently the Department of Communities provides funding to community organisations under the Family Services Act 1987. Aspects of that act are jointly administered by our wonderful ministers Pitt and Boyle.

No significant changes have been made to the sections of the Family Services Act that relate to government funding since the act's introduction over 20 years ago. As a result, the Family Services Act is quite obviously dated in style and content. It does not provide a transparent guide to exercising powers and performing legislative functions. Also it does not provide adequate measures to ensure the safety of vulnerable service users and the appropriate use of public funds.

By contrast, the Community Services Bill being debated today provides greater transparency and certainty for the community services sector, ensures quality outcomes for service users, their families and communities, and ensures consistency with other contemporary human services legislation.

I would like to talk in more detail about some of the important improvements contained within the bill. In relation to funding, the Family Services Act does not specify the requirements that community organisations must meet to be eligible for funding assistance. Also, under the current arrangements, organisations need to submit similar information a number of times and in a number of ways.

A clear process for determining which organisations are eligible for assistance from the department is set out in the bill, and these are called approved service providers. Determining eligibility for assistance will provide greater transparency and certainty for the sector and provide a consistent benchmark. Processes for providing information to the department will also be streamlined.

The current statutory provision of monetary grants does not fully reflect how the department assists community organisations. By contrast, this bill clarifies the kind of assistance, including funding leases and other forms of assistance, the department can then provide. Clarifying the kind of assistance that can be provided reflects contemporary arrangements for assisting community organisations and will support future innovation. This will also provide a consistent benchmark and a transparent legal basis for service agreements.

The Family Services Act does not effectively support a proactive or flexible response to managing performance issues. Investigative and monitoring powers are limited and the only performance measure is the suspension of funding.

The bill provides flexible and responsive remedial and assistance measures. It equips the department with contemporary investigative monitoring powers to deal with serious concerns and provides greater transparency and effective safeguards to ensure the appropriate use of powers.

Contemporary expectations for the review of decisions are not currently met by the Family Services Act. For the first time, the bill sets out a fair process for reviews and appeals that will provide a transparent, accountable and fair right of review for important administrative decisions and facilitate improved decision making by the department.

The bill being debated today provides a contemporary legal basis for the Department of Communities to give assistance to community organisations. The legislation also intends to meet community expectations about the quality, safety and accountability of services provided to Queenslanders. The Department of Communities will obviously use this new legislation instead of the Family Services Act as the basis for giving assistance to community organisations.

I applaud Minister Pitt's commitment to ensuring new community services legislation that will provide a strong and clear guide for the community services sector, and help government and community organisations work together to provide high-quality, safe and accountable services. This genuinely contemporary approach is essential to achieving the government's vision of safe, valued and empowered communities.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (6.12 pm): I rise to support the Community Services Bill 2007. I also give my thanks to the minister for his compassion for people in our community who need the support of these services. I also thank him for the briefing that we received, what feels like some time ago now. I thank the officers who gave us that briefing in an open-handed manner.

Over the term of their lives, many people in our community will need to access support services in one form or another. I note from the minister's notes that, under the Family Services Act, the department provides funding to approximately 860 community organisations. I believe the majority of those would be not-for-profit organisations and, in turn, they rely heavily on volunteers. Therefore, any streamlining of the application process would be welcome. I know that one of the objectives of the legislation is to make it easier to apply for funding.

During the briefing it was pointed out that this legislation will allow elements of an agreement between the organisation providing the service and the government Department of Communities to be lined up in one document, in things like peppercorn leases or peppercorn rents, or assistance that is given in service agreements. Some information, including things like the non-government organisation's goals and qualifications, will only have to be provided once and not repeatedly each time they apply for funding.

Smaller organisations that rely on people who are paid small wages, if they are indeed paid wages, or who work on a volunteer basis, will welcome any streamlining of the red-tape process. The majority of people who volunteer to work in those organisations do it out of a heart of compassion and not necessarily a love of administration. Whilst it is acknowledged that there has to be a transparency in the process and that the minister must account for the money that he and others in the department expend, it is also important to remember that those people are there because they have a heart of care for the people in the community whom they help. On that basis, I hope that there will be no negative impacts on organisations that are currently receiving funding from the minister's office and that are working in good faith.

I know that the bill provides for show-cause notices, compliance notices, the suspension or stopping of assistance, the recovery of unspent or unused funds and the appointment of interim managers when there is no other option. Those elements are allowed for in the bill, but knowing the minister's attitude towards the community, I hope that there would be as much work done as possible before something as detrimental as that was actually put in place. After all, the clients receiving those services will be most disadvantaged.

I also note that there is a criminal history screening requirement in the bill, which enhances the current provisions. I do not think too many people in the community would object to that. I know some people are getting a little tired of the process, because sometimes there is a delay between the application and the approval. They feel concerned that perhaps their ability to provide services is under threat. However, I do not believe the principle per se is actually under question.

For a couple of minutes I would like to recognise some in the community that I work in who work tirelessly for members of the community who are facing challenge or stress and who, for a variety of reasons, are in need of support services. Whether that is practical support, emotional or psychological support, it can mean the difference between an individual or a family looking forward optimistically to a strong future or imploding.

Groups such as the Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul, which we affectionately call St Vinnies, provide an incredible amount of emotional and practical support for the people in the community who are most easily forgotten. Their compassion and their genuine affection for members of the community who are facing tough times is a testament to us all. Blue Care and Anglicare also supply support across a broad range of services. I believe that they are well recognised for the level of care that they provide, albeit often on a little bit more of a commercial basis.

In Gladstone, the Aquatic Centre is managed by Kym Lawn. The centre provides therapy and rehabilitation, particularly for the older members of our community, at the therapy pool. The centre relies on a significant group of volunteers to work with community members who have compromised mobility. That therapy is available at the pool all through the year. They do a brilliant job. Some people's ability to re-enjoy social contact is because of the work that the volunteers do at the therapy pool.

The Endeavour Foundation works with young people and older people with disabilities. I know that they do not get a lot of state government funding, but the foundation gives those individuals a great sense of self-worth through its work site in Lyons Street in Gladstone. I have been there on a number of occasions. They used to do car detailing and the young ones who did the car detailing would give me heaps because my car was never tidy or clean. They used to do a remarkable job at getting it back on track. They were really proud of the work that they did and still do with some of the major industries. Those young men and women have a career path that they themselves can manage. That reinforces their self-esteem incredibly. I commend those people who work in that area.

Narelle, who is on the Committee of the Ageing, and Tracy Page, who manages Mainstay, which is a respite centre for people with disabilities, both physical and intellectual, do a brilliant job and we desperately need additional respite facilities in Gladstone. Mainstay can sometimes be booked up a couple of years ahead, so it is very difficult for people who need emergency respite to be able to find a place. Funding for Mainstay was raised within the community, and whilst it is funded from government in great measure now it was an initiative at the time of Judy Young and others to see Mainstay constructed. I commend them for their foresight then. I believe that they have sufficient statistics to be able to show that need continuing.

Roseberry Community Services runs a number of facilities for at-risk youth. They also manage the new singles accommodation. They run Branchout, which is an organisation that endeavours to relink young men and women who are significantly at risk of disengagement back into productive work in the community. The people who work with Branchout do a brilliant job. A lot of them are young men and women themselves, and I commend all of them for their compassion for young people who sometimes are a little bit unlovable, but they genuinely want to see these young men and women reach their potential.

There is a lot of work done out of the Community Advisory Service. I commend Marie MacDougall from Women's Health, which provides an incredibly broad depth of assistance to women in our community including sexual assault support. There are migrant women who come in with poor English and poor social skills because of the language barrier and Women's Health provides a single focus for these young women and older women to be able to get some social support and some socialisation.

I would also like to specifically comment on Women's Shelter. Whilst it is an organisation that has to work very privately because of the nature of the people who access them for assistance—it is domestic violence in the main—each time that I have called in there the genuine concern by the ladies who work there and those who volunteer there is almost palpable. They are not blind, they are certainly not naive and they recognise the foibles of human nature, but they also want to see these women, and often children, who have been damaged by violence re-establish a life where they can be confident and feel safe, and I commend them.

The Gladstone Community Linking Agency also provides support for people with physical and intellectual disabilities. Judy Young manages the agency and has always been an inspiration to me and I am sure to many people. John and Judy had a young man whom they adopted who had quite a profound disability, and they worked tirelessly to see Anthony reach his potential. I believe in great measure he is the young man that he is because they invested a lot of time. Her involvement in the linking agency is grounded in her own experience.

I want to mention the Port Curtis Day Respite Centre and Meals on Wheels. All of us here value the work of Meals on Wheels and the ability of that organisation to keep older men and women or younger men and women with an inability to cook for themselves in the community. I cannot speak too highly of all the volunteers who work in those organisations. Other members have mentioned the PCYC. We also have Nhulundu Wooribah Indigenous Health and Aged Care, which is managed by a young man called Matthew Cooke. Matthew is a young Indigenous man and I believe he has great potential ahead of him. He is a good thinker, he is very strategic and he has aspirations for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in Gladstone which are incredibly admirable. I wish him every success in the future.

There are any number of organisations in my electorate and other electorates that are too numerous to list—otherwise I could get sat down for relevance—but I want to put on the record my appreciation and I am sure the minister's appreciation to not only the paid staff but also the volunteers who support those organisations. I believe they look forward to a positive and prosperous future with the minister and this new funding strategy. I would hope that all of them can feel confident that, even if they do have something negative to say about the direction that governments—whether it is this one or subsequent governments—take in the future that is disadvantageous or difficult to them, they will not be disadvantaged in terms of their funding package. Because in all honesty, I think every single one of us

would agree that if these organisations suddenly shut up shop our community would not just be the loser; it would be catastrophic. Governments could never supply the services that so many of these NGOs and small organisations do. I commend them for their hard work. I commend them for their compassion. I support the minister's bill and look forward to working with him to benefit my community and these wonderful workers in the community.

Mr MOORHEAD (Waterford—ALP) (6.25 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Community Services Bill 2007. The Community Services Bill 2007 will ensure that community services funded by the state government will continue to be of a high quality, relevant and flexible to local communities while also ensuring that taxpayers' hard-earned dollars are spent in an accountable and transparent way.

What this bill and its predecessor legislation have recognised is that, with a little financial assistance, communities can deliver some support services as well if not better than government. Funding local community based organisations can mean that support is tailored to local needs and delivered in a way that is appropriate for local communities. While I am a strong supporter of government services, governments must take the opportunity to support community based services where they can build strong services and stronger communities. Funded properly, delivering community support through community based organisations builds more resilient communities.

Building stronger communities and delivering community services is not simply a matter of financial support or a matter of changing legislation. The state government's Strengthening Non-Government Organisations Strategy brings together a renewed legislative framework and strong financial support. But just as importantly the strategy also provides support for clear and transparent accounting systems, support through a one-stop shop web site, support in collaboration with community organisations, and support for workforce development. I know the word 'holistic' is one that is overused in politics as well as in departments, but this is one strategy that is holistic and takes every opportunity to support strong community services and strong community organisations. What must be realised is that most of the community services supported by this legislation are built on volunteer support either through volunteers delivering services or through volunteer management committee members.

For management committees of community based organisations funded under the current legislation, I appreciate the need for legislation to make the management of community based organisations a clear and transparent process. While most people who volunteer their time in community based organisations are not accountants, we are expected to ensure that taxpayer grants are being spent appropriately and lawfully. The process to move to the standard charter of accounts has made accounting to the Department of Communities a simpler task not only for members of the management committee but also for the hardworking staff who have to prepare the accounts.

It is important that we make community services funding available to locally based community organisations. There has been a worrying trend in recent years for funding to be directed towards large institutional charities rather than local community organisations. It is important that the funding decisions give consideration to the substantial community benefit of funding community based organisations rather than large organisations or private sector providers.

The Strengthening Non-Government Organisations Strategy will also support workforce development amongst the community sector workforce. This is an important initiative to support the invaluable staff members who deliver community services. Many of these workers, the face of community service delivery, are working more for love than money. Also, working in generally small organisations means that career paths are often limited. Unfortunately, this has often led to high levels of turnover. Workforce development opportunities such as skill recognition, education and career path options will go a long way to provide career options for community service workers. Community service workers not only work above and beyond the call of duty but often have jobs that take significant emotional energy. Career development will assist not only in providing job satisfaction but also in reducing turnover, allowing that important corporate knowledge and experience to stay within community organisations.

It is important that the legislation which provides the framework for the delivery of funding community services is relevant and up to date. Community services in my electorate are essential in delivering such needed services. This includes domestic violence services, disability support and respite services, and the funding of community outreach in community and neighbourhood centres. As the minister has said, most people will use the service of a state government funded community service even though they may not realise it.

If you have attended the Beenleigh Neighbourhood Centre and participated in one of Lucretia Suci's cooking groups you have benefited from a state government funded community service. If a local father or partner has attended the Youth and Family Service (Logan City) Men's Domestic Violence Counselling Service, they have accessed a state government funded community service. If a family has been able to avoid interaction with the Department of Child Safety because of the support of Lifeline and the Referral for Active Intervention Services, they have benefited from state government funded community services. These are but a few of the important services funded by the Department of Communities.

While the Family Services Act 1987 has served us well, this bill will bring the legislative framework up to date with the services needed by the communities of 2007. Part 3 of the bill introduces streamlined processes to provide for preapproval processes for service providers to become eligible to receive assistance. Corporations, which include incorporated associations, will be able to apply to the chief executive to become an approved service provider. The chief executive will need to have regard to a number of factors, including the financial records and the appropriate corporate governance of the association or incorporated body.

Under part 13 those organisations which are currently service providers are deemed to be approved service providers and, importantly, the decision process for approval will be quick and effective with a decision required within 90 days after the application is received. Part 9, in particular clause 92, allows for the decisions of the chief executive to be reviewed through internal review and ultimately to the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal.

Part 4 of the bill will also make clear the funding process and how funding agreements are to be developed. Clause 28 makes clear what is required to be contained in a funding agreement. This agreement based regime will make it clear what is expected of community organisations and what community organisations must do to fulfil their obligations. This clarity of funding arrangements will only be further enhanced with the provisions of part 2 which will allow the minister to issue standards for how community organisations go about spending taxpayers' money. That is what this bill is about: balancing the need to provide financial support to community organisations with the need to make sure that taxpayers' money is being spent in an appropriate way and can be accounted for. But this is not always what occurs.

Community based organisations can be divided or otherwise dysfunctional, meaning that community services can be disrupted. This bill provides a strong compliance regime to ensure financial accountability. Officers of the department are provided with the rights to monitor and enforce agreements. The chief executive officer will be able to issue compliance and show-cause notices in response to breaches of funding agreements. Failure to comply with this process will allow the chief executive to suspend or stop assistance or recover unspent funds.

My view is that the enforcement regime is an important part of getting balance between flexibility and accountability. This is particularly the case when seen in the context of the cooperative approach that I have experienced when dealing with the officers of the Department of Communities. I congratulate the minister on bringing this bill before the House and I commend the bill.

Debate, on motion of Mr Moorhead, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 6.33 pm to 7.30 pm.

LIQUOR (RESTRICTION OF SUPPLY TO MINORS) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 6 June (see p. 1930).

Mr GIBSON (Gympie—NPA) (7.30 pm): There are many who would say that the use of alcohol and the abuse of alcohol are not the same thing. This is not true. I recognise that many people drink socially without becoming alcohol abusers, but obviously alcohol use is a prerequisite to alcohol abuse. It is the abuse of alcohol amongst youth and its attendant social consequences that concerns me the most. This bill goes a long way to protecting our youth from the dangers of excessive alcohol consumption.

Alcohol abuse and alcohol dependence are not only adult problems; they affect a significant number of adolescents and young adults between the ages of 12 and 18 even though drinking under the age of 18 in public places is illegal. With young people, there are additional concerns which often arise in relation to excessive alcohol consumption, including the possible progression to illicit drugs, with some reports suggesting that most addiction to illicit drugs commences with an addiction to alcohol; and increased health and personal safety risks, with research finding that teenagers who begin binge drinking by 13 years of age are almost four times more likely to be overweight or suffer from high blood pressure by the age of 24 and are more likely to be involved in fatal car accidents, violent altercations or risky sexual behaviour and an increased risk of alcohol dependency later in life.

We cannot contend that the current situation is acceptable. To argue that is to abandon our youth. The *National Alcohol Indicators—trends in youth alcohol consumption and related harms in Australian jurisdictions 1990-2002* report shows the following: from 1993 to 2002 about 2,650 Australians aged between 15 to 24 died from alcohol related injury and disease caused by risky or high-risk drinking, accounting for about 15 per cent of all deaths in that age group; and over 100,000 young people were hospitalised for alcohol related injury and disease between 1993-94 and 2001-02, with Queensland recording higher rates of hospitalisation for young males for this reason than all other jurisdictions apart from the Northern Territory. The report found that the most common causes of alcohol related deaths for

young people are road injuries, suicide and violence. The report also discovered that the male alcohol related death rate is about four times higher than that for females and that young people in non-metropolitan areas are at a greater risk of alcohol related death than city youth.

