



# RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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## WEDNESDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER 2007

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The House met at 9.30 am.

### ABSENCE OF SPEAKER

The Clerk informed the House of the absence of Mr Speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr John English) read prayers and took the chair as Acting Speaker.

The honourable member for Keppel was nominated by Mr Acting Speaker as Deputy Speaker.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER (Mr John English, Redlands) 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 ACTING SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I have to report that Mr Speaker has 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.

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: 29 August 2007

"A Bill for An Act to make various amendments of Queensland statute law."

"A Bill for An Act to amend the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act 2003."

"A Bill for An Act to amend the Terrorism (Preventative Detention) Act 2005, the Public Safety Preservation Act 1986, and for other purposes."

"A Bill for An Act to provide for assistance to service providers providing community services, and the regulation of the community services, and for other purposes."

"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."

"A Bill for An Act to amend legislation administered by the Attorney-General, and for other purposes."

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

3 September 2007

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 3 September 2007, from Her Excellency the Governor to Mr Speaker advising of assent to Bills on 29 August 2007.

### PRIVILEGE

#### Equine Influenza

**Mr HORAN** (Toowoomba South—NPA) (9.32 am): I rise on a matter of privilege. Yesterday in a statement in this House about equine influenza the Premier claimed that on Wednesday, 22 August no advice was given to Queensland authorities of the outbreak. In addition, in response to my question without notice in parliament yesterday the primary industries minister stated that on 22 August no advice was provided to the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries by the Australian government.

I table a copy of an email from the Australian Chief Veterinary Officer, Dr Bob Biddle, which was sent to government authorities throughout the country, including Ron Glanville, Queensland's Chief Veterinary Officer, and Allison Crook, who is the Director of the State Disease Control headquarters, on Wednesday 22 August about the detection of equine influenza. Under the confidentiality protocols of the Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Disease, the third point on this email is a clear red alert about equine influenza in Australia. Mr Acting Speaker, the Premier and the primary industries minister have clearly misled the House in this matter of national importance and I will be writing to you—

*Tabled paper:* Email dated 22 August 2007 from Richard Rubira relating to equine influenza in Japan.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I rise to a point of order. This matter is now becoming a debate. It is supposed to be a personal—

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. However, the member for Toowoomba South is fully aware that the correct protocol is to write to me in relation to this matter. Please resume your seat.

**Mr HORAN:** That is correct. I will be writing to you, Mr Acting Speaker.

## PETITIONS

The following honourable members have lodged paper petitions for presentation—

### Local Government Reform

**Mr O'Brien,** from 137 petitioners, requesting the House to oppose the recommendations of the Local Government Reform Commission.

### Gillies Highway, Cycle Track

**Ms Lee Long,** from 262 petitioners, requesting the House to incorporate a cycle track in the upgrade of the Gillies Highway between Yungaburra and Lake Eacham.

### Local Government Reform

**Ms Lee Long,** from 286 petitioners, requesting the House to allow the four Tableland Councils to continue to serve their shires in their existing forms.

### Intercountry Adoption

**Mrs Stuckey,** from 3,462 petitioners, requesting the House to abandon the proposed 250% increase in the cost of intercountry adoption assessment.

### Caloundra Road, Crash Barriers

**Mr McArdle,** from 67 petitioners, requesting the House to urgently replace the crash barriers on Caloundra Road, Little Mountain Home Park.

The following honourable member has lodged an e-petition which is now closed and presented—

### Intercountry Adoption

**Mr Purcell,** from 1,104 petitioners, requesting the House to abandon the proposed 250% increase in the cost of intercountry adoption assessment.

## TABLED PAPERS

### MINISTERIAL PAPERS TABLED BY THE CLERK

The following ministerial papers were tabled by the Clerk—

Premier and Minister for Trade (Mr Beattie)—

- Letter, dated 3 September 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 15 August 2007 and the National Interest Analyses for the proposed treaty actions listed

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

- Additional information for the Report by the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure (Ms Bligh) pursuant to s3.6.9 of the Integrated Planning Act 1997 in relation to the Ministerial Call in of a development application for The Edge at Noosa, and Appendices tabled on 22 August 2007

Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism (Ms Nelson-Carr)—

- Response from the Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism (Ms Nelson-Carr) to a paper petition (868-07) presented by Mr Cripps from 123 petitioners, regarding the removal of crocodiles identified near public facilities and populated areas.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

### Main Beach, Illegal Constructions

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.35 am): Today the owners of 17 multimillion-dollar properties fronting Main Beach will receive an order to demolish gazebos, patios and garden fences that they have illegally built along one of the state's most popular beaches. Officers from the Department of Natural Resources and Water estimate that property owners along Main Beach have taken control of \$3 million of public land for their own use. Today we are drawing a line in the sand and those people who are blocking public access to the land illegally will have 28 days to demolish or remove fences, gardens, paving and other encroachments built on the publicly owned beach.

Queensland has a proud tradition of ensuring that the beaches belong to everybody. Main Beach is one of the Gold Coast's best known beaches and a recent survey by the department of natural resources found 17 coastal properties encroached on coastal dunes at the back of the beach between David Evans Reserve and Hollandale Park. Encroachments include a paved area, a patio, gardens, garden edging and lawn. They include steel fencing completely enclosing a five-metre strip of state land. A thatched gazebo is partly built on this land, and there is also a brush fence enclosing a two-metre strip of state land.

I am informed by the Minister for Natural Resources and Water that some owners already have already removed illegal fences after being told about a July survey by the department. The minister also says other residents have claimed that local councils approved their use of the land despite the fact that the councils have no power to do so. The Land Act 1994 prohibits a person from occupying, enclosing, building or maintaining a structure on state land. Property owners who refuse to remove encroachments could have them removed at their expense and face fines of up to \$30,000. In 2003 around 15 owners of beachside properties at Mermaid Beach were told to remove encroachments on beach land. Gold Coast beaches are famous throughout the world and they will remain open to everybody, not just the very rich.

For the information of the House, I have photographs which highlight a fence. There is another photo that does exactly the same thing. I table these and urge members to have a look at them so they will understand why the government is quite rightly concerned about this sort of behaviour.

*Tabled paper:* 18 photographs of encroachments on Crown land.

All we want is a fair go for all Australians. One thing about Australia that I love and I hope we all love is our egalitarianism, and we are determined to maintain it.

### Russia Week

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.38 am): A few weeks ago I declared 1 to 7 September Russia Week in Queensland to show the growing importance this country has to the Smart State and to commemorate a visit by senior Russian government and business leaders. Our Russian visitors are participating in the inaugural Russia Australia Business Forum at Parliament House today. It is themed around innovation in building the economies of the future. With a full program, it is an important platform giving government and business delegates an opportunity to meet face to face to exchange ideas and approaches to developing trade opportunities. My ministers and I will be engaged with this during the day.

I table for the information of the House a copy of the forum program and other associated material which includes sessions on the global economy and what it means for Russia and Australia.

*Tabled paper:* Russia Week Business Forum program for 5 September 2007, list of presenters and companies doing business in Russia.

*Tabled paper:* Media release, undated, by the Premier titled Smart State Launches Lucrative Russia Plan Ahead of APEC.

The forum, together with cultural activities tied into the inaugural Russia Week in Australia, is indicative of how strongly my government wishes to drive greater engagement with Russia.

Members will be aware from previous reports that both the Deputy Premier and I visited Russia in the initial stages to develop this relationship. Later this week—in fact, on Friday—I will be attending events in Sydney, including the official lunch with the Russian delegation. I will be meeting Yuri Luzhkov, the Mayor of Moscow, who I met in Moscow when I visited. We will be looking at advancing the relationship with the Moscow City government under the protocol of cooperation that I signed last year.

One practical way we are already advancing this agreement is by hosting the first 10-week study and work placement program for a procurement specialist, Mr Nikolay Akimov, who is visiting from the Moscow City Government University of Management. Mr Akimov arrived in Brisbane on Friday, 31 August and his scholarship is at Griffith University, with a series of work placements with Queensland agencies.

Hosting 130 Russian visitors, including a strong media delegation, will have a large impact with this influential group. They will take back with them impressions about Queensland and a greater insight into our modern and prosperous Smart State. The delegation is being led by His Excellency, Alexei Gordeyev, the Minister of Agriculture of the Russian Federation. I will also be joining the minister shortly to receive a special gift for the people of Queensland, a huge bronze statue of an important Russian scientific pioneer—a fitting gift for the Smart State and another example of just how far our Smart State reputation has spread.

I would like to incorporate a statement I will be releasing that spells out the detail of the relationship and what that plan includes.

Leave granted.

Queensland Government

Premier of Queensland and Minister for Trade

#### SMART STATE LAUNCHES LUCRATIVE RUSSIA PLAN AHEAD OF APEC

Premier Peter Beattie today announced a strategy to spearhead investment and trade opportunities and strengthen ties between the Smart State and the Russian Federation.

"In just three years Russia has moved from being our 41st largest merchandise export destination to our 21st—and rising," Mr Beattie said.

"That's a phenomenal rate of growth, from AUS\$35.2 million in 2003-04 to AUS\$344.2 million in 2006-07," he said.

"Through a new, targeted Queensland Russia: Towards 2010 strategy we will be showing how serious we are about building stronger global relationships and returning dividends to our partners, the Smart State and its people."

The three key elements of the new plan will include:

**Partnerships In Innovation:** Building links between Smart State universities, researchers and companies. This will include satellite and related technologies, agriculture, mining and energy.

**Regional Russia:** Linking flourishing regions of Russia with Smart State industries and services. This will include signing protocols of cooperation, business partnering and staff and student exchanges.

**Trade and Investment Growth Plan:** This will include a Trade Mission to Russia in 2008, increasing Queensland's visibility within Russia, attracting Russian delegations and media to visit and take part in events in Queensland, and provide targeted training and mentoring for Queensland companies. It will also include providing targeted training and mentoring to Queensland companies entering the Russian market.

Mr Beattie unveiled the plan at the Russia Australia Business Forum—a lead-in event to APEC, and the only one to be held outside of Sydney.

It has been co-hosted in Brisbane by the Queensland Government, the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, the Russian Academy of Business and newspaper Vedemosti.

Russian Minister for Agriculture and Co-Chairman of the Russian-Australian Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation, His Excellency Mr Alexei Gordeyev, is attending the forum and heading the largest senior delegation from Russia to visit Queensland to date.

Mr Beattie said the long-term value of developing trade partnerships and engaging with regional Russia cannot be underestimated.

"Since 2003, Russia has been recording growth rates of 6-8%—more than double the European Union," said the Premier.

He commended Queensland showing the way for others to follow, including Mincom, which provides specialist software to the Russian mining industry, and Red Oxygen—a leading developer of enterprise SMS/text messaging software which recently signed an agreement with Russian company The Vimpel Group.

"Queensland primary industries are cracking into the Russian market with Australian Rural Exports (Austrex) Pty Ltd successfully delivering one of the first ever consignments of beef breeding cattle to the Russian Market," Mr Beattie said.

In the knowledge sector, a Protocol of Cooperation with the Moscow City Government signed by the Premier last year has welcomed its first work placement in the Smart State, with Mr Nikolay Akimov, of Moscow's City University's Procurement Department, starting a 10-week program with Griffith University and other agencies on August 31.

Last year in Moscow Mr Beattie announced a Russian language scholarship, funded for three years by the Queensland Government and The University of Queensland.

Mr Alistair Tweed began his scholarship at UQ earlier this year, with the university reporting a 50% increase in the number of students studying Russian, up to 53 students since the scholarship was launched.

"Not only will greater engagement with Russia provide business and trade opportunities, but it will give students and workers a chance to gain experience overseas and become valuable members of the global economy," said the Premier.

In a significant gesture, Minister Alexei Gordeyev presented Queensland with a sculpture by Sergei Bychkov—a two metre tall, bronze statue of Konstantin Tsiolkovski, founder of theoretical astronautics who is regarded the father of space flight.

“On behalf of the people of Queensland I am humbled to receive such a significant gift, recognising Queensland’s international reputation as the Smart State and our future role in the knowledge industries,” Mr Beattie said.

“I am pleased to announce it will have a permanent home at the Planetarium, Mt Coot-tha, for the enjoyment of all Queenslanders and reminder of our strong ties with Russia.”

Among senior officials joining Minister Gordeyev in Brisbane are:

- Mr Alexander Shokhin, President of the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs;
- His Excellency Mr Viktor Kress, Governor of the Tomsk Region;
- Ms Irina Gorbulina, President of the Russian Academy of Business;
- Mr Sergey Chernyshev, Director of the Department of International Economic Relations, Russian Ministry for Economic Development and Trade;
- Mr Yuri Trushin, Chairman of the Board of the Russian Agricultural Bank.

### Voluntary Student Unionism

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.41 am): The Howard government’s introduction of voluntary student unionism in July last year has ripped the heart out of our universities, with the Department of Education, Training and the Arts reporting a number of alarming trends after seeking feedback from Smart State universities. Essential services that are critical to students and their families, such as child care, counselling, medical services, and legal and welfare advice, have been scrapped or wound back at universities across the state.

Universities are being forced to foot the bill to keep some level of services running. This means finding money out of their existing budgets. I will give members some examples. Griffith University estimates that \$6.5 million in revenue has been lost by its student associations as a result of the introduction of the anti-unionism policy and the university has been forced to provide \$1.5 million from its own budget to help offset this loss. The community spirit that was once a key part of university life is disappearing along with the on-campus activities that student associations once provided. Many student associations are continuing to struggle on, despite the downturn in memberships, but staff numbers have been slashed.

At Central Queensland University, the loss of the student levy has meant that the number of staff employed by the student association has been reduced from 42 to 15, either through redundancies or attrition, resulting in a loss of about \$1 million in wages in the local community. Similarly, James Cook University’s student association was forced to retrench much of its existing staff.

**A government member:** Shame!

**Mr BEATTIE:** There has been a significant reduction in many services, including sport and recreation, Orientation Week events and academic advocacy. I take that interjection. It is a shame. At the University of Queensland, we are all familiar with how the much-loved Schonell Cinema was forced to close its doors. A cafe has also been shut and two refectories, including the sole Ipswich facility, are also under threat of closure. The student associations are doing a remarkable job to try to maintain some level of service for students despite the Howard government’s attempts to destroy everything that our universities stand for.

### Port of Gladstone

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.43 am): For the week ending 25 August 2007, the port of Gladstone exported over 1.4 million tonnes of coal following the arrival of the first ship on the RG Tanna Coal Terminal’s new fourth berth. This is worth crowing about. By the end of 2007, upgrades to the port of Gladstone are expected to result in 75 million tonnes of coal shipping capacity, representing an increase of some 30 million tonnes, or more than 60 per cent, since July 2005. My government has been working closely with industry to facilitate this massive expansion, having already approved over \$300 million of direct equity for the project. I seek leave to have the details incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

This additional capacity is fully underwritten by long-term take or pay contracts with our coal exporters.

Attention has now turned to developing the Wiggins Island Coal Terminal, and significant expressions of interest have been received from coal companies, well in excess of 100 million tonnes.

Of course, we do not anticipate all of these expressions of interest will firm up into contracted volumes, but it does show the level of interest in taking the project to the next stage.

Over the coming year, with input and financial support from coal exporters, a full feasibility study into the project will be conducted. Pending the outcomes and commitment from coal companies, construction is expected to start in 2009, with additional export capacity available in 2012.

The combined capacity for coal exports through the RG Tanna and Wiggins Island coal terminals, when all stages are completed, will be about 150 million tonnes per annum.

My Government looks forward to continuing to work closely with the coal companies over the next few years, to facilitate the doubling of the Port of Gladstone's capacity, subject of course to the feasibility study.

### International Conventions

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.43 am): International conventions are big business for Brisbane and the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre is playing its part. There are few businesses as cutthroat and competitive as the international convention market, yet the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre continues to attract record numbers of conventions to the city. In the past eight weeks, the centre's international bidding team has confirmed another 10 major international conventions that are coming to Brisbane between 2008 and 2012. Together, these 10 conventions will deliver 11,500 delegates to Brisbane with an estimated economic benefit to Queensland of at least \$28 million. The latest successes mean a total of 77 new international and national conventions have been confirmed for the centre during the past 12 months. That level of bookings is unprecedented. I seek leave to have more details incorporated in *Hansard*, including the bid wins.

Leave granted.

It shows Brisbane is a significant player in the lucrative convention market and I congratulate the Centre's management, and their partners at Brisbane Marketing, on their achievements.

The latest confirmations include an interesting mix of topics.

They range from the 29th International Symposium on Sea Turtle Conservation and Biology in 2009 to the International Federation of Information Processing World Computer Congress 2010 and the Asian and Oceania Congress on Child Neurology 2011.

These events sit very comfortably with Queensland's Smart State image.

Brisbane also intends to bid for one of the world's top 20 conventions—the Annual World Dental Congress in Brisbane in 2013.

Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre is partnering with the Australian Dental Association and the Queensland Government to bid for the four-day event.

The convention would be expected to attract at least 8,000 delegates and their partners from around the world. Such an event would generate more than \$16 million to the Queensland economy.

Brisbane will present its bid submission in the next few weeks.

International convention bid wins:

- Asia Pacific Conference on Vision 2008
- Research In Education International Conference 2008
- 29th International Symposium on Sea Turtle Conservation and Biology (2009)
- International Symposium on Remote Sensing 2010
- 20th International Maritime Pilots Congress 2010
- International Horn Symposium 2010
- IFIP World Computer Congress 2010
- The IFLA World Library and Information Congress 2010
- Asian & Oceania Congress on Child Neurology 2011
- 2012 International Council of Archives Congress.

### Queensland and Central Java Sister State Relationship

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.44 am): Queensland and Central Java have reaffirmed their longstanding sister state relationship. On Thursday last week the Vice-Governor of Central Java, Mr H Ali Mufiz, and I signed the new memorandum of understanding here at Parliament House, where I hosted a reception for an Indonesian delegation from Central Java. The new memorandum of understanding extends the relationship for another five years. The Vice-Governor is very likely to become the Governor very shortly. The previous Governor was just promoted to the ministry in Indonesia. I seek leave to have more details incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The agreement covers the specific areas of agribusiness and food, urban and regional development, road and transport infrastructure, trade and investment, education and training and tourism industry development.

It sets out a comprehensive agenda that is achievable in the five-year time frame.

Indonesia is an important trading partner for Queensland.

The Sister State relationship with Central Java, which was first signed in September 1991, provides a strong basis for expanding that trade relationship.

## Indigenous Art

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.45 am): As members know, my government is committed very strongly to the development of Indigenous art. I want to report to the House that a near sell-out of an Aboriginal art exhibition in Victoria has created quite a buzz among art lovers and collectors there. The exhibition by 12 Aurukun-Wik sculptors is on at Melbourne's prestigious Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi. The exhibition has won many new fans of the art of Indigenous people living in far-north Queensland. The carvings have been snapped up by collectors and the exhibition has generated more than \$120,000 in sales for works. I congratulate them all. I seek leave to have the details incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

That includes totemic animals such as crocodiles, sharks, wallabies, dingoes, brolgas, and heroic humans.

The artists are masters of an internationally recognised sculptural tradition, using media such as wood, natural ochres and acrylic paint.

Several of the works will find a permanent home at some of the major public institutions in Australia to be enjoyed by the wider community.

The Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi is making Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures from Queensland more accessible.

The gallery has launched exhibitions around the world including Venice, Milan, Geneva, Moscow, Mumbai, Seoul and Jerusalem.

The exhibition in Melbourne is the third in a series of art shows aimed at raising the profile of Indigenous artists from the north-west coast of Cape York Peninsula.

A previous exhibition, *Storyplace: Indigenous art of Cape York and the rainforest*, at the Queensland Art Gallery attracted considerable interest revealing a new market for these unique artworks.

The latest triumph in Melbourne follows on from the recent successful opening of an exhibition of Lockhart River art at Spoleto in Italy on 2 September 2007.

## Government Jet

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.46 am): Finally, I simply want to report that we indicated that we would sell the Hawker 800XP government jet. The handover and sale has been completed. It was sold for \$A8,503,267.23.

**Mr Lucas** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I thank the minister for transport. We did very well out of the sale. It was sold to Empire Aircraft sales, which is located in Dubai. So I want to report to the House that we have sold the jet for \$8.5 million.

## Queensland Economy

**Hon. AM BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure) (9.46 am): Members will have noted overnight the federal Treasurer, Peter Costello, crowing about the latest economic data. He is quoted in today's *Australian Financial Review* as describing the economic activity at a national level as 'remarkable'. I can only say to the federal Treasurer of Australia that if he wants to see remarkable economic activity he should come to Queensland, because he ain't seen nothing. If Peter Costello's figures are remarkable, then Queensland's figures are simply staggering. Well may the southern states look north with envy.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Ms BLIGH:** I note the efforts of the opposition members to pull down the Queensland economy, to talk it down at every opportunity they get. They will not find us on this side of the House doing that. Queensland is the forward pack making the hard yards and dragging the rest of the country along.

The latest ABS data shows that domestic economic activity in Queensland rose at an annual rate of 8.2 per cent in the June quarter, compared with a 5.4 per cent growth in the rest of Australia. That is domestic final demand—economic activity excluding export. The strength of our economy in the June quarter was driven mainly by strong growth in investment by both the private and public sectors.

Specifically, total private investment in Queensland increased by 16.3 per cent higher than that in the same quarter last year. The national rate was up 11 per cent. Even more impressive was the investment by general government and public corporations at state and local levels, which rose at an annual rate in the June quarter of 39.7 per cent—so almost 40 per cent. We are nation building here in this state. Unlike Western Australia, our investment is much more broadly based. In the Western Australian economy, mining investment accounts for some 70 per cent of its total projects while in Queensland it is 24 per cent.

Dwelling investment in Queensland continued to defy the national trend. In annual terms, dwelling investment in Queensland recorded double digit growth of 13.7 per cent for the third consecutive quarter to June 2007. This 13.7 per cent rate of growth compares with a mere 2.6 per cent of growth in the rest of Australia. Again I say to Peter Costello that if he wants to see activity, he should come to Queensland.

Although the rate of quarterly growth in business investment is distorted due to the reclassification of Telstra from a public to a private corporation in the March quarter, the strengthening in growth in annual terms demonstrates that growth in business investment remained solid in that quarter. The strength of the Queensland economy has benefited both workers and job seekers in this state. Over the year to July 2007, the level of employment in Queensland increased by 82,000 persons. Not only was the rate of employment growth in Queensland almost double—

**Mr Johnson:** After March it will drop off after you shut down local government.

**Ms BLIGH:** Mr Acting Speaker, I am sure that there are other people in this House who are pleased to hear that the rate of growth in employment in Queensland was double that in the rest of Australia. Most impressively, 77,500 of those 82,000 positions were full-time jobs. This excellent outcome in employment growth has also been reflected in sustained low unemployment. The five per cent unemployment target has not only been achieved but also broken consistently since early 2006. The 3.5 per cent unemployment rate recorded in July 2007 represents the best outcome for more than three decades. Remarkably, with more than half a million more Queenslanders working, the number of unemployed Queenslanders has halved since the Beattie government came to power in June 1998. The labour force participation rate has increased and reached an historic high of 67.4 per cent and remained close to this level.

If any further proof were needed that this is a great time to be in the building game in Queensland, it has arrived with the latest construction data from the Bureau of Statistics. The figures show that in the three months to June in Queensland construction work completed grew by a staggering \$1.24 billion over the previous quarter to \$8.35 billion. Construction work completed in this state increased by 16 per cent over the March quarter, which is the best result of all states of Australia and well above the national average of 9.6 per cent. In fact, Queensland is now a very clear leader over all of the states on this measure. This measure is a red hot signal that the state is setting new records in terms of economic activity.

In raw data terms, for the 2006-07 year the value of construction work in Queensland was \$30.4 billion compared to \$28 billion in New South Wales and \$24.5 billion in Victoria. The statistics speak for themselves. In terms of construction work done, Queensland has recorded growth for each and every one of the last 16 quarters. In comparison, our fellow boom state of Western Australia has recorded that growth for 14 quarters.

As I said, any time Peter Costello wants to see an economy that is performing at its peak he should come to a state like Queensland and see how a Labor government does it.

### **Queensland Ambulance Service**

**Hon. N ROBERTS** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (9.53 am): I am pleased to inform the House that the hard work and clinical skills of our Queensland ambulance officers have again been recognised by Queenslanders. The findings of the 2007 national patient satisfaction survey for ambulance services have recently been released and show that the Queensland Ambulance Service has again earned a satisfaction rating of over 97 per cent.

This is the fourth year the Queensland Ambulance Service has maintained patient satisfaction ratings in the high nineties. It shows that our ambulance officers are maintaining their high level of service to the community, despite the state's increasing workload from a growing and ageing population. In fact, for the 2006-07 year the Queensland Ambulance Service responded to over 815,000 demands for service, that is, over 2,200 a day which really puts this satisfaction rating in perspective. The patient satisfaction survey is one of the key quality performance indicators for the Queensland Ambulance Service and is an important national benchmark. This is solid confirmation that the Queensland Ambulance Service is a world-class organisation offering high-quality ambulance services to all Queenslanders. The customer knows best, and the fact that 97 per cent of patients were satisfied with their treatment is a big tick of approval for our vital ambulance services across Queensland. I want to thank all our ambulance officers for their excellent efforts in ensuring the safety and well-being of their fellow Queenslanders.

On another positive note, later this month the Queensland Ambulance Service will take part in the Queensland Training Awards state finals after receiving the Brisbane Region Employer of the Year award for outstanding achievement in the area of vocational education and training. Since 1999 the Queensland Ambulance Service has received three national quality awards, including the National Training Award in 2005, and this ongoing recognition is clear evidence that we are investing in our most important asset—our people.

Finally, I remind members that next week is Ambulance Week. Across Queensland ambulance stations will be opening their doors to the public with open days, functions, displays and demonstrations. Ambulance Week is a big invitation to Queenslanders to get involved in improving community safety, whether that is attending a first aid course or a CPR course, finding out about the best use of triple zero, or taking advantage of the baby capsule hire service. I invite members and members of the public to support their local ambos by attending one of the many activities scheduled across the state.

### Local Government Reform

**Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport) (9.55 am): Senate Hansard released last night reveals the Australian Electoral Commission commendably resisting the pressure from John Howard to compromise its independence in his desperate re-election campaign. The Deputy Electoral Commissioner, Mr Paul Dacey, gave evidence to the federal Senate inquiry that is examining proposed Commonwealth legislation to provide for taxpayer-funded plebiscites on amalgamation. This inquiry, and the bill itself, are set up as cheap political stunts, destined to be nothing more than a pitiful waste of taxpayers' money.

The Prime Minister's bill does not mention local government once and it does not offer to change one boundary. He is peddling false hope. It is a cruel hoax and vintage gonzo election-year politics from John Howard. It is exposed as being about his vote, not about the vote of any Queensland shire. In that light, I applaud the Australian Electoral Commission and Mr Dacey for resisting John Howard's transparent attempt to take the issue of local government reform and blatantly turn it into a political, point-scoring issue to muddy the conduct of the federal election.

Mr Dacey told the inquiry that the AEC would resist the attempts of the Local Government Association of Queensland to hold plebiscites on 20 October. He said, 'It is out of the question.' Rather, Mr Dacey said that the AEC was quite rightly focused on the job it was established to do, that is, organise and run the upcoming federal election. In evidence to the inquiry Mr Dacey said, 'We do not want to put that at risk in any way.'

Working on the basis that these referenda would take the form of a postal ballot, the AEC would be stretched, possibly needing five to six weeks from the date of mailing ballots to rural and remote Queensland and receiving responses. Mr Dacey stated—

Because of the uncertainty of the date of the federal election, we would be very reluctant to tie up considerable AEC resources in the next few weeks given that it is quite possible that the Prime Minister may call the election after APEC.

He further stated the AEC is not even considering the possibility of having an attendance ballot in conjunction with the federal election. He said in evidence—

Other than the issue of section 394 of the Commonwealth Electoral Act, there are all sorts of other issues of confusion—boundary differences, voting differences, different ballot papers, high informality possibilities—that we are not even contemplating that as an option at this stage.

Of course, section 394 of the Commonwealth act guards against any attempts to muddy federal elections with outside issues and the AEC is to be commended for its rebuff of John Howard's outrageous solicitations.

The desperation of the federal government to jump into this issue was exposed in further evidence when the AEC was unable to advise the inquiry of the total cost of running such polls or, indeed, where the money would come from. Mr Dacey further said, 'We would of course need someone to pay for it for us.' He said, 'It would be an unusual circumstance where we would not charge a fee for our service.'

In further evidence from the Finance and Administration Department, an officer revealed this issue was being driven by the Prime Minister's department when he told the inquiry he had no knowledge of involvement by the federal local government minister. Last week the LGAQ told everyone that the federal local government minister would announce a date for polls, but nothing happened. Apparently no-one told Jim Lloyd, just as no-one told him about the Prime Minister's plans to challenge the independence of the AEC. This week the LGAQ told everyone they were off to Canberra yesterday to sort out the arrangements. Once again, nothing happened.

What the evidence to the Senate inquiry reveals is this: the Australian Electoral Commission is quite properly resisting and standing up to the Prime Minister's desperate intervention. They know their charter is to run federal elections on federal issues. It is now three years and seven days since John Howard called the last election. The Prime Minister is out of time and out of luck. He should have the courage of a real leader, call the election and front up to the Australian people for his day of judgement on interest rate rises and WorkChoices. Today, all Australians should be grateful for the fierce independence of the Australian Electoral Commission. It is time for a federal election on federal issues. I table the evidence from the Senate inquiry, along with the letter to Special Minister of State, Gary Nairn.

*Tabled paper:* Bundle of documents regarding the Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration inquiry into the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Democratic Plebiscites) Bill 2007.

### Education Capital Works Projects

**Hon. RJ WELFORD** (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Education and Training and Minister for the Arts) (10.00 am): Providing the best possible learning environments and educational opportunities for young Queenslanders is a cornerstone of our Smart State philosophy. We are committed to building contemporary education facilities which equip students for the challenges of the 21st century and inspire them to learn. This commitment is reflected in our investment in education capital works projects this year.

Since 2002, our government has invested more than \$1.7 billion on building new schools and classrooms and updating and remodelling existing facilities. A large slice of our capital works program is spent on buying land and providing new schools and classrooms to accommodate increasing student numbers in Queensland's key growth areas. New schools to open this year include Burpengary Meadows State School, Springfield Lakes State School, Isabella State School at Edmonton and the Queensland Academy for Science, Mathematics and Technology at Toowong.

Last week, I was extremely pleased to officially open the \$14 million first stage of the new Burpengary Meadows State School. Our government contributed \$7.5 million to the project, delivering high-quality facilities and modern educational tools, including high-speed internet and interactive whiteboards. Stage 2 of the project is in the early design phase with construction scheduled for completion by the start of 2009.

We are also building two new state schools in the booming northern Gold Coast region at Western Pacific Pines and Northern Coomera. Construction of the first stages of these projects is due for completion by the start of the 2008 school year. The Queensland Academy for Health Sciences is under construction on the Gold Coast and on track to open at the start of next year and the Queensland Academy for Creative Industries will move into its purpose-built premises at Kelvin Grove in the new year.

We have also recently rolled out the \$850 million State Schools of Tomorrow initiative, which will deliver major school renewal and modernisation in four regions across the state: Inala-Durack, East Ipswich, Innisfail and Wynnum-Manly. In this year's budget we allocated \$445.5 million to our education capital works projects. I am pleased to say our school building program is booming and is set to gather even more momentum in the future.

### Paediatric Cardiac Services

**Hon. S ROBERTSON** (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Health) (10.02 am): I am pleased to inform the House that cardiac services for Queensland children will be significantly improved from next year. As members would be aware, paediatric cardiac services at the Prince Charles Hospital will transfer to the Mater Children's Hospital early next year in preparation for one single Queensland Children's Hospital in 2011. Pressure on the Prince Charles cardiac paediatric intensive care unit has already eased this year with its number of beds increasing from three to four. When services move to the Mater next year, the number of paediatric cardiac beds will increase to nine: five intensive care unit beds and four high dependency unit beds. The Prince Charles Hospital can currently perform six paediatric cardiac operations a week but over time this will increase at the Mater.

Waiting times at the Prince Charles Hospital have already reduced in the past year. In August last year, 75 children were waiting an average 100 days for cardiac surgery. Now 70 children are waiting an average 79 days. The Mater transfer has the potential to reduce waits further with the increase in the number of intensive care beds. The capacity to diagnose heart problems and perform procedures such as repairing a hole in the heart will also improve at the Mater with greater access to the cardiac catheter laboratory. Currently, paediatric and adult cardiac patients share the lab, meaning access for children is limited to three three-hour sessions a week. This will improve at the Mater where we are funding a new cardiac catheter lab which will provide diagnostic and interventional procedures for children five days a week. Adults at the Prince Charles Hospital will then have full access to the existing lab, improving services there.

This development is great news for our youngest cardiac patients. It is also a significant reform at Prince Charles Hospital which is currently undergoing a \$134 million redevelopment to improve its adult health services and take pressure off other public hospitals on the north side.

### Queensland Police Service, Induction

**Hon. JC SPENCE** (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (10.04 am): This afternoon I will have the pleasure of attending the Queensland Police Service induction ceremony for graduating recruits at the police academy at Oxley. A total of 120 recruits will be graduating today, further boosting the number of police in Queensland to over 9,600.

The Queensland Police Service is attracting recruits of the highest quality from a range of backgrounds and from interstate and overseas. We have heard a lot of nonsense from the opposition and others about an exodus from the Queensland Police Service but an examination of figures reveals a very different story. Today's induction proves that in a competitive police recruiting environment, the Queensland Police Service is an attractive option for anyone wanting to become a police officer.

There are 28 recruits graduating today with previous experience as police officers. There are 16 police with experience from other states in Australia. We are getting seven from the Northern Territory and five from New South Wales. They are coming here from Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria—proving, of course, that we are doing something right here in Queensland. As well we are getting 11 police from overseas, with seven coming from the United Kingdom. They are coming here from the United States, New Zealand and other European countries.

The other 92 officers are graduating after an intensive 30-week training course. They have an average age of 30 and come from a wide variety of professional backgrounds. Some of these people have previously worked as library assistants, wildlife officers, hairdressers, butchers and teachers. We even have a former funeral director becoming a police officer. They have an important and wide range of tertiary degrees, including degrees in applied science, human movements, business and justice.

Since police launched their 'We don't do boring' campaign we have had a 20 per cent increase in applications each month. Unlike other states that are having trouble recruiting, we can choose from more than 220 applicants each month. Policing is a challenging, demanding and often thankless job, but it is also very rewarding. The government welcomes our new recruits.

### **Newport Homes**

**Hon. RE SCHWARTEN** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology) (10.07 am): I wish to report to the House on the collapse on 22 August 2007 of Newport Homes Pty Ltd, which is a Gold Coast builder with a significant proportion of its work in Brisbane. Korda Mentha has been appointed voluntary administrators of the company, and the BSA is currently working with the administrator to ensure the best return for suppliers and contractors.

The Building Services Authority is currently assisting homeowners affected by assessing their entitlements under BSA's Statutory Home Warranty Insurance Scheme. Newport Homes has 109 homes under construction mainly in the north and west of Brisbane. About 80 of these homes are between 60 and 80 per cent completed. There are 29 homes where deposits have been paid but construction has not commenced.

I am advised by the BSA that the links that Newport Homes has with nearly 30 marketing companies based in New South Wales may well have led to its collapse. The four marketing companies with the most ties with Newport are Modern Equities Pty Ltd, Reliance Capital Pty Ltd, Darren George Properties Pty Ltd and Encompass Professional Services Pty Ltd. I am advised these New South Wales marketing companies source investors and claim a commission of between \$25,000 to \$35,000 per construction contract from Newport Homes. The owners negotiate and sign a contract with Newport Homes at which point the commission is payable. The BSA is analysing the relationship of the marketing companies to Newport Homes. It appears that excessive commissions are the main reason for the collapse.

I am advised by BSA that over the last 18 months there have been a number of Queensland building company collapses caused by excessive commissions being charged by marketing or wealth creation companies. One example is SNS Developments Pty Ltd from Mackay, trading as Laguna Homes, which also collapsed. The BSA has to date paid out \$3.2 million under the Statutory Home Warranty Insurance Scheme. Contractors should be very, very cautious before developing close financial links with these marketing or so-called wealth creation companies, as should investors. There is clearly a trail of misery and the BSA will get to the bottom of it.

### **Drug Court**

**Hon. KG SHINE** (Toowoomba North—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Premier in Western Queensland) (10.09 am): The Drug Court has been an initiative strongly supported by this government to reduce drug related crime in our state. The establishment of the Drug Court recognises the link between substance abuse and crime.

The Drug Court has the sentencing option to divert drug addicted offenders from prison by imposing the condition that they undergo an intensive rehabilitation program. It began as a pilot program in south-east Queensland in 2000 and then extended to north Queensland in 2002. It became a permanent sentencing option last year. Drug courts now operate in Beenleigh, Southport, Ipswich, Townsville and Cairns. The 2007-08 state budget allocated \$1.5 million for the continued operation of the drug courts.

I can announce today that the 250th participant in the Drug Court program graduated in Southport this week. In addition to the 250 who have now graduated, almost 100 are currently participating in an intensive drug rehabilitation order. This shows a significant number of drug offenders are able to be rehabilitated and reintegrated into the community, which of course is one of the objectives of the Drug Court Act 2000. For those who graduated from the program, the combined total of sentences avoided by suspension of the initial jail sentence and admission to rehabilitation totals 349 prisoner years. This represents a significant reduction in the pressure on prison resources.

### Summer Storms

**Hon. GJ WILSON** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy) (10.10 am): The recent storms that hit south-east Queensland will be the first of many across the state in the coming months, and history tells us that it will not be a matter of if we lose power but when. With that in mind, I take this opportunity to inform the House of plans to tackle whatever nature throws at the electricity network.

More than 2,000 Energex emergency crews and support staff and 1,600 trucks will be ready to respond to power interruptions in south-east Queensland this summer. The details are outlined in their booklet *Summer Preparedness Plan*, which I have with me here today. Energex has set aside a record \$555 million for capital works and maintenance in the lead-up to summer. The organisation is also on track to boost its electricity capacity this summer. The extra capacity will be the equivalent of the entire power use of the entire Gold Coast on a normal spring day. A series of community safety initiatives will reinforce the organisation's 'safety first' culture.

Ergon Energy has ramped up its preparations for the coming storm and cyclone season after delivering its best ever performance last summer. Ergon is in the third year of a five-year capital works program that is delivering a massive \$3.2 billion boost to the network. Its contact centre has recruited and trained extra staff especially for the storm season, and the storm centre on Ergon's web site is now active.

I recently had the pleasure of joining the Premier in opening Ergon's new multimillion-dollar control centres in Townsville and Rockhampton. These world-class centres will revolutionise the way Ergon responds to emergencies in regional Queensland. For the first time, control centre operators there will have control of almost all of Ergon's entire network. That is no mean feat when we consider it is a network of around a million power poles, 150,000 kilometres of powerlines and more than 300 substations across 97 per cent of the state. These super control centres will be the network's nerve centre and either one of them will be able to take over in an emergency. Queenslanders from Cooktown to Coolangatta can draw comfort from the fact that, when the storms hit this summer, Energex and Ergon will be ready for action.

### Threatened Species Week

**Hon. LH NELSON-CARR** (Mundingburra—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism) (10.13 am): This Friday, 7 September, is the anniversary of the death of the last Tasmanian tiger in captivity, so for very compelling reasons that date has been nominated as National Threatened Species Day. It serves as a stark reminder of the fragility of so many of our native species. The day is incorporated in Threatened Species Week, which began on Monday and concludes this Saturday.

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service is coordinating events across the state with a focus on aquatic plant and animal species. The theme is 'Get off our backs'. Activities are concentrating on ensuring that use of our bays, beaches and waterways does not impact on threatened species, raising awareness of the impact of collecting native fish and water plants by aquarium hobbyists, and raising awareness of the impact of releasing exotic fish and plants into waterways.

The week impresses the need for boaties to slow down where there is threat of a boat strike on dugongs and turtles. It is promoting responsible use and disposal of fishing gear to reduce the risk of entanglement and infection of turtles and sharks. On beaches, sensible four-wheel driving is being urged where shorebirds such as endangered little terns nest.

Threatened Species Week also provides the opportunity to remind aquarium hobbyists and pond-owners to ensure that unwanted fish, turtles, snails and plants are not disposed of in our waterways to threaten native wildlife. As well, it is vital that animals and plants used to stock aquariums and ponds have not actually come from threatened wild populations.

No matter how intense the efforts of EPA staff to save threatened species, the support and understanding of the community is absolutely vital. I acknowledge and congratulate the many local conservation groups that participate in, and are often at the forefront of, management efforts. If endangered marine animals and plants had a voice, they could well be saying 'Get off our backs', and that is what the EPA fervently hopes the general public will heed during this very important week.

### Liquor Licensing Ministerial Forum

**Hon. MM KEECH** (Albert—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading, Wine Industry Development and Women) (10.16 am): Last week, together with my parliamentary secretary, the member for Whitsunday, I attended the annual Ministerial Conference on the Status of Women in Hobart. This important forum is an opportunity for ministers from the states, territories and New Zealand to meet with the federal minister and discuss issues of importance affecting women. Talks were dominated by the devastating effect on women of the Howard government's WorkChoices legislation. I presented strong empirical evidence that under WorkChoices women are the biggest losers. It was disappointing, therefore, that the federal minister for women, Julie Bishop, failed to attend the conference to respond to the concerns raised by state and territory ministers.

The council also had an opportunity to meet Indigenous women who had travelled from throughout Australia and had come to the council to present a very important report on issues affecting their communities. Again, it was disappointing that the federal minister, Julie Bishop, was not available to hear from these Indigenous women the significant increase in domestic violence in their communities since the Howard government got rid of the CDP work programs.

I raised with my colleagues an emerging problem we are already tackling here in Queensland—that is, the disturbing increase in the number of young women drinking alcohol at unsafe levels. This problem requires national action, which is why I will be inviting state, territory and federal liquor licensing ministers to a forum in Queensland later this year. I think it is vital that liquor licensing ministers, who do not currently have such a forum, share their knowledge and resources to help change Australia's longstanding drinking culture that is killing our young people.

The move received strong support from ministers for women, who agreed to raise the matter with liquor licensing ministers in their own jurisdictions. Ministers for women have an important role to play in implementing strategies to battle binge drinking but we need to work closely with other agencies to achieve the best possible results.

Queensland Health, the Department of Communities and the Liquor Licensing Division work together to create effective education and advertising campaigns on the dangers of binge drinking. We have run a number of highly successful campaigns, including Queensland Health's 'Make up your own mind about drinking' series of ads, a copy of which I presented to other ministers at the conference. Recent evaluations of this campaign have shown strong recall rates among young women and the message was considered empowering rather than preaching. This approach could go a long way to changing the worrying drinking culture that we are seeing develop among young Australian women. The Beattie government is committed to improving the lives of young women. I look forward to reporting back to parliament on the outcomes of the inaugural liquor licensing ministers forum.

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! Before calling the Premier, I acknowledge in the public gallery a group of students and teachers from Brisbane Grammar School in the electorate of Brisbane Central, which is represented in the chamber by the honourable Premier, Peter Beattie.

### Equine Influenza

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (10.19 am): I acknowledge Brisbane Grammar School and welcome them to Parliament House. It is great to have them here.

I want to thank the member for Toowoomba South for tabling a copy of the email from the Australian Chief Veterinary Officer from 22 August regarding equine influenza. Let me advise the House that I was unaware of that email. But having read it what the document proves is the case I mounted yesterday, and that is that the federal government failed in its duty to Australian horse owners in this matter. This email absolutely proves my case. The Commonwealth knew that there was a threat from this exotic disease, and it proves my case.

The document proves the case I mounted yesterday. The federal government failed in its duty to Australian horse owners in this matter. As this email proves—and I have read it in great depth—the Commonwealth knew there was a threat from this exotic disease. It has a national action plan, the AusVet Plan, and it failed to act on it. It failed to implement it.

**Mr Horan** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Mr Acting Speaker, they are good at throwing mud but when I put the facts on the table they do not like it. I have read the plan. This plan was not implemented, and I will tell the House why. It states—

Containment relies on the following principles:

- quarantine of cases and in-contact horses;
- immediate imposition of horse movement controls until the extent of the outbreak is clarified ...

On any test the federal minister has failed. He should have imposed these vital controls immediately, as his own plan clearly states. He did not, and horse owners across Queensland and New South Wales are paying the price for it.

**Mr Hobbs** interjected.

**Mr Copeland** interjected.

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Warrego! Member for Cunningham!

**Mr BEATTIE:** The document further states—

If a complete national horse standstill is not invoked immediately and maintained rigorously until the extent of the outbreak is known, it may not be possible to contain an outbreak of EI.

What the document tabled by the member for Toowoomba South proves is that the Commonwealth knew from 17 August that horses in its quarantine station in Sydney had symptoms consistent with equine influenza, yet it did not stop—

**Mr Copeland:** We told you.

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

**Mr BEATTIE:** He does not like the truth, does he? Yet the Commonwealth did not stop the movement of horses in this country until 25 August—too late to protect our horse industry from this highly contagious disease. The Commonwealth knew, but the Commonwealth did not stop the movement of horses in accordance with their own plan. There is no mention in this email that there is any possibility that equine influenza had escaped the quarantine barrier—no mention at all. Those opposite know that it is like a foreign country, the way this operates. All this email says is—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Their only defence to facts is rudeness. Their only defence to truth is rudeness. Let us have the facts, not the rudeness. They know as well as I do that all I said was they had some issues internally. There is no suggestion of a breach of quarantine, which is like a separate country—not one breach. Secondly, the Commonwealth did not stop horse movements. This is actually worse. What those opposite have done is hung their federal minister, because it shows that not only did he know but he did not implement his own plan. This is actually worse. I think based on this email that Mr McGauran should either resign today or be sacked. This is worse than what we thought.