These are disturbing trends and statistics. We cannot continue to deny that we have a problem. I commend the member for Surfers Paradise for the initiative that this legislation represents. It is clear that youth are accessing alcohol freely. Secondary supply or third-party sales is where adults such as parents, older siblings or even strangers legally purchase alcohol to supply minors for such things as teen parties. In my opinion, this action is clearly irresponsible. The 2005 ministerial forum to discuss schoolies alcohol issues suggested that 64 per cent of alcohol supply to minors was from an immediate relative or friend's parent.

Research by the US National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism found the following: adolescents who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who begin drinking at the age of 21; early age of drinking onset is also associated with alcohol related violence, not only amongst persons under the age of 18 but also amongst adults; it is estimated in the US that there are over three million teenagers who are out-and-out alcoholics and several million more have a serious drinking problem that they cannot manage on their own.

It is hard to imagine that this research would be very different here in Australia, the land of beer and booze-ups. Why a parent would want to risk this kind of behaviour for their children I fail to understand. Binge drinking, often beginning around age 13, tends to increase during adolescence, peak in young adulthood from ages 18 to 22 and then gradually decrease. Individuals who increase their binge drinking from age 18 to 24 and those who consistently binge drink at least once a week during this period may have problems attaining the goals typical of the transition from adolescence to young adulthood, goals such as marriage, educational attainment, employment and financial independence. Alcohol use among adolescents has been associated with considering, planning, attempting and completing suicide. Research does not indicate whether drinking causes suicidal behaviour, only that the two behaviours are correlated.

Parents' drinking behaviour and favourable attitudes towards drinking have been positively associated with adolescents initiating and continuing drinking. Children who are warned about alcohol by their parents and children who reported being closer to their parents were both less likely to start drinking at an early age. Lack of parental support, monitoring and communication have been significantly related to the frequency of drinking, heavy drinking and drunkenness amongst adolescents. Harsh, inconsistent discipline and hostility or rejection towards children have also been found to significantly predict adolescent drinking and alcohol related problems. Peer drinking and peer acceptance of drinking have also been associated with adolescent drinking.

For young people aged under 18, the Australian alcohol guidelines recommend, amongst other things, the following: that they not drink beyond the levels recommended for the general population; that they be supported in any decision not to drink; that they not drink at all for at least several hours before undertaking potentially risky activities; that they not mix alcohol with mood-altering drugs; and I think this next point is important—that they be kept under adult supervision at all times; that they keep drinking to a minimum; that they not drink to become intoxicated; and that they have a gradual supervised introduction to alcohol in order to become responsible adult drinkers. The guidelines also note that—

A younger person's ability to cope with alcohol is influenced by their physical size and stage of development. Young people generally have a smaller body size than adults, and therefore tolerate less alcohol. They also lack experience of alcohol and its effects. This lack of experience also means that their bodies have not developed any tolerance to alcohol.

Far greater attention has been directed at the interaction of young people and illicit drugs than young people and alcohol, when alcohol is shown statistically to be a more dangerous substance for young people than heroin, speed or ecstasy. Accordingly, the lower significance attached to alcohol abuse may explain some parental latitude in terms of the drinking behaviours of young people. It has also been suggested that, to tackle the binge-drinking habits of young people, alcohol misuse by the wider community must also be addressed.

If we want to deal with the problem of under-age drinking, we must be honest enough to realise that this cannot be dealt with in isolation from the wider community's views on alcohol. This demands that we ask ourselves some uncomfortable questions. Youth binge drinking will not be solved quickly; it will take courage and bold thinking to address it. This legislation does exactly that. We must genuinely examine our own thoughts and attitudes towards alcohol and then seek to integrate these with the message we give our young people. If we do not, young people will rightly dismiss our advice as hypocritical. There are lessons from successes in other fields, such as the cultural changes that have accompanied a reduction in smoking within Australia, the acceptance of compulsory seatbelt wearing and the support for random breath testing. These lessons we can apply to changing the attitude towards binge drinking for our youth.

The Australian secondary students alcohol and drug survey 2005 data showed that whilst tobacco and cannabis usage were down on similar surveys in 2002 and 1999 the antidrinking ad campaigns that had occurred over that period had done nothing to reduce alcohol usage amongst secondary students. The provisions in clause 5 of this legislation are modelled on the successful approach taken towards the sale of tobacco products to minors.

I note that the last time this bill was being debated we heard the minister's concerns about how parents could be questioned if they were purchasing alcohol for minors. It is no different from parents being questioned if they were purchasing tobacco products for minors. I think the minister clearly showed her lack of understanding of this particular piece of legislation.

There needs to be a deterrent at the point of sale because at the moment all that is present is advertising material and promotional giveaways. We need to legislate to ensure that anyone who is entertaining the purchase of alcohol for minors is aware of the consequences.

The drinking behaviour of teens in Australia has remained relatively unchanged since the 1990s. The solution to under-age drinking or drinking alcohol at an age that is dangerous to their development and safety will not be found in blaming parents or the teens themselves. The solution can only lie in making the whole of society take an interest. It is our social behaviour that feeds the problems, our embracing of getting sloshed, our rules governing the promotion and advertising of alcohol, our inclusion of alcohol in every special and important event. We must all bear the consequences of our choices. We must share the responsibility for this problem. This bill goes a long way to doing this. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs MENKENS (Burdekin—NPA) (7.41 pm): I rise to speak in the debate on the Liquor (Restriction of Supply to Minors) Amendment Bill 2007. I am very happy to support this amendment bill. This bill seeks to make improvements to the Liquor Act 1992 to limit the potential supply of alcohol to minors in private places. Existing legislation fails to include any stipulation relating to the providing of alcohol to teenagers in private residences. This allows it to be legal for an adult to provide a minor with alcohol as long as it is not in a public or licensed premises.

I commend the member for Surfers Paradise for bringing in this private member's bill because it is a responsible piece of legislation. This is about under-age drinking. I have no doubt that everybody in this chamber tonight is aware of the problems of under-age drinking. I can actually see no reason at all why any member in this House could in all conscience oppose this bill unless they themselves are totally irresponsible. I ask any member who will stand up and vote against this bill along party lines to genuinely examine their conscience.

I would like to take the minister to task on her speech. I have read her speech. I have a lot of respect for the minister but the minister spoke about this bill alienating parents. That is totally fanciful. The minister said in her speech that the bill seeks to intrude in family relationships by dictating to parents what decisions they may make about their teenagers and alcohol. In opposing this bill she says the government respects the right of parents to make informed, responsible decisions about their children and alcohol.

That might be fine but, through the chair to the minister, this bill is not about the feelings of parents, it is about protecting our youth. This bill is about youth. It does not just talk about parents, it talks about youths who have turned 18 or 19 who are legally adults but may not be behaving like responsible adults. This bill is about making them aware that they are responsible adults and that they cannot supply their mates with alcohol. That is what is happening. It is not just parents who are supplying these youth with alcohol; it is the just turned 18-year-olds who are conned into supplying their mates with alcohol. I see this as a most responsible bill.

The bill will append the existing limitation on the supply of liquor to minors under the Liquor Act 1992. All relevant provisions presently in the act in relation to the limitation of supply to minors are maintained. However, they have been redrafted to contain the changes to be implemented. The bill seeks to further heighten the restriction on the supply of liquor to minors by broadening the guidelines that apply to the offence of supplying liquor to minors or juveniles found consuming liquor or in possession of liquor. Also it relates to the selling of liquor to a person who is knowingly buying it on a juvenile's behalf. That is the actual principle behind this legislation. It absolutely evades my rather small brain why members would be against this bill.

Drinking by minors is a major issue facing not only Queensland but the whole country, with a constant loss of life on our roads every week due to alcohol. These are our future generations. We must act now to stop the unnecessary loss of young life—not just on the roads but in terms of the other things that they are doing to themselves. Our young people are our heritage. As we know, our young people still require our protection. Everybody has rights but our young people still require responsible protection.

We see this over and over again at the end of each year as we approach schoolies week celebrations. This is not just about schoolies week but every day and every week of the year. We are seeing young people having wild parties on the weekends. They arrive at apartments and have lots of liquor and goodness only knows what else. Too often we hear of tragedies resulting from these alcohol related wild parties. It is unbelievable and it is a sad fact that the majority of teenagers receive their alcohol from older people. They could be their parents or family members but more often than not it is their adult mates—that is, those mates who have just turned 18, 19 or 20 but who are not behaving like adults.

Alcohol impairs judgement and teenagers are more likely to engage in such things as unsafe sexual practices when they have been drinking. They open themselves up to the sad associated risks of date rape, of sexual intercourse without a condom leading to exposure to sexually transmissible infections, and possibly pregnancy. It can be the ruination of young lives.

Some people believe that alcohol is less dangerous than other drugs. There is evidence to suggest that parents are so alarmed at the thought of their children using harder drugs that alcohol is considered a lesser and therefore a more acceptable evil. It was estimated in 2001 that just over 3,000 Australians died due to alcohol use. There were 64,782 alcohol related episodes that needed care in hospital. Both of those figures are more than those attributed to illicit drug use. It is necessary that we bring in tighter legislation regarding the sale of liquor to protect our minors from binge drinking. It is clear to everyone that we must address this potentially dangerous practice. Binge drinking can lead to serious health problems.

What is binge drinking? It is generally known amongst young people as getting smashed. Sadly and seemingly it is becoming the thing to do. It can be defined in two ways—firstly, as having six drinks or more in a row or, secondly, as drinking large amounts every now and then and losing control. There are two kinds of binge drinking—drinking a lot over a few hours or drinking over several days or weeks. The second type is actually more harmful to the body and is often a repeated behaviour.

Binge drinking can lead to death, permanent brain damage, alcohol poisoning, violence, sexual assault, accidents and drowning. It is a tragedy and a travesty on our young people. Although binge drinking affects people of all ages studies indicate that binge drinking is on the increase among young people with one in six people having more than 20 drinks a day at least once a month.

Clause 4 substitutes the description of 'responsible adult'. This definition is updated to reflect the current definition used in the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act 1998. It removes the element of a person having parental rights or responsibilities only while a minor is on licensed premises or in a public place. I believe it is essential to amend this clause by making it illegal for adults to permit children to drink alcohol without due care and guidance. There is a high level of concern in the community at under-age parties without parental supervision, and even with parental supervision terrible things happen so often at parties for young people. Drunken brawls and teenagers consuming dangerously high levels of alcohol and so on really are a recipe for disaster.

I am genuinely concerned about the issues that have been raised by this bill, and I ask members in the chamber tonight to look seriously at the purpose of this bill. Do we really care about our young people? Are we really trying to assist our young people? I commend members to vote for this bill. I fully support the amendments contained in the Liquor (Restriction of Supply to Minors) Amendment Bill 2007. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (7.50 pm): I am certainly pleased to speak to this bill because our shadow minister for health has put a lot of thought into it. It is about due care and consideration for young people who are at a very vulnerable stage of life as they transition from teenagers at school into working life or university student life. As the member for Surfers Paradise, the shadow minister does have some experience of what happens in his electorate in what is famously known as schoolies week, which started in the 1980s and has built up to be the major event it is now. This bill does not just apply to schoolies week. This is a very sensible and a very responsible bill that is about encouraging parents or other responsible adults to look after teenage children in their care so that any drinking that occurs in a private residence simply for the purpose of socialising with their family or friends is carefully supervised so that those children learn to drink in a socially responsible way. That is not to say that that is encouraged, but it does happen and many families make the choice that they would like their children to have a sip or a half a glass or whatever it might be to carefully and sensibly introduce them to drinking. It is probably far better for them to learn responsible social drinking in that regard than to go out the back of some hall with their mates somewhere and do it in a very subverted way.

One of the pleasures of being a dairy farmer was at the end of the night—we would finish milking at about seven—we would sit on the back steps of the house looking over the Mary River, which sadly will be flooded by the dam, and because of the cattle slump we could afford one stubbie every second evening. The boys would say, 'Can I have a sip, Dad?' I would let them have a sip and a bit of a sniff—a quarter of a mouthful and that was about it. We had time together sitting on the back steps of the house. That is what a lot of parents like to do when they sit around the table when their kids are 17 or so. Those kids are going to be able to have a drink on their own in another year's time. It only makes sense for them to be able to be a part of the family socialising and having a small drink with their family or friends so that they see that it is something that can be done in a very sensible way.

The legislation proposed by our shadow minister is attacking what is a real problem. It is probably hard for many responsible parents to understand how this could happen. I have been told that it does happen, particularly in schoolies week when adults will take students down to the coast, put them in units, give them a couple of slabs, stock the fridge and then jump in the car and go home. Those kids are there in high spirits. They have just finished their many years at school and they are left on their own

without supervision. That is the nub of this bill—that is, if they are under 18 and they do want to have a drink, if they have a drink under the supervision of their family or a responsible adult then it is allowable but not under any other circumstance. This bill has a lot of common sense and will be good for young people.

It is not just schoolies week that we should be looking at when talking about this issue but other parties that get out of hand in streets and in suburbs and so forth. This bill is looking to combat the genesis of that problem as well. If there is going to be a party and kids turn up of all ages from 16 through to 19 or 20 and there is no proper supervision and no proper responsibility taken, that is when these parties turn ugly. This is a terrible trend of our time. There are so many good kids in our community. The vast bulk of kids are just wonderful. We go to school speech nights and shake our heads in awe at their ability, their talent, their responsibility and their self-discipline. But these other events are occurring more and more often—events to which the police are called, the police are outnumbered and fights start spilling out onto the streets. I have spoken before in this parliament about one that occurred in the suburb of Kearney Springs in Toowoomba where neighbours were hit with palings and all sorts of things happened.

In the past, drinking parties have got out of hand where there has not been enough parental supervision. Now of course in the electronic age with mobile phones they can ring or SMS and before you know it 10, 20 or 30 car loads arrive and the whole thing gets out of hand. It is up to families and adults to be responsible, but sadly the reason we often need to pass laws in this parliament is that people do not bear that responsibility. Laws are there in an endeavour to get, if you like, the percentage of error down. It is a bit like Rugby League in that there is always going to be a certain number of errors in the game. Even Jack Gibson could not coach errors out of Rugby League. There have to be rules and guidelines to try to get to the absolute minimum in terms of the number of errors and indiscretions that occur, and that is what this bill is about.

Most importantly, this bill is about giving our young people at that vulnerable age around the 17-year-old mark some protection so that they can make the transition to adulthood safely and carefully in order to reach their potential and so that they do not fall off a balcony, that they do not get knocked over and end up in a spinal ward, that they do not have an unwanted pregnancy and that they do not have a terribly unhappy schoolies week or an unhappy party they attend, but rather they have a good time and a safe time through their later teenage years guided by responsible adults and responsible parents. That is what this is about. Sometimes it takes an amount of discipline that is applied through legislation to make that happen.

We all know that sometimes policing of these issues can be exceptionally hard. It is hard enough to control policing in a licensed environment. Generally speaking, publicans are very responsible. However, the policing of this sort of thing in a home environment or a private party environment is even more difficult. Where a party gets out of hand and the police are called, I believe this legislation would be a deterrent. I believe this legislation would be a great asset to schoolies week, particularly for all of those good organisers who endeavour to provide other activities so that the kids have a great time celebrating the end of their school years in a safe way. Also, this sort of legislation would be another way of making parents and the system of parenting that much more responsible.

We often hear of parenting courses and how important they are. People might ask themselves, 'Why do we have to have parenting courses?' It is a fact of life that many young people do not grow up in the circumstances of having a mother and father who can teach them and show them good ways of growing up. Instead, they grow up in a system that is dysfunctional and so they need the parenting course. Those sorts of things are good to assist our society and to assist young families.

Something like this is an excellent idea. I would like to ask everyone in this parliament to give it proper consideration. It is about protecting our young. It is about enabling our young people to have a happy, enjoyable and celebratory time. It is sensible legislation. It is practical because it is based on legislation in other states. It has the support of the Drug and Alcohol Foundation. It has the support of the people who organise schoolies week and I am sure this would have the support of all good, responsible parents and adults throughout Queensland who want to do the right thing by our young people. I urge the House to give this every consideration.

Ms van LITSENBURG (Redcliffe—ALP) (8.00 pm): I rise to oppose the Liquor (Restriction of Supply to Minors) Amendment Bill. I am pleased to have an opportunity to contribute to this debate. In common with other members, I continue to be extremely concerned about reports of destructive, dangerous binge drinking by young people. We have all witnessed too many lives lost and destroyed by excessive, irresponsible alcohol consumption. This has been reflected in our road toll over the last year or so when our young people have died as a result of a combination of drinking and speed. However, in his bill, the member for Surfers Paradise has failed to appreciate the complexities and subtleties of secondary supply of alcohol by parents. The bill presents a blunt, unsophisticated response to a matter that is of grave concern to the community. However, it is worse than that. The bill risks destroying an opportunity to find real long-term solutions to under-age drinking by alienating and penalising parents.