There is no mention in this email of any possibility that equine influenza had escaped the quarantine barrier, nor does it say that Queensland authorities should take any action. There is no suggestion that we should take any action at all, other than to note the information on the Japanese outbreak and to note the possibility of the EI outbreak in the quarantine station.

**Ms Bligh** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** That is right. Not only that; the Commonwealth did not stop horse movements in New South Wales. Hence, some of these horses ended up in Warwick. This is even worse. Those opposite have hung their own minister. Your federal minister should have stopped horse movements. He knew sooner than we thought—

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! Please direct your comments through the chair, Premier.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Through you, Mr Acting Speaker, he should have stopped horse movements. I call on the Prime Minister to sack Minister McGauran. He is clearly absolutely incompetent.

### Equine Influenza

**Hon. TS MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries) (10.23 am): I was unaware of the email that was tabled by the member for Toowoomba South. Tabling of the document provides further evidence of my statement made yesterday in parliament in my response to a question without notice. The document only refers to suspected equine influenza at Eastern Creek, which is a quarantine facility and technically is not regarded as part of Australia. There is no suggestion in this document that the disease had broken the quarantine barrier. It was still technically contained at Eastern Creek. There was no suggestion that it had transferred to the Centennial Park equestrian facility.

I confirm again that the Queensland government was not notified until 6.30 am on Saturday, 25 August by the Chief Veterinary Officer of New South Wales that equine influenza had broken the Australian quarantine barrier and it had shifted from the AQIS facility to an equestrian facility. Under the protocols that are in place, the Chief Veterinary Officer of the Commonwealth should have immediately notified the chief veterinary officers of each jurisdiction in Australia that the suspect disease was now confirmed, that it had broken the AQIS barrier at Eastern Creek and that it had moved into the

Centennial Park complex. At that stage we were still waiting on that call from the Australian Chief Veterinary Officer. Thank God the Chief Veterinary Officer of New South Wales rang our Chief Veterinary Officer in Queensland. There was a national telephone hook-up at 10 am on Saturday, 25 August by chief veterinary officers where it was agreed that there would be a standstill. We put that in place by declaration on Sunday, 26 August.

Yesterday I went to Morgan Park with the former opposition leader, the Hon. Lawrence Springborg. Mr Springborg has been very cooperative in this. The advice given to me by the people at Morgan Park who are there because McGauran failed to act swiftly is that they are very happy with the whole-of-government approach taken by the Queensland government. They are still waiting to hear from the Commonwealth government.

### Intercountry Adoption

**Hon. D BOYLE** (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety) (10.27 am): Last Friday was the closing date for submissions to the regulatory impact statement on proposed changes to adoption fees. By Monday we had received 96 submissions which, interestingly, is less than 10 per cent of those to whom the department had mailed direct information. These submitters are all opposed to the fee increases for intercountry adoptions. The decision to adopt a child from overseas is not a decision made lightly or quickly. There are lengthy assessments and a difficult wait while the country of origin makes its own assessment and hopefully identifies a suitable child. The costs are considerable. The majority of the cost is associated with the other country. For example, to bring a child home from China costs up to \$25,000 when airfares, accommodation, legal costs and fees are considered.

Over recent years the Queensland charges have been \$2,053. Under the proposed fee changes, this would rise to \$5,060. This includes an increase in the assessment fee for intercountry adoption from \$2,000 to \$3,500 and a new postplacement supervision fee of \$1,500 to meet the requirements of the country of origin. However, the proposed fee changes would still leave Queensland with lower fees than other states. New South Wales charges \$9,700; South Australia, \$8,512; Northern Territory, \$6,600; and Victoria, \$6,561.

Some critics have suggested that the government is trying to raise revenue by these changes. That is a long way from the truth. It is estimated that for every intercountry adoption finalised this financial year the Queensland government will spend about \$16,800. The current fees only recover about 15 per cent of the cost to government and the increased fees will still only recover about 30 per cent of the cost to government.

Another of the criticisms has been that the charge for couples wanting to adopt Queensland children is not being increased. This is true and is because the state government has the primary responsibility to find a home for the small number of Queensland children available for adoption each year. The submissions will now be examined in detail and all issues considered prior to the final decision.

## MEMBERS' ETHICS AND PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE

### Report, Notice of Motion

**Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (10.29 am): I table report No. 82 of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee titled 'Matter of privilege referred by the Speaker on 18 April 2007 relating to an alleged intimidation of a member by a legal firm'. I commend the report and recommendations to the House. The report addresses important issues of privilege associated with correspondence from legal firms addressed to members regarding their activity in the House. I therefore give notice that I will move—

That the House take note of the report.

*Tabled paper:* Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee Report No 82 titled 'Matter of Privilege referred by the Speaker on 18 April 2007 relating to an alleged intimidation of a member by a legal firm'.

## NOTICE OF MOTION

### Queensland Ambulance Service

**Mr SEENEY** (Callide—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.30 am): I give notice that I will move—

That this House calls on the Government to convene an immediate independent inquiry—

- to identify solutions to the current ambulance crisis; and
- to ensure the ambulance tax paid by every Queenslanders provides a world class, responsive, value for money ambulance service, as promised by the Premier.

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Local Government Reform

**Mr SEENEY** (10.30 am): My first question without notice is to the Premier. I refer again to the guidelines for the local transition committees which will make all the structural, financial and operational decisions for the new regional councils in Queensland. Can the Premier confirm that failed Labor member Steve Rodgers has been appointed to the local transition committee for the Townsville City Council, the Cassowary Coast Regional Council, the Cairns Regional Council and the Tablelands Regional Council? How is this failed Labor politician and now union hack better qualified than the people who have been elected by their own communities for many years? How many other union hacks have received multiple appointments to determine the future of communities where they have never lived and never been elected?

**Mr BEATTIE:** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. He flogged this horse yesterday. I have to tell members that this is becoming a bit of a dead horse. The Leader of the Opposition is like one of the ones that the federal minister for agriculture, Mr McGauran, let out of the supposed quarantine area. I am not aware of where Steve Rodgers has been appointed. I do not follow every single appointment either by the councils or by the unions. My understanding is that Steve Rodgers works for the—

**Mr Hobbs:** He's not appointed by the councils.

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Warrego. I call the Premier.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Rudeness is no excuse for having no facts.

**Mr Seeney:** He's been appointed to four councils.

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! Leader of the Opposition, you have asked the question.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Do you want me to answer this or do you just want to tell me the same thing four times.

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Premier, please direct your comments through the chair.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I am very happy to do that. As I understand it, Steve Rodgers works for the ASU, the Australian Services Union. In those circumstances he represents council employees.

**Mr Seeney:** Four councils.

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! Leader of the Opposition, you have asked the question. The Premier is answering. I call the Premier.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I am very happy to answer this. Just put the rudeness in a box for one minute. As I understand it, he is a member of the ASU. Being a member of the ASU in a regional area it is likely that he would be appointed to this. The ASU has large membership in councils. Did I know he was appointed, no. Did anyone talk to me about it or consult me about it, no. Is he a member of the ASU and does he work for them? Yes, that is my knowledge unless he has resigned. Would it surprise me that he was appointed, no. Why would it not surprise me?

**Mr Hobbs** interjected.

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Warrego!

**Mr BEATTIE:** Is that your IQ level or is that your four fingers?

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! I call the Premier.

**Mr BEATTIE:** That is clearly the National Party's polling vote at the moment. Put them up again so we can see them. I have not gone out and said that National Party members who are mayors or councillors should not be on these transition committees.

**Mr Seeney:** They're elected people. They are elected by the communities for heaven's sake.

**Mr Hobbs** interjected.

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! Leader of the Opposition and member for Warrego!

**Mr Seeney:** That's a terrible comparison.

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition!

**Mr Seeney:** Sorry.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I take that interjection from the Leader of the Opposition. How does he think union officials get there? They get elected by their members.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** This is about anti-unionism. All the Leader of the Opposition has confirmed is that he is anti-unions, he is anti council workers having any say and he is committed to WorkChoices. That is what this is about. Can I mention this point: is this a paid position? No, it is not. It is an unpaid position. I do not know why you hate the workers.

### Queensland History

**Mr SEENEY:** My second question without notice is also to Premier. Why has the Premier given almost \$1 million to Ross Fitzgerald, another Labor mate, without a tender process to write a history of Queensland when Raymond Evans, described as the state's most eminent historian, has just published the book *A History of Queensland* at no cost to the taxpayer?

**Mr Mickel:** I bet you haven't read it.

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! Minister!

**Mr SEENEY:** It is available in the Parliamentary Library, you can get it for nothing. Is this \$1 million paid to a Labor mate simply about buying the Premier a better place in Queensland's history than he deserves?

**Mr BEATTIE:** Mr Acting Speaker—

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr Lucas:** If anyone's going to be a footnote, it's you.

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! I call the Premier.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Colleagues, I do need to give the Leader of the Opposition the courtesy of an answer. I have resisted four or five barbs in the interests of being appropriate and with respect to my office. I will not make the comment about how much it would cost to get a footnote in history for either of us. I will let the community make that judgement long term.

**Mr Seeneey:** You're the one spending \$1 million.

**Mr BEATTIE:** The member does not like the fact that sometimes his questions do not work and that is why he continues to interject. The reality is that 2009 is an important occasion for Queensland. We are going to celebrate our 150th year anniversary. I want to make certain that that is celebrated in a number of ways. Firstly, infrastructure is going to be built in partnership with councils. We have a \$100 million state government fund and councils have been able to put forward bids with them putting in funds dollar for dollar. We will be spending \$200 million as a permanent reminder of this great state.

Yes, we have commissioned Ross Fitzgerald to write a book for the 150 celebrations in 2009. I make no apology for ensuring that our history is appropriately recorded. One of the things I find annoying is that in a great state like this we have not ensured that our history is appropriately recognised at a national level. I would expect this history written by Ross Fitzgerald to be fair. I would expect it to reflect all the history of this state—different governments of different political persuasions—but, more than that, I would expect it to talk about the people.

**Mr Seeneey:** Does Merri Rose get a mention?

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! Leader of the Opposition!

**Mr BEATTIE:** Very nasty. It does not do you any good, you know. At the end of the day, it is water off a duck's back.

**Mr Seeneey** interjected.

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! Premier, please refer to members by their correct titles.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Can I simply say that all the Leader of the Opposition is seeking to do, as he always does, is come in here and be negative and whinge and carry on. I make no apology for ensuring that a definitive history of Queensland is written as part of our great state's 150 birthday celebrations. I could not think of a more fitting gift for our schools and for our communities to remember how great this state is.

The Leader of the Opposition can try to undermine Queensland, but I never will. I will always stand by Queensland. I want Queensland's history to be recorded. I am proud of Queensland and I am proud of our history. I know the wreckers opposite are not proud of Queensland, but I am proud of Queensland. I know the difference between the Leader of the Opposition and me is simple—I love Queensland and he hates it. He tries on every occasion to undermine it. He does not want a history of this great state. Why should we not have a history that we can give to leaders around the world to say, 'This is how great Queensland is.' I will never miss an opportunity to go and tell the world just how great Queensland is. I make it clear to my colleagues that both these questions were not dorothy dixers.

Time expired.

## Technology

**Ms MALE:** My question without notice is to the Premier. Is the Premier aware of any new technology that can be used to communicate Smart State initiatives?

**Mr BEATTIE:** The answer to that is yes. Sites such as MySpace, Facebook, YouTube and other blogs are innovative ways for people to communicate to get their message across, and I am looking at exploring some of those options obviously for me and the government. I note that the member for Moggill has also ventured on to the web. However, he has had no choice because his staff have flown the coop, so he is out there having to defend himself to get his message out. He has no staff to do it. Gone are the days when he made his staff go out and deal with journalists and abuse them and play favourites. Now the Leader of the Liberal Party has hatched a plan to cut out all of the hard work and go straight to the community itself through YouTube. I understand he is so happy with his YouTube performance he wanted to run the media management session the Liberals had on Bribie Island. Like a bad slide night with the in-laws, he could have shown off his foray into YouTube. I can imagine how well it would have gone: his colleagues could have sat through an exciting night of watching Bruce in the park, Bruce in the parliament and Bruce in his office. Better yet, he had no pesky journalist to ask him any hard questions and he does not have to stand next to Jeff as well. That is another bonus about using YouTube.

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Premier, please refer to members by their title.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Yes, I will; the Leader of the Opposition. After everyone woke up of course at the retreat, the Leader of the Liberal Party stressed his new approach would allow him to take his message to the world—and of course that is very important and I am pleased to see some of it here. But after Kevin Rudd used YouTube and thousands of people from around the world have viewed his messages and have commented on them—and he would have got quite a large number of responses—I wondered how many the Liberal leader got. Was it 500 or 1,000 or 10,000? At last count his three clips had generated a grand total of seven comments! Now, there are eight members of the Liberal Party, so that was Bruce and seven members of the Liberal Party! But hang on: that is what I first thought, but I was wrong! I do not want to mislead the House, but I was wrong. Those seven hits included four from the same person. One sent in a really big comment that was profound but his codename was 'Sheik Your Booty'. Bruce, all I can say is this: be careful on the net. Be careful on YouTube. You had trouble with your mobile phone yesterday. I would urge you to continue to do this because it will impress your colleagues. I know that there is an enormous amount of grief there. All I can say is, Bruce, keep trying! We will have a look at it. We will have a look at your experience and we will see what we can do. So good luck, digger! We know that you are going to have some difficulties in the future, but, Bruce, I want you to know—and I have said this before and I want to say it again—we are right behind you.

## Queensland Health, Appointments

**Dr FLEGG:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. Minister, I refer to the termination of employment of Dr Mohammed Asif Ali due to his dishonesty on his CV. Minister, please explain the difference between his treatment and that of Virginia Hancl, who was at the centre of a crisis that paralysed geriatric services at the Prince Charles Hospital. Even though a CMC investigation found that she had been dishonest about her qualifications, she is now employed by the minister's department at a very senior level at Eventide Nursing Home. Does the minister have any coherent policy at all on professional staff who mislead about their qualifications?

**Mr ROBERTSON:** Obviously I have a fairly good knowledge about where this question has come from, Dr Flegg. Given that he knows the history of that particular case, he would also appreciate that that was exhaustively investigated by the independent Crime and Misconduct Commission and in fact an apology to the doctor involved in that particular case was provided by both the director-general and me. It was the role of the director-general based on the independent reports of the CMC and other bodies that conducted investigations, including the Ethical Standards Unit, that the decision was made in that particular case to resolve it in the way that was publicly released and in fact received some attention in this place at the time.

Each case stands on its merits. In both cases there were exhaustive investigations underway, and based on the particular facts of the matter appropriate determinations were made as to what should occur. It has been done transparently, openly and exhaustively. That is our commitment and that is the responsibility of senior managers in the Queensland Health organisation. I support the decisions taken when it is quite clear that there have been exhaustive and independent investigations undertaken. I think it is actually time for people to move on. I actually think it is time for people to understand that they have had their day in court, that people involved in that particular dispute have received appropriate apologies and acknowledgement of what went on in those particular matters and that everyone now has a right to get on with their lives. But each case stands on its merits based on the individual facts of each case.

## Local Government Reform

**Ms NOLAN:** My question is to the Premier. Is the Premier aware of progress being made by councils on the local government reform process?

**Mr BEATTIE:** I thank the honourable member for the question and remind the House, as the minister for local government pointed out earlier, that the deputy electoral commissioner has told a Senate inquiry that the Australian Electoral Commission would resist the attempts of the Local Government Association of Queensland to hold plebiscites on 20 October. He said that it was out of the question and the AEC was rightly focused on the job it was established to do—organise and run the upcoming federal election. I think that is an appropriate position for it to take. We expect it to be independent and we expect it to stay out of the politics, and it seems to be going down that road.

I am pleased to report that the majority of councils are getting on with the job. In fact, I have reported in the past the process of how the transitional committees were operating. I have had a look at some of the headlines around. They include 'Amalgamation going ahead', 'Workings of supercouncil', 'CEO to be appointed at first merger meeting', 'LTC members named', 'Shire union talks start' and 'Unions have their say'. I table those for the information of the House.

*Tabled paper:* Article from the Townsville Sun, dated 29 August 2007, regarding the implementation of local government amalgamation reforms

*Tabled paper:* Article from the Warwick Daily News, dated 28 August 2007, titled 'CEO to be appointed at first merger meeting'.

*Tabled paper:* Article from the Noosa News, dated 31 August 2007, titled 'Workings of super council'.

*Tabled paper:* Article from the Bowen Independent, dated 29 August 2007, titled 'Shire union talks start' concerning the implementation of local government amalgamation reforms

*Tabled paper:* Article from the Atherton Tablelander, dated 28 August 2007, titled 'Amalgamation going ahead'.

*Tabled paper:* Article from the Warwick Daily news, dated 5 September 2007 titled 'Unions have their say'.

I want to congratulate all of the councils involved in the formation of the 34 local transitional committees. They are vital to ensure that the formation of new councils takes account of all local interests. They are also a sure sign that the majority of mayors and councillors recognise that a constructive approach is the most positive thing they can do for their communities. If we have a look around we can see quite a lot of negativity being pursued by those opposite for cheap political purposes. Yesterday I highlighted from a former National Party member on the Gold Coast that the Liberal Party was simply trying to use amalgamations to run a Liberal Party team for the Gold Coast City Council. It is trying to bring politics into local government down there and I hope that is rejected by the people of the Gold Coast.

We have seen the Leader of the Opposition repeatedly attack the workers in the councils and their representatives in the unions. The Leader of the Opposition wants the transition to be run only by the councils and to ignore the workers. There is a really clear difference between the Leader of the Opposition and me on this. He has made it clear this week that he wants the transition to be run only by the local councils with no involvement with the workers or their representatives. Let me make it clear: the local councils have a key role in transitions which is why they have representatives on it. But I am determined that council employees will be given a voice.

**Mr Schwarten:** And their families.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I take that interjection. Council employees and their families will be given a voice. I say to council workers from one end of this state to the other: the opposition wants to give you no voice at all. I am determined, and so is my government, that council workers will have a voice. They will have a voice. Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition stated clearly his support for WorkChoices. He is about undermining workers. We are about looking after them.

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Before calling the honourable member for Surfers Paradise, I acknowledge in the public gallery another group of students from Brisbane Grammar School in the electorate of Brisbane Central, which is represented in the House by the honourable Premier, Peter Beattie.

## Health Services

**Mr LANGBROEK:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. Minister, I refer to the practice of telling public patients to go to private clinics where they see the same doctor but receive quicker treatment. Can the minister confirm that patients are being told that if they pay they can get access to vital treatment more quickly? Don't Queenslanders have the right to expect that public treatment should be free? Minister, what does this say about Labor's commitment to public health?

**Mr ROBERTSON:** Obviously the honourable member has a particular case in mind and he therefore has an obligation I suspect to make those facts known. Once he does so, I will be in a position of course to give a detailed outline of the procedures in place.

I might say in globo, if you like, that these allegations are made from time to time and where details might be provided we will follow up on them. But, of course, the Commonwealth has an interest in this matter as well. Just recently I recall receiving a letter from the federal health minister after having made some suggestions or expressing some concerns to my office some months ago that similar cases may have been around. Those cases have been investigated. Recently I received a letter from the federal health minister acknowledging that there was not such an issue that he was originally concerned about.

### GPS Monitoring of Sex Offenders

**Mrs MILLER:** My question is to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. The member for Burnett has been calling for GPS tracking devices to be fitted to sex offenders under supervision orders in the community. Would GPS technology improve offender monitoring compared to the equipment that is currently being used?

**Ms SPENCE:** I thank the member for Bundamba for the question. From what I can gather it seems that the opposition has three policies in the law and order area. I think we have all heard about them. The first one is to buy the police a helicopter. The second one is to introduce GPS tracking technology for sex offenders. The third one is to make our sex offender registers public. We have talked enough about helicopters in this place.

I am pleased that the member for Bundamba has brought up the issue of GPS tracking technology. It is an issue that I have studied. As I have said publicly, the government has not written off the introduction of GPS technology but it would prefer to wait and see what is happening overseas and interstate where this kind of technology is being trialled.

The New Zealand Department of Corrections has been piloting the GPS technology for the last two years. Indeed, I went to New Zealand and talked to the authorities. Last Friday it put out a media release on the conclusion of the trials and what it found as part of its live tests. I am happy to table this media release from the Department of Corrections in New Zealand. It says that there is no prospect that the GPS technology could be used to replace existing technology because it was too unreliable.

**Mr Schwarten:** Like the member for Burnett.

**Ms SPENCE:** I will have to agree with the member for Rockhampton on that one. That is exactly what I said when I came back from New Zealand after talking to the authorities over there—that it would be better if we waited until the technology became more reliable before we invested taxpayers' dollars in it.

The media release states further that the—

... public has an incorrect perception that GPS involves real time tracking of offenders, and that the monitoring company is able to actively watch the offender via satellite.

I think the member for Burnett and the other members of the opposition also have that incorrect perception of GPS technology. It can do tracking in retrospect, but there is no lifetime tracking. We do not have whole armies of individuals sitting in front of monitors watching where the sex offenders are at any point of the day or night. That simply does not happen. It is irresponsible for the opposition to continue to peddle this technology to Queenslanders before it is going to solve the problems that we all face with these people.

With respect to the opposition's policy of making public our sex offender registers, I think there is some problem in that the coalition does not seem to be totally behind this policy. I note in the debate on the child protection register that the member for Currumbin stated that she was pleased that we were not introducing a Megan's Law type of register because—

This type of law is inconsistent with society's goal of protecting individual liberties. It gives residents a false sense of security, it encourages a vigilante mentality.

I agree with the member for Currumbin.

**Mr McARDLE:** I rise to a point of order. The minister said that she would table the media report. Could she do so.

*Tabled paper:* Media release, dated 27 August 2007, from the Department of Corrections, New Zealand, titled 'GPS technology to monitor offenders at work and study'.

Time expired.

### Queensland Ambulance Service, Political Advertising

**Mr MALONE:** My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services. Two weeks ago in this House the Premier gave an undertaking that ambulance officers were not to appear in party political ads. Indeed, we were told that the minister's commissioner had instructed officers that such action was unacceptable. I table the Premier's ministerial statement of that day on the longstanding policy of Emergency Services personnel not to take part in any political campaigns in uniform.

*Tabled paper:* Extract from *Hansard*, dated 22 August 2007, regarding political advertising.

How is it then that uniformed officers continue to appear in ALP TV ads broadcast nightly in the Bundaberg-Wide Bay area for the local federal candidate, Gary Parr, and as late as last night? Is this just another example of the minister's government's politicisation of the QAS?

**Mr ROBERTS:** I thank the member for the question and I confirm that the Ambulance Commissioner has reiterated our policy that uniformed ambulance officers, and indeed fire officers and other uniformed officers across the Department of Emergency Services, should not be participating in political campaigns. I support that. That is the position of the Department of Emergency Services. That directive has been reissued to departmental officers.

In terms of the negativity about the Queensland Ambulance Service, the people of Queensland who have used the Ambulance Service over the last 12 months have indicated in a national survey that 97 per cent of them are satisfied with the service that has been delivered by the Ambulance Service. The National Party and the member for Mirani appear to be running with the three per cent of people who do not believe that our Ambulance Service is delivering a quality service to the people of Queensland. I stand by the quality service that has been provided by paramedics throughout this state day in, day out. They are doing an outstanding job in responding to increasing levels of demand. The opposition on a day-to-day basis is out there undermining the confidence that the people of Queensland have in this service.

I have confidence in my commissioner. I have confidence in the service that has been provided by the ambulance officers. The government recognises that our ambulance officers are responding to increasing pressures.

While I am on my feet I want to take this opportunity to talk about some of the things that we are doing to assist our ambulance officers to respond to that increased demand. To give members an idea of the increased demand that our ambulance officers are responding to, in the last financial year they attended 10,757 more code 1 incidents within 10 minutes than they did the previous year. I think that is reflected in the 97 per cent patient satisfaction rate that we have been consistently receiving over the past few years.

In addition, in recognising the additional demands placed on our ambulance officers, the government this year brought down a record budget—an additional \$50 million, an increase of almost 14 per cent—

**Mr STEVENS:** I rise to a point of order. Under standing order 118 titled 'General rules for answers' it states quite clearly—

An answer shall be relevant to the question.

Quite clearly, the question was in relation to the ads.

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr ROBERTS:** The government has delivered a record budget to the Ambulance Service of \$404 million this year, which is almost an extra \$50 million and which is going to deliver an additional 250 ambulance officers into our service. That is on top of the additional 220 officers that we delivered in last year's budget. In addition, we recognise that some communities are expanding in terms of their demand. We are building an additional three ambulance stations to service the people of Queensland.

Time expired.

### Gold Coast, Federal Road Funding

**Mrs REILLY:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. I note that after more than four years of no commitment for Gold Coast roads from the Howard government there has finally been a victory for local motorists

**An opposition member:** Thank you, John Howard.

**Mrs REILLY:** Yes, thank you John Howard. I am sure I will never have to say that again. Can the minister inform the House of how long Queensland has been lobbying for this funding and whether or not it will do the job?

**Mr LUCAS:** I thank the honourable member for her question because for many, many years she, along with all our Gold Coast state members, has been demanding federal action on road funding. She has delivered, and the campaign that the state government has waged to get the federal government to accept its responsibility for its share of the M1 has finally paid off; it has not totally paid off, but we are getting there.

Anyone who knows the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan would know that the state government's share of a significant proportion of that project was contained in the plan. We have had our money on the table for many years. In 2004 I first raised the issue of the need for the federal government to contribute to the Pacific Motorway upgrade. More than 2½ years ago we wrote to Canberra requesting fifty-fifty funding for the upgrade of the M1 at Logan and from Nerang to Tugun. We told the federal government that it would cost \$1.5 billion. Finally, last week we got a commitment from the federal government for \$455 million, with a matching commitment from federal Labor.

Anyone who reads the Gold Coast media would know that Steven Ciobo in particular and failed Liberal candidate Ros Bates were in there with petitions and postcards that never went anywhere, saying that the state government should do the job. Time and time again we pointed out to the community that the state government had its share of the money ready and was willing and able to go. We started off doing the planning and we did the land acquisition, but still there was no federal money.

People on the Gold Coast have realised that they are paying \$330 million a year in federal fuel taxes but for a number of years have seen nothing from the federal government in major road announcements. Despite returning a swag of safe Liberal seats on the Gold Coast, they have been totally ignored and underrepresented by ineffectual federal Liberal members.

What do we on this side of the House do? If a road is our responsibility, we cop it. However, if it is a federal responsibility they should play that role. Why is it that New South Wales can get \$160 million a year over 10 years on fifty-fifty funding? They have that now. The good news is that this week we will call tenders for the Nielsen's Road interchange.

The people of the Gold Coast will not be caught out or fooled by a federal government whose representatives have said time after time that they have no responsibility for this project. If they have no responsibility, why are they finally 'fessing up with \$455 million? They were caught out and now they are desperate because they are behind in the polls. It is about time that they accepted the responsibility for this project, which is at least two years behind where it could have been.

We on this side of the House will keep putting pressure on the federal government to give a fair go to this growth state. Each year, Gold Coast motorists pay \$330 million in fuel tax. They deserve—

Time expired.

### **Tarong Energy Corporation**

**Mrs PRATT:** My question is to the Minister for Mines and Energy. I have been made aware that businesses directly associated with Tarong Energy Corporation have informed their workers that TEC has made its decision on its fuel source option and has informed the minister and all relevant bodies. Has the minister been informed by any means of TEC's decision and will he inform landholders in communities affected by this decision before 30 September? If not, why not?

**Mr WILSON:** I thank the honourable member for the question. As the member knows full well, I have responded to questions asked on 24 May and on 30 July—which was at the estimates hearing, when she quite rightly asked a number of questions about the future of the Tarong Power Station and the fuel source decision that is being considered by that power station. Tarong Energy Corporation has undertaken a very extensive examination of the three choices that it has for long-term fuel security at the Tarong Power Station. Indeed, it has formed a view about which way it proposes to go. It has advised the government of its recommendation, and the government is considering that recommendation.

We well understand the importance of this decision, which is why we are proceeding expeditiously to examine that recommendation. We will be making a decision in relation to Tarong's preferred option as quickly—I underline, as quickly—as possible. The member should remember that it is important that this multimillion-dollar decision needs to be carefully considered rather than rushed. However, as the member knows, it is important to make the right decision.

I recognise that on a number of occasions the member has quite rightly and quite ably made representations to me about her view and the views of her constituents as to which of the three options should be recommended by Tarong Energy. She has quite vigorously represented to me that the decision should be for the Kunioon option. I have taken on board her points of view. However, there are two other options and it is important that the consideration of the three options be done on an entirely objective and expert basis so that all of the financial, social, environmental and economic considerations that need to be taken into account are fully and properly addressed, and then the right decision can be made.

I recognise the importance of the decision for the South Burnett area and the member's area. I recognise that the member strongly supports the Kuniouon option. The government will make the decision speedily. The way forward will be very clear and I expect to be able to do that in the very near future.

### **Moreton Bay Marine Park Rezoning**

**Mr WEIGHTMAN:** My question is to the Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism. Can the minister outline to the House why some National and Liberal Party federal members are using the Moreton Bay Marine Park rezoning review to try to score political points, when in fact all they are doing is confusing the community at large?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** I thank the member very much for that question. It is very timely. I have spent some time with the member in his part of the world, which is absolutely beautiful. It is a magnificent fishing retreat for Queenslanders. I plan to continue to work with him to make sure that Moreton Bay is available to all Queenslanders.

In light of the positive feedback that the EPA has received in relation to the consultation process, I think this question is very necessary. Ironically, some members of the federal government seem to think that that consultation should end. Just last weekend Senator Boswell called for the immediate release of the draft, yet there have been consistent calls to wait for input from a research program that has been commissioned by Moreton Bay Access Alliance. I ask Senator Boswell: which is it to be? Release the draft now before the consultation is complete or wait until everybody has had their say? The government is committed to hearing from everybody in this review process. The EPA is working very closely with the access alliance, and their research will help to inform the process as will feedback from many other users of the bay.

Senator Boswell, the member for Bowman and his friends continue to spread unnecessary fear in the community and make outrageous claims about the bay being locked up. I am happy to say that that is not working. In fact, this week I have had calls to my office from leading representatives of the recreational fishing sector, saying that they were rejecting attempts by the federal National and Liberal members to stir things up. We have had people calling the EPA daily to hear the real story. They are very confused by the messages that are coming from those federal members. Once they get the real message, they agree that our process is, in fact, very fair, it is very open and it is necessary.

The consultative process that the EPA has carried out has been of the highest standard. That is also the view of major stakeholders on the 30-member stakeholder reference committee. The committee includes representatives from commercial interests, recreational fishers, businesses, recreational groups and the conservation movement. Later this year we will see a draft plan for consultation and then the community will be able to provide even further comment before a final plan is prepared and considered by government. This plan will offer protection for the natural wonders of the bay, as well as providing for ongoing recreational fishing and an assurance of a vibrant, sustainable, commercial fishing industry.

### **Equine Influenza**

**Mr HORAN:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries. The DPI control group briefing states that the minister signed the standstill notice at 11.30 am on Sunday, 26 August. In a media release issued yesterday, he stated that the state standstill came into being, along with the quarantine of Morgan Park, on the Saturday. Will the minister explain why horses left Morgan Park before 11.30 am on Sunday, including a horse stabled beside the sick horse? Why were people allowed to come and go with minimal quarantine arrangements, including to feed horses at properties on the Darling Downs, in the midst of some of the most intense horse populations in Australia? Does this not prove that the minister's initial response was a shambles and a failure?

**Mr MULHERIN:** I thank the honourable member for the question. I briefed the honourable member on all occasions over the weekend about the response taken by the department. We offered the honourable member a briefing by the department's biosecurity officers so that he could be fully informed of all of the events leading up to and including the quarantine of Morgan Park. The honourable member decided to send a staff member. So I think it is more to do with his trickiness in this chamber—unlike the member for Southern Downs, who has been very cooperative and has informed me at all stages of what has occurred and what the people's concerns were at Morgan Park.

In relation to the national standstill committee, following the telephone hook-up of chief veterinary officers from around the state jurisdictions at 10 am on Saturday, 25 August, a national standstill order was put in place. I decided to strengthen that standstill order by signing a declaration at 11.30 am on Sunday morning.

**Mr Lucas:** 24 hours later.

**Mr MULHERIN:** I take the interjection. There was a national standstill order put in place. Biosecurity Queensland, along with its counterparts in other states, contacted the industry, which included the racing industry and the equestrian industry, and notified them that there was a national standstill in place. I also note that racing around Australia immediately came to a standstill. I strengthened that standstill order by signing a declaration at 11.30 on Sunday.

The Chief Veterinary Officer, Dr Ron Glanville from my department, received advice on Saturday that horses at Morgan Park had elevated temperatures. We took samples from those horses and tested those overnight at our facilities at Yeerongpilly. They tested positive to the influenza A strain. The government jet was dispatched to Geelong with the samples where it was confirmed on Tuesday that it was equine influenza. The Chief Veterinary Officer, Dr Ron Glanville, put the Morgan Park facility in quarantine at around four o'clock on Saturday.

If the honourable member would like to cooperate, as has the member for Southern Downs, the offer is there for a full briefing by the biosecurity department after question time, rather than sending one of his officers along. He is too lazy; he wants to be tricky in this place.

### **Rockhampton Hospital, Magnetic Resonance Imaging Equipment**

**Mr HOOLIHAN:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. The minister will be aware that Rockhampton Hospital has been crying out for the Commonwealth to provide it with vital magnetic resonance imaging equipment to provide patient diagnosis and treatment. Has the minister received any response from the federal health minister to his request on behalf of the hospital for an MRI licence?

**Mr Johnson:** Still haven't built the Yeppoon Hospital.

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Gregory!

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I thank the member for the question. I can assure him that progress on the new hospital for Yeppoon carries on. We are at the stage of design and hopefully will be on site in the not too distant future according to the timetable that was set out in the election campaign.

**Mr Seeney:** How many years ago did we have that vision in Rockhampton?

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! Leader of the Opposition!

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I am happy to take that interjection from members opposite. With respect to MRI facilities in Rockhampton, twice over the past 18 months I have written to the federal health minister to press Rockhampton's case for a full-time Medicare-funded MRI licence and twice Tony Abbott has refused. For 10 years Rockhampton had its own MRI scanner seven days a week but since August 2005 it has been forced to share a scanner which is literally towed on the back of a truck between Bundaberg, Gladstone and Townsville. This is unacceptable in a modern health system and is a clear demonstration of the level of competency when one puts the federal government in charge of health services.

A Commonwealth licence is required for MRI services to be bulk-billed through Medicare, but for more than two years it has refused to grant one for Rockhampton. This is despite the fact that the number of MRI referrals continues to grow. Last year there were nearly 700 referrals at Rockhampton Hospital, up from 428 in 2004-05. The Rockhampton Hospital acts as a major referral centre and trauma hospital for 200,000 central Queenslanders so access to an MRI all day every day is imperative.

While Mr Abbott continues to drag his feet on this issue he is putting patients at risk. It is estimated that up to 200 public patients are disadvantaged every year because of the federal health minister's stubbornness. These patients are forced to travel as far as Brisbane for a scan or wait up to two weeks for a mobile MRI scanner to return to Rockhampton. It is not just public patients affected by the Commonwealth decision; private patients share the same mobile scanner. MRI scans are particularly important for vascular and orthopaedic diagnoses because they produce a more detailed image than CT scans or standard X-rays. The higher quality image allows for better diagnosis, better treatment and a much better outcome for patients. Mr Abbott is content to treat the people of Rockhampton with contempt. Once again I call on the federal health minister to grant a full-time licence to Rockhampton with the existing licence to boost the MRI services at both Bundaberg and Gladstone.

### **Queensland Ambulance Service**

**Mr DICKSON:** I put this question to the Minister for Emergency Services: on Monday, 3 September a constituent of mine, a terminally ill leukaemia patient, was refused ambulance transport to hospital for emergency treatment. He waited another two hours for an ambulance to be dispatched. Why has the minister allowed ambulance services on the Sunshine Coast to become so stretched that ill patients are put through such trauma and what will it take for him to acknowledge that we have a crisis in the Ambulance Service in Queensland?

**Mr ROBERTS:** I thank the member for the question. I am not aware of the particular details of that case and I invite the member to provide those to my office and I will get back to him with a response. I will take this opportunity to get more information into the House and into the community about how the government is responding to the increasing demand that has been placed on our ambulance officers. At the outset I want to say that they are doing an outstanding job under increasing pressures. That is indicated, as I said earlier this morning, by the fact that 97 per cent of people who use our ambulance services are satisfied with the service that they received. Three per cent are not satisfied. The National Party, and it appears now the Liberal Party—the whole coalition—fit within the three per cent who do not believe that our ambulance officers are doing a great job.

The government recognises that our ambulance officers and our service is under increasing pressure. We have responded quite significantly in the last budget and I have outlined some of the specific initiatives, but I want to give more detail. In addition to the funding increases, the Department of Emergency Services or the Ambulance Service has introduced a number of measures to assist in responding to the increasing demand. We have the additional officers, additional fire stations which are being built and this year we are funding an additional 140 vehicles. The majority of those vehicles will be replacement vehicles, but that funding will provide around about 30 to 40 additional vehicles on the road to respond to the increasing demand. We have an active international recruitment campaign. We actively recruit trainee paramedics but we also need qualified paramedics to make sure that we have the mix right. We have a very successful international recruiting campaign. Yesterday I attended an induction course for an additional nine officers who will be coming on stream soon and just a few weeks ago I attended an induction course of an additional 20-odd. That is part of our response as well.

In addition to that we have implemented significant roster reform which is probably one of the most significant productivity improvements that the Ambulance Service has seen for many years. The opposition promotes 14-hour shifts. On the one hand it criticises the length of shifts that ambulance officers are working but on the other hand it is promoting 14-hour shifts. Shifts of 14 hours are not appropriate as a rostered shift for ambulance officers. Shifts of 10 hours have been found to be much safer. We are implementing an effective roster reform which will deliver not only productivity improvements but also a better and safer working environment for our ambulance officers.

We are also looking at improving the patient transfer system. One of the ways in which we can release resources into the community with emergency responses is to have better coordination of our patient transfer services. We are working closely with Queensland Health and indeed within our own department to make sure they are conducted in the most effective way possible.

### Home WaterWise Rebate Scheme

**Ms van LITSENBURG:** My question is to the Minister for Natural Resources and Water. Minister, could you outline how many rainwater tank rebates have been paid out under the government's Home WaterWise Rebate Scheme?

**Mr WALLACE:** I would be absolutely delighted to outline how many rainwater tanks we have paid rebates for. At the close of business on Monday, the Home WaterWise Rebate Scheme had processed for payment in excess of \$100 million worth of rainwater tank rebates. That means we have provided more than 100,000 rebates to Queenslanders for rainwater tanks to help them conserve this precious resource—yes, 100,000 rebates. The \$100 million mark represents almost 85 per cent of all rebates paid to date—nearly \$118 million.

**Mr Johnson** interjected.

**Mr WALLACE:** Congratulations to Queenslanders. Congratulations to those in the electorate of Gregory; I know they have applied as well. Although the water tank industry is reporting reduced demand for tanks, this is not due to state government rebates. Other organisations may have cut back, but we are keeping on keeping on with the same rebate of up to \$1,000 whether tanks are plumbed in or not. More than \$12 million has been provided for 62,682 water efficient washing machines—that is a lot of clean clothes out there in Queensland—and more than \$2 million for 14,754 dual-flush toilet suites. One in every eight households in the Brisbane City Council area now has a rainwater tank, which is up from one in every 20 households just three years ago.

The Beattie government recognises that consumer education is an important element in conserving water. We are working with the Bunnings Warehouse chain to encourage local residents to make their homes and gardens more waterwise. Over the weekend, one-stop information displays were set up at Bunnings Warehouses at Underwood, Southport, Rocklea, Rockhampton, Morayfield, Caloundra, Cairns, Bundaberg and Browns Plains.

**Mr Lucas:** Flushed with success.

**Mr WALLACE:** I take the transport minister's interjection: flushed with success. Indeed I recently went to a great display at the Townsville Bunnings Warehouse, where thousands of locals flocked to see the display. I could not get my wife out though; she stayed there and wanted to buy more. The displays are the third round of the statewide government campaign to educate households to save water. The current round of displays will be in stores until 9 October.

The Home WaterWise Rebate Scheme passed the \$100 million mark for rebates paid in early August. The Beattie government provided a further \$100.8 million for the Home WaterWise Rebate Scheme in the state budget, providing funding until 30 June 2008. Congratulations to Queenslanders who have jumped on board. Congratulations to my hardworking staff who have got the rebates out. And congratulations to Johnathan Thurston for winning his second Dally M Medal last night.

Interruption.

## DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Before calling the member for Burdekin, I would like to acknowledge the presence in the Speaker's Gallery of His Excellency Mr Alexei Gordeyev, Minister of Agriculture of the Russian Federation and Co-Chairman of the Russian-Australian Joint Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation, who is leading a 130-strong Russian delegation to Queensland to participate in the Russian-Australian Business Forum being held at Parliament House today. Welcome.

**Honourable members:** Hear, hear!

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Resumed.

### Moreton Bay Marine Park

**Mrs MENKENS:** My question this morning is to the Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism. Minister, you have made public comment that you are going to close 18 per cent of Moreton Bay, but isn't it true that you are secretly planning to lock up 80 per cent—yes, 80 per cent—of the areas currently used by Moreton Bay fishers?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** I thank the member for the question, and in a word 'no'. It just amazes me where they get this information from.

**Mr Mickel:** She makes it up.

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** It is just made up.

**Mrs Menkens** interjected.

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Burdekin, you have asked your question.

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** In February this year, we began a process that was due. It was time to have a look at Moreton Bay because it was 10 years since the last review program. In that time, the demographics of this state have changed dramatically. We have had a large change in south-east Queensland where the population has increased substantially. Of course with that comes this desire to live around the last marine park left in the world that is surrounded by this many people. People want to live around Moreton Bay. They love it. It is a beautiful place.

**Mrs Sullivan:** They want to use it.

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** They want to use it. We have a number of users of that bay. So if we want to protect that bay for future users and for environmental reasons—that is, to keep the fish stocks up and to protect the mammals and other fish that are on the decline because of population growth and other things that come with that—we have to do something in the most productive way. To suggest that we are closing 80 per cent of Moreton Bay is just absolute nonsense. It is ludicrous and it is untrue.

We have been very certain to involve over 30 stakeholder groups who are users of this bay, whether they be commercial fishers, recreational fishers, boat and tackle shop owners, the fishing alliance or Sunfish—the list is huge. Anyone who can put together a stakeholder group of this size successfully, as the director-general of my department has done, is to be congratulated.

Since February this year, we have had absolute camaraderie and collegial behaviour—apart from the member for Burdekin's colleagues in the National Party. We have managed these public forums and EPA forums extremely well. We are in stage 1 of this process; there are two stages to go. Nothing has been closed. Suggestions have been given. We want input from the community. We will continue with that. At the end of this year—

**Mr Mickel** interjected.

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** Well, Ron Boswell is trying to frighten everybody. He is probably one of the reasons the member for Burdekin has this skewed view of what we are doing in Moreton Bay.

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Before calling the honourable member for Yeerongpilly, I would like to acknowledge in the public gallery a further group of students and teachers from Brisbane Grammar School in the electorate of Brisbane Central, which is represented in the chamber by the honourable Premier, Peter Beattie.

### Energy Conservation Strategies

**Mr FINN:** My question is to the Minister for Mines and Energy. Minister, climate change is being debated and discussed in boardrooms and lounge rooms across the country. Governments around the globe are pursuing environmentally sustainable energy solutions, and I am pleased that Queensland is on the front foot in this. But can the minister please advise the House what actions all Queenslanders can take to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and also save money?

**Mr WILSON:** I thank the honourable member for the question and his intense interest in the whole issue of new energy policy and greenhouse gas emissions. Energy conservation—that is, using less energy to achieve the same standards of service—reduces greenhouse gas emissions and saves money. It is good news. Just a five per cent reduction in household and business electricity consumption in Queensland over 10 years would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 14 million tonnes.

The state government is promoting easy, practical tips for energy conservation by households and other consumers under its EnergyWise and ClimateSmart Living campaigns. Tips range from switching off second fridges until they are really needed to installing compact fluorescent light bulbs. Later this year, the state government will make available free energy audit tool kits to help households find ways to save money and energy. This will include access to appliance meters to measure the energy use of home appliances.

Energy savings are an important part of our \$1.3 billion ClimateSmart 2050 policy. There is our \$50 million Smart Energy Savings Program which will require larger businesses to undertake energy conservation audits and bring on energy-saving measures with a three-year or shorter pay back period. To back this up, there is our \$50 million energy savings fund. It offers financial assistance to small and medium businesses to introduce energy conservation measures. Households in remote areas will benefit from the \$7 million program of rebates to help them install energy efficient appliances—for example, replacing fridge seals and installing greenhouse friendly hot water systems.

In three years time the state government will also start to phase out electric hot water systems and all new commercial buildings in Queensland will have to have a minimum four-star energy efficiency rating. This is about keeping energy costs down and a clean energy future for Queensland. We owe it to our future generations to act now. We are more than doubling the renewable and low-emission technology targets to 10 per cent by 2020 and what we are doing is cutting edge. If we act now, we will be able to have a gradual transition to a cleaner energy future. Energy conservation strategies can start now and save money in the longer term. We can get the balance right and we need to start now.

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! That concludes question time.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Local Government Reform

**Mr SEENEY** (Callide—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 am): It is outrageous that unelected union officials will be determining the future of Queensland's communities. It is outrageous that unelected union officials will be determining the future of any Queensland community, let alone those communities where they have never lived, never visited and never been elected by anybody. Yet that is the situation that the government's so-called reform process has put in place.