The vast majority of parents are dedicated to the safety and wellbeing of their children. No parent wishes to see their child injured or killed as a result of a drinking session or party gone awry. I expect that simply telling parents they commit an offence by giving their teenagers alcohol and prescribing how parents will supervise their children in their own home would be seen as offensive and naive by many responsible parents. If parents are making misguided, ill-informed decisions about alcohol and their children, government needs to consider opportunities to educate and support parents to make safer decisions.

In any sensible debate about this issue we cannot overlook the significant cultural role that alcohol plays in our community. Some parents do feel pressured to allow their teenagers to consume alcohol. Some parents perhaps mistakenly consider they can retain some control over their children's safety if they supply their children with a limited amount of alcohol. These are real issues and considerations for parents. We need a strategic long-term approach which includes a cultural change on how we view alcohol. Simply creating a new offence and penalty for parents, as proposed in this bill, is not the solution. Government cannot solve this issue on its own and needs to engage with parents in a meaningful way. While some form of legislative sanction may be appropriate in extreme circumstances, we cannot risk the goodwill of parents by simply introducing a broad, sweeping offence with no regard to the pressures that parents face and the cultural role of alcohol in our community.

I have followed media reports regarding the progress of the Youth Violence Task Force with interest and am aware the task force will be making submissions regarding Queensland's liquor laws. I expect that, comprising community and government members, the task force will develop recommendations that reflect a robust consideration of alcohol in the community. The current bill, on the other hand, presents a response that is simplistic and limited. I have no doubt the government will carefully consider the important work conducted by the Youth Violence Task Force and its recommendations for reform. I look forward to learning more about the findings of the Youth Violence Task Force in the coming months. In the circumstances, I am compelled to oppose this bill.

Ms BARRY (Aspley—ALP) (8.07 pm): I also rise to oppose the Liquor (Restriction of Supply to Minors) Amendment Bill. I want to put on the record, with an excuse for my cynicism, that I fear that this bill is more about headline grabbing rather than a practical goal of achievable solutions to the under-age drinking problems. This bill, if it is enacted, would create an offence to supply alcohol to a minor in all circumstances, all venues and at all times with the exception where that supply is by a parent, a step-parent, the child's guardian or particularly a person who has parental responsibility who can provide alcohol to a minor as long as they responsibly supervise them. I want to talk a bit in detail about those particular aspects of this bill and why it is so indiscriminate in its application, ill considered in its required enforcement and, I believe, poorly consulted on in the broader community.

For all its honourable-sounding motives I am afraid that it is an opportunistic and cynical approach to the real problems of under-age drinking. I suspect the honourable member knows full well that the bill will be rejected by the government and he will most likely claim that those who vote against this bill do not care about the kids and the problems of under-age alcohol abuse and the tragedies that arise from it. However, I refute that absolutely. This bill is rejected because it creates problems and not solutions. Let us just walk through some of the problems with the bill.

For instance, for this bill to work, the enforcement officers would need to be in our homes, our hotels, our parks and our private venues overseeing the activities that families are engaged in. Is this impractical? Absolutely. The breadth of the charter is too broad and it is subjective and time consuming. Is it invasive? Absolutely. How will the enforcers target which houses they will go to and what intelligence will be used with respect to their targets? To work, every adult, not an official guardian identified as having parental rights or a guardian, will be open to the charge under the bill for any alcohol supplied to a minor. It is full of real problems. No more is sensible adult negotiation available to anyone other than an official guardian and parent. For example, aunts, uncles, grandmas and grandpas are all potentially able to be charged with giving their nieces, nephews and grandkids any amount of alcohol. I am disappointed to say there goes my sister's fantastic port-soaked trifle at Christmas.

We can imagine that that is not what the honourable member intended with this bill, but it is possible in this bill's truest application and that is the challenge that faces the honourable member here. I ask the honourable member to demonstrate where family members other than a minor's parents, step-parent or guardian as identified in clause 5(b)—those people who have parental rights and responsibilities—have the right to exercise adult decision-making processes with respect to the supply of alcohol to minors. Put it simply, I am an aunt; I have a lot to do with my nephews. If I wanted to give my 17-year-old nephew a glass of wine—a sip of champers—in my house and he reported that to somebody because he might want to brag and it was investigated, then I am at risk of being charged under this legislation. People say that is not possible, but we are in politics and we all have enemies. Under this legislation I am, as my nephew's aunt—

Mr Rickuss: Haven't you read the bill?

Ms BARRY: Yes, let me get to that and I will explain it to you—for all intents and purposes not a responsible adult. The only defence under proposed section 155A(2) is a person who is a responsible adult.

A 'responsible adult' is a minor's parent, step-parent or guardian who has parental rights and responsibilities for the minor. As members know, I am not a lawyer but I think I can work my way through legislation. So I had a little look at this. The Child Protection Act in Queensland refers the definition of 'parental responsibility' to the Commonwealth Family Law Act 1975. Section 61A of that act deals with what is parental responsibility and who has parental responsibility. Parental responsibility in relation to a child means all the duties, powers, responsibility and authority which by law parents have in relation to children. Section 61C outlines that each parent has parental responsibility, subject to court orders where a parenting order is conferred by a court, and it confers parental responsibility for a child on a person. Section 61E refers to the effect of adoption and outlines in subsections 1 and 2 how adoption affects parental responsibility. Section 61F talks about the application to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

After going through all of that, my conclusion is that, quite clearly, as Auntie Bonny I am not a responsible adult. I hope the honourable member will tell me that his bill is not intended to lock up wayward aunts, uncles and grandparents. In fact, I hope he does that, because if he does I will know for sure that this legislation before the House is indeed ill considered and opportunistic.

The challenge for all of us here is to deliver to the people of Queensland practical and considered legislation that does not result in the potential for many hundreds of people being caught out in unlawful practices unintentionally or not. Nor should it be legislation that removes common-sense adult decision making and replaces it with unreasonable and impractical rules of state within the boundaries of family decision making. I have to say that I am a bit worried that the member for Surfers Paradise might be a socialist in disguise.

The bill also requires the seller of liquor to adults to somehow know responsibly that a person intends—

Mr Gibson interjected.

Ms BARRY: Listen and learn. Be calm. Somehow that person who is a seller has to reasonably know that another person intends to supply liquor to a minor. I look forward to hearing the member for Surfers Paradise explain what strategies will be available to bottle shop and hotel liquor store workers for them to flush out these offenders to protect them from the risk of prosecution. Should the presence of children in the buyer's car be the giveaway? Maybe all adults who purchase ready-to-drink products such as a chocolate vodka mudslide, a breezer or slammer may be suspect because, in my view, no self-respecting adult drinks these drinks. Or are all adults on the coast during schoolies suspect—and I suspect most of them would be. I have just decided that all middle-aged people with exhausted looks on their faces and worn-out credit cards could well be identified as parents of teenagers and should be interrogated for all such offences. I know that is all a bit ridiculous and a bit funny, but quite frankly it is unworthy legislation to be before the House on such a serious matter.

I have not supplied my children—all four of them—with alcohol for parties away from home or during schoolies. I do not think that parents should. I have a strong view that, as parents, teaching our children to say no to alcohol before they are 18 is the best lesson that we can give them. I think it is important that we give our children strategies to deal with peer pressure in relation to alcohol consumption at all ages. Parenting is challenging and as a community and as individual parents we should support each other in eliminating the practice of supplying alcohol to minors at times such as schoolies and parties.

This legislation does nothing but criminalise the issue. I think the honourable member cares deeply about kids and he is distressed by the dreadful yearly ritual of alcohol abuse in his electorate each year at schoolies and is committed to solving the problem. However, he needs to be true to his convictions and work with us to deliver practical and sustainable legislation on the matter of under-age drinking. It is worthy of much harder, considered work than the bill before the House. I urge honourable members to reject the bill while acknowledging the underlying aspirations of the member for Surfers Paradise to eliminate the distress caused by alcohol abuse by minors.

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—Lib) (8.14 pm): It gives me great pleasure to speak in support of this bill. At the outset I make it very clear that, through this bill, the honourable member is putting in place a train of action whereby young adults can progress to adulthood with a proper understanding of alcohol—the impacts, the downsides and, indeed, the upsides. The member has put together a bill that is going to make everybody think about what we need to do to ensure that young people progress successfully to adulthood and then beyond.

However, we should take the time to read the minister's contribution to the second reading debate of 6 June. I sat here and listened to it and then I read it again tonight. I thought, 'Any moment now she will stand up and apologise because she had no idea what this bill was about.' She had absolutely no concept of what this bill was about and on not one occasion during her 10 minutes did she make a salient point, a reference of any value or any true note. The minister made some ludicrous suggestion

that the police were going to be raiding rooms of family homes, that parents would be taken outside if they supplied a glass of Bailey's to their child, or left the dining room to go to the kitchen leaving a glass of white wine sitting upon the table. What an absolute load of rubbish!

If the minister had taken the time to read the second reading speech of the honourable member, she would have learned very quickly that the bill is all about amending the act to make it illegal for anyone, except a responsible adult, to supply alcohol to anyone under the age of 18 in private residences. The bill is not the rubbish that she portrayed it to be, clearly without any knowledge or understanding of its intent or terms. The minister rambled on for 10 minutes and made absolutely no sense. The bill is a very serious attempt by the member to try to put in train a series of policy initiatives that will help our young people.

During the minister's contribution to the second reading debate she asked the rather ludicrous question of how licensees and bottle shop staff would be able to detect whether an adult intended to provide some or all of the alcohol purchased to their teenage children. Of course if the minister had bothered to read the legislation she would find that it states that, if a person knows or ought to reasonably know that a person is going to supply alcohol to a minor, that person commits an offence. That is a perfectly reasonable clause that exists in hundreds of pieces of legislation in Queensland. Of course, it is based upon all the circumstances and all the facts seen in an objective light to establish whether a person has breached the terms of the legislation.

The minister then goes on to take a cheap shot at the member himself by saying that he did not appear at the relevant conference that she held on the Gold Coast but was there via his electorate officer. The minister then turned to the issue of the Liquor Licensing Division. The Liquor Licensing Division in this state protects young people from alcohol being served to them before they turn 18 years of age. But, of course, the minister is quite well aware that her own division has complained about a lack of staffing and resourcing in her department. In fact, I table a report of 21 August 2006 signed by a number of people from her department that outlines a litany of problems that her department has not been able to deal with nor has she been able to deal with—issues such as providing equipment as basic as mobile telephones to officers in Brisbane so that there is not one mobile telephone for 12 or 13 officers, the basic idea of having a database so that officers can access urgently any information required to prosecute their tasks, a sufficient number of pool cars to cater for additional staff, interview rooms and technology for officers to be able to respond to concerns that they deal with on a day-to-day basis.

Tabled paper: Memo, dated 21 August 2006, from Brisbane Based Compliance Officers, Department of Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development to Chris Waters, Executive Director, Liquor Licensing Division regarding understaffing.

The minister has failed to acknowledge—and the member has brought this issue to the attention of the House—that we face a real problem in this state with under-age boys and girls drinking heavily at schoolies and at parties. This member has put together a bill to try to attack that issue. Yet the minister, without having any knowledge at all of the issues, ridiculed the bill. On reading her speech, you glean what from it? That she has to be reading the wrong bill to make some of the inane comments that she made in her speech. It made absolutely no sense whatsoever.

This bill is aimed at parents who abrogate their responsibilities. This bill is aimed at providing a source for children to grow into adults and to understand and comprehend the dangers and the benefits of alcohol. Maybe if such legislation had been in place years ago we would not have seen Matthew Stanley dead at 15 years of age. We would not have seen David Stevens dead at 26 years of age or Nigel Lee dead at 31 years of age. They were all young men—one was only 15 years of age—who died as a consequence of alcohol-induced trauma. Maybe if this parliament and this government had already put together a bill that had protected those men, as well as other young men and women, they would not be dead today. Yet the government condemns the honourable member for Surfers Paradise for putting together a bill that attempts to address these very major issues.

The bill is all about education. The bill is all about providing our children with the necessities to cope with what they go through in the teenage years and into adulthood. It also very clearly puts into perspective the fact that parents have to be responsible. They simply cannot supply alcohol to their children and expect to walk away from their responsibilities and liabilities. If they supply alcohol to their children but then do not look after them, under the terms of the bill they will be liable to penalties. That is what this is all about, rather than the drivel that we heard from the minister.

Let us take a feather out of the federal government's cap. It has have taken the bull by the horns and acknowledged that there are problems in the Northern Territory that need to be addressed. Why are we so gutless that we will not to take the initiative ourselves? It is because the people on the other side of the House do not want to take the issue on. They hide behind words and phrases, and will not confront the issues eyeball to eyeball. That is why we have these problems in the state at this point in time.

Until the government learns to deal with the issues and come up with solutions, as opposed to running down a member's bill that tries to do the right thing, we will face these problems day in and day out. It is a good bill and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RICKUSS (Lockyer—NPA) (8.22 pm): I rise to speak to the Liquor (Restriction of Supply to Minors) Amendment Bill 2007, introduced to the House by the honourable member for Surfers Paradise. Having listened to the contribution of the honourable member for Aspley, I must confess that I am at a bit of a loss. She referred to the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act and its definition of a responsible adult. However, that definition is a carbon copy of the definition of a responsible adult under this bill. The government passed the tobacco legislation that uses the same definition for responsible adults. I do not know what planet the member is on.

I have a real worry with under-age drinking and it is a point that the member for Gympie raised. A 15-year-old who becomes involved in drinking is four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than a 21-year-old. That is a staggering figure. In the period between 1993 and 2000, 2,650 15- to 24-year-olds were involved in alcohol related injuries. Those figures are absolutely staggering. I fully support somehow restricting under-age people from getting involved with alcohol. I honestly do not know why parents feel it is okay to supply a heap of grog to youngsters of only 16 or 17 years who are staying together in a unit, even if one of them is 18. If one or two of them are 18, it does not mean that the other four or five should be getting into the grog. It does not make a lot of sense.

I heard the minister's speech two months ago on 6 June and I was astounded at what I heard. I have to agree with the member for Caloundra: I do not know what bill she was reading. It certainly did not sound like the Liquor (Restriction of Supply to Minors) Amendment Bill introduced by the member for Surfers Paradise.

I fully support the bill. Any fair-minded person in the public or in the parliament would also support the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (8.24 pm): I rise to speak on and oppose the Liquor (Restrictions of Supply to Minors) Amendment Bill 2007. I start by stating the objectives that the bill proposes to achieve, which is to amend the Liquor Act 1992 to restrict the potential supply of alcohol to minors in private places such as holiday apartments. While all of us in this House can understand and support the sentiment of that statement, the fact remains that neither is the bill practical nor is it the answer to the problem that it is trying to address. It is not just me that believes that this is not a practical solution needed to curb under-age binge drinking.

I took the bill to the Liquor Industry Action Group Logan Corridor and asked for the members to give me their views on it. The Liquor Industry Action Group Logan Corridor consists of pubs and clubs managers and staff, security providers, officers from Logan City Council and Relationships Australia, liquor licensing officers and my parliamentary colleagues the member for Waterford and the member for Woodridge. Also, a large contingent of police officers that represent various locations throughout Logan and a variety of branches within the Queensland service also attend those meetings.

The feedback I received was that the bill would be impractical. I will read one of the comments. It states—

I've read the amendment bill regarding minors. There is no way in a pink fit this could be passed. It's impossible to manage.

Those words reflected the majority of comment made to me when I asked for feedback on the bill.

However, everyone does agree that under-age binge drinking is a problem throughout the country. Firstly, I think it is important to put into context the problem that this bill deals with. The liquor licensing web site states that young people are being recognised nationally as the group most at risk for alcohol misuse, with 42 per cent of males and 39 per cent of females aged 18 to 24 years drinking at risky levels, and 14 per cent of males and 10 per cent of females aged 14 to 17 years drinking at high-risk levels, with a further 27 per cent of males and 34 per cent of females in that age group drinking at risky levels. Some of the impacts of risky drinking on young people include road injuries, water related deaths and injuries, domestic violence and abuse, sexual coercion and violence.

What is Queensland actually doing to combat this problem? The Queensland Alcohol Action Plan is one step that the Queensland government has implemented to tackle alcohol misuse in minors. The Queensland government is committed to continued education and information based campaigns that target transitional development periods when young people are more vulnerable to high-risk alcohol use, such as the 12- to 14-year-old and the 17- to 18-year-old age groups.