**Mr REEVES:** I raise a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition is deliberately misleading the House. They are elected by their members.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hoolihan): Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr SEENEY:** What an absolute absurdity, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is a good demonstration of the total lack of understanding of members on that side of the House. These people have been given positions that have been denied to councillors and mayors who have been elected by their communities for many years time and time again. They have given the better part of their life to the welfare of their communities. They are the people who have been elected to determine the future of those communities for the communities, and yet this morning in the parliament we see an example of a union hack who had a brief stay in this place before he was rejected by the people who had a chance to vote for him. And now he has been put into a position where he will determine the structure of the local governments in communities throughout north Queensland.

It is not, as the Premier suggests, just about workers' issues. These people will be voting on who will be the CEO, who will be the chairman of the interim council, how the executive structure of the new council is going to be set up, how the financial structure is going to be set up and how the operational structures are going to be put in place. They are decisions that should be made by community representatives—people who have been elected by the community to serve the community. They are not decisions that should be made by unelected union hacks with the union's interest in view. The local government reform process is not about building stronger communities; it is about building stronger trade unions, and it is an outrage.

Time expired.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hoolihan): Order! Before calling the member for Aspley, I welcome to the public gallery school leaders and teachers from Caningeraba State School in the electorate of Burleigh, represented by Mrs Christine Smith.

### Health Professionals

**Ms BARRY** (Aspley—ALP) (11.33 am): I continue to be incredulous even after such a long time about how out of touch the Howard government truly is. I do not think there is a person in Australia, and certainly not in Queensland, who does not realise that we desperately need to train more Australian doctors and nurses. We should be doing everything to support those people who are studying to be our future health professionals. So members can imagine my distress when I recently received a letter from a young nursing student in Bundaberg who was writing to me to apply for a job. Why? She clearly cannot work for me from Bundaberg but she wrote to explain and highlight her and other students' current struggles with Centrelink and the federal government. I seek leave to table the letter from Leonie, who is a nursing student three-quarters of the way through her Bachelor of Nursing course.

Leave granted.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 22 August 2007, from Leonie Johannesen to Ms Veronica Barry MP, regarding eligibility for Austudy for part time nursing students.

She works at a job 10 to 15 hours a week. She undertakes two full days studying practical nursing that is unpaid. She attends lectures and tutorials for two days a week, and she studies and does assignments. Total work and study adds up to 50 hours a week. Recently, due to changes only in the lecture part of her study, she has been deemed ineligible for Austudy by the federal government and is required by Newstart to apply for seven jobs per fortnight. At the same time, to add insult to injury, Newstart does not acknowledge her study commitments. They are jobs that she cannot take, does not have time for, and she submits job applications that she feels are fraudulent. It is no wonder that in Leonie's course alone only 39 nursing students remain out of the original 60. They leave because of income stress.

In Australia the average student survives on less than \$10,000 a year. It is a national disgrace. The federal education minister comments that students should be frugal, which is insulting and out of touch. Young Australians, particularly those students who are seeking to be doctors and nurses, should be supported by a federal government that understands how important they are to our country. John Howard has failed all of them and all Australians who are reliant upon these people for their services. It is absolutely time for John Howard to go.

Time expired.

### Under-Age Drinking

**Dr FLEGG** (Moggill—Lib) (11.35 am): There is a plague in Queensland that this government seems to care little about preventing, and that plague is under-age drinking. Some members of our community are so concerned about this problem that a group has got together to launch a petition which I am very proud to stand here and support on their behalf. Among their members are Dr Murray Bingham, Gabrielle Bingham, Anne D'Arcy Evans, Scott Emerson, Robyn Emerson and John Patton. Robyn Emerson will be the chief petitioner. These are members of the community who have come forward because they are concerned that there is a serious issue that is not being addressed in this state, and that is that liquor licensing applies on licensed premises but there is no law in this state that prevents the supply of liquor to under-age people for the purpose of their consumption.

**Mr Lawlor** interjected.

**Dr FLEGG:** I hear the interjections from the member for Southport. He and his government should be ashamed that they have done nothing about this plague that is affecting us. Up to a third of under-aged groups are regular drinkers. It exposes them to serious risk of injury. It exposes them to excessive risk-taking behaviour. Around one in eight young people who die in this country die as a result of alcohol. We are kidding ourselves and this government is kidding the people of Queensland if it thinks that this is harmless fun and if it continues to turn a blind eye to one of the most serious problems confronting young people.

Time expired.

### Cairns Airport

**Mr WETTENHALL** (Barron River—ALP) (11.37 am): As tropical north Queensland has emerged as Australia's premier tourist destination, Cairns airport has grown to become Australia's largest regional airport from its humble origins in 1928 when Tom McDonald flew his Gypsy Moth from the sand ridges near its present site. Based on passenger volumes, it is Australia's sixth largest domestic airport and the fifth largest international airport. It is a key feature of the Australian domestic aviation network, with air services to all capital cities except Hobart.

Cairns is a hub for services to the Torres Strait, Cape York and Gulf communities which allows connectivity to southern destinations. It is also the home for the Royal Flying Doctor Service and continues to develop as a centre of enterprise providing maintenance and other services to the aviation industry.

In 2007-08 in excess of three million passengers will pass through the terminals, up from two million just five years ago. That is why I am delighted that the redevelopment of the Cairns airport domestic terminal commenced last week. I thank the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure for joining me and the member for Cairns at the airport recently to inspect the commencement of works and announce that the national construction company Hansen Yuncken has been awarded the \$135 million contract to redevelop the domestic terminal. That is just part of a \$200 million redevelopment project.

The importance of the airport to the local economy cannot be underestimated. An estimated 30,000 jobs depend on the operation of the airport—almost a quarter of all jobs in Cairns—and the airport generates in excess of \$2 billion to the regional economy. The redevelopment of the terminal recognises that the domestic market is the bread and butter of the tourism industry in our region. The government's investment in the airport is an expression of confidence in the region and the tourist industry. The redeveloped facility will also address the requirement now in the regulatory framework for a 100 per cent—

Time expired.

## SUMMARY OFFENCES (GATECRASHING) AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

### First Reading

**Mr MESSENGER** (Burnett—NPA) (11.39 am): I present a bill for an act to amend the Summary Offences Act 2005 and the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

### Second Reading

**Mr MESSENGER** (Burnett—NPA) (11.39 am): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Today I introduce a bill of significance to every Queenslanders. This bill aims to give police more powers and creates a new offence of gatecrashing to combat the growing problem of violent gangs gatecrashing private parties. The timing of the bill is particularly important as we quickly head towards Christmas and the holiday season where private parties will be held in homes right across the state.

I want to make it clear here today that gatecrashing is not simply an innocent social activity. Gatecrashing needs to be recognised as a serious offence as it holds the potential for loss of life and the substantial destruction of property. One only has to think back to the tragic case of Matthew Stanley, who lost his life at a party that had been gatecrashed, to understand the significance of gatecrashing. Just recently, a devastating incident occurred in Logan where police were called to a party that had been gatecrashed and one officer was struck in the head with a bottle. The despicable acts conducted by people who think gatecrashing is fun are intolerable and offensive.

Currently, the law is not able to deal adequately with the serious act of gatecrashing. That is why the coalition is introducing this bill. Queensland Police currently do not have the legislative powers to effectively deal with the act of gatecrashing. The simple act of trespass is a 19th century offence that does not arm police with the legislative muscle to effectively save lives and protect the property of Queensland families. Put simply, police do not have the power to move people on from around private

residences. This bill gives police the power to move on people they reasonably suspect are about to commit the act of gatecrashing a private party. In light of the limited time I have this morning, I seek leave to incorporate the rest of my speech in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

This Bill gives police the power to move on people they reasonably suspect are about to commit the act of gate crashing a private party.

Currently, move on powers around private residences are not specific to this type of offending and, given the need for police to be able to proactively prevent gate crashing, this additional power is absolutely necessary.

This Bill will work in two ways. First, it will send a clear message to any person considering gate crashing a private party that the people of Queensland say No, it's an offence and you will be punished. Secondly, it will lay out the specific offence of gate crashing and give police additional powers to deal with the very real danger this action creates.

The act of entering a private party and behaving in an offensive manner does not fit with the offence of trespass. Therefore, the penalties for gate crashing proposed in this Bill are double that of trespass. These increased penalties and the recognition of unacceptable behaviour is part of holding people accountable for their actions.

Gate crashing is a threat to the lifestyle and social life of all Queenslanders. The family celebration, an 18th birthday party, the important 21st are all under threat by what has become a well organised attack on what should be a friendly social gathering.

Research has linked gate crashing with the broader social issues of swarming behaviour and organised group violence. While more needs to be done to control alcohol supply to under age people, along with getting to the root cause of violence in Australian society, this Bill is important in acknowledging in law the unacceptable and offensive behaviour of gate crashing. It is about holding people who gate crash responsible for their actions.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Shine, adjourned.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Moreton Bay Marine Park

**Ms van LITSENBURG** (Redcliffe—ALP) (11.42 am): There has been a lot of politicking and misinformation about the Moreton Bay Marine Park rezoning review. Recently I attended a public meeting at which there was a lot of conjecture and fear based on the federal government's management plan for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Fishing is the epitome of the Redcliffe lifestyle and people could be justifiably nervous about the result of the Moreton Bay Marine Park review except that the state government's focus is quite different. Straight after that public meeting I met with both the Premier and the minister. The Premier immediately announced that the Redcliffe jetty would not be closed to fishing.

Last Friday while the minister for the environment was in Redcliffe announcing the 10-year plan for Hays Inlet and the wildlife corridor, which I had been discussing with her for some weeks, she announced that fishing from all jetties, boat ramps and most beaches would continue. This was great news for all mum, dad and family fishers in Redcliffe. Our lifestyle is secure. We will be able to fish from our iconic spots. I have also met with such groups as Sunfish, Moreton Bay Access Alliance and groups of commercial fishers. They have all come up with positive plans for the bay. I was pleased to note their significant environmentally sustainable focus.

The consultation phase of the review is still in progress so no decisions have been made but the focus is on sustainability. A balance between all users of the bay, including tourism and commercial and recreational fishing, and protecting the bay is vital. The Beattie Labor government will come up with a balanced plan to ensure the increasing number of users of the bay will be able to enjoy boating, fishing and sightseeing and that there will be fish in the bay to grace family tables, restaurants and shops in Redcliffe and throughout the whole south-east.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hoolihan): Order! Before calling the member for Cunningham, I welcome to the public gallery another group of students and teachers from the Brisbane Grammar School in the electorate of Brisbane Central, which is represented in this House by the Premier, Mr Peter Beattie.

### Prep Year, Teacher Aides

**Mr COPELAND** (Cunningham—NPA) (11.44 am): The coalition has been committed to the provision of full-time teacher aides for prep since the inception of prep some years ago and the passage of the relevant legislation. During the last election campaign the coalition committed to providing \$20 million for the provision of full-time teacher aides this year and \$40 million for the provision of full-time teacher aides next year given the full cohort coming through.

There is growing unrest in the community and amongst the interest groups that this state government continues to refuse to provide those full-time teacher aides. Everyone other than the government recognises that this is a problem. Everyone other than the government recognises that this needs to be done. Hopefully, the government will implement this coalition policy as it has implemented other coalition policies recently.

The QTU has recently held a ballot regarding the teacher aide issue for prep. It had almost 9,000 people respond. Almost 99 per cent of members voting supported the notion that full-time teacher aides are required to successfully deliver the prep program. Almost 97 per cent of members voting expressed grave concern that the lack of full-time teacher aides in prep in the state school system has resulted in some parents choosing a non-government school with full-time teacher aides for their child's education. Almost 99 per cent of members voting called on the government to bring forward the review of the existing prep teacher aide allocation model so it can be taken at the end of this year with a view to increasing the allocation for next year.

The QCPCA also conducted a survey. It had 235 responses, which represents 22 per cent of schools where a prep year is in operation. Some 55 per cent of respondents were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with teacher aide hours. P&Cs also expressed a need to increase the overall funding for prep because it has such a high consumable content because it is a play based curriculum.

This is a real issue affecting all of our schools. I know that members of the government realise it is an issue because they go to their schools and visit. They know the stresses that the teachers are under. They know the stresses that the teacher aides are under. They know that prep is not being delivered adequately through the government's allocation.

Time expired.

### Student Housing

**Mr REEVES** (Mansfield—ALP) (11.46 am): I wish to inform the parliament of my concerns regarding the provision of illegal and unsatisfactory student accommodation in residential areas on the southside, particularly in the suburb of Macgregor. House owners are converting their downstairs areas into an extra two bedrooms, even though it is below the building regulation height, and then turning a garage into another two bedrooms. Amazingly, a four-bedroom residential house now becomes an eight-bedroom student accommodation service with only one or, if they are lucky, two bathrooms. They are doing this by getting certifiers with highly questionable ethics to agree that they can build extra rooms by calling them storerooms even though the certifiers know they will be used for bedrooms.

House owners are charging up to \$200 per week per room. So instead of collecting for an average three- to four-bedroom house \$450 per week they are now getting an amazing \$1,600 per week. As a result, many families who want to live in these local suburbs are simply priced out of the market.

We have an enormous number of high-quality, purpose-built student residences in our local area and these are properly planned and developed to accommodate a large number of students. This inappropriate conversion of domestic style homes creates overcrowding, promotes unsafe congestion in our local streets and ultimately reduces the quality of life for residents in our local neighbourhoods.

Today I call on the Lord Mayor of Brisbane to conduct an immediate inquiry into the enforcement of the state building codes. Why, after complaints have been made to the council, has no apparent action been forthcoming? I know the local Liberal councillor Graham Quirk has also expressed concern and I ask him to support this inquiry call. I know that the member for Yeerongpilly has also called for assistance.

If the Brisbane City Council needs action by the state government as a result of its inquiry I will make the strongest representation for this action to occur. I will be encouraging residents with information about the dodgy certifier practises to pass that on to Building Services Authority. I have a meeting about that at 12.45 pm today. I will also assist residents who wish to make a submission to the Department of Local Government and Planning's building control private certification review which is currently examining this issue. I am meeting with them at 12.45 pm today.

Time expired.

### Tablelands Electorate, Electricity Supply

**Ms LEE LONG** (Tablelands—ONP) (11.48 am): An issue that has been raising its head more and more often in my electorate is the cost of accessing electricity from the state power grid—something that most Queenslanders take for granted. They certainly do not expect to pay huge sums just to hook up to the power supply. But that is exactly the problem facing a growing number of people in my electorate and no doubt in other rural areas of this state, and the costs are frightening. It is not uncommon for Ergon Energy to hit people up with huge quotes after they have already got their bank loans set up for their new homes, and these amounts come completely unexpected and out of left field. Amounts can range from \$20,000 to \$60,000 just to hook up to the grid.

In one instance a quote to underground a power line for just 300 metres came in at almost \$60,000. In a more recent case, a constituent has been asked to pay nearly \$8,000 even though an existing power pole is less than 15 metres from his new house. That is the length of 15 steps to the point of connection. That averages out at about \$500 per metre or per step. It is no wonder then that people find these costs exorbitant and are shocked and horrified. By the time they recover, the quote time has run out and a new quote is even higher—sometimes even double the previous quote if it is left for some time. That is a huge burden for something as basic as electricity in the modern age and which many urbanites consider a right and certainly they would only ever have to pay a fairly minor connection fee in comparison to access power.

In this area the Beattie government is failing rural and regional Queenslanders. Most city services are subsidised, so why not subsidise country services where the wealth of this state is made? It is a bitter farce to hear government members speak out about how the Queensland economy is booming when people who live in rural and regional areas not only have to battle for access to maternity services, decent hospitals, roads and schools but now may even have to scrimp and scrape and go without to afford something as simple and basic as electric power supply. Country people should not have to foot such massive bills for an essential and basic service in the 21st century.

### Equine Influenza

**Mr LAWLOR** (Southport—ALP) (11.50 am): I am an unsuccessful punter and have been one for most of my life. I do not punt as much these days as I once did, but I am still interested in horseracing. I have owned some moderate performers and I have been on the board of the Gold Coast Turf Club for 14 years. I go to the races most Saturdays, and I did so last Saturday at the Gold Coast where a phantom meeting was held—that is, no racing but betting on Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth. There was no racing in Queensland and New South Wales. It was sad to see the impact of equine flu on a huge industry. But in addition to the direct and visible impact on trainers, jockeys, stable hands and feed merchants, there is an indirect impact on racecourse, TOTE and TAB employees, racebook printers and so on. When one considers that the Spring Carnival in Sydney has been cancelled—and I believe Melbourne will be next to be cancelled—hundreds of millions of dollars will be lost. What about the recreational riders, pony clubs, the Olympic equestrian team and the breeding industry? What about the poor people confined with horses to Warwick? What will it cost them?

All of this is as a result of the equine flu and all of it is as a result of the negligence of the Howard government at the Eastern Creek quarantine facility. Notwithstanding that horseracing in Japan was suspended due to equine influenza on 19 August, Mr McGauran, the federal minister for primary industries, said—

Australia will not take any risk with horses being imported from countries where equine influenza is present.

At about the same time a thoroughbred stallion was being tested for equine flu, which was about to be spread throughout the horse population of New South Wales and Queensland and possibly and probably the rest of Australia. Although this is a disaster of major proportions, it could have been worse. What if it had been foot-and-mouth disease that had been released from a quarantine station? What do the graziers of Australia think about the federal government's quarantine protocols? In 2003 and 2004 the Australian Racing Board wrote to then federal primary industries minister Warren Truss warning that exactly the equine flu scenario which has now occurred would eventuate as a result of the downgrading of the quarantine protocols at Eastern Creek. As Andrew Harding, the CEO of the Australian Racing Board, has said, they were virtually patted on the head and told, 'Don't worry. It'll be okay.' South African racing was shut down for three months, as was Japan, due to the equine flu. So there have been numerous warnings, but the federal government was asleep at the wheel. I have every confidence in the ability—

Time expired.

### Gold Coast, Cardiac Services

**Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (11.53 am): This morning I want to look into statements made in the House yesterday by the health minister regarding cardiac services on the Gold Coast. The minister accused me of scaremongering by raising concerns over the Beattie government's move to cut private cardiothoracic services to the Gold Coast. This is not fallacious fear raising; this is a reality. But I note that any mention of anyone in his department is turned around to be, in his words, an unprecedented personal attack. It just is a clever device used by his master, the Premier, and the health minister thinks that he can do the same thing.

Let us look into what happened. In December last year Queensland Health convened the Percutaneous Coronary Intervention Reference Group to discuss changes to the requirements contained in the clinical service capability framework as they applied to the provision of cardiac services in regional Queensland. The purpose was to consider whether routine cardiac services such as angioplasty could be performed in hospitals without the necessary cardiothoracic surgery backup.

Specifically, the PCI Reference Group, which comprised cardiologists and representatives of Queensland Health, deliberated on the question of whether routine cardiac services could be provided to patients in Cairns, where the nearest cardiothoracic support in Townsville exceeded the requisite two hours distance. The outcome of this meeting would set a precedent for similar services in regional areas such as Mackay and Rockhampton.

The group reconvened at 5 pm on 19 February. The terms of reference for this meeting included a provision for the committee to provide general recommendations and advice concerning cardiac surgery, including any changes to the current requirements within the clinical service capability framework. A proposal was put to the committee that hospitals and clinics with fewer than 400 cardiothoracic cases should not perform them. That has now led to clever arrangements having to be made with John Flynn teaming up with Greenslopes to get to 400. Cardiologist and Queensland Health concerns were raised about the impact such a change would have on existing services in Queensland. At that time the Chief Health Officer made a clear and express representation that any changes to the framework would not apply to existing services such as those which are carried out in private hospitals on the Gold Coast. The Chief Health Officer guaranteed that any change to the framework—

Time expired.

### After the Full-Time Siren Lifeskills Course

**Mr BOMBOLAS** (Chatsworth—ALP) (11.55 am): Recently I represented the Queensland government at the first After the Full-Time Siren Lifeskills course graduation ceremony. The government is proud to be in partnership with the Griffith University Sports College to run this innovative new program for elite athletes. After the Full-Time Siren provides elite athletes with an opportunity to collaborate and plan how to best meet the challenges that arise from being a public role model. It is important to acknowledge the hard work the athletes put into the program as well as fitting in elite competition. Each year the Beattie government provides more than \$50 million in funding programs targeted towards new and improved opportunities for people to participate in sport and active recreation. The government is strongly committed to promoting healthy, active lifestyles for all Queenslanders and sport plays an integral role in encouraging people to get more mobile.

After the Full-Time Siren has many strong links with the government's True Sport Lives Here program, as both offer an environment in which athletes can contribute to the community that supports them and become positive role models in the public eye. With the help of the Queensland government, Griffith University is providing a great service to elite-level athletes by ensuring that they are as well prepared for life off the field as they are on it. Inaugural graduates included athletes from the following sporting groups: the Brisbane Broncos; Logan Basketball including Luke Gillard, the son of Moose and Wendy; QAS; Queensland Cricket and Queensland Fire; Sunnybank Rugby; and the Queensland Reds. Congratulations to Michael Jeh and his team at Griffith University, and they are keen to expand and improve the program.

### Apprenticeships

**Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (11.56 am): On 29 August in the *Observer* the Premier rightly commended the reward system for early finalisation of apprenticeships with the \$1,000 bonus. A constituent in my electorate raised the fact that his daughter finished a hairdressing apprenticeship approximately one year and eight months early, which I think is a phenomenal effort. However, when she called the infoline about the \$1,000 she was told that her trade was not included. Both her and her father feel that that is discriminatory, particularly given that Rebecca shortened her apprenticeship by a large margin and is now gainfully employed. It appears that the only apprenticeships that are on the targeted list are engineering and heavy industry type skills. I know that even in my electorate it is very difficult to get people like hairdressers and others involved in new jobs.

Further, this constituent also commented on the fact that his young son and other young men and women who are apprentices have to go away for TAFE training and are paid \$22 a day as an accommodation allowance. If those young people do not have families in the centres where they have to go for training, the cost of accommodation is much more than that. I have today put a question on notice to the minister for that amount to be reviewed or at least for the gap to be ascertained and for there to be a review on the amount paid. He also said that he was concerned that his nephew—he has a lot of skilled people in his family—from Rockhampton is staying in Gladstone because the area that he is interested in is more common in the Gladstone region. He is going to sign up in the next week or so as a fridge apprentice, but because he is 20 he will still be on junior wages. This gentleman claims that because he has signed up as an apprentice on junior wages he will stay on junior wages for the full time of his apprenticeship. I seek clarification, because I would expect that once he reached the age of majority—21—in the apprenticeship line he should be on senior wages.

### Marine Worm Technology

**Mrs SULLIVAN** (Pumicestone—ALP) (11.59 am): The worm has turned. Thanks to continued state government funding and the patience and dedication of researchers within the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, in particular senior biologist Dr Paul Palmer who participated in Science Week, it has been discovered that marine worms can be used like live vacuum cleaners to clean the nutrients from the salt water left over in prawn farm ponds once the prawns have been harvested. Dr Paul Palmer, the worm farmer, has been conducting water remediation trials using two species of Moreton Bay sand worms—nereids—at the department's Bribie Island Aquaculture Research Centre, which is located in the electorate of Pumicestone.

With the assistance of local Donnybrook prawn farmer Peter Spindler, who has for many years understood the value of working with and protecting the environment, Dr Palmer is assessing the worms as a natural low-maintenance and environmentally friendly way to reduce nutrients from prawn farm ponds. Division 2 Councillor John McNaught and I accompanied Dr Palmer to Mr Spindler's prawn farm last week to see firsthand the experimental program. A series of tanks has been set up which combines the worms' specialisation as floor feeders with the mechanical properties of a domestic pool sand filter. Normally, sand filters clog up over time with algae and debris. However, when worms are living in the sand they tend to eat the organic debris and create a network of burrows which allows the water to continue to pass through the layers.

The worms' feeding activities and the burrow networks that they create substantially increase the sand bed's filter surface area and improve the condition of the water. The worms' appetite and capacity to consume organic material increases as they grow, but they are happy to sit and wait for their next meal.

This is a major breakthrough. It has generated great interest in aquaculture operations such as prawn farms, which produce seasonal crops and can have varying levels of waste during the prawn crop. At the end of the prawn season the worms will be able to be harvested and supplied to lucrative bait markets and will eventually create an export market. They could also be used as a highly nutritious food for fish or prawn brood stock.

I congratulate all of those involved in this project. As the member for Glass House, Carolyn Male, has expressed an interest in this experiment, she will be accompanying me to Peter's farm at the start of the prawn season in January.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hoolihan): Order! The time for private members' statements has expired.

## URBAN LAND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY BILL

### Second Reading

Resumed from 22 August (see p. 2769).

**Dr FLEGG** (Moggill—Lib) (12.01 pm): I rise to speak to the Urban Land Development Authority Bill. I note that the minister is not in the House. I think the fact that the minister is not in the House is symptomatic of something that is of great concern, and that is that this bill has been done with undue haste—with quite disgraceful haste, in my view.

This bill will fundamentally affect the lives and businesses of tens of thousands of Queenslanders. It encompasses changes that take power away from local communities. It encompasses changes that override local authorities. It encompasses changes that override well-established local planning procedures. It imposes a whole new structure on communities throughout Queensland. Yet the government has introduced it with ridiculous haste.

In the few days since we have had briefings on the bill and have had an opportunity to try to consult with the community, there has been an enormous amount of interest and concern and an enormous number of submissions in relation to this bill, some of which were still coming in this morning, because of the undue haste with which these measures have been brought to the parliament. I note that the minister's response to the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee was circulated only this morning.

This bill affects fundamentally the planning for communities and the rules that apply to what can be built in communities. It contains a number of measures that generate enormous power and create enormous difficulties within communities in Queensland. Yet the communities, the local governments, the landowners, the developers, the environmental groups and the community groups have had a minimal opportunity to consult or have input.

This bill is a power grab. It takes power away from local communities, local authorities and preprepared local planning. At the end of the day, all of that power will rest with the minister. We have moved the wrong way in this state. We have moved from a situation in which communities made their own decisions and communities were empowered to have an input into what happens to a situation in which the government, or even worse in many cases one minister, dictates what will happen in communities.

The government's version of the stated objectives and purposes of this bill are to improve housing affordability, to introduce regional planning, to introduce master planning for particular areas of state interest, and to establish state infrastructure agreements. The main purposes of the legislation for these urban areas is to facilitate the availability of land for urban purposes, to facilitate the provision of a range of options to address diverse community needs, to plan for and facilitate the provision of infrastructure for urban purposes, to facilitate planning principles that give effect to ecological sustainability and best practice urban design and to facilitate the provision of the ongoing availability of affordable housing options for low to moderate income households. They are the government's stated purposes. I think we in this parliament, those in the community and the stakeholders are quite entitled to use those stated purposes as a yardstick for this legislation.

Will this legislation deliver on those lofty ideals? There are some problems in relation to development in this state. There are definitely some problems in relation to housing affordability in this state. The questions are whether the measures contained in this bill will deliver more affordable housing, whether they will overcome the problems that have made development difficult to deliver and, if they achieve some of these objectives, at what cost? Make no mistake about it, there is a cost in this bill and the cost is the removal of power and say from communities, local authorities, individuals and community groups and the vesting of that power and say and decision making effectively within the hands of the government.

This bill is saying to us in this House and to the people of Queensland that the present planning scheme in this state is not working. The planning scheme—the IPA legislation—has been tinkered with by this government for years. This bill introduces overarching powers that sweep aside existing planning requirements. It says categorically without a shadow of a doubt that the present arrangements have failed. This bill also reflects on the ability of the South East Queensland Regional Plan to deliver. There is reference to that plan in many of the documents.

Certainly, I would be the first to concede that there are significant issues for young people in particular in this state around housing affordability. In fact, young people in this state have been faced with a property market that has basically doubled over the past five years—way in excess of any ability they may have to save. That has generated a housing affordability crisis. But there are two things that are not clear. One is whether this bill will improve housing affordability. Many of the contacts that I have made have cast considerable doubt over whether this bill will deal with housing affordability. The other issue that is not dealt with by this bill is the other factors that impact on housing affordability.

Housing affordability has been influenced by delays in local councils and by the difficulty of getting large developments. But it has also been influenced by excessive charges and a range of other impacts. Planning alone should not be seen as a panacea for housing affordability. If the government is serious about housing affordability, it needs to consider the other measures.

Principally, this bill sets up an authority. The composition of that nine-man authority is a chairperson appointed by the government, the Chief Executive of the Department of Infrastructure, the Chief Executive of Queensland Treasury and six other appointed members with the following skills: extensive knowledge and experience in areas of local government, architecture, urban design or planning, social policy or community development, law, economics or accounting, the construction or development industry, or natural resource and environmental management. Members may be appointed by the Governor in Council for a period up to five years. Therefore, a pretty broad-ranging group of people can be appointed to the council.

The problem that the opposition has with the proposal is that, at the end of the day, these are all government appointees. As we have seen with government appointees in a whole range of other areas, it is an unhealthy and potentially dangerous situation when a commission with this power—and this will be one of the most powerful commissions in the state and it will certainly have more power than any local government authority—is completely manned by government appointees.

We have circulated an amendment to this aspect of the bill as we believe that the commission should have some people appointed independent of government. In the short time that we have had to prepare amendments to the bill, we have proposed that a number of the members of the committee should, in fact, be appointed by local government. Local government has expertise in planning. It is local government whose power is being taken away by the bill. In Queensland, local government has put in place planning instruments after rigorous community consultation. Therefore, it is appropriate that some members of the commission are independently appointed, not by the government but by other stakeholders.

The powers of the authority are extensive and, in fact, virtually unfettered. The authority will have the power to acquire and consolidate land in urban areas. It will undertake planning, management and delivery of strategic urban development sites. The initial sites that the government is referring to its commission—and it is its commission—are sites in Fitzgibbon, Northshore at Hamilton, Bowen Hills, Woolloongabba and the Mackay Showgrounds.

Those are only seed capital, as it were. The reality is that once the government uses its numbers in this place to pass the bill, effectively it can refer anywhere in the state to its own commission, whose members the government has appointed, and override almost any planning that has ever been done in that community. This is a centralisation of power in the hands of the government. Really, it is a power grab by the government that is unhealthy and will deprive local communities of a say in what happens to their communities. Under the bill we are starting off with five communities, but effectively wherever one lives in Queensland one's community can be referred to the authority. The authority can override whatever the community has done in terms of the local plan devised by the local council. It will take away any power that the locally elected councillors may have in relation to development in that area. It would be hard to imagine a power that could have a greater impact on the welfare of communities throughout the length and breadth of Queensland than the power that this bill confers.

The opposition has had very limited time to consult in order to amend aspects of the legislation. We have circulated a number of amendments to try to restore a bit of balance in a commission that has so much power and so little accountability. In particular, our amendments deal with two areas. One is when a member of the authority has a conflict of interest. The conflict of interest provisions that are contained in this bill are not adequate. The bill provides no guarantee that vested interests within a particular area would be totally excluded. While there are some provisions that effectively require a member to walk out of a meeting, as we have seen in this state previously one has to be very vigorous when dealing with conflict of interest matters. It is not acceptable that anyone sit on this authority during the time that their personal vested interest is dealt with by that authority.

Our amendments will also deal with the issue of the right of appeal. The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee and numerous stakeholders from across the state have raised the serious issue that the right of appeal has almost been completely withdrawn. There is only a minimal right of appeal in this legislation. It does not matter whether you are an environmental group concerned about the development of the environment, whether you are a local resident who is concerned about the direction taken with the development of the community, whether you are a landholder or a developer putting forward a proposal: you have very little right of appeal. I notice that one part of the bill states that one can take an appeal in writing to the minister. Talk about Caesar judging Caesar! Under this bill, all the power of the authority derives from the minister. What sort of appeal is it if one can only approach the person who presides over the authority in the first place?

Like many others, I understand that lengthy and frivolous appeals can have a serious impact on development and the ultimate cost of developments. We do not want to see a situation where development is held up by frivolous appeals, and repeated and lengthy legal delays. That has been of serious concern within the state. However, at the end of the day people who are impacted upon have to have some comeback.

I notice that where people's property values are affected because of changes in planning there is no accessibility to compensation. With the possibility of impacting on the value of people's private property combined with the fact that they have no appeal and that the government controls the entire process so that the local council, the authority and the local planning instrument do not mean anything, we have a recipe for something that can be very seriously misused. We have some very serious reservations in relation to that.

The bill also provides for amendments to the Integrated Planning Act. As with the regulatory provisions of the South East Queensland Regional Plan, state planning regulatory provisions will, amongst other things, affect the operation of a planning scheme. They will be able to prohibit development, provide a single overarching planning instrument that can be applied in a range of circumstances and provide a more transparent approach with public consultation included.

The changes also allow for state infrastructure agreements. The bill inserts a new part 3 into chapter 5 of the Integrated Planning Act 1997 that deals with contributions for state infrastructure. The purpose of this amendment is stated to be to ensure funding for state infrastructure is a transparent and equitable process as identified in an existing government election commitment. It formalises the government's intent to collect contributions towards state infrastructure in high-growth areas as signalled in the South East Queensland Regional Plan. It is, however, at the end of the day, another government charge. It is another tax that homeowners and home purchasers will pay. In introducing a bill that is designed to improve housing affordability and lower the cost of housing, we find an amendment to the IPA to allow a new tax on property. Moreover, it is a new tax on what will predominantly be new property, the sort of place where first homebuyers might be looking to acquire their first home.

There is a danger here of extending what has already been seen as an inequitable situation. New homebuyers, who are quite frequently the first homebuyer or the young homebuyer, have been expected to pay in some cases enormous amounts towards contributions for infrastructure and we are now adding another layer of charging for infrastructure. This charge, make no mistake, will fall on the same group of new homebuyers—more likely than not young homebuyers.

The stated reasons behind the bill are that legislation is required to establish the Urban Land Development Authority—the ULDA or the authority, as I have been referring to it—to plan, undertake, promote, coordinate and control the development of certain areas of land in Queensland for urban purposes. Amendments to the Integrated Planning Act are required and there is a range of reasons explaining why we need to amend the IPA, such as to enable the minister responsible for the administration of the IPA—the planning minister—to consider and decide conflicts among state referral agencies, local government and applicants in respect of the Integrated Development Assessment System—IDAS. It is also stated that it is required to provide for the planning minister to refer infrastructure charges to the Queensland Competition Authority for advice and comment. I think this is a measure in the bill that would generally be well received. Infrastructure charges have been a bone of contention. As members would be aware, they vary enormously between different local government areas and some review of those charges is certainly timely and in order. Another reason the amendment is required, it is said, is to provide appeals to the Building and Development Tribunal in relation to the calculation of infrastructure charges for specific developments. At least we have left one small area under which there is some appeal, but it is a very small area and appeal mechanisms in this legislation are few and far between.

It is argued that the changes to the IPA are needed to enable the planning minister, the regional planning minister or a designated person to introduce state planning instruments to be referred to as state planning regulatory provisions—SPRPs—that will affect the operation of planning schemes. There is a pattern emerging here. Not only do we have the authority taking away all planning in certain areas, but also we have these state planning instruments taking away many of the existing rights of local communities to participate and have their own local plan.

It is said that we need these changes to provide for the implementation of regional plans across Queensland. This in itself is a major provision. As members are aware, we have had the South East Queensland Regional Plan for two or three years in the south-east. This legislation will facilitate the introduction of those sorts of urban planning instruments throughout the rest of the state. In fact, rather than urban planning instruments they will be regional plans across the rest of the state. Queenslanders outside the south-east corner should be pricking up their ears in relation to this because these are fundamental changes that will affect how they operate, particularly in relation to their properties.

The government has argued that these changes are needed to extend the use of the major development area designations under the South East Queensland Regional Plan, to identify areas proposed for urban development to be renamed master planned areas—again we have another major change designating areas of south-east Queensland for intensive urban development under the name of master planned areas—and to provide for a more efficient planning process for these areas involving the preparation of structure plans and master plans. This is a whole brave new world, if you like, for the way planning, approvals and development is undertaken in this state. These are major changes to what has gone before.

It has been argued by the government that changes to the IPA are needed to provide regulatory support for structure plans and the master plans through state planning regulatory provisions, including provision to regulate development in a manner that affects the operation of planning schemes and provides for state infrastructure charges. Again we have seen the government centralising control of planning in this state into the hands of the minister. I think this is a debate that the people of Queensland should have been allowed to have. These are enormous and fundamental changes that will affect most Queenslanders. The power for planning and development approval is being shifted from local councils elected at the local community level to state government. Centralisation to this extent has to be treated with great caution. What I object to most of all is that communities have barely, if at all, been consulted. The indecent haste with which these proposals have been brought in has robbed Queenslanders again of the opportunity of having an input into the future direction of their local community. It really is a contempt on the part of the government towards not local councils but local communities who have had a say in planning and development approval. Without any consultation with those communities much of that power, and in some cases all of that power, is being swept up into the hands of one minister. I think Queenslanders should be very, very cautious about that development.

When the minister comes to deliver her summing up, there are a range of issues that we would like to hear her response to. I would like to hear the minister's justification for introducing a new level of taxes—a new level of infrastructure charges—on new developments in this state.

I would like to see the minister give us some guidelines on how much these charges will be. How much will the state government take in infrastructure charges for each block of land in a master planned community? If the minister cannot answer that question, if she cannot tell this House and Queenslanders how much her new tax is going to cost on each affected block of land, then these provisions should not be introduced. We are attempting to have a discussion on the serious issue of housing affordability that has emerged rapidly in this state, but how can the minister pretend she is dealing with housing affordability by putting a new tax on new houses? It is a nonsense.

So at the end of the day, this is not an acceptable measure to bring in unless, at the very least, some assurances are given to the community of Queensland about how much these charges will be per block of land and what safeguards there will be to protect homebuyers. There has been a lot of talk in this state about certain local authorities which have repeatedly jacked up infrastructure charges virtually as a source of revenue. We have here a cash-strapped government which is introducing a new tax but it does not want to tell us how much the new tax will be. I see these charges as being a backdoor way of generating more state government revenue that can be jacked up and jacked up. This government has always found it comfortable to tax property and development. We all know who pays those taxes at the end of the day—it is the homebuyer. This is an issue that Queenslanders understand. It is a backdoor tax and we want some sort of assurance about what this tax is going to cost.

**Mr Lee:** You are a real performer, Bruce. I don't know why they want to get rid of you.

**Dr FLEGG:** That is coming from the member for Indooroopilly! A concern expressed in relation to the UDAs is that they contain no appeal. The minister can introduce amendments to them even after they have been published. When we are looking at a power grab of this dimension, consultation is simply not enough. The notes to this bill say that landowners can appeal by writing to the minister. I could stand here and appeal to the minister—which I am doing on a few points—but I have a fair indication it will not do me a lot of good. That is about how much good it will do. We cannot have an appeals process where you are appealing to the person you are appealing against.

That level of concern is substantial out in the community. People have rights. Queenslanders have rights. Whether they are residents, developers or elected to a local authority, they have rights and those rights should be respected. Grabbing power away in this manner without basically any recourse or appeal goes too far.

The minister can amend a UDA at any time. The five areas that have been designated as the initial areas to come under the authority encompass 20,000 to 30,000 dwellings. So something like 50,000 Queenslanders will have their local plan on the shape of their neighbourhood redrawn with the stroke of a pen here today when the government uses its numbers to pass this legislation. That is 50,000 people to start with, and the government has the power to extend it to as many Queenslanders and as many Queensland communities as it wishes to.

There is nothing defined in this bill—and this is a serious concern to me and others, and I hope the minister will make some response to this—to indicate what areas the minister should designate to come under control of the authority. This is a carte blanche bill where the minister can be driving around on a Sunday afternoon, see a block of land and decide to turn it into an urban area. This bill needs clear definitions so Queenslanders can see what characteristics are required before the minister decides to refer an area to the authority and eliminate effectively the current planning restrictions in that area. It is not good enough to say that the minister can refer whatever he or she likes. This can go anywhere.

Master planning areas allow local, state and property owners to agree to a plan and override local planning and thus reduce dramatically the input of concurrence agencies. This is one of the various changes being made to the IPA. Beyond the five areas being referred to the authority, planning throughout all of Queensland is potentially influenced by these other changes. Again, we understand that we have something of a constipated system when it comes to putting changes through and that some measures need to be taken to address it, but there is a need to respect communities and be cautious with the extent to which you override local planning. Potentially, that measure—which I can see some benefits in—should be exercised with some caution in the light of the rights of the community.

An area of state interest temporary plan will override the local plan. We have a lot of instruments in this bill which can effectively override any planning instrument they like. So we can declare a state interest temporary plan which for a temporary period will override any local plan that already exists. The minister has 20 days to approve over the top of councils or concurrence agencies if decisions have not been forthcoming. Again, I can see some justification for powers of this nature because there have been problems in our imperfect planning system, but this power needs to be exercised with some caution so it does not also infringe on the rights of local communities.

The call-in powers of the minister are to be dramatically increased. Effectively, any sort of development could be called in by the minister. It should be unmistakable to anybody looking at this bill that the minister in this state virtually has the power to plan any development in any area of the state that he or she likes. There is no doubt that this is a power grab. Some reasons which have been advanced to

justify it have some validity. I have an uncomfortable feeling that housing affordability is being used to justify the power grab rather than it actually being dealt with, and that is something that will have to be watched closely.

When places are referred to the authority, the process is to set up a three-stage plan—a land use plan, an infrastructure plan and a sequencing plan. As well, some extra policies can be imposed, such as perhaps a heritage plan, an environmental plan or something along those lines, but they are not part of the fundamental requirements.

Once a plan is finalised for one of these areas, it must be displayed for 20 days. Given the advertising requirements for relatively simple modifications to a home, to have a plan for an entire community of many thousands of people on display for 20 days is a very limited opportunity. We know from some other activities of the state government that these plans will quite likely be put up in December or January. These plans are then referred to the Governor in Council and then introduced into the parliament as a regulation.

The ULDA accesses all development approvals and there is no appeal. Clause 55 provides for a decision by the urban development authority regarding an urban development application, a UDA. The authority may refuse to grant the application or it may impose conditions on the UDA development approval. However, clause 55 does not provide a right of appeal from this decision. This means that an applicant cannot appeal a refusal or the imposition of conditions, nor can people who have made submissions regarding the UDA development approval appeal a grant of an application. Clause 61 provides applicants with a limited appeal right against particular conditions proposed by other government entities nominated by the UDA.

In this process the concurrence agencies are effectively removed except for a provision that they should be consulted. There is power to attach its own conditions or third-party conditions. So the authority can not only attach its own conditions to a development application but also can attach third-party conditions to a development application, such as collecting infrastructure fees on behalf of councils.

When this bill was introduced a very short time ago, I circulated it for comment. The response I had in what amounted to only a matter of days was quite substantial. I have had over 20 submissions to date and they are still coming in this morning. It was interesting to note that quite a number—a larger number than what I would normally expect—went to great lengths to say that they did not want their name used. These were not developers as such but other organisations and other stakeholders who rightly ought to be able to participate in a public debate and represent their views as stakeholders—some of these were very senior stakeholders in property development circles. This indicated to me a high level of anxiety and fear that even if organisations—not particular developers—were to speak out publicly against aspects of this bill they may find themselves not being treated in the way they feel they ought to be treated. I think that is a very disappointing development in a democracy. This bill has concentrated so much power in the hands of a government and a particular minister that even stakeholder groups do not feel comfortable to put their views, or at least their unsanitised views, out publicly. Some serious note ought to be taken of this, because it tells us immediately that the view out there is that this is delivering enormous power without appeal and without a lot of accountability.

Among the submissions that I have received, which are quite numerous, some are from community and environment groups. Not surprisingly, perhaps, they are very concerned about measures in the bill, particularly the lack of appeal mechanisms and the fact that these groups will have very limited input into planning in many areas of the state. Some indicated to me that they were still preparing submissions and others wanted to organise meetings, but this bill has been introduced with such haste that not only are things being taken out of their hands in the local community; they have not even been given the chance to take things so far as to come into a meeting with their views.

Certainly a number of submissions that I received were concerned about current bottlenecks. They were concerned about delays. I think that tells us that there is a concern and there is a need to address some of these things, which is why there are aspects of the bill that I have supported. However, there were as many submissions or more that were concerned about infrastructure charges and their impact on affordability. Unfortunately, I do not have a lot of good news for these people, only that there will be another level of infrastructure charges imposed. Among submissions that I received, one senior industry submission stated that the government is seeking to introduce a new charge on development—a state infrastructure charge. This process was introduced to reduce the cost to new developments and housing but they have actually added a new cost.

**Mr Hinchliffe** interjected.

**Dr FLEGG:** This is a quote from a submission that I received. It continues saying that nearly 100 per cent of state provisioned infrastructure is for general benefit—that is, it benefits the whole community—and is not local benefit infrastructure.

There are no defined triggers as to when the minister will step in and direct a council or government agency to make a decision on an application. Such a power needs to be objective and clear. This current subjectivity will only lead to confusion and inconsistency. The bill seeks to place the onus to develop master plans on councils or the ULDA and not the landowner themselves. I think that is a significant issue to have been raised at senior levels of the property industry. A master planned community can only properly be done if it is done by the landowner itself. That is the one risking the capital. Why would a landowner place the future of a multimillion-dollar development in the hands of others?

The bill essentially recognises that there is a problem in the development assessment processes in Queensland. Why isn't the government doing more about fundamentally reforming the whole system? There were responses from people in local government complaining that there had been no true consultation with them; that the authority would have very significant powers, which raises the fears of the potential for it to become a 'beast' that is difficult to control as has occurred elsewhere. It raises another level at which the state government will intrude on local councils. It creates another level of bureaucracy and there is significant risk of duplication with existing council planning services.

Shortages exist already for skilled town-planners. This scheme will place further strains on resources and will likely lead to further brain drain from council DA officers. The bill does not compel the authority to consider council concerns or aspirations. Neighbourhood planning currently undertaken by councils considers the whole community and involves community consultation throughout every stage. This will not be possible under the conditions set by the bill for development areas. Regulated infrastructure charges will likely lead to higher rates—this is feedback I have had from members of local government—for homeowners.