As such, a priority under the Queensland Alcohol Action Plan is the development and implementation of programs that enhance protective factors and reduce risk factors in young people to prevent alcohol misuse and reduce alcohol related harm through both general and targeted strategies. What are some of those strategies?

We can look at the GENERATE youth web site, which is an online mechanism that has information, connection and discussions between young people and government, including alcohol and drug issues. We have the Queensland School Drug Education strategies and school based youth health nurses program.

An opposition member: It doesn't work, though.

Ms STONE: There is the Croc Festival, which encourages young Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians from rural and remote communities to take control of their lives, to focus on positive future goals and make healthy choices through a three-day festival that embraces health, careers, culture, education, sports, visual and performing arts. Young people, their communities, governments and non-government agencies are involved in the development and production of the festival.

I heard a member of the opposition say that the school based nurses program is not working. Obviously, that member has never been out to the schools to see those school based nurses. I have gone to my high schools and sat down with the school based nurses. I have gone into the classrooms with them and seen the programs that they are running. They are doing a wonderful job in our schools. I congratulate the school based nurses. Unlike the opposition, I appreciate what they are doing.

I attend the activities at the high schools in my area and something that I am passionate about is our schoolies week education strategy. Every year I go to the schools as a representative of the Liquor Industry Action Group, usually in partnership with the police. Sometimes we ask the local publican to speak at those classroom activities. He or she actually explains to the students what their responsibilities are as publicans to ensure that they do not have under-age drinkers on hand. They tell the students about the penalties that they receive if they do not comply. The students then get another perspective on this issue. The police and I talk about the Liquor Act, but we also bring up some of the most stupid incidents that occur at schoolies and most of them are usually alcohol related. We talk of how some of those people now have criminal records and how much that has ruined their future. So we are able to speak with those grade 12 students about a range of issues.

One thing that the Liquor Industry Action Group wants to do more of—and we have done this in the past—is to speak to grade 12 students in the beginning of the year about the liquor laws, because we feel that waiting for schoolies is a bit too late. We would rather use schoolies to go back and reinforce the message that they would have already been given in the beginning of the year. What I really like about this classroom activity with schoolies at the end of the year is not just giving these talks but also hearing their views on issues that are important to them—an issue such as this, for example. Hearing their views is so informative, especially in a debate like this one.

The bill seems to have an emphasis on parents. While no-one would deny that more parental responsibility on issues such as under-age binge drinking would be a good thing and is warranted, it does not really emphasise that it is not just parents who are supplying alcohol to minors. When we speak to young people they will tell you that older friends and older brothers and sisters are getting alcohol for them. This also came out in the Safe Youth Parties Task Force. During the Safe Youth Parties Task Force I held a small forum with a number of students from high schools in my area.

Mr Gibson interjected.

Ms STONE: Madam Deputy Speaker, I can barely hear myself giving this speech and I am getting most unparliamentary language from this side of the House.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Ms STONE: Okay, now we have some manners back. During the Safe Youth Parties Task Force I held a small forum with a number of students from high schools in my area. I must admit that some of them had some very interesting ideas. One group would like to see a wine appreciation class. They believe that, while we are a nation with a beer-swilling, heavy-drinking culture, perhaps it is time to refine this and teach about the finer points of wine. They were very keen to talk about France and its views on wine.

The other point they made was that they were often introduced to alcohol at home with a glass of champagne for a birthday toast. While some of them were given alcohol on special occasions at home during their teens, they believed it assisted them to learn more about the refined side of enjoying alcohol and that it went a long way towards their knowledge and their education on responsible drinking. I had this experience as a child, and I must say that responsible drinking was certainly impressed on me. It was also a bit of a novelty as a teenager to have a sip of champagne like the adults and toast the birthday person. But it also meant at 18 that it was not a novelty to go to a pub and try all the drinks, because I had already had that experience with alcohol—and probably because my mum and nanna worked in the hotel industry I had very good experience with some of the drinks. I think we should acknowledge that parents can educate their kids about responsible drinking in their homes in a sensible and safe manner.

The state government is also looking at this issue as part of the review of the Liquor Act. It is important that the act is balanced with regard to the liquor industry and the welfare, needs and interests of the industry. We have liquor trading conditions that are monitored. I know that the Tactical Crime Squad in the Logan area does targeted operations in local pubs and clubs. I have had parents complain to me about their kids being fined. There is really nothing to say about that. Their kids should not have been there.

I also have a very nice story to tell. I had a parent tell me about their son who was fined for sitting in the park having a stubbie. A police car came from a bush track, appeared from nowhere and the kids were fined for having a stubbie in the park. I rang and congratulated the police officer. I said, 'Thank you very much. Can we do more?' So we are enforcing our laws on under-age drinking.

The other thing I would like to say is that the major difference—and I am talking about some fun remarks regarding our drinking at home—is that we did not have the violence and the parties that we see these days. That is the difference. I want to acknowledge Senior Constable Grant Sampson from Loganholme Police Station who was seriously injured in a gutless and cowardly assault from a person gatecrashing a party. I know all Queenslanders are thinking of him during his recovery and wish him a full and speedy recovery.

It is this type of incident that goes to the heart of this bill. That is why I do not believe this bill is the answer. I have called on the Premier, the Minister for Health, the Minister for Communities and minister for youth, and the minister for fair trading to implement a campaign that says no to violence—not no to domestic violence but no to violence full stop. That is why I cannot support this bill.

Mr GRAY (Gaven—ALP) (8.34 pm): I recognise from the outset the fine intent—and I mean it sincerely—of the member for Surfers Paradise in bringing this bill before the House. I, like the member for Surfers Paradise, abhor the images of teenage drinking binges that we see not just at schoolies but also continually throughout this country. This is not a Queensland problem; this is an Australian problem. I know alcohol is the greatest drug problem that we have in this country. It is worse than all of the rest put together, and it is about time we realise that and we stop—

Mrs Sullivan interjected.

Mr GRAY: I take that interjection about people occupying our hospitals. We have a good and enforceable set of laws that apply to that. We recognise that alcohol is a major problem in this country.

If this bill were able to be enforced and operational I would support it, but I cannot and so I must oppose it in its current form. I wish this bill were the silver bullet to this problem, but it is not. The attack that the government should make upon the problem of abuse of alcohol is one that should be far ranging. We have heard from other honourable members here tonight a range of strategies that have been employed throughout our schools and the community to try to rein in the abuse of alcohol.

Some of us might get stuck into the grog on the odd occasion in front of our children. I have not drunk for 10 years, and I have done that deliberately. Alcohol has not crossed my lips for 10 years, but I am no saint and it did before then. I had a health scare and I think a lot more Australians are having health scares and they are realising the dangers of drink. Like many Australians, I have type 2 diabetes and the last thing I want to do is consume volumes of alcohol. I would suggest that all of those who are going to say that this is the silver bullet to curing the problem of binge drinking ought to remind their children of the long-term effects of alcohol which are indescribable. The impact that this has upon ordinary Australians is there each and every night on the television news and in the newspapers.

When we look at this legislation, though, we in this parliament have a responsibility to ensure that legislation is both practical and responsible before it passes in this place. This bill fails both tests. It is impractical for those officers charged with enforcing it and it unreasonably interferes in the business of families. I agree that families are part of the culture of drinking and poor examples within families encourage drinking at a later age.

This bill makes it an offence for an adult to provide alcohol to a minor—that is wonderful and sounds good—unless that adult is the child's guardian or responsibly supervises the minor at all times, whatever that may mean. We have been given some illustrations of what it might mean. If this bill is passed, a responsible parent may be committing an offence if they give their teenager a glass of wine over the dining room table and then removes themselves to the kitchen to wash up. Where does supervision end? It is not reasonable and enforcement is impractical. We have to change the drinking culture within Australia. The federal government has to take a lead role in this and look at the advertising of alcohol within this country. It does not want to tackle that problem. It is a major revenue raiser for this country, so the federal government has a problem in terms of tackling that major concern.

The idea that Liquor Licensing officers will be invading the lounge rooms, holiday apartments and backyards of suburban Brisbane, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Cairns, Ipswich or wherever to detect these new offences creates a comical image in one's mind. Or at least it might be funny if it did not represent a manifest waste of the time and resources of our Liquor Licensing officers and police.

The bill also creates an offence for licensees and their employees to sell alcohol to adults who they ought reasonably to know intend to provide that alcohol to a minor. Give us a break. How do they decide that when they are in a busy takeaway liquor premises and people are queued up in cars? Selling tobacco and selling alcohol are very different. They are sold in different places—in the same places at times—and those people have to make judgments. This goes beyond that reasonable judgement to 'ought reasonably to know'. I guess the bottle-shop attendant is expected to interrogate everyone who walks into their store, or perhaps is expected to simply apply stereotypes and discriminate against young adults by only interrogating them.

In reality, we have no idea how a bottle-shop attendant could know what purpose their customers have when they make a purchase. It is even more difficult to imagine how Liquor Licensing officers are expected to go about obtaining evidence. In that regard, the bill is not practical. It is as simple as that. Another possibility is that the bill represents that symbol of wasteful, lazy policy development—legislation no-one expects to be enforced. The member must think it is okay for the bill to create these offences using very vague terms because the detail can be sorted out by compliance officers. The trouble is that the bill is not very vague. It would be better if it was. It is very clear. Clause 6 creates an offence to supply liquor to a minor in any circumstances except those listed in subclause 2. There is not a lot of room to move for interpretation in this bill.

The government cannot solve all the problems associated with under-age drinking on its own. We need to engage with parents in a meaningful way rather than try to criminalise them. I am very concerned that this bill will contribute to the problem of under-age drinking rather than solving it. The Beattie government is committed to examining practical, reasonable options for dealing with these issues of under-age drinking, including secondary supply. The bill does not pass that test. I cannot support it.

Mr WEIGHTMAN (Cleveland—ALP) (8.42 pm): I rise to speak to the Liquor (Restriction of Supply to Minors) Amendment Bill 2007. The proposed amendments proffered by the member for Surfers Paradise are aimed at controlling the very real and complex social problem of youth drinking. The unfortunate reality is that the bill does not address the real issues. What it does do is create a logistical nightmare with regard to the policing of some sections of the bill. As I have previously said, under-age drinking and the subsequent associated violence and unsociable behaviour is a complex social issue requiring a variety of layered strategies to deal with it. I am not convinced that this bill does this.

The Beattie government has taken giant strides in addressing binge drinking, in particular amongst young people in Queensland. We have a Brisbane City Safety Action Plan and a Statewide Safety Action Plan which is about protecting Queenslanders. We have banned drinking competitions on licensed premises. It is a serious breach of the Liquor Act to promote the rapid and dangerous consumption of alcohol by patrons. We have formed a liquor flying squad for quick deployment across the state. Police and Liquor Licensing have dramatically ramped up compliance blitzes across Queensland and they are having some results.

Sometimes we have to protect people from themselves. Sometimes we have to quell youthful exuberance that can lead to trouble because of the misuse of alcohol. As other members have said, we need to change the Aussie drinking culture. I am not saying for a moment that people should not drink, but they do need to start taking responsibility for their own actions. The responsibility of getting the message across starts with us, the parents. Many of us have provided alcohol to our children and it may be to ease them into drinking. After all, drinking in a controlled environment in a controlled way should be acceptable. Unfortunately, too often we slip into uncontrolled areas and that is where the problems arise.

There are already stiff penalties for breaches of the Liquor Act for licensees and anybody else. A licensee can lose his or her licence for supplying alcohol to minors on premises. They can be fined up to \$18,750 per offence for supplying alcohol on licensed premises. People other than licensees can be fined up to \$3,000 for supplying alcohol to minors on premises or for consumption in public places. It is more likely that they will receive a \$600 on-the-spot fine though. Minors are likely to cop a \$225 on-the-spot fine for drinking on licensed premises or in public places. There is no offence for drinking in private residences and at this time I think that should remain so. We do not need to adopt such a Big Brother approach. This is not a granny state. The government should not be telling parents whether they can give their kids a drink, when and where. It is not our role. But it is the role of parents, as I said, to accept their responsibility as parents and to teach their kids responsibility when it comes to consuming alcohol. Parents have a responsibility and the young people need to accept responsibility for their own actions. After all, their life may depend on it.

The death of Matthew Stanley nearly 12 months ago did have an alcohol component, but it was not the sole factor. Youth drinking is a cultural problem and requires a cultural shift. In my humble opinion, this legislation does not do that and therefore, based on that, I cannot support this bill.

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—Lib) (8.46 pm): I cannot believe what I am hearing in this chamber tonight. This is an epidemic. This is one of the great social issues that challenges this country today. The member for Springwood quoted the figures. This is an epidemic where a large portion of young people in this country and in this state are consuming risky amounts of alcohol and we are doing nothing about it.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Dr FLEGG: I should not need to go through, for the people in this place, the effects of alcohol on young people. Young people are susceptible to the effects of alcohol. We see it in areas of trauma, with falls, drownings and road trauma. It is a factor in teenage suicide and it is a significant factor in assaults. In fact, this issue has come to public attention largely because of the effects of alcohol in relation to assaults at youth parties when tragically people are killed.

It is incredible that people on the other side of the House think that this is some sort of joke. Every one of those members on the other side of the House has a significant problem in their electorate with this and they think it is some sort of joke.

Mr Swarten interjected.

Dr FLEGG: Particularly the member for Rockhampton who is having trouble keeping quite on the other side.

Mr Swarten interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the House, you will need to return to your seat if you want to keep interjecting.

Dr FLEGG: Young people exposed to alcohol under-age are much more likely to develop substance abuse problems and addiction. The human brain develops through adolescence. Adolescents are much more vulnerable to the psychological and mental health effects of alcohol, including learning and memory impairment. They are less sensitive to the sedative effects which means that they can drink more, they can get in and drive vehicles and they can indulge in other sorts of risky behaviour.

It should not be a surprise to one single person in this House that alcohol is probably the biggest single factor in serious risk-taking behaviour. That is something that we cannot pick up.

Mrs Sullivan: You drive us to drink.

Dr FLEGG: It is interesting that the member for Pumicestone is interjecting and thinks that this is some sort of joke. I worked for many years in her electorate and I can tell the member for Pumicestone that she has a serious problem in her electorate. Assaults are an every day event in the member for Pumicestone's electorate. Many of the under-age assaults are due to the problems with alcohol that she thinks are such a joke that she interjects.

One such assault led to the tragic death of Matthew Stanley and led to the creation in Queensland of the youth violence task force. Matthew Stanley was killed outside an out-of-control youth party. That is something that we see every weekend in Queensland. The youth violence task force—which members on this side were not invited to be members of but had representatives from the other side of the House and community people—recommended the measures that are contained in this bill. The government's own appointed youth task force recommended the measures contained in this bill.

We have heard people on the other side of the House who have not even read this bill, such as the member for Gaven, talk about parents being criminals for handing a glass of wine to their children across the dining room table. Read the bill. The bill says that parents, guardians or responsible adults can share a drink with juniors or minors but other people cannot.

If we walk out of this place into the real world that is what people expect. People do not expect that their 15-, 16- and 17-year-olds are going to be dished up alcohol by some youth on a street corner or somebody other than their parents. That is what the community in Queensland wants. We should be serious about ensuring people do not drink alcohol under the legal age of 18 unless they are doing so with a parent or a responsible adult.

I heard it said on the other side of the House that we need to change social attitudes in this state and we need to change social attitudes in this nation. I could not agree more. I have four boys who have all gone through their teenage years. I have been through schools and I know what happens as I am sure many people here do. The tolerance that has developed in this society for institutionalised under-age drinking is unacceptable.

Do members know that if we want to change those social attitudes it starts here. It starts with the people in this chamber who put their hands up to be leaders in their communities. They should be prepared to go back to their communities and say, 'We have an epidemic. We have a serious problem. We see young people's lives ruined. We even see people loss their lives. We want to set a standard in this place.' That is what should happen. I cannot believe what I am hearing tonight.

It is members here who are required to take a lead in changing community attitudes. What we have heard from the other side is that somehow or other it is acceptable that children can obtain alcohol virtually anywhere as long as it is not on licensed premises. What is being said by those on the other side is that juniors and children should be responsible for policing themselves. I am sorry but that is wrong. This community does not accept that. It is adults, parents, members of parliament and opinion makers that should be saying, 'We have to do something about this.'

We have heard from those on the other side that the main reason for not doing something about this serious problem that everybody in our community is calling for action on is that we cannot enforce it. I am not so sure that a degree of enforcement could not be achieved. But it is a case for setting a standard and saying, 'It is wrong for young people to be given intoxicating amounts of alcohol.'

The argument about enforcement is trotted out whenever people want to stop good measures. If we said that we could not enforce the speed limit on isolated country roads so we should not have a law we would say that that is nonsense. What about tobacco? How many convictions do we get concerning the tobacco laws? It is important to ban the sale of tobacco to young people. What is more, under existing law in Queensland we cannot buy tobacco and give it to an under-age person but we can go out and get them absolutely pissed on liquor legally. We have one law for alcohol and we have a totally different one for liquor. That is absolute nonsense. We have a law for tobacco because we want to protect young people. We want to protect young people from alcohol. We want a law that does that. Wimping it is absolute rubbish.

I have heard the enforceability argument used to justify the legalising of drugs as well—drugs should be legal because we cannot enforce the law. It is drivel. As soon as we change the law to legalise drugs because we are not catching everybody the social attitude to drugs will end up weakening and we will have the same attitude we have to alcohol.

This is great legislation. The member for Surfers Paradise, who can see the problems in his electorate, is to be congratulated for trying to bring some common sense to this that the parents of this state would cheer for. The reality in the state of Queensland is that minors should not be being plied with alcohol unless their parents or a responsible adult is present. It is a hard decision. It goes against the culture in some parts of Queensland. I am sorry but that culture of under-age drinking is wrong and it is costing lives. We want to do something about it. The member for Surfers Paradise has tried to do something about it. I support that and will be voting for this legislation.

Mr DICKSON (Kawana—Lib) (8.57 pm): I rise to speak in the debate on the Liquor (Restriction of Supply to Minors) Amendment Bill 2007.

Government members interjected.

Mr DICKSON: I love the crowd here. It really spurs me on. It is fabulous. Thank you for coming. The topic we have to touch on for a start is the effect that alcohol has on our children. Most of us have children and those who do not probably will have one day or are working on it. What we do by letting our youth get hold of alcohol is create a major problem. They could probably lose their lives. We have discussed that a lot tonight. They go out with their young friends.

We have problems in my electorate of Kawana, particularly around Mooloolaba. They hang around the loo with a view and get absolutely smashed. The parents are responsible to a point. A lot of parents are supplying young children with alcohol. It is not 17- and 16-year-olds but 12- and 13-year-olds. Members should get their heads around that. That is what is happening.

We have a fellow in Maroochydore shire called Pat Quinn. I used to go out with him on night duty every now and then. We would be picking kids up from sporting fields and off beaches and taking them to the watch-house or taking them back to their parents. This is going on not just in my area but in every area in Queensland if not Australia. It is a major topic.

I commend the member for Surfers Paradise for bringing this forward. Regardless of which side of politics one is on, this is about the kids of Queensland. That is where we can make a difference. We cannot make a difference in the rest of Australia but we can help the kids we know and the ones that we are responsible for.

They face problems even at blue-light discos. We would think that that is a safe place to send our kids. They are taking alcohol into these premises in their shoes. Do members know the skateboarding shoes they have with zips on them? They take alcohol in in them. They are getting smashed. It is happening regularly. This is going on in front of us all. If we sit back and do nothing we are responsible for letting it happen. Members need to get their heads around that. I hope those opposite have a better bill. They may not pass this one tonight but they should bring a better one forward. If they do not like our bill, then they should do that. This is an opportunity to make a difference. We can amend the law to make a better plan later on.

The government has a smoking law that it does not police. I went to one of the local pubs here in town recently and had a drink, because I am old enough. But the reality is that people are smoking next to drinkers. Nobody does anything about it. It is happening every day of the week. These are laws that are not chased up. If those opposite want to talk about how hard it is to implement laws, just think about council amalgamations. That will be a really hard one to make work, and the government is going to find that out really soon. When that happens, it is going to cost this government a bomb. The reality is that this problem is never going to go away unless we do something. I ask this House to be brave and support this legislation. It does not matter if it comes from this side of politics. It is about doing the right thing, and those opposite can be a part of doing the right thing. It is not difficult; it is just a matter of voting.

Those opposite have a social responsibility to their relatives, to their children and to all of the people of Queensland. For those opposite who do not have children yet, they will experience it one day. I have two boys who are 18 and 20. They have both gone through exactly this situation. I would like to see a law in place that would support me as a parent. I am pretty safe in that my kids are 18 and 20. It is the kids who are 12, 13 and 14. For each one of them who drops off the perch, those opposite should take a bit of responsibility because that is what they will be doing if they vote against this bill tonight. They will be supporting children getting drunk and being supplied with alcohol. If they are proud to do that, they should vote against this bill, because that is what they are doing. They would be voting against a bill that is trying to protect the youth of Queensland. I say to government members to think about it before they vote tonight. This is their opportunity to do the right thing. Again, I know that I am pulling the heart strings, but they are the heart strings of each parent in this state. If we let one of them lose their lives, those opposite have voted the wrong way. I will leave those opposite with that thought to take on board because the lives of children are really important, or they are to this side of politics.

Mr ELMES (Noosa—Lib) (9.01 pm): I rise very briefly tonight in support of the Liquor (Restriction of Supply to Minors) Amendment Bill. I have been sitting here for most of this debate listening to the comments that have come across the chamber from those opposite and I am wondering whether I live in a part of Queensland that does not exist—

Mr Nicholls: Not for much longer anyway!

Mr ELMES: Not for much longer anyway! We will all be done over by the government anyway! But it must be that I live in a part of this state that does experience under-age drinking. It must be that antisocial behaviour only exists in Noosa and it does not exist anywhere else in Queensland. I wonder what this government is doing about the restriction of the supply of alcohol to our young people. I am pleased that the minister for police is here in the chamber.

Mr Hoolihan interjected.

Mr ELMES: Perhaps you should enforce it, member for Keppel. Perhaps just once this government should enforce something. The minister for police is in the chamber. She should be making sure that the police go out there and enforce the law. That is what they should do. This government also allows for a farcical regime of licensing of outlets that encourages the sale of alcohol to under-age people and to people who buy alcohol and then on-sell it. Most importantly, following all of the failures of policy over the last 10 years, members of the government are going to oppose the one bill that comes along that has been presented here tonight by the member for Surfers Paradise that is at least attempting to do something about the problem.

There is no doubt about it: the abuse of alcohol is a scourge on Queensland teenagers. Alcohol, as we know it, can be drunk in moderation as adults. It can add to the odd social occasion and it is very much part of the Australian culture. For better or worse, we have to accept that that is the case. But the abuse of alcohol, especially by minors who have little experience in the effects and the consequences of binge drinking, is very dangerous indeed. If one looks at the statistics, the National Drug Research Institute at Curtin University reports that from 1999 to 2002 116 Queensland teenagers died from alcohol related deaths. Of greater concern, we should note that this is 1.2 times greater than the rest of Australia. Further research from the Queensland University of Technology demonstrates that the number of 14- to 19-year-olds who consume alcohol on a daily basis has doubled between 2001 and 2004. Research shows that teenagers are most at risk when drinking as compared to other age groups. Teenagers are more prone to taking risks with their lives and the lives of their friends when under the influence of alcohol. All we have to do is look at any newspaper in Queensland any day of any week and see yet another car wrapped around a pole or driving headlong into another vehicle somewhere and you can bet your last dollar that alcohol is involved.

Alcohol abuse leads to higher incidences of teen violence, higher incidences of unruly and unsocial behaviour and, more worryingly, higher incidences of domestic violence. Make no mistakes: a bottle of grog in the hands of an at-risk teen is just as dangerous as a loaded gun and it should be taken just as seriously by this House. I commend the member for Surfers Paradise for this bill. It goes a long way towards preventing the sale of alcohol to minors through careless parents and other friends. This bill puts the onus on the parent or guardian purchasing the alcohol to ensure that it is consumed in a safe and lawful manner. I support this House encouraging parents to take responsibility for their children, and as the parent of a teenager myself I really appreciate the motive behind this bill. I urge this government to support the bill. I and my coalition colleagues regard the importance of the health of Queensland teenagers above partisan politics.

Mr DEMPSEY (Bundaberg—NPA) (9.06 pm): I rise to support the Liquor (Restriction of Supply to Minors) Amendment Bill, a very common-sense bill before the House tonight. I fully support the member for Surfers Paradise and his attempts to protect the youth of Queensland. This bill will protect the lives of our youth and save countless deaths caused by alcohol. Alcohol remains one of the most dangerous drugs in Australia and every effort must be taken to take the cool factor out of its use. Alcohol affects

people of all ages and continues to be a scourge on our society. Current partnerships and strategies are to be commended that educate our community to the effects of alcohol. By taking a positive stand, we will not just save our youths but reduce the huge economic costs inflicted on society by its usage.

We talk about root cause analysis in our health system, so why not start with the cause of many of our health related problems? We talk about helping the police, so why not reduce the amount of antisocial behaviour we have on our streets due to alcohol and make our communities safer for all of our youths and citizens to enjoy? Educating our youths to make positive choices through positive reinforcement and education are some of the basic fundamental ways to recognise the dangers of alcohol. We all have rights and responsibilities, and as adults we have the responsibility to care for our youth and protect them from danger. I am glad that the minister recognises that under-age drinking is an important issue and that it has affected many generations of Australians. This is why this generation needs to make a stand and say the same as the advertisements that recognise the huge amount of human suffering and carnage on our roads, which is that enough is enough.

During this sitting of parliament we will see other legislation introduced to this House that has been amended on a number of occasions. If we choose not to take action now in a positive manner, how many more young lives will be put at risk by not even trying? How long will it be before long-term measures are in place? This government has to stop being Pontius Pilate and ignoring the truth and stating that the problem of youth alcohol abuse is too big to even start. Most parents are responsible and we have to support these parents with legislation that assists them in caring for their children. We do need long-term strategies, as alluded to by the minister, but we also need action now, because while we wait Queensland youths suffer.

Again, during this sitting of parliament we see local government legislation rushed through this House while we have legislation—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Moorhead): Order! Member for Bundaberg, you cannot refer to legislation that is before the House.

Mr DEMPSEY: I will alter the words. Again, during this sitting of parliament we see legislation rushed through this House while we have legislation before us tonight which will save lives, but unfortunately it will be blocked because of the numbers. Political point scoring should not be used to restrict this bill. To change our culture of alcohol abuse we need our civic leaders—and that includes all state government members here tonight—to stand up for the youth of Queensland, support Queensland parents and lead by example.

Finally, I ask all members here tonight to support this very positive legislation to protect our youth from the effects of alcohol. To support this bill is to send a clear message that alcohol abuse is not condoned and puts the Queensland community on the front foot in recognising that alcohol abuse is not cool and is, indeed, the largest drug killer in our community.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (9.10 pm): I rise to speak to the Liquor (Restriction of Supply to Minors) Amendment Bill 2007. In so doing, I have to acknowledge that when listening to the shadow minister for health, John-Paul Langbroek, I was reasonably clear about the intent of this piece of legislation. He talked in particular about schoolies week—and I refer to both the south coast and the north coast. The abuse of alcohol and also the use of illicit drugs and the impact that that short period of time can have on young men's and women's lives have become matters of quite significant concern. I thought it was relatively clear that the intent was not to impact on families but to allow them to continue with family traditions within the home. It was really to address those third-party sales or the situation, as occurs for some during schoolies week, where mum or dad for whatever reason drops the young son or daughter off at the Gold Coast or a similar venue and unloads a bootful of alcohol believing that they are doing their child a service.

In his second reading speech, the shadow minister states—

I recognise that there needs to be a delicate balance struck. I support the rights of parents and guardians to make decisions on sensible alcohol consumption within their families, for example having a glass of wine at home to cautiously introduce a youngster to alcohol. However, schoolies and underage teen parties have caused a high level of concern in the community. Parties of this kind encourage teens to consume dangerously high levels of alcohol.

That in itself is very clear: the intent of the bill is to address those incidents where young men and women have access to significant quantities of alcohol to their detriment and perhaps through the thoughtlessness of adults who have purchased the wine, beer or other alcohol legally.

In my electorate—and I believe it would not be an isolated incident—we also have problems with groups of young people. These problems come in cycles. I have not heard any complaints recently. For several months we had complaints of young people who were walking through residential areas, usually carrying a small esky, and were absolutely legless—or so close to it that it would not matter. They would drink their alcohol and throw the bottles over the fence as they walked past. Residents feared for their safety and their lives because of the actions of these groups of young people. It is evident that the young

people did not buy the alcohol; they were too young. The police did their utmost to address the situation. As soon as they became aware of it, they would send a patrol out if there was a vehicle available. However, there was, as I said, a period when this was quite problematic.

It has been stated also in this debate that the legislation, as it stands, would alienate parents because it would require them to put their foot down with their teenagers. As responsible adults, we already do that in a lot of areas. We have to set limitations on children and young adults when they get in cars during that rebellious period. I had only daughters; I did not have sons. During that period when it was not cool to put a seatbelt on, you had to lay down the law and say, 'You will put a seatbelt on.' We have to do that in setting curfews as young people are emerging young adults. The period of time that they are allowed out at night is gradually increased, not necessarily as their responsibility increases but as their understanding of the risks and the dangers of going out late at night increases and as we become confident that they understand the predatory nature of some adults. As parents, one of the roles that we play is setting constraints on young people not because we want to be difficult, not because we want to alienate them, but because we are responsible and love them very much. I believe that this kind of control and constraint falls into the same category.

There have been a number of speakers from the government side. The member for Aspley raised an issue in relation to the responsible adult qualification. Her comments were of concern to me in that if she is accurately interpreting the legislation it is problematic. Clause 4 talks about who is a responsible adult, and obviously a responsible adult in relation to a minor is an adult who is the minor's parent, step-parent or guardian or a person who has parental rights and responsibilities for the minor. The member for Aspley talked about her role as an aunt where she may have a 16- or 17-year-old nephew or niece with her at her home and if she provides them with some kind of drink with a meal or whatever she could be in breach of this legislation. I would be interested in the comments of the member for Surfers Paradise as to whether, as the aunt in that situation with the niece or nephew in her care, she becomes a person who has parental rights and responsibilities at that point in time. I would be interested in the comments of the member for Surfers Paradise and shadow minister for health on the issue that the member for Aspley raised. My understanding of his intent is that the bill was to cover those extreme situations. It would be unacceptable if it covered normal, natural and acceptable home situations and situations where a young man or woman is with trusted relatives. I look forward to his comments on those matters that were raised by the member for Aspley. I support the principles of this private member's bill, but my vote will depend on the shadow minister's response to the issue in relation to a responsible adult.

Mr NICHOLLS (Clayfield—Lib) (9.17 pm): I am pleased to support this thoughtful legislation that has been introduced as an initiative of the member for Surfers Paradise. In common with other speakers, I want to commend the glamorous and honourable member for his initiative in introducing this bill. It is unfortunate to note that, despite having responsibility for this important issue, the do-nothing Labor Beattie government has failed to take effective action on this issue as it has on so many more—as it has on health, water, infrastructure, rail, coal and many other issues. Tonight, again, we have a litany of excuses. We had a litany of excuses from the minister when she spoke in response to this matter during her earlier speech when she said—

The bill seeks to intrude in family relationships by dictating to parents what decisions they may make about their teenagers and alcohol.

This government already intrudes on that decision-making process. This government already makes it an offence to supply liquor to a minor on licensed premises. So an adult taking their teenage child on to licensed premises cannot lawfully supply them with a glass of wine. We are already taking the decision-making power away from an adult with respect to licensed premises.

We have a litany of excuses about enforcement such as, 'It would be too hard to enforce.' That is an operative problem that is able to be undertaken by a government that shows willpower and commitment to enforcing rules to protect our young people. We had a litany of excuses about intrusions into the family home and who would be responsible if someone left the room. One only needs to read the legislation to see that it requires responsible supervision of the minor in subparagraph 155A(2).

We had a litany of excuses about the supply of liquor. It states if the person knows or ought reasonably to know that that liquor would be supplied to a minor. These are all excuses from a do-nothing, know-nothing Labor government that does not want to take action to address a very real and important issue that has been addressed thoughtfully, as I say, by the member for Surfers Paradise.

The bill does not seek to intrude upon the reasonable supply of liquor to children by parents in their own home. In fact, it specifically allows that to occur and provides for that to occur. It states that it is perfectly acceptable for a responsible adult, as defined in the legislation, to provide their minor with a drink. Tonight every member has said that they support that. This is what this bill actually says. New section 155A says that that is perfectly legitimate. But it seeks to prohibit the unacceptable behaviour of people supplying large amounts of alcohol to children in unsupervised circumstances.

We have spoken about the intrusion into parental rights and responsibilities. I refer to the Parliamentary Library research paper titled *Our Binge Drinking Culture*. At page 31 it states—

Virtually no parents felt safe supplying their teenagers with alcohol for an unsupervised party.

So, yes, parents are perfectly happy to supply alcohol in supervised circumstances where they are available, where they can monitor the consumption, where they can act as responsible adults, but they do not support the untrammelled supply of liquor to minors where they are going to be unsupervised. So let us just dismiss the canard that has been put forward that this bill is a ban on the responsible supply of liquor by adults to their children, because that is not what it is. We have legislation that acknowledges specifically that as a responsible course of action by adults to their children.