The state government has not demonstrated how it will lower infrastructure charges. The state government does not have technical expertise in this area and so on. There is extensive consultation that I would have liked to have had time to delve into further.

Another senior industry stakeholder expressed special concern about the introduction of state infrastructure charges and the requirements and operation of the master planning process. A theme that is coming through is that the master planning process will generate significant problems for people coming to Queensland as the big end developers try to establish new communities here. The other issue raised was the perceived effectiveness or otherwise of the ULDA and the IPA amendments in actually improving housing affordability.

State infrastructure charges are an additional tax which will be borne by developers and passed on to new homebuyers, further inflating the cost of dwellings. With these regulations on property the government has set a dangerous precedent in planning to levy these charges, which appear to contradict the very nature of the government's strategy.

The question was raised—why not have code assessment now? While there is strong support for the use of code assessment in the development application process, one senior figure did not understand why councils cannot incorporate code assessment within their current planning schemes rather than require detailed and time-consuming master planning that halts the development process. So industry sees the master planning process as likely to be another constipating, time-consuming, delaying process. The comment was made that this introduces another level of red tape.

The stated intent or excuse for introducing this bill is its impact on housing affordability. The government considers—and perhaps with some justifications—dealing with delays in getting developments up and running an issue in terms of housing affordability. There was no cost analysis released with this legislation. This is a major bill that is going to impact almost everybody in the state but no cost analysis has been released to outline the savings achieved by taking these rights away from communities and putting them in the hands of the minister and the authority. What will be the savings in the cost of a block of land or the cost of a home? Again, I would say to the minister—and I hope she will respond at the end of the debate—if she cannot tell how much these measures will save and what the impact on a unit, a block of land or a home will be then, at the end of the day, she has failed the test of showing that this will improve housing affordability.

The point has been raised that some of the areas that have already been referred for planning are quite expensive areas. By and large they are not first homebuyer areas. I think it is incumbent upon the government and the minister to show us what the savings will be, if any, and to show us where in these areas that are being centrally planned the benefit is going to be, particularly for low-income earners. Some of these areas are ones where there would currently be no affordable housing.

**Mr Hinchliffe:** And that is the point. This will be able to drive them in there, through the planning process.

**Dr FLEGG:** I accept that interjection. I am posing the question. There is nothing in this bill that requires a developer or a planning scheme to provide affordable housing. There is no detail of what percentage or how much affordable housing there will be. We have no details about how much money it is going to save. There is nothing in place in this plan that would indicate that affordable housing will be delivered in the localities that are being planned. They are questions that need to be answered.

We all know that the government has levied a dramatically increasing burden of taxes and charges on property owners. That has been a significant issue impacting on housing affordability in Queensland. We see that this bill introduces a new tax.

I had a look at the state government collections on transfer duties. The majority falls to property transfers and home transfers. Transfer duties have risen from slightly over \$1 billion in 2001-02 to a projected \$2.84 billion in 2007-08. If we are talking about housing affordability I would say that the \$2.84 billion state government impost largely on the purchase of homes would be a pretty good place to start.

There is an array of issues that impact on housing affordability. The issues related to the supply of property and the delays are certainly well known. But issues such as infrastructure charges, skyrocketing transfer duties and the like have led to the price of land, in particular, going through the roof. If the government is serious about dealing with housing affordability it needs to have a look at all the factors that impact upon it. The record budget receipts from transfer duty raise within me considerable concern that through this bill the government is introducing yet another revenue stream to be imposed on property in the form of another tier of infrastructure charges.

We have been saying since the state budget this year that this government is looking for more ways to raise revenue and looking for more assets to sell off. It is doing so because of its deteriorating budget position. It is very likely that we see now a Trojan Horse in the form of another new state government tax on housing. I look forward to hearing the debate on the issue and the minister's comments. We are concerned about housing affordability. We are concerned that the measures being introduced to impact on housing affordability actually work. We are concerned that the government address the real issues that impact on housing affordability and not simply use housing affordability as an excuse, as a Trojan Horse to centralise and grab power for planning from local communities and to introduce new state taxes.

Sitting suspended from 12.58 pm to 2.30 pm.

**Mr McNAMARA** (Hervey Bay—ALP) (2.30 pm): I am delighted to rise to address the Urban Land Development Authority Bill and to offer my strong support for the bill. This is of course important legislation. One of the topics which has been occupying the public mind very much in recent months and years has been the issue of housing affordability. In Australia we have been perhaps very lucky to live through a time of great prosperity, and there is little doubt that the quality and cost of the housing which we are these days privileged to live in has increased dramatically.

It is a matter of public record, and I refer in particular to statistics from Clive Hamilton's work, that the size of the houses in which we reside has grown very substantially. In 1955 the average house was 115 square metres and these days the size of the average house is about 221 or 225 square metres. In 1955 the average number of residents of an Australian dwelling was 3.6 and these days that is down to 2.6. Over that 50-year period we have seen the size of the average Australian home double while we have seen the number of residents living in those houses decline by a third. I guess perhaps the biggest surprise in the housing affordability debate is that it is a debate at all. It is quite clear that, although we are the wealthiest people who have resided in this country—we are twice as rich as our parents and three times as rich as our grandparents—nevertheless we have got used to living in houses that are grand by any standard of comparison with the houses in which our parents and our grandparents lived.

This bill addresses what government can do to deal with housing affordability. This bill brings a consolidated approach and a single authority to take on the issue of identifying land and to then cut through red tape where possible to do everything the government can do to deliver land, to streamline the process and to get land to market in the most affordable way so that we can have developments that people can afford. But of course housing affordability is utterly an issue for our whole community. We as consumers as purchasers of houses, financiers, the banks and other financial institutions that lend and of course the builders themselves all bear a responsibility.

One of the plain truths is that, no matter what government does and no matter how we streamline building procedures and how we streamline the process of subdividing and bringing land stock to market, if at the end of the day people continue to build houses which they cannot fill, financed with loans that they cannot repay then we will continue to have a housing affordability crisis. It is an issue where as a whole society we have to step back and say, 'Why do we need houses that have five bedrooms when there are only two or 2½ people living there? Why do we need to have houses of 300 squares empty when we return to them at 9 pm at night and leave again at 6 am the next day?' Those issues about appropriate housing as opposed to affordable housing are not of course the subject of this bill and so I will not dwell on them.

This bill does what government needs to do in recognising a very serious issue and an issue that confronts all young people. Housing ownership has been one of the proud historical aspects of life in this nation and indeed one of the things that has differentiated us from many jurisdictions around the world where leasehold tenures and other tenures apart from freehold have been the norm rather than the exception. Here Australians and Queenslanders in particular expect to own their homes. They expect to be able to buy a home at an early age and they expect to pay it off. But we live in a challenging time where the desire for the biggest and best we can have and perhaps sometimes bigger and more than we can afford is offered up to people as a right rather than an aspiration.

This bill, however, takes us in the direction we need to go. The authority when formulated will consist of nine people with a deep understanding of the issues involved in bringing land to market, of bringing affordable land, of identifying those lots that are useful and available and can lead to higher densities and greater outcomes for the cities involved. That will be a very useful process to then ensure that the zonings that apply on the land that is brought forward meet those targets of making sure that we do not simply fall into the trap of building more McMansions on land that has been identified under this process. With those few words, I certainly commend the minister for this innovation. It is, however, a step that must be approached in partnership with government, the finance sector, the building sector and of course all of us—the residents of Queensland who have to understand that we, as our parents and grandparents did, have to cut our cloth to suit our purse. With those words, I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr REEVES** (Mansfield—ALP) (2.36 pm): It gives me great pleasure to rise to support the bill being considered by the House today, the Urban Land Development Authority Bill. The Queensland government is committed to improving housing affordability and providing a wide range of housing choices for Queenslanders, but we need to meet the ever-changing needs and demands of households during times of rapid population growth. This bill and the establishment of the Urban Land Development Authority means that we are taking those steps to ensure that that will happen in the future. This bill implements immediate actions of the strategy that require a legislative basis and, as I said, establishes the Urban Land Development Authority.

Recently I had the pleasure to visit Perth with other members of the House to witness the work of the East Perth Redevelopment Authority. That trip highlighted that a coordinated approach and an urban land development authority like the East Perth model works. It coordinates and breaks down all of those council issues in terms of conflicting views of businesses and residents and results in a total package that will ultimately lead to better outcomes and better planning models and, as a flow-on effect to that, better outcomes in affordable housing. I was very impressed with what we saw in Perth. We not only met with the people involved but saw firsthand the great planning that has and is occurring there. The fact that planning and infrastructure are tied together is a model that we should investigate further down the track in terms of our system of planning and infrastructure, particularly with regard to public transport infrastructure. It is important to get the planning right, and to be able to get the planning right we need to get the infrastructure right. There is an important link in having those two things connected.

The main purposes of the bill are to facilitate the availability of land for urban purposes, to facilitate the provision of a range of options to address diverse community needs, and to plan for and facilitate the provision of infrastructure for urban purposes.

We have identified five initial development sites—and I have no doubt we will add more development sites—being Woolloongabba, Bowen Hills, Northshore at Hamilton, Fitzgibbon and the Mackay Showgrounds. I think the Woolloongabba site will be a model that will be adopted by many other states in the country. That great land at Woolloongabba will be encompassed by one planning model, which will ensure some great outcomes for the future. We have already seen some great public infrastructure in place at Woolloongabba with the South East Busway, but we need to make sure that we get it right.

**Mrs Sullivan:** You're are the No. 1 ticket holder.

**Mr REEVES:** I will take that interjection. I have not reminded people of that for a while. I am the No. 1 ticket holder of the South East Busway. The bus station at the Gabba links in perfectly with the government—

**Mr Johnson:** You don't want to forget who started that busway, either.

**Mr REEVES:** I do, actually. It was a bit before the member's time, too.

**Mr Johnson** interjected.

**Mr REEVES:** It came as a result of the Better Cities—

**Mr Johnson:** You don't like giving credit where credit is due, you lot, do you?

**Mr REEVES:** The member should keep going, because it helps me with my speech. It came about as part of the Building Better Cities program under the federal minister for local government, Brian Howe. He initiated funding to explore the options for public transport. It will be great in October or

November when we will have a federal government that will once again concentrate on infrastructure, development and planning for our major cities. So I take that interjection. I thank the member for Gregory for supporting that finally we will have a federal government that will once again be looking at the planning of cities and major infrastructure in south-east Queensland. I note already that the Labor opposition—and soon to be Labor government, hopefully—has already made some big announcements in the planning of our cities and major population areas. I congratulate it on its foresight.

As I said, the authority will undertake the planning, management and delivery of strategic urban redevelopment sites. We already have five. The government will also look for suitable other sites.

What has happened in Perth certainly demonstrates that TODs—transit oriented developments—work. But you have to get the planning and the infrastructure right. I can see that occurring here. We should not be limited to these sites, and I know that we will not be. I can see some real potential in some of the outer suburbs. I know Fitzgibbon is mentioned as one of the five sites. Contrary to what the local paper for that area says, Fitzgibbon is not an inner-city area; it is an outer suburb.

**Ms Darling:** It's only 25 minutes drive.

**Mr REEVES:** Yes, but it is one of the outer suburbs of Brisbane, unlike what the paper has said. I forget which one it is. I think we could look at transit oriented developments in a number of other sites, such as around the new Rochedale busway station that will be built in the next few years, even the present one at Eight Mile Plains, or around a range of others. We should not limit ourselves to the ones that are mentioned in this bill.

I can see a real need for developments such as TODs. As people get off their bus or train to come home from work, they can pick up their children at the child-care centre, or pick up their groceries, or go to the doctor—do a range of things—from there rather than having to travel an extensive number of kilometres. That is what happens with transit oriented developments. More importantly, people do not even have to own a car because they can walk to the train station or walk to the busway station. That is going to be good for society.

I should add that I was disturbed to listen to the shadow minister. I should not be surprised, but he was talking about—

**Mr Hayward:** You should be disturbed.

**Mr REEVES:** It was pretty disturbing listening to him. The best part is that we know we will not have to listen to him for very much longer because his days are numbered, just like Mr Howard's. The shadow minister talked about a new secret tax. He is just plain wrong. Once again, the member for Moggill is loose with the truth. Once again, this most overfunded opposition does not even do its own homework. If it were not for the *Courier-Mail*, the opposition would not have anything to talk about in the mornings.

This is not new. It is not a secret. Such a claim from the member for Moggill is ill-informed and wrong. Infrastructure charges were introduced as part of the regional plan in 2005. If members opposite do not believe me, they should read policy No. 8.9.3 of the plan. It has been a matter of public record for two years and two months. Yes, even longer than the leadership of the member for Moggill. It just takes the member a bit of time to catch up, but I hear the numbers are catching up with him.

This legislation is better than what we have currently. Currently, local governments apply these charges through the conditions of the development application. There is no clarity about the charge, no certainty about the amount, and no ability to have knowledge of the charge prior to committing to the development. That is just not a proper way by which developers can develop anything. We are talking about something quite clear. As I said, this was part of the regional plan which was released in 2005. It is policy No. 8.9.3.

This legislation is better because it delivers certainty and transparency—how much the proposed charge will be and what the money will deliver. New section 5.3.4 states—

- (a) the amount of the charge;
- (b) the land to which the charge applies;
- (c) when the charge is payable;
- (d) the State infrastructure network for which the charge has been stated.

These charges do not apply across the state. The member for Moggill is misinformed. It applies only to the declared master plan areas. Not unsurprisingly, Dr Flegg is simply running the lines of his developer mates. To his credit, he probably thinks that that is his last hope. If the white-shoe brigade or the developers can give him some support, maybe the Liberal Party, which is so desperate for funds—I do not think it has paid Australia Post for the costs incurred during the last election campaign—

**Mrs Sullivan** interjected.

**Mr REEVES:** They will have to pay their Willprint bills now. That is the problem. The Liberal Party is so desperate for funds that Dr Flegg thinks that if he supports these developers then they might put some extra money into the Liberal Party coffers and he can hold on to the leadership. That must have been the tone of his discussion. Once again, he forgot to mention—

**Mr Johnson:** What's this got to do with the bill?

**Mr REEVES:** I will take that interjection from the member for Gregory.

**Mr Johnson:** What has this got to do with the bill?

**Mr REEVES:** Maybe the member should not ask me that question. I am responding to what the member for Moggill said,

**Mr Johnson** interjected.

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Gregory.

**Mr REEVES:** He just—

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Mansfield, direct your comments through the chair.

**Mr Johnson** interjected.

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Gregory!

**Mr REEVES:** I am sorry, Mr Acting Speaker.

**Mr Johnson** interjected.

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Gregory!

**Mr REEVES:** He must have had a bad lunch partner. He just forgot to mention—

**Mr Johnson:** I enjoyed the company I had lunch with.

**Mr REEVES:** At least that is one of us. The member for Moggill forgot to mention new section 4.1.36, which sets out the appeal process. Further, new section 5.3.2(2) states—

The Minister may seek advice or comment from the Queensland Competition Authority ...

These charges do not apply to every new development. Once again, the member for Moggill is loose with the truth. He does not do his homework. He is trying to appease his developer mates. He is clinging to power because he thinks that his developers are going to support him. Dr Flegg's days are numbered, just like Mr Howard's.

This bill is about planning for the future. It is about ensuring that—

**Dr Flegg:** You haven't read it, have you?

**Mr REEVES:** I have read it. I have looked at it. As I said, the honourable member obviously did not listen to what I said about east Perth. I have seen it in action, but I will bet the member has not. Dr Flegg needs to get his act together and look at what is happening here. He is looking at local government holus-bolus, talking about developers being charged after the approval process has finished.

This legislation is going to be good for Queenslanders. As I said originally, it will improve housing affordability and provide a wide range of housing choices for Queenslanders. More importantly, it will result in proper planning to get the right mix of housing, commercial realities and transport outcomes now and into the future which will benefit all Queenslanders, particularly those who live in south-east Queensland.

I commend the bill to the House. I ask the member for Moggill to go to the facts and stop being loose with the truth.

**Mr HOBBS** (Warrego—NPA) (2.51 pm): The previous speaker to this bill got something really right. He got the name of the bill right, the Urban Land Development Authority Bill.

**Dr Flegg:** That's about as far as it went.

**Mr HOBBS:** That is about as far as it went. For the rest of his speech, he rambled on about things that do not seem to be a part of the bill. Obviously that means today we are going to have a wide-ranging debate.

On a more serious note, I wish to talk about the Urban Land Development Authority Bill 2007. This bill makes some significant changes to such things as building approvals which will affect future developments, not only in this city and other urban areas but throughout Queensland. While there are some positive elements in the bill, we would like to see some important changes made to the legislation. The bill allows for the establishment and operation of the Urban Land Development Authority which will have extensive planning and development approval powers. Those powers need to be examined to ensure that the authority does not go overboard, although I do acknowledge that it is important to have the ability to get things done.

One of the problems that we have had across-the-board is that throughout the state people are complaining about the development process being too slow, and that is probably a failure of some of our planning laws. The Integrated Planning Act and IDAS, the integrated development assessment system, were put in place to make the system operate faster and to make it easier for the community to understand the process. That has failed in a lot of ways, even though the IPA received bipartisan

support. I think local governments also recognise that the process has become too complicated. Therefore, to a certain degree—although not entirely—this bill has come about because of the failure of other mechanisms.

By the same token, it is very hard to pull together large-scale developments with multiple ownership. For example, with state-owned land it will be much easier in the first instance as the bill identifies five areas, but if more areas may come on line later it will become harder. These types of development authorities do operate in other states and they have had successes in certain areas. We have to learn from any mistakes that may have been made in other places.

All local government powers and many state powers are vested in the authority. It is particularly important that this new body does not become a power unto itself, blatantly overriding the wishes of communities. In many instances, planning laws have been put in place after a consultation process involving the communities and the councils. In recent times all councils had to go through that process. Communities have been extensively consulted in relation to their town plans and we do not want the authority to entirely override such plans.

The authority will be established by November 2007 with nine board members, a CEO and 15 to 25 staff, and the board members will be appointed by the Governor in Council. It is particularly important that the right people are appointed to the authority. When we consider what has happened in the local government field, the types of people on those transition authorities—

**Mr Reeves:** This is waffle.

**Mr HOBBS:** The member for Mansfield gave a very wide-ranging speech. I will not go off the bill, but I will say that I have heard of one case where a union official has been appointed to eight council transition authorities. How bad is that? Therefore, I want to know who will be appointed to this authority that will be in charge of quite large developments. I could name quite a few people—

**Ms Bligh:** They will all be unionists. Mark my words: they will all be union officials.

**Mr HOBBS:** They probably will be, too. It would not surprise me. It is very important that we ensure that the people opposite cannot abuse the system. They cannot be trusted not to abuse it as they have abused it before. They have abused the trust of people in local government areas by placing some of those members on up to eight councils. That is how they have abused the system. I do not think we need to do that in this instance.

The authority can make by-laws and introduce special rates in addition to general rates. Obviously, there will be costs involved and maybe benefits will flow from that. However, generally speaking you can bet your boots that the rates will not go down; they will go up.

**Mrs Sullivan:** They're going up anyway.

**Mr HOBBS:** One would hope that if things are working on a larger scale that the rates might be reduced. That is what I am saying.

Currently, there are five nominated sites with additional urban development areas to be identified through whole-of-government processes, including consultation with local government. The five sites are Fitzgibbon, Northshore at Hamilton, Bowen Hills, Woolloongabba and the Mackay Showgrounds. I am sure that the member for Mirani will be interested in this aspect of the bill. A few months ago we were in Mackay and it seemed to me that the people of Mackay do not want the showgrounds developed into heavy-density living areas.

**Mr Johnson** interjected.

**Mr HOBBS:** Yes. It seemed to be quite clear that they did not want it developed for that purpose. It will be very interesting to see how the government will manage that. Let us wait and see.

The changes to infrastructure charging processes is an area that needs to be very carefully looked at. There is a provision for the review of infrastructure charges schedules by the Queensland Competition Authority. For many reasons the infrastructure charges have been a very contentious issue in the broader community. Obviously, one of those reasons is the costs involved. I have heard that the cost of developing a block is about \$90,000 and most of that involves government charges. It would not surprise me if those charges were very high. When one adds up all of the state and local government costs and charges, the figure is very high. In fact, for quite a long time local government has been working to streamline the process and make the charges more consistent across the board, although some were not able to achieve that. I support any move to hasten the process that ensures that charges are reasonable. Many people do not realise that, particularly in regional areas, local governments tended to lag behind in the charges that they levied for development approvals.

When the reports came through the councils suddenly realised that they were not charging enough and were out of pocket, so they had to increase rates. As a result of increasing the rates, and in one year they could be up to 50 per cent, the community was then in uproar. Councils probably should have started putting the rates up five years ago but they did not do that. So there needs to be good and careful planning.

People do not realise the cost of construction these days. Inflation might be at a certain rate but the cost of construction is going up by a lot more than that, especially in Queensland when at present there is tender by invoice. If someone wants concrete poured, or a pipeline laid or development of some sort, there is a very, very high price for labour and skills.

In relation to the revised plan for planning and development approval processes for master planned areas, there is the power to identify and declare master planned areas, which obviously we have to have. This simplifies the processes involved, which is an alternative to section 3.1.6 and current regional plan structure planning provisions. In other words, the structure plans that are prepared by local governments with state input all have to be balanced up at the end of the day. There is a requirement for state interests to be addressed at the planning stage thereby removing required subsequent development approvals. So there is a lot of work to be done there.

There is also the ability for developers to apply for master plan approvals reducing subsequent development approval requirements. Once again, we need to ensure that those processes are above reproach. We need to ensure that the systems that we have are fair. That is why it is important to make sure that there are people at arm's length who are running the authority and that there is no connection or conflict of interest so that the broader community can at least see that everything is well above board. There is also the ability for councils to enter into financial agreements or introduce special levies to fund structure planning in master planned areas. Once again, that is an issue that we will have to wait and see to find out what the implications are.

The increased power of the minister to intervene in the IDAS process is an important factor. There is the ability for the minister to issue a directions notice to assessment managers, concurrence agencies or applicants—for example, to decide an application in a certain time frame. There has to be some sort of structure in place but the present structure we have here in Queensland does not give us a great deal of confidence. There are also penalty provisions for noncompliance. These increased powers of the minister are certainly quite comprehensive.

The introduction of state planning regulatory provisions gives effect to those provisions and also provides a general power that can be applied in a range of circumstances—for example, to implement a regional plan, apply interim land use controls or limit or vary the operation of a planning scheme. Also the provision can be used to give effect to the 'iconic areas' provisions recently announced by the government. There is possibly an avenue to expand this across the whole of the state. It is going to be very, very hard to do this. I know that the Douglas and Noosa councils are working with the state government to come up with iconic legislation. From what I am hearing there has not been a lot of progress. There was for a while but it seems that it is stalling. I think the main reason that it is stalling is that it is hard to do. How on earth can there be legislation to protect some parts of a council area but other parts will not be protected? We all have iconic areas that need to be protected. Some councils will have them and some will not; some councils will have part of an iconic area and some will not. We need to have a system.