It is interesting to note that the minister in her response talked about her policy formulation and how she tested the suitability of the member's legislation. She talked of attending the degustation dinner held at Michael's Restaurant to discuss these issues. It is interesting to note that this is the minister's policy forum. This is where she checks out the suitability of legislation brought before the House—at an exclusive dinner at one of Brisbane's most exclusive restaurants. On the strength of such investigation the minister determines her whole government's response and policy.

One is compelled to ask where the next policy forum will be held. Is it going to be down at Cha Cha Char? Is the minister going to go to the Zen Bar? Will the minister be at Jimbour House to decide wine policy? Or is it going to be at some other exclusive restaurant? This legislation deserves more consideration than just a simple six-course meal down at Michael's Restaurant one night with a couple of suppliers from the liquor industry.

The minister talked about the review of the Liquor Act. How long must we wait for that review? How long has it been out there? How long has this review been undertaken? More than 12 months. How much further down the path are we to see an outcome from this minister that addresses this very real issue, this very live issue? If we wait for the minister to take action, how many more schoolies will have been affected by drinking too much alcohol? How many kids attending parties will have been affected by drinking too much alcohol? The answer is too many and that is why this legislation needs to be actioned today. That is why the member for Surfers Paradise has introduced it, because if we waited for this government to find a solution we would be in a crisis like we are on health, water and rail infrastructure.

In the immortal words of Jack Nicholson, I would rather have a full bottle in front of me than a full frontal lobotomy. I am no wowser and this is not wowserish legislation nor is it unreasonable. It is entirely suitable, it is entirely appropriate, it addresses thoughtfully a real issue with a responsible attitude and provides for parents to supervise their children in the responsible consumption of liquor. All members tonight have spoken about the responsible consumption of liquor.

We have had the hand-wringing wets and lefts opposite telling us all about how it should be by education and not by enforcement and not by heavy penalties. This bill is no heavy penalty regime; it is a responsible application of law and regulation to a social problem that is getting worse and worse and worse. This bill provides for that particular response—the thoughtful supply of alcohol by adults to minors. We have similar laws for the sale of tobacco to children. We mandate adult supervision of young drivers. A person under the age of 18 cannot enter into a contract without parental consent and approval. Yet at the moment this government allows alcohol to be supplied by an adult to a minor without let or hindrance. We are definitely not fulfilling our obligations as responsible adults.

This legislation simply acknowledges the same type of restrictions that I have mentioned in relation to tobacco and other issues to the supply of liquor to minors. This issue ought to be dealt with before the next schoolies week, because if we wait for this government to address the issue we will certainly have more incidents of violence and alcohol-fuelled bad behaviour by our children.

This bill is responsible. It is not a cure-all for everything—it does not promise to be—but it is a responsible measure that provides adults with a sense of responsibility and a reasonable allowance to supply alcohol to their children. The honourable member for Surfers Paradise ought to be congratulated on his forethought in introducing this bill and for his action in prosecuting it. It ought to be supported as good legislation that addresses the issue.

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (9.25 pm), in reply: I thank all members for their contributions, especially coalition members. I also want to thank those members for contributing at short notice following the changes to the order of business that were moved earlier today.

Firstly, I want to comment on the contribution by the member for Aspley, who suggested that maybe I introduced this bill as a headline grabbing action. I note that the member for Aspley, along with the member for Springwood and the minister, were the only senior members of the government who were here for the debate. I say to the member for Aspley that I am not interested in headlines. I have a 17-year-old daughter who is going to schoolies this year. My greatest fear when she gets into her 1988 Volvo and goes to schoolies or goes to any parties before then is that she is not going to come home

without some sort of injury. So I absolutely refute the suggestion that I am doing this in any way for any headlines. I am just one of hundreds of thousands of parents around the state who feel very strongly about this issue. I will continue on this issue.

I am no wowser. I can tell members that my sister and I were not great drinkers and we do not come from a family of great drinkers. I remember one night when my parents went out my sister, who was always the instigator in these things, said to me, 'Shall we hit that bottle of Advocaat that is in the pantry?' I think it was off. So we were not into alcohol, but I certainly have had alcohol in my time and I will deal with that later. But I want to refute absolutely what the member for Aspley has suggested about me introducing this bill in terms of headlines, because this is a major issue not just in my electorate but throughout the state.

We are seeing the results of these teen under-age parties quite regularly. Unless we do something about this in terms of legislation, we are going to see them occur with greater frequency. I think the members on this side of the House made those points quite well. Of course, on the other side we just had members criticising the legislation. The junior members opposite—new members—clearly only followed the minister's speech, which I found to be a dumbfounding response. I want to thank the minister for giving me two months to prepare my response, because for the 10 minutes of her contribution I sat here and wondered about the hundreds of pages of legislation in her portfolio as she managed to completely misinterpret a seven-page bill which, in her own words, was simplistic and limited.

The member for Gladstone wanted some clarification about what the member for Aspley said about the definition of a 'responsible adult'. As the member for Lockyer pointed out, the definition of a 'responsible adult' in this liquor bill is a carbon copy of the definition of 'responsible adult' in the Labor government's Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act. So I say to the member for Aspley, thank God you are not my daughter's aunt, because you would not just give her a drink; you would probably give her a fag as well.

How on earth is the minister going to cope with a review of the entire Liquor Act 1992? From her speech it is clear that the minister is confused about to whom the responsible adult defence applies. As is the case under the current legislation, the definition of responsible adult clearly encompasses parents. Why then has the minister embarked on a 10-minute rant about how the bill alienates and penalises parents?

Perhaps the minister somehow missed page 5 of the bill. In new section 155A referred to by the member for Clayfield there is clearly a defence available for parents who responsibly supervise their children. Given that the minister believes that there is absolutely no defence for the parents of the child, it must be that the minister does not understand the meaning of 'responsibly' or does not understand the meaning of 'supervisors'. Perhaps she is overwhelmed by the concept of responsibly supervised.

On pages 1,925 to 1,927 of the *Hansard* of 6 June the minister sought to attack the bill by stating—

The bill seeks to intrude in family relationships by dictating to parents what decisions they may make about their teenagers and alcohol.

Perhaps the minister is not aware that much of the legislation in Queensland seeks to do exactly that. We intrude in family relationships and dictate that child abuse is not acceptable. We intrude in family relationships and dictate when a parent is allowed to teach their child to drive. We intrude in family relationships and dictate when a child must be sent to school. Is the minister voicing her objection to all of these other intrusions into the family relationship?

For the benefit of an obviously confused minister, the bill makes it an offence to supply or sell alcohol to minors. However, the bill also provides a defence to parents who responsibly supply their own teenagers with alcohol. Rather than intruding in family relationships by dictating to parents what decisions they make, the bill strengthens parents' rights to make decisions about their own teenagers and alcohol rather than having someone else make the decision for them by supplying their teenager with alcohol at a house party and doing so legally. Which option are parents going to be happier with: being the only adult deciding when and how their teenage daughter should be introduced to alcohol, or letting some 21-year-old male at a house party decide? According to the minister's logic, that 21-year-old male has a right to supply alcohol to a 17-year-old girl at a house party.

This is the dilemma that my eldest daughter faces, and my second daughter and my 10-year-old son will face it in the future. My 17-year-old said to my wife, 'I don't want to talk to my father about alcohol at schoolies. What am I going to do? He does not want me to drink.' I understand that she may well be faced with incredible peer pressure to drink alcohol. We have all faced it. I do not want to sound like an old-timer talking about the olden days, but clearly the focus has changed. My wife Stacey said that when she was at schoolies and staying at Broadbeach she barely got through a cask. Now the focus seems to be getting absolutely blotto every night. That is the dilemma my daughter faces, but she cannot talk to her father or is scared to talk to her father because she is worried that I am talking about legislation that will affect her relationship with her peers.

The minister noted that—

The bill prohibits licensees from selling alcohol to an adult if the licensee knows or ought to know that the adult intends to provide the alcohol to a minor.

She asks—

How are licensees and bottle shop staff expected to know whether an adult intends to provide some or all of the alcohol they are purchasing to their teenage child?

That is odd because the Beattie government thought fit to use this type of approach in section 23 of the Summary Offences Act 2005. It is a little difficult to see how a licensee cannot know that an adult intends to supply alcohol to a minor when the minor is in the bottle shop pointing out to the adult what to buy. That happens all the time at the Gold Coast, especially during schoolies. We do not need to hear trite lines about certain types of alcohol that no self-respecting adult would drink. It is a serious problem. Schoolies are out there identifying what they want their parents to buy and the parents are clearly buying it for them.

This part of the offence in new section 155A sends a clear message to the community that it is not okay to purchase alcohol on behalf of minors. The requirement of the prohibition sign in new section 61AA is aimed at educating the public through targeted advertising just like those required under the tobacco laws.

A few weeks ago I was in Kingscliff. They have signs in the pub that say that you are not allowed to buy for a minor. If we can do it for tobacco we can do it for alcohol in this state, as they clearly do in New South Wales. People will be deterred by the knowledge that is passed onto them that something is against the law. The offence also puts a responsibility on rogue licensees who think that schoolies week is a sales-boosting opportunity.

The minister feels that legislation that cannot be properly enforced is not worth having. The new offences created under this bill build on the current offences contained in the Liquor Act 1992. Is the minister admitting that the current legislation is unenforceable? For legislation to be enforceable it needs to be free of loopholes and it needs to be clear. This bill does both. The bill removes the loophole that allows irresponsible persons to supply alcohol to minors for unsupervised parties, leading to the familiar alcohol-fuelled youth violence that we have tragically seen in Queensland.

The minister proposes that we change Aussie drinking culture, so now the minister is equating the problem with being Australian. Which nationality would she prefer Queenslanders to be? While the Beattie government seeks to engage in its new social engineering of the public and its attack on Aussie culture, how many more minors are to be lost to alcohol problems and what on earth will this do about the legal loophole currently allowing under-age drinking and secondary supply?

With heavy overtones of doom, the minister supposes that we expect police to raid the dining rooms of family homes. Will mum be prosecuted for leaving the room to do the dishes after giving her 17-year-old a glass of Baileys after dinner? The offences in the bill are not specific to family homes. The minister implies that they are directed at mums and dads rather than irresponsible people. That point was made by the member for Burdekin.

Most offences in the Queensland Criminal Code and various other acts are offences that can occur in the family home. Is the Beattie government having police conduct raids on family homes on a daily basis now? It is absolutely nonsensical to suggest such a thing. As for mum leaving the 17-year-old to finish off a glass of Baileys, as the minister mentioned in her speech, if she had read the bill the minister would have seen that such a mother would have been able to make out the defence available.

While providing some examples of parents supplying minors with alcohol, the minister plays on the images of minors as young adults, as teenagers on the verge of adulthood. Under the Acts Interpretation Act 1954, and therefore also under the Liquor Act 1992, a minor is any individual under the age of 18. There is no distinction between a 17-year-old, a seven-year-old or a two-year-old. All are minors. When the minister excuses providing alcohol to a minor, she is not only excusing providing alcohol to teenagers but she is also excusing providing alcohol to children as well. A glass of Baileys for a 17-year-old at dinner is vastly different to a glass of Baileys for a seven-year-old or even a 17-year-old at an unsupervised house party.

While advocating the supply of alcohol to minors in her speech, the minister proposes to have a regulatory approach addressed in the comprehensive review of the Liquor Act 1992.

Mr McArdle: It's still going on.

Mr LANGBROEK: Exactly; it is still going on. With all of the complexities of liquor licensing and the resulting consultation, the review of the Liquor Act 1992 will not provide a new law enforced by schoolies week this year. However, between now and then how many more teenage parties are

Queenslanders to endure? How many more alcohol-fuelled incidents involving minors will there be? How many more school tragedies? If the Beattie government finally acts, it will be forced to address this problem in exactly the same manner that has been done in this bill. Until then, what new initiative is the Beattie government going to use to comfort the next grieving parent?

The minister triumphantly sports industry support for her opposition to the bill, as also mentioned by the member for Clayfield, informing the House, 'On 6 June, Queensland Day, at Michael's Restaurant I had the opportunity to gauge the level of industry support for the opposition's bill.' That is amazing! Mr Speaker, I am sure staff in your department will be overwhelmed with joy that you have endorsed this type of industry consultation. For the mere price of a meal at Michael's Restaurant, one can receive an accurate account of the entire liquor industry's support or opposition to a legislative proposal. I trust that the minister has booked in her policy officers for the review of the Liquor Act 1992.

If the minister was aware of the legislation that her portfolio administered, she would be aware that Michael's Restaurant is a licensed premises. Under the current Queensland law, no person—parent or otherwise—is permitted to provide a minor with alcohol at a licensed premises and no minor is permitted to drink alcohol at a licensed premises. This bill would make no change to the current law as it relates to minors, alcohol and licensed premises, so it must be the current laws that the industry rejects.

I wish to deal with the comments made by the member for Springwood. She said that she put the legislation to the Liquor Industry Action Group in her electorate which opposed the bill. When I was drafting this bill, I consulted Liquor Licensing via my electorate officer. I could not be there in person and I am sorry that I cannot be at everything. In the future I will probably highlight the times when the minister does not make it to every bit of community consultation via parliament at the Gold Coast. I am terribly sorry, but I sent my electorate officer.

When Jim Bell from the Gold Coast Licensed Venues Association suggested restricting the supply of liquor to under-aged teens, I understand that the fair trading minister looked daggers at him. There we go! We have licensed venues at the Gold Coast endorsing the bill.

This bill has the endorsement of the Australian Drug Foundation as well as senior Gold Coast police and Liquor Licensing. It is a recommendation supported by the youth task force. The police minister is on the record on 1 April 2007 alluding to the fact that these amendments are necessary. The Premier and the fair trading minister have also conceded that binge drinking by under-age youth is a problem. Why are we playing politics with this?

As the youth task force and the minister for police have recognised, this problem needs a regulatory approach because a large part of the cause is a regulatory flaw. This bill fixes a loophole in the current legislation that allows for under-age drinking and secondary supply. In fixing this regulatory flaw, this bill sends a clear message to the community that under-age drinking and secondary supply are not okay. This bill does not attack parents, nor does it dictate to parents that someone else will decide how and when their children are exposed to alcohol. It simply prohibits the irresponsible supply of alcohol to minors no matter where that occurs in Queensland.

Will the passing of this bill prevent every alcohol related youth tragedy? Maybe not. Will the minister's approach of doing nothing prevent any alcohol related youth tragedy? Definitely not. It is for this parliament to realise when a regulatory response is needed, and when it is it is for this parliament to act. It is not for this parliament to sit idle while the government embarks on some ridiculous social engineering experiment or distracts from the issue with yet another government initiative of inaction. The question for members is: why do we need to wait? Why do we need to have more tragedies and grieving parents? This bill addresses the problem of under-age drinking and secondary supply now—not when the government eventually feels enough of a voter backlash but now. With this bill the members of this parliament can act and they can do it now.

I am not surprised at the callousness of this government in rejecting this bill. Experience has conditioned me to expect this outcome, because in the nine years that this government has tyrannised Queensland not one private member's bill by coalition members has been ratified by this government. If the hallmark of democracy is diversity of ideas and opinion, it seems democracy is dead in Queensland. Here tonight we have a chance to make a change. We have a chance to make a difference to the four million lives we represent in this place. Instead, in disparaging this bill to amend the Liquor Act we are effectively saying, 'Here's cheers to a generation of drinkers.' This weekend hundreds of under-age school kids are going to get messy, smashed or blind. Call it whatever you will, it means the same thing—binge drinking—and it is hurting our kids.

This is not a new phenomenon. Drinking to excess has been around since my high school days, as I have highlighted before. Most of us have suffered the after-effects of a carton. I note that the member for Gaven is now abstaining, and good luck to those who do and who choose to. I enjoy a drink just as much as the next person. I cannot deny that drinking, which is embedded in our Australian culture, is also found in cultures across the globe. But at some point, and as we have often seen in Queensland, on-the-drink, lovable larrikins can turn into louts. I have had people who have told me that

their kids have come home from overseas and have said, 'We just don't see the level of alcohol and the violence that accompanies it overseas.' They just do not see it when they are in America or Europe. The culture is just not the same. For some reason it is creating problems here.

The destructive effect of alcohol on the community is evident on our streets and it is evident in statistics. I want to commend the Parliamentary Library for the research brief on binge drinking that it prepared over the last couple of months. I thought it was very interesting and I want to quote some of the information from it. To give members an idea, one in four Australians across all age groups is classified as a problem drinker. This one in four is becoming younger and younger. The Safe Youth Parties Task Force reported that 82 per cent of 14- to 17-year-olds drink at risky or high levels compared with just over 60 per cent of the rest of the population. It gets worse. Visit a hospital emergency ward—for example, the Gold Coast, the second busiest emergency ward in the state—on a Friday or a Saturday night and ask the staff, and you will find that young people are well and truly overrepresented. The number of teenagers being admitted to hospital for alcohol infused injury or harm is rising at an alarming rate. In the 10 years to 2002 about 500 under-age drinkers died as a result of risky behaviour associated with drinking.