This situation has been brought about because of the forced amalgamations. If we did not have that we would not be looking at this and racking our brains to put in place a system that works. There needs to be a system in relation to iconic areas legislation to ensure that the community has a real say. We have to go beyond the consultation process. The consultation process is almost becoming a farce in a lot of ways. It really is becoming a farce when one looks at what is happening with the Moreton Bay situation. Everyone knows what is going on. We have been there and done that.

**Mr Reeves** interjected.

**Mr HOBBS:** It is called manipulation of the people. The government is going to lock up a lot of Moreton Bay. Everyone knows that. It is a matter of how it will be done. There needs to be a better mechanism than the consultation process. We have to explore how we do that. It might be by some sort of a straw poll or a senate or maybe have an evolving number of people who have a particular input. It needs to be something different from what we have now. I do not think that having a plan and putting it on the wall of a council chamber is necessarily working. People do not get to see it. It is too complicated in many instances. We have to have a better mechanism and that is hard.

The legislation before the House is comprehensive. A lot of work has gone into it, and I commend the department for all the work that has been done. As I stated previously, being government land does make it a lot easier than if it had had multiple ownership, which is so hard to pull together. This would work better under those circumstances.

Returning to the issue of the minister being responsible for administration, the minister is also the only appeal process. There needs to be a better appeal process. I do not think that people believe in an appeal process that involves the minister. Obviously the government is going down a certain line and wants something to happen. There needs to be an independent group or body to appeal to. There is the Planning and Environment Court. We do not want to hold developments up. I know that courts have been used in the past to stall many development plans. That should not happen, but that is the system that we have. We do not want that to occur, but by the same token we want to make sure that people get a fair say. We cannot get that if we have a dictatorial government such as we have now in relation to council amalgamations. There are real concerns in that regard.

The minister has said that the government will consider the potential for bringing forward greenfield land sites identified in the urban footprint where practical and feasible. That is very interesting because I was talking about that type of thing before the last state election and the minister came out and criticised me by saying that it was shocking and it was putting it in the hands of the developers. All I was doing was saying that we need to review it. Maybe there is land out there that we could do something with. It was simply a matter of saying let us have a look to see what we can find.

It is very interesting to see that the government has now taken up my idea. I thank the minister for looking at that. I think there are avenues out there. There is no doubt that when these plans are put together—the urban footprint is the same—the idea is good and we need to do what we can to preserve open space and to have controlled and well-planned development. There is not much sense at all in locking the land up and throwing the keys away. We need to review it and see where we are going and work with a modern society. By the same token we have to balance up all of those things that are important to us to ensure that we get the best balanced development that we possibly can.

The explanatory notes to the bill state that it will—

Amend the *Integrated Planning Act 1997* (IPA) to improve the efficiency of the integrated development assessment system until the IPA/Integrated Development Assessment System (IDAS) Reform Agenda is implemented; enhance the level of involvement of the Queensland government in the land supply pipeline ...

We are hearing various arguments about who is blocking the land pipeline. Some people say that developers already have an enormous amount of land that is locked up that has not been developed. The councils say that they are approving developments at a record rate so therefore it is not their fault. I suppose the issue is somewhere in the middle, and that is what we have to look at. Certainly, the supply of land is important. Housing affordability is obviously the main game here. Having these large developments with high densities will work in certain areas. They were frowned upon many years ago. In the UK some of those developments were a disaster.

**Mr Johnson:** And in Melbourne.

**Mr HOBBS:** Yes, Melbourne, as the member for Gregory said. We have to be careful how that is done, but I think we are getting better at managing that. We have better structures, better noise levels, better management of those complexes. With those comments, I just say that this legislation is important.

**Mr STEVENS** (Robina—Lib) (3.11 pm): I rise to speak on the Urban Land Development Authority Bill 2007 which quite simply has highlighted the fact that the government's Integrated Planning Act has not been a satisfactory piece of legislation to address the dire problem of land availability in Queensland. The Integrated Planning Act 1997 created this problem that the state is now experiencing and, although we support the government's attempt to make land affordable, this legislation will not be the panacea for affordable housing in Queensland.

In fact, I go back to 1992 and the reign of Brian Howe in Canberra. I was on the planning committee of the Albert Shire Council at the time, and we saw definitive and direct policies in relation to urban consolidation coming from Canberra. As a result of those urban consolidation policies, which were deliberately designed to save governments in terms of infrastructure in outlying areas—the schools, the hospitals, the roads—we would hold back the greenfields sites and concentrate on the development of brownfield sites in the city centre areas, particularly around transport corridors. That has resulted in the problem that we are experiencing today in housing affordability.

Everywhere we look, the answer is land supply. Quite clearly the regimes which were adopted by local government as well as state government focused development in very, very tight areas which meant only one thing—in supply and demand, in basic economics, the price of land would get dearer because of the lack of supply. That has come to fruition. It started in 2001 and we are in the situation now where young families and low-income families cannot afford to get into the market in Queensland.

With the introduction of this piece of legislation, I have grave concerns about the government's future management and possible manipulation of the development industry. I pose the question: will the Urban Land Development Authority just be an avenue for the Labor Party to do business with its financial donors and Labor-supporting development mates? I would like to highlight this statement at the beginning of my speech by calling on the government to proclaim its intention of accepting any money from Labor Party supporting developers who have any potential to be involved in this Urban Land Development Authority whatsoever. I look forward to the minister's response in that regard.

One would hope this would not be the case, but anything is possible with a government which is only reactive to any problems that develop in this state, as is now occurring in the housing affordability market. We have seen this with water, hospitals and transport infrastructure, and this legislation is an admission that the government's planning policies have failed the low-income and young families trying to enter the housing market.

**Mr Lucas** interjected.

**Mr STEVENS:** The little Aussie Labor battlers. Thank you very much, Minister for Transport.

Regarding the specifics of the bill, the government has proposed that the Urban Land Development Authority Bill will implement the following. It will establish the Urban Land Development Authority to plan, undertake, promote, coordinate and control the development of certain areas of land in Queensland for urban purposes, and those areas have now been identified under the regional urban growth strategy. It will amend the Integrated Planning Act to enable the minister responsible for the IPA to consider and decide conflicts amongst state referral agencies, local governments and the applicant in respect of the integrated development assessment system.

It will provide for the minister to refer infrastructure charges schedules to the Queensland Competition Authority for advice and comment. It will provide for appeals to the Building and Development Tribunal in relation to the calculation of infrastructure charges for specific developments. It will enable the minister or the regional planning minister for a designated region to introduce state planning instruments—to be referred to as state planning regulatory provisions—to affect the operation of planning schemes.

It will provide for the implementation of regional plans across Queensland. It will extend the use of the major development area designations under the South East Queensland Regional Plan to identify areas proposed for urban development—to be renamed master planned areas—and provide for a more efficient planning process for these areas involving the preparation of structure plans and master plans. In short, the minister becomes very similar to the former local government and planning minister, Russ Hinze, the minister for everything.

With the implementation of the urban land authority and the resultant bypassing of councils' time lag and priority infrastructure charges problem which has plagued the development industry, it is ironic that the government has to introduce legislation to override legislation—that is, the IPA Act—which has proven to be cumbersome and ineffectual. Yet again this is a knee-jerk reaction by a government which has lost touch with industry stakeholders and the people of Queensland.

I look now specifically at the issue of housing affordability. Under article 25 of the United Nations declaration of human rights, a fundamental human right is the provision of necessities of life, which includes available suitable housing for everyone in the community. Availability of public and private housing has reached crisis point in Queensland and new innovative solutions need to be developed. Partnerships between the government and the private sector are a genuine and realistic tactic in addressing the housing needs and affordability crisis that is the current short-term problem.

As an opposition concerned with the long-term direction of this state planning authority by another name, we would demand that a sunset clause be placed on this housing affordability legislation to limit the potential for this legislation to be redirected to other planning issues not related to housing affordability. Today's economic unaffordability crisis may well be replaced in an economic sense in perhaps five years time by a housing excess which may in fact drive prices down to very affordable prices, particularly if the country embraces the Rudd Labor government federally, as the polls and the good members opposite would have us believe.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr STEVENS:** I am glad to see they are all not asleep. Housing affordability is a key issue, as it is a fundamental responsibility of government to ensure housing is available and affordable for all in the community. Obviously the government's planning strategies to date have failed through their focus on limiting land supply release when it has glaringly been a bullish real estate market since 2001. This has resulted in enormous leaps in real estate values in Queensland which has made Brisbane even more expensive than Melbourne—something which was unheard of previously and which has led to the Beattie Labor government playing catch-up football again with this welcome but infinitesimal measure to address housing affordability in Queensland.

With regard to housing affordability and the crises in the rental market and the public housing market, it is very clear that the whole matter is dependent on the supply of land for building houses at a reasonable cost so that young people and low-income families can get into affordable housing. Currently the market is through the roof and they cannot do that, which forces them into the rental market. This again, because of the sheer demand, forces the rental market through the roof. Less than one per cent of houses in Brisbane is available to the rental market, so rents for low-income families and young people have become exorbitant as well. What happens when they cannot afford the rent in this booming market? They have to move on to the public housing sector, and that has a list now of some

35,000 people waiting for public housing in Queensland. That is a lovely record that I am sure members opposite are very proud of. They claim to stand up for their little Aussie battler constituency but I am absolutely sure that good members in the past like the late Hon. Tom Burns would have been very disappointed to see public housing numbers blow out to that extent.

With the increased rental housing crisis and an increasing need to access public and private housing, it is becoming out of reach for many people to provide themselves with a roof over their heads. This is where the government, industry stakeholders and the private sector can work together to address this situation with benefits for all parties. But the state government to date has ignored this engulfing crisis and everything that it has come up with now in this legislation is reactive. Land release has to be the first of many initiatives to be implemented by this state government to ease the public and private housing crisis in Queensland.

In this bill the government is set to release land in five areas. That is some 700 hectares with approximately 20,000 people accommodated in those 700 hectares, which equates to housing density of approximately 30 people per hectare and which is complete Labor Party ideology. In heavy densities, high-rise units will make it a better Labor area. Quite clearly this fits nicely into the Labor Party package. The areas of Fitzgibbon, Northshore at Hamilton, Bowen Hills, Woolloongabba and Mackay Showgrounds will soon be graced with high-rise buildings and multidensity populations which will have to fit in with this new attempt at affordable housing for Queensland.

As this legislation effectively removes all merit based appeals for communities involved in this initial package of land to be fast-tracked, and four out of the five parcels of land identified are in the Brisbane area, which does have the greatest need for affordable housing, I believe that a checks and balances system to unfettered development should be put into this legislation. That should take the form of an appeal process to the Planning and Environment Court for all designated developments that go outside the existing planning parameters of local government. Those parameters have been developed with the community and with the local governments. They have been signed off and agreed on and they follow this state government's policy direction. Any movement away from those planning parameters—all the expenditure, time and effort that went into that—is not acceptable to the community and we should have the capacity to have an appeal process to the Planning and Environment Court. That does not exist in this legislation at the current time. That is the only way that we will see fairness and justice retained in the planning process.

I would now like to look at the structure and make-up of the government's proposed Urban Land Development Authority. The make-up of the authority will be the chairperson, the CEO of the Department of Infrastructure, the CEO of Treasury, and six other members to be appointed with skills such as extensive knowledge and experience in the areas of local government; architecture, urban design or planning; social policy or community development; law, economics or accounting; the construction or development industries; or natural resource and environmental management. It gives the government a wide-ranging group of people from which to select members to be part of that authority.

From the area of local government, I think it is more than appropriate that members from the Local Government Association are appointed to that particular authority. I believe it should be mandated that at least two members of the local government authority form part of that group of six members which the minister is proposing. The members of the Urban Land Development Authority may be appointed by the Governor in Council for a period of up to five years. I think this is a very appropriate period to review the situation. This is also the appropriate period that I have suggested would suit a sunset clause. This would allow us to relook at the legislation to see whether it is still necessary for housing affordability after the completion of five years—not for state planning matters but for housing affordability.

The authority will assume control over land identified as necessary and in urban development areas. The authority's power extends to planning, management and delivery of strategic urban development sites. This means that the state government through the Urban Land Development Authority will take over control from the local council in the development of these urban land areas. My great concern with this structure is to maintain the highest probity and ethical standard possible by the inclusion of conflict of interest criteria that reaches the highest level of propriety. This should be achieved by excluding from this member group any person who has a direct or even indirect association in any way with the end developer of these identified properties. If the minister is uncomfortable with those exclusions, I will be most interested to hear her reasons why.

The Urban Land Development Authority is to be operating by December 2007, and the success or otherwise of this housing affordability exercise should be monitored and evaluated on the strength of quantifiable evidence of achieving greater housing affordability outcomes. This cannot be just a cynical exercise in establishing a state planning authority which they have in other Labor states under the guise of an attempt at reducing the housing problem. This legislation is quite clearly under the definition of Henry VIII legislation and can probably be justified as transitional legislation until the revision of the Integrated Planning Act is completed. I understand that is well on the way. However, in this

circumstance it should be noted that this type of legislation should only be used where the current legislation is inadequate. This again highlights the failings and procrastination of the Beattie Labor government in not addressing the Integrated Planning Act's deficiencies at an earlier date.

My other reservation with this legislation is the extent to which the local governments involved will have to share the cost burden of the infrastructure that will not be provided in the local government areas concerned by the circumventing of this necessary infrastructure in order to cut costs. This may well lead to the passing on of the costs of the local government development infrastructure works to the local government ratepayers—more state government to local government cost shifting—through higher rates. I need an assurance from the minister that this definitely will not happen.

In conclusion, I am really disappointed that this important legislation is being rushed through in this session. I would have been better able to contribute to the debate had I had more stakeholder feedback. As late as last night there were serious concerns about this legislation raised by the Property Council. I would have liked the opportunity to explore their concerns more with more time before this legislation was brought on for debate.

I congratulate the minister for making a preliminary attempt to assist those many unfortunate members of our community who cannot afford to enjoy the great Australian dream of homeownership. I do sincerely hope these projects in some way have a positive effect on housing prices in Queensland.

**Ms BARRY** (Aspley—ALP) (3.30 pm): Before I speak to the bill I would like us to take some time to mourn the lost Liberal Party. Listening to the member for Moggill and the member for Robina—

**Mr STEVENS:** Mr Deputy Speaker, the relevance of mourning the lost Liberal Party, please.

**Ms BARRY:** I am getting to it.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Wettenhall): Order! There is no point of order.

**Ms BARRY:** Those in the Liberal Party like sheep looking for a leader have hooked themselves on to a National Party leader and have become in their arguments archaic and anti everything. Here are those in the Liberal Party, the champions of business, so they claim, the champions of free markets, the champions of reducing red tape, coming into this place and taking an anti everything stance. They are criticising the Deputy Premier for her leadership stance to try to free up land supply and free up the housing market to allow market forces to take effect.

On top of that they come in here with a conspiracy theory that this bill may indeed be about the capturing of Hamilton-Portside as the hub of many working-class families. I really think it is a sad day for the Liberal Party after listening to the two arguments advanced by the member for Moggill and the member for Robina.

I, on the other hand, would like to rise to support the Urban Land Development Authority Bill 2007. Housing affordability is a matter of concern to all of us—Australians and Queenslanders who seek the security of tenure for our families through homeownership, for future young Queenslanders and those of us who are their families and those concerned that our children will own their own affordable home. It is a concern for anyone who struggles with the level of financial stress that high mortgage repayments have on working families.

There is a big billboard on Gympie Road which has a picture of John Howard and him saying, 'Working families have never been better off.' He said that in March 2007. Mr Howard only needs to go and have a look at families living with the pressure of high mortgage repayments to know that not many people agree with him.

Housing affordability is of concern to investors and renters in a market where demand outstrips supply. Price pressure on house prices and subsequent rents has only one way to go and that is up. Part of the answer to improving the availability of the supply of affordable homes is to ensure that the processes of planning and development deliver land ready to build houses on and to ensure that the process is effective, efficient and timely. This bill provides for that enactment.

As outlined in the Queensland Housing Affordability Strategy there are a number of government priorities. They include: to improve the operation of the land supply pipeline from raw land to completed development; to improve the efficiency of the integrated development assessment system through amendments to the IPA 1997; to enhance the level of involvement of the Queensland government in the land supply pipeline; to improve the monitoring of land supply; and to improve the operation, transparency and accountability of infrastructure funding and charges for new development.

The main features of this bill that I wish to address are, firstly, the establishment of the Governor in Council appointed Urban Land Development Authority in designated areas called urban development areas and, secondly, the changes to the planning minister's role. I refer to the Urban Land Development Authority processes outlined in this bill. The authority will plan, carry out, promote, coordinate and

control the development of land in a number of designated areas. The authority will have the power to acquire and consolidate land in the area suitable for housing and ensure that its way to market is improved and effective.

One of those areas is Fitzgibbon, which is on the eastern side of the Aspley electorate. This is an area in middle Brisbane north that is close to public transport facilities. It is imperative that development in this area is timely, well planned and affordable. The details of the process are laid out very well in the Deputy Premier's second reading speech and I do not intend to repeat them.

In addition, the bill provides the state with a new provision that allows the planning minister authority to consider and decide those conflicts between state departments, local governments and an applicant of a development to ensure that available and appropriate land supply is not held back from development as a result of protracted disputes and/or decisions.

Developers, councillors and, importantly, prospective homebuyers have been for far too long denied timely access to appropriate land supply as a result of such things as unresolved interdepartmental issues, a lack of qualified and experienced town-planners, overworked council departments and delayed council decisions for myriad reasons. It is important that land development across the state meets that required infrastructure and environmental requirements and that community desires are considered and that this is done in a way that is transparent and accountable.

It is imperative that as a government we show leadership on the matter of finding the balance between responsible land management outlined in such documents as the South East Queensland Regional Plan and housing affordability. The areas identified in the plans for the urban authority are quite rightly those prime sites for residential development—Hamilton, Woolloongabba, Bowen Hills, Fitzgibbon and Mackay. They are designed to reduce the mass urban sprawl that reinforces our dependence on multicar trips to live and work.

As I have said before in this House, and in particular in the local government reform bill debate, leadership on the issue of changing the way we plan our cities and our businesses and communities that prioritises the issues of people living close to where they work and play is critical to preserving the quality of life in communities like Aspley. I do not want this community to become nothing more than a huge road network that carries ever increasing numbers of people to Brisbane by car and my constituents end up feeling like they are living in the middle of a busy road 24 hours a day.

Far from what the member for Moggill says, the bill empowers communities through a concise and dedicated authority that is dedicated to dealing with and eliminating a patchwork approach to individual developments. It puts communities first, reduces unnecessary delays, provides affordable options for land and homebuyers and gives them the direction so they can decide what is right for them. With those few words, I congratulate the Deputy Premier and her team and commend the bill to the House.

**Ms LEE LONG** (Tablelands—ONP) (3.38 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Urban Land Development Authority Bill which has some major implications for the future development of urban areas right across Queensland. This bill will create the Urban Land Development Authority, or ULDA—a statutory body with some very strong powers and very important functions. This new authority will be charged with planning, carrying out, promoting, coordinating and controlling development in urban development areas.

These changes are focused on the operation of the land supply pipeline from rural land to completed development, with the intention of making the integrated development assessment system more efficient pending the implementation of a reform agenda, increasing Queensland government involvement in the land supply pipeline, monitoring of land supply, and more accountability on infrastructure and development charges. The control and regulation of land development is traditionally a major function of local government, from the detailed work that goes into the creation of town plans right through to assessing applications for new carports and home extensions.

This bill is aimed at the largest end of the scale and provides for the planning minister to decide conflicts between state referral agencies, local government and applicants under the integrated development assessment scheme. Given this government's recent treatment of local government, that might be cold comfort indeed to our councils. This bill also provides for the implementation of regional plans across Queensland. The Far North Queensland 2025 Regional Plan currently under consideration will be the first statutory plan outside of south-east Queensland to be implemented. Statutory regional plans are described in the explanatory notes as integrating and balancing state interests for a geographic region and therefore overriding a state planning policy or planning scheme where there is an inconsistency.

One of the key initiatives of the bill is to assist in improving housing affordability in Queensland. The Tablelands electorate is desperately short of public and private accommodation options. Families are often forced to crowd in together to ridiculous levels just so that everyone has a roof over their heads. I have mentioned before a case in Atherton where seven adults and 12 children were all crammed in together because they had no other option. Median wage earners in my electorate can expect to see half or even more of their take-home pay disappear on rent for a basic three-bedroom

home—all this at a time when there is still an estimated 75 per cent of Queensland held as unallocated state land. The bulk of that may well be in rural and regional areas, but it is clear that the housing crisis exists across the state and especially in far-north Queensland. In my electorate more unallocated state land needs to be made available in towns such as Chillagoe, Mount Garnett and Irvinebank, not just in and around our larger urban centres. The mayor of Herberton has already been calling on the state to release more land to be made available in her shire. The cutting of so much red tape would help in that regard.

The bill before us today raises a number of issues which indicate that it may well create more problems than it claims to resolve. I will begin with the number of ways it breaches fundamental legislative principles. The explanatory notes list seven different ways these basic guidelines are breached or challenged. The absence of appeal rights concerning development in so-called urban development areas is one such area. This absence goes further than the situation presently legislated under the Integrated Planning Act where there is a general right of appeal. One of the justifications given is that the ULDA is required to notify the public of a proposed development scheme and consider submissions. The message is clear: having a public consultation process somehow justifies removing the basic right of appeal.

Another justification is that the minister will be entitled to amend proposed development plans submitted by the ULDA to protect the interests of the landowners, but the landowners must have made submissions to him within a certain time frame. In reality, all that says is that someone's appeal rights have been stripped away in return for the chance to write to a minister who may ignore their submissions anyway. Another justification is that this bill is designed to ease the housing crisis in a timely way and that imposing an appeals process could lead to significant delays. Let us remember that there would not be a housing affordability crisis if our state and federal governments had been doing their jobs. As with the health crisis, both levels of government have spent more time blaming each other than in dealing with the issues.

Another area where fundamental legislative principles are challenged is the absence of appeal rights concerning ministerial directions under the IPA. Amendments in this bill extend the rights a minister now has under the IPA into giving directions to assessment managers, concurrence agencies and applicants. It appears that on the one hand appeal rights are stripped away because a minister might, if he feels generous, act in the landholders' interests, but then the decision of a minister cannot be appealed anyway. There is also the granting of a power to enter land without a warrant. As is often the case, this is justified on the basis that this power already exists for authorised employees and agents under the Local Government Act 1993. I note that in this section the ULDA is described as having some functions and powers similar to those of a local government. It might have those powers and it might be able to ride roughshod over local communities, existing development plans, restrictions and so on, but let us keep in mind that it is not an elected body and it will generally have no connection or involvement with people in the area affected by its decisions.

I have recently received correspondence on this bill which raises other concerns about the potential impact on the environment and in particular the way this legislation creates the potential for restrictions protecting the environment to be stripped away. The correspondence states—

The