We now know that alcohol is responsible for more than a quarter of all deaths among young people in Australia, more so than internationally. Yet another study released yesterday estimates that more than 200,000 Australians are living with undiagnosed brain damage as a result of binge drinking. A point made by the member for Moggill, the Leader of the Liberal Party, is that we all seem to think drinking alcohol is a bit of a laugh but young, impressionable brains can clearly be affected by these abuses through their developmental years. We need to change this culture that somehow drinking to excess is okay.

When I look at the statistics, as a parent I have to wonder what we are doing wrong. Perhaps the greatest concern in the under-age binge-drinking epidemic is that most of these kids go 'bottoms up' with their parents' blessing. This is evident when we look at where young teenagers are getting their booze from. I have had it within my own family. I have had family members who have said that their kids were at schoolies. They say, 'Come on, John-Paul; everyone is doing it. What are you, the fun police?'

At the state government post schoolies forum on the Gold Coast in December we heard that 64 per cent of under-age kids get their alcohol from either their own parents or a friend's parents. This supports reams of other research that points to an Australian staple out of control. By age 11 half of all Australian kids have drunk a full glass of alcohol and by 15 years almost one-third are binge drinking—11 years of age! In a press release put out by the Premier in February he said, 'Too many of our young Queenslanders who are making their journey into adulthood are having their lives ravaged by drug and alcohol abuse.' He is dead right, and yet what is this government doing about it? Education—the lightweight solution of his fair trading minister? I say to the Premier that education is not working. Alcohol education is about as wasted as these kids are on a Saturday night. That is not my opinion or that of the Queensland coalition. The National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre concedes that education fails when it is up against the mateship ethics of young males. And it is not just teenagers who are apathetic to the dangers of drinking. When one parent turns up to a state government information night on the schoolies festival, clearly the message is falling on deaf ears.

Where education might work, however, is with the conceited Queensland cabinet, because from what I have heard here tonight none of the Beattie government ministers have a clue as to what this solution is about. The fair trading minister is on the record stating that it is time parents took more responsibility for their kids. Well, let us make sure they are held to account. The Labor government decries this bill as a degradation of civil liberties, but that has not stopped it from rubbishing such rights when it suits it. Education did not work with cigarette smoking, it did not work with drink driving, it did not work with road hoons and it did not work with drug driving. Reining in these forms of destructive behaviour required drastic legislative reform, and the coalition supported all of the government's initiatives in these areas—drink driving, hooning, drug driving and cigarette smoking—but when we have an idea we get rubbished and you guys will not support it.

I want to quote Peter Cameron from the *Gold Coast Bulletin* who said, 'Preaching responsible drinking to tearaway teenagers sounds like optimism on a bender.' If we are going to educate teenagers in a bid to save them from the bottle, let us give them and their parents reason to listen to us. We need deterrents, which this bill would achieve. Education is an important tool in our arsenal against youth binge drinking, but education alone will not stop teenagers getting smashed at schoolies. Ten years ago school leavers were surveyed on their schoolies experience. The results are horrifying, to say the least, particularly for parents such as me who have someone going to schoolies this year. Of the 1,800 or so schoolies surveyed, three-quarters of the boys got drunk every night as did more than half of the girls. This study was carried out 10 years ago. It worries me to think of those figures extrapolated to the current day.

What this proves is that the beliefs commonly held about schoolies week are to a large extent correct. School leavers do drink heavily, which in many cases sends good, decent teenagers on a downward spiral. In 2005 more than 700 people copped \$225 fines for under-age drinking or drinking in

public. Our reputation for lightweight law enforcement in Queensland precedes us. School principals are telling students and their parents to head for the Gold Coast if they want to get drunk. How much damage is this doing to our reputation as one of Australia's most liveable cities and premier holiday destinations? And it is true. I know that it has been noted in many tourism guides: 'Don't go to the Gold Coast in November because it is full of schoolies.' That is what is in the *Lonely Planet*. How smart is that?

Jim Keogh, the Gold Coast police chief superintendent, said that last year's schoolies were drunker than ever. Unsurprisingly, he also pointed the finger of blame at parents. He said that the supply of alcohol to children by their parents perhaps needs a bit of a re-think. The fair trading minister's concern about this practice is also on the record. 'What is of concern is parents dropping off to young 17-year-old children bootloads of alcohol and then helping them take it up to their units,' she says. 'If you knew there were four 17-year-old girls with 10, 12 or 15 cartons of alcohol in their apartments you would be staggered.' I am staggered—staggered that the minister would rubbish these amendments when clearly she and her government agree in principle with what the coalition is trying to do.

I thought that the police minister might bring some common sense to the debate given her endorsement of a coalition crackdown on secondary supply in a lead article in the *Sunday Mail* in April. So does Geoff Munro, the director of the Community Alcohol Action Network arm of the Australian Drug Foundation. The Australian Drug Foundation has long advocated the adoption of legislation similar to that of New South Wales which is the only state in Australia which has a legal drinking age. It is illegal for alcohol to be sold to or bought by a minor but in every state except New South Wales any adult can give as much alcohol as they like to any child in their care. This legal loophole needs to be closed before more lives are affected by grossly inadequate laws.

This bill has been endorsed by the Australian Drug Foundation, not to mention has received strong support from the public who concede that under-age drinking on private premises is a grave problem. Obviously the difference is I did not book them all in at Michael's Restaurant. In a submission to the Victorian government, the ADF recommended the Liquor Amendment Bill as an improvement on the New South Wales legislation which allows for penalties of up to \$11,000 for an aggravated offence or 12 months imprisonment. I hope this government's Victorian counterparts have more sense than those opposite. I would like to quote from Geoff Munro. Referring to the member for Albert, he stated—

The minister appears not to understand the bill because it does not prevent parents giving alcohol to their children. It does not dictate to parents about their own children. Her preferred model is hardly sufficient. We all agree that there is a need to change the drinking culture but there is little sign that this will be achieved by any single measure. We know from worldwide evidence that education is the least effective single measure and social marketing has similarly shown little effect. Legislation is important because it helps set a community standard.

I know that this legislation is tough but I make no apologies for that because something needs to be done about curbing under-age drinking. It is vital that law makers and law enforcers get serious on the issue of private supply to minors. I do not want to see another alcohol caused injury or death on my watch while I am in this place. In Queensland there are no rules or guidelines for parents of teenagers when it comes to alcohol. Most parents think that by supplying their kids with alcohol they will drink responsibly. I have seen it at schoolies. They come, they drop their kids off and do not believe that their kids do the things that they are shown to be doing. We know that this is not the case. We know that the kids are overindulging because they have peer pressure, because it is a fun thing to do and because it is easy to get carried away, as we probably all have done but not to the extent that kids are doing and with the regularity with which they are doing it now.

Paul Stanley, the father of 15-year-old Matthew Stanley whose life was tragically cut short by an act of alcohol-fuelled violence, made this point in the *Sunday Mail* article that I referred to—

We want to see a situation where parents are not dropping their 15-year-olds off at parties with crates of beer. It is happening. It is irresponsible and it is wrong.

I agree. The coalition agrees. Liquor Licensing and the lobby groups agree. The overwhelming majority of Queenslanders agree. The only people who do not are the members of the Beattie government who will not admit that they agree because they have got some political point-scoring to do. We saw it with ice pipes. We saw it with smoking in cars. I remind those opposite that this is not a game. These are people's lives we are talking about. They are the lives of our kids. I challenge the police minister chairing the youth task force to explain to Paul Stanley why the Beattie government will not support the recommendations of yet another committee born of Labor's great solution to the problems of Queensland: more spin, more publicly funded task forces, reviews and reports that go nowhere.

This bill will set down parameters to give parents guidance on the complex issue of under-age drinking. We know learning to consume alcohol in a socially acceptable way is not a skill naturally acquired at 18. Like anything, learning to use alcohol responsibly takes time, experimentation and inevitable mistakes. I am not suggesting that this legislation is the hangover cure. Young people will still drink. What this bill will achieve, however, is a uniform position on teenagers and alcohol consumption. Where we fail is where there is a grey area, and until the Beattie government accepts that education alone is not the divine answer we will continue to fail this generation of Queenslanders. What will work is a combination of legislative early intervention and harm reduction measures in addition to education.

The advantages of this legislation, if it were brought to bear, would support parents and other adults who do not want to give alcohol to minors or encourage drinking. It would discourage adults from giving alcohol to minors because it would be unlawful to do so thus reducing the prevalence of under-age drinking. Parents would retain the right to serve their own children if they so desired, but perhaps the greatest achievement of this legislation would have been its educative effect—there is the minister's favourite catchword again. Placing further restrictions on the secondary supply of alcohol to minors would demonstrate to Queenslanders that under-age drinking requires care and supervision.

The bill does not seek to persecute parents who support a cautious, controlled approach to introducing their kids to alcohol. It does not affect police powers and responsibilities because it does not need to. Finally, alcohol is not the problem. A cold beer is a quintessential ingredient in the Aussie barbecue and I do not wish to change that. I finish with a quote—

No drug, not even alcohol, causes the fundamental ills of society. If we are looking for the source of our troubles we should test people not for drugs, we should test them for stupidity, ignorance, greed and love of power.

I commend the bill to the House.

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

AYES, 28—Copeland, Cripps, Cunningham, Dempsey, Elmes, Flegg, Foley, Gibson, Hobbs, Hopper, Horan, Knuth, Langbroek, Lee Long, Lingard, McArdle, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Nicholls, Pratt, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Rickuss, Dickson

NOES, 49—Barry, Bombolas, Boyle, Darling, Fenlon, Finn, Fraser, Gray, Hayward, Hinchliffe, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Jones, Keech, Kiernan, Lavarch, Lawlor, Lee, Lucas, McNamara, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, O'Brien, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Purcell, Reilly, Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Weightman, Welford, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Male, Nolan

Resolved in the **negative**.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.02 pm): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Caloundra Aerodrome

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—Lib) (10.02 pm): Caloundra aerodrome is home to 16 businesses with a capital investment of nearly \$12.5 million and an annual turnover of more than \$30 million. These businesses employ 168 people. Those people's lives and those of their families are now under threat and so is the whole viability of avionics in Caloundra. Unbelievably, this government in its arrogance is turning its back on these people and the people in Caloundra who rely upon those businesses and derive their income outside of the aerodrome site itself.

It is not simply the people who work there who will suffer; it is the flow-on negative economic impact that will reverberate across Caloundra for years to come. To put it bluntly, these people are going to be thrown out of their businesses while, at the same time, this state government proclaims that avionics is the way of the future. The only reason it is doing this is for the almighty dollar. It is not looking towards the benefit of Caloundra but is focused on greed for itself.

A trust deed exists over the land between the Commonwealth and the Caloundra City Council but the state government has the power to resume the land, leaving the federal body powerless. Let us forget about the legal rights and think of the moral obligation owed to the men and women working at the aerodrome now and into the future. Aerodrome tenants have been consulted in only a superficial manner on the future of the site. They are now suffering uncertainties which directly affect their businesses in terms of the availability of capital and the ability to undertake long-term contracts.

These businesses must not be allowed to fold. The simple fact is that these men and women support families and are part of the economic driving force of Caloundra. If the state government and the local council are serious about a new airport site why have they not opened up talks with the Deputy Prime Minister's office or the Department of Transport and Regional Services?

Land is available off Pierce Avenue, at least in the short term, for some of these businesses to operate from. Why is the state government not saying to these businesses, 'In the intervening period of time we will place you at the Pierce Avenue site so that you can continue to operate, earn income and put money into the economy.' While there are so many people claiming they are working towards a solution to the aerodrome problem, in reality many are working in reverse.

The simple reason is that this government is not interested in the people who work on the aerodrome site. In fact, the only interest it has is the dollar and the people of Caloundra in its mind are a poor second. If it is serious, pick up the telephone and talk to Mark Vaile's department about getting the purported Bells Creek aerodrome site at least on the drawing board and stop producing hot air by making statements that have absolutely no basis in reality.

The aerodrome site is an iconic site in Caloundra and has been the home to many businesses now for many years. It injects large amounts of income into the economy and employs many people. The aerodrome site and those who work on it and operate from it are very important to the ongoing viability of Caloundra city and indeed the whole of the Sunshine Coast. To allow this aerodrome site to be folded and these businesses to be put in mothballs will be an absolute disaster for them, their families and the economy of the city as a whole.

Death of Hon. TJ Burns AO

Ms JARRATT (Whitsunday—ALP) (10.04 pm): While I was disappointed not to have an opportunity to participate in the official condolence motion for Tom Burns this morning, I am pleased to have this opportunity to put on record my deep sadness at the passing of the man. Tom Burns was one of those rare individuals who felt equally at home with his mates down at the river fishing or when he was in the company of prime ministers, presidents and international leaders. I suspect, however, that Tom was never as happy as when he was dressed in his flannelette shirt and floppy hat making plans for a week or two at the fishing shack he frequented near Bowen.

Tom made regular trips to Bowen to join his mates fishing and crabbing at Meatworks Creek and during these visits he often dropped in to say hello or stay a night with Mick and Maria Colwell. As Mick was my campaign director for my first two elections, I had the privilege to sit and chew the fat with one of the greatest Labor campaigners of all time.

Tom always showed an interest in my electorate and would ask me how things were going and share the benefit of his wisdom. Invariably Tom's advice centred on the importance of actually getting out and talking to the people, finding out what the issues were from the very people I would represent. I think Tom would have been happy to see me take up residence on a stool at the local pub so that I could talk to the workers and the battlers about the issues that actually impacted on their lives. It is probably fortunate that I stopped short of this extreme action, but I nevertheless often think of Tom's good advice.

During one of his regular fishing trips to Bowen Tom took time out to do a little campaigning with me in Proserpine and Bowen. As we walked the streets saying g'day to the locals I began to understand the community's deep affection for the man. I am told that in his younger days as a party organiser in the Proserpine area Tom was often seen riding his pushbike around providing assistance to working people. He made many friends during this time and despite the passing years the respect that he gained through his hard work and decency is a lasting legacy to a man who went on to become Deputy Premier of Queensland.

In government, Tom gained the respect of people right across the state. His straight speaking, can-do attitude appealed to country people. I recall that my father, then a card carrying member of the Country Party, held a quiet respect for the minister for the bush. On behalf of Tom's many friends in Whitsunday and his good friends Mick and Maria Colwell who now live in Brisbane I pass on my condolences to Angela and the family, and I say a sad farewell to a great man and a humble human being.

Givelda Primary School

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (10.07 pm): This government has told my community of Pine Creek and Givelda that their state primary school, Givelda Primary School, a one-teacher, 14-student facility which is approximately an hour's bus trip from Bundaberg, is under threat of closure. The education department is now involved in a standard consultation process with the community before the potential mothballing of this state school.

After consulting with my constituents unfortunately I have to draw the conclusion that Givelda is typical of the manner in which this government, through its education and transport departments, is mismanaging small rural schools and their subsidised bus services. This government is looking for every opportunity it can to close down small rural schools because it has a big-is-best policy. The forced local government amalgamations is also another classic example of the big-is-best policy.

To the casual observer this consultation process and the reasons given for wanting to close Givelda may, on the surface, be fair and logical. However, on a closer examination of the facts, the manner and reasons for this closure must surely ring alarm bells. Fact No. 1 is that student numbers have not been declining within the Givelda and Pine Creek communities. The number of primary school

age students in the community has increased. But because the government has failed to provide a subsidised or free bus service that travels to the Givelda State School student numbers have naturally declined. In 1989 the school was staffed by two teachers and had 50 students.

According to Kay Amsler, the secretary of the Givelda State School, 50 primary school students who live within a seven to eight kilometre radius are being bussed on subsidised bus services by this government to Bundaberg primary schools about 25 to 30 kilometres away. Why does this government prefer to encourage or entice its primary students with a free or subsidised school bus service to travel away from the nearest state school? It appears that the government is using the transport department to strangle the school of students. Why will this government not at least offer a free service to the nearest state school? After meeting with more than 20 parents and concerned citizens last Sunday afternoon, I have found that this problem is not only confined to the Givelda State School. It is occurring at Cordalba State School and at others in the Burnett. I also suspect that it is not an uncommon occurrence which is happening statewide.

I call on the education minister to give a commitment to personally visit any school he intends closing to speak with its parents and citizens. I also call on him to scrap plans he has for closing Givelda school. It is a wonderful school whose children are receiving a first-class state education. I also urge the transport minister to take immediate action to implement a review of all school bus runs.

Death of Hon. TJ Burns AO; Scouting Movement

Ms DARLING (Sandgate—ALP) (10.10 pm): Like my colleague the member for Whitsunday, I was disappointed this morning when there was not enough time in the condolence motion for me to pay tribute to Tom Burns, so I will take that opportunity now. I would like to pass on my condolences and those of my family and Labor Party members in my area to Angela, Gail, Linda, Samantha and their families. My grandfather Jack Melloy was Tom's deputy from 1974 until 1977 and I recall just how impressed he was with Tom as opposition leader. They were the leadership team in what must have seemed the darkest of days for the Labor movement when only 11 members represented the party in state parliament. It was to be my grandfather's last term in parliament and I remember him saying that he wanted to step aside to make way for the younger members. I clearly remember the great faith he had in Tom Burns's capacity to rebuild the party's parliamentary ranks. And rebuild he did, leading the policy think tank that would prepare the party for its ultimate transition to government in the following decade. Tom was a great bloke to be around and his enthusiasm was infectious. He will be sadly missed.

On a celebratory note, I want to spend the remainder of my time paying tribute to the tremendous volunteers of the scouting movement. The year 2007 marks the 100th anniversary of scouting internationally and 2008 will be the 100th anniversary of scouting in Australia. I was pleased to be invited recently to the Bramble Bay District Scouts AGM by District Chairperson Bev Robertson. At the AGM Robyn Teufel, who has been district commissioner for 13 years, announced that she would be retiring, and I want to wish her the best. She was with the scouting movement for 40 years. Lynn Masters also resigned as secretary after 40 years of service to scouting and five years in the position of secretary. I wish them all of the best for the future.

But I particularly want to pay tribute and offer my congratulations to all of the volunteers who make up the five scouting groups in the Bramble Bay District Scouts—Sandgate, Boondall, Aspley, Bracken Ridge and the Bald Hills-Bracken Ridge scouting group. It is kept alive by the volunteers. On the night of the AGM Robyn Teufel gave me this lovely scarf and a woggle with a map of Queensland on it and asked me to wear it in a prominent place to promote the scouting movement. I hope that they are watching the internet broadcast now. I am proud to be associated with the scouting movement in Queensland. I wish them all of the best for another 100 years. They do a wonderful job of keeping our kids in outdoor recreation and teaching them about leadership, teamwork and serving the public. So well done, Scouts! I would salute, but I was not a Girl Guide myself. Congratulations!

Death of Mrs D White

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (10.13 pm): I rise tonight to put on record my deepest sympathies to the family and friends of Dorothy May White, who passed away suddenly at her home at Upper Stone west of Ingham on Tuesday, 12 June 2007. Dorothy White had been a long-serving and committed member of the Nationals for many years, holding office bearer positions in a number of local branches and committees. Dorothy supported the party through many successful periods and through many difficult periods but always faithfully and proudly, believing strongly in the policies and philosophies of the party. Dorothy was a gentle, unassuming and kind person. She was fond of dancing and eventually Dorothy was married to her husband Frank in 1955 after they had met at one of the many regular dances in the Herbert River district at the time, a feature of life in regional Queensland that was, unfortunately, much more prominent then than it is now. I suspect many members of this place will agree that they are aware of many courtships in their family or amongst their friends that began at these traditional bush dances.

Dorothy was born in Ingham on 17 May 1936. Her family lived at Upper Stone, the area where she was to spend her whole life. Frank and Dorothy had three children—Allan, Lynette and Nola—and Dorothy was very devoted to her family. Dorothy enjoyed the blessing of grandchildren later in her life and she was very proud of them. Dorothy had a number of other interests in her life, including voluntary community service. Dorothy was a long-serving and committed member of the Upper Stone branch of the Queensland Country Women's Association. Through the Upper Stone branch of the CWA and in her own private time, Dorothy pursued a love of craft and other domestic skills. She was a very committed member of the Red Cross and volunteered many hours in the service of those less fortunate in the community.

Dorothy was a very committed volunteer at the local Hinchinbrook tourist information centre in Ingham. For many years Dorothy and Frank have volunteered regularly at the information centre in Ingham which, until 2 June this year, was located within the Hinchinbrook Shire Council chambers. A new Hinchinbrook tourist information centre was opened as part of the Tyto Wetlands Interpretive Centre in a brand-new building. Dorothy was excited to attend the opening of the new centre on 2 June and it was very fortunate that she had the opportunity to volunteer at the new information centre once or twice before she passed away. Most importantly of all, Dorothy was devoted to her husband Frank, as Frank was to Dorothy. Living on their sugarcane farm at Upper Stone, Dorothy enjoyed all of the benefits and challenges of a rural lifestyle. While Dorothy's practical skills made the task of keeping a house in the bush achievable, her love and commitment to her family truly made the house a home. To Frank and his family, please know that my thoughts and prayers and those of your friends are with you during this difficult time. Dorothy White will be sadly missed by all who knew her.

Springbrook National Park

Mrs REILLY (Mudgeeraba—ALP) (10.16 pm): The Springbrook Plateau is a unique part of the world. It is an evolutionary sister to the Wet Tropics and a nationally recognised hot spot of threatened biodiversity. The World Heritage listed Springbrook National Park is the jewel in the crown of the Gold Coast hinterland, and that is why the Queensland government has allocated \$40 million to the purchase of land for environmental protection. This scheme will help guard Springbrook's forest from climate change, expand the national park boundaries and provide a more stable environment for the park's flora and fauna. It will also help the ecotourism industry and boost the local economy. As the Premier, Peter Beattie, told 200 Gold Coast businesses at a combined chamber of commerce lunch last week—

Egypt has condos on the Nile coast which attract many visitors from Europe. We want them to come here. It's a long way for them to travel and the one thing we've got going for us is the environment.

But some people are misrepresenting the government's intentions and making wild claims that are hurting local business and putting unnecessary fear into the minds of local families. They are saying that the government is buying businesses in order to shut down the mountain's economy and its community. Let me make this very clear: there have been no operational or viable businesses purchased by the state government bar one—the Springbrook Mountain Manor, which will be leased as an ongoing concern for the next two years and was only purchased as a contra deal to secure another parcel of land adjoining the national park.

The former Springbrook winery and the Springbrook Mountain Lodge were not operating, were not viable and had been closed for some time. No jobs have been lost and no landowners forced out. All land was purchased from willing vendors, there were no forced resumptions, sales were brokered by a local land agent for properties primarily already on the market and the market value was paid. Of course the government enlisted the expertise of the pre-eminent experts in rainforest conservation. Who else would it ask for advice than the Australian Rainforest Conservation Society, the very body responsible for achieving the national park's World Heritage listing? Regeneration and revegetation will, I hope, be done in conjunction with the support and participation of local residents and landcare participants as well as interstate and overseas visitors keen for a true ecotourism experience. This will be overseen by a reference group made up of representatives from relevant agencies such as the EPA, the Gold Coast City Council, environment and community organisations, chambers of commerce, local business and community leaders.

Given the enormous support for the government scheme from the Mayor of the Gold Coast, Ron Clarke, the Mudgeeraba Community Association, informed residents of Springbrook, the Friends of Springbrook Association, Gecko and smart business operators on the mountain whose very livelihood depends on the tourism generated by the World Heritage listing of the national park, I am confident that the reference group will be able to work cooperatively for the benefit of the Springbrook community and to preserve the national park for generations to come.

Hospital Connect

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (10.19 pm): In Toowoomba we do not have many opportunities for people who are poor and sick and who have to visit specialists in the Brisbane area. Sadly, many specialist services are not available in Toowoomba, particularly services relating to radiation, eyes, sleep apnoea and other specialist services. The only way these people can get to Brisbane is via the Greyhound bus service, the ambulance transit service, which is a 15-seater bus, or a system that has been run for 12 months called Hospital Connect, which is run by a husband and wife team with previous bus experience. We do not have a railway system like the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast and Ipswich. We only have a train that stops outside the meatworks about five kilometres outside the town during the night or early in the morning. So there is no rail system for people to use.

This Hospital Connect service provides people with a trip to Brisbane to the Wickham Terrace specialists, the Wesley Hospital, PA, QEII, RBH or the Mater for a cost of between \$36 and \$40. If they are eligible for the subsidy through the health department it costs them nothing on completion of the paperwork. The system run by the ambulance of the mini bus that supports 15 people is a good system, but it is meant for those people who need care in transit. There are many other people, such as people who need to access radiation services, eye services and sleep apnoea services and so forth, who need to use the Hospital Connect service—the private service. Those people wanting to access the spinal injuries outpatients at the PA Hospital—and many of the outpatients have appointments in the afternoon—need to travel via Hospital Connect because the ambulance service leaves early to get back to Toowoomba on time.

In terms of finance, the health department pays \$420 per person in the ambulance mini van and it is \$40 maximum in the private Hospital Connect service. Tonight, after many letters to the Minister for Health, the minister for transport and the Minister for Emergency Services, I plead with the minister for transport to provide some assistance to allow this Hospital Connect service to continue. If he cannot do that, this service will finish at the end of the month. All they want is a sliding scale so that when they reach profitability—and they have in the past at times—they are prepared to have no subsidy; they can run it on their own. They just want some assistance.

On many occasions the ambulance transit service cannot take people. Last Sunday night a social worker from the Toowoomba Hospital rang Hospital Connect in relation to a person who could not afford to pay for the transport they needed and who could not get on to the ambulance bus. This service for our city of Toowoomba is absolutely essential. Minister, please provide a subsidy. Do not let us lose this service.

Death of Hon. TJ Burns AO

Hon. KW HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (10.22 pm): I want to take the opportunity in this adjournment debate to say some words about Tom Burns. I got to know him well over the years and saw his many acts of kindness and support: support for other members of parliament, support for this parliament—and I am sure members on the other side know what I am talking about—and of course support for the Australian Labor Party.

I was first elected to this parliament in November 1986. The first call I received from any member of parliament came from Tom Burns. 'Congratulations, digger,' he said, or words to that effect. 'We have not had the best of results. I think we got 30 seats.' Then he said, 'Digger, let me give you some advice.' He went on to give me some advice about the location of the electorate office and things like that. The point he was making was that it is really important—and I have tried to do this and I am sure other members do the same thing—to get out and about in your electorate. No votes are won by sitting around in your electorate office. That was the point he made to me.

I served with Tom in the Goss cabinet when Tom was Deputy Premier and, of course, deputy leader of the party. Make no mistake: Tom made a very strong contribution to that Labor government.

A lot of people spoke about Tom's commitment today, but the thing that I remember amongst other things was his commitment to animal welfare and to animal awareness. Some members here—and I look at the member for Toowoomba South—would recall his support for the RSPCA. I am not even sure if it still exists, but he began Pet Week in Queensland as an awareness of the importance of people looking after animals. A number of schools took it on as particular projects.

For me, one thing made Tom stand out from the crowd and that was his kindness and his willingness to help. I will never forget that when I was first elected as the member for Caboolture no bedroom was provided to me. I commuted between Caboolture and parliament and returned no matter how late every day that parliament sat. One day he came to me and he said, 'Digger, that's not right,' and he handed me the keys to his bedroom and he said, 'From now on that room's yours. You can have that.' It made such a difference when I did not have to make that commute every day. I never forgot that. Looking around the parliament I wonder how many people would do something like that whether or not they even used the bedroom. That was the commitment that he had and the support he gave to other members.

Tom taught me a lot about the importance of being part of a team. As the member for Lytton said today, he preached loudly that disunity is death. I want to take the opportunity to pass on to the Burns family the deep and personal sympathies of my wife, Janet, and me. Tom is truly missed.

Health System

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (10.26 pm): I rise to highlight once again the continued failure of the Beattie government to deliver decent public hospital care to the ordinary people of Queensland. We have endured nearly two decades of promises from the ALP in Queensland. We have been promised that things are actually in good shape. We have been promised that any problems were isolated incidents and we are promised that there are no systemic problems. We were promised that it was all being attended to and we were promised that there were no secret lists. We were also promised that the Premier would quit if he could not fix things. But none of that was true.

In just the past few days we have seen an exceptional doctor leave one of our 'premier' hospitals because of a lack of support from Queensland Health. At a time of desperate doctor shortages, he could not, it is reported, get backing to train more specialists. We have also seen the leaking of a report from an independent umpire that has given Queensland Health, under the management of this government, just five more years before it is totally out of control. After decades of promises, after years of ALP 'management', after billions of dollars in record budgets, this government has set Queensland Health on a spiral to doom.

In my electorate, the Atherton Hospital is struggling to overcome the handicap of buildings and infrastructure, some of it built almost a century ago. The Mareeba Hospital has been denied a dialysis unit and ophthalmic services have disappeared. Cairns Base Hospital continues to have ambulances ramping up and acting as de facto wards as it struggles with understaffing, underfunding and underresourcing. It is meant to be the far north's main public health facility, yet even it is struggling to keep its head above water.

Despite the ever-increasing centralisation of the few services we have left, this government continues to force the burden of travelling onto individuals, who are often ill, injured or medically frail. If this centralisation is to continue, then at a minimum a dedicated, frequent and free bus should be provided so that people in regional areas such as the tablelands have the quickest and simplest transport options available. Nothing is as good as having health services available locally, but it is not acceptable to remove services to more and more distant locations and offer a few cents a kilometre as paltry compensation.

We have also recently seen the revelation that patient files were actually marked 'never to be seen', meaning that those unsuspecting Queenslanders would never receive medical attention. It is difficult to imagine a greater betrayal in a public hospital system than to hold secret files denying patients any chance of getting treatment. Yet what do the people of Queensland hear? More promises that it will be fixed. It is to the eternal shame of the ALP that it has made this same promise to the people of Queensland so often and failed to honour them so often that nobody believes it anymore. After Patel, inquiries, studies, reports, investigations, hearings and promises from minister after minister, the only certainty that Queenslanders have is that still nothing has changed.

Aviation Industry; Death of Hon. TJ Burns AO

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (10.29 pm): The Queensland aviation industry is flying high. Whether it is civil or military aviation, there is a wealth of opportunities being given to Queenslanders. They range from head offices to heavy maintenance, from training to manufacturing, research and development and a focus on developing further this growing industry. Already I have met two young men from the Springwood electorate who are participating in this industry through their studies and work experience placements.

I have spoken in this House before about the leadership of Springwood State High School in this field. It is a leading school in aerospace studies and that is having a real impact. Springwood State High School aerospace studies students have had the opportunity to visit Aviation Australia. I, too, have had this wonderful experience and I know that, like me, they were amazed at the facilities and the success of the industry. Aviation Australia at the Brisbane airport is offering opportunities in aircraft maintenance engineering—avionics, structures and mechanical. They also offer an internationally recognised diploma of aircraft maintenance engineering. They offer world-class training in flight attendant training. People are coming from all over the world to participate in the cabin crew training.

I am very proud to say that Aviation Australia was a Queensland government project that commenced in January 2001. In five years it has grown to be the leading provider of aviation vocational training in Australia. It has established a global brand and is recognised as one of the world leaders in its field. I want to congratulate Springwood State High School on recognising this industry as a real opportunity for its students to obtain jobs and to obtain training and studies for careers for the future.

Last week I was fortunate enough to visit the school's aerospace studies block and see its classroom in action. The students had been studying in an interactive program flying a plane and landing at Brisbane airport. On the day that I was invited to visit the classroom not only did they have an interactive computer program; they also had a flight simulator. The simulator was a replica of a cockpit with all the dials, buttons and rudders and had a screen in front of the windscreen that showed what it would look like flying over Brisbane city, or what the terrain is like flying a certain flight path. While the student—that is the trainee pilot—is in the simulator flying, their actions are being recorded on a computer program that is printed out for them at the end of the flight to analyse their results. Their flight and actions are also being screened back into the classroom for students to critique and learn from.

One particular flight path that all students undertook was taking off, circling and landing at Brisbane airport. At the time I visited the school only one student had landed the plane successfully and I am pleased to say that it was a female student. I was also offered the opportunity to fly. With no flying lessons, interactive or otherwise, I had to take off, circle and land at Brisbane airport. Although I had a lot of help from the training officer, I managed to land the plane on the grass next to the runway. However, I am pleased to say that it landed safely. What a great activity and what a great learning experience for those students. I applaud Springwood State High School for recognising this industry.

I want to take what time is left for me to recognise the passing of Tom Burns. Like many members in this place I, too, have wonderful fond memories of Tom going back to when I was 16 years of age and joined the Labor Party. Tom turned up at a branch meeting and gave us all a big talk about how bad Woolies was and how it sacked all young kids. I came from a Woolies family—everyone in my family worked at Woolies—so I was quite shocked at this. I had to tell him that I actually had a job at Woolies from the age of 14. Being 16 years old, I knew it all.

I also have many other memories. I want to say that my most recent memories of travelling in Vietnam with Tom showed me the tremendous generosity and compassion that this man had. Tom Burns was a true believer. He was a legend and he will be sadly missed.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 10.33 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, Stuckey, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Weightman, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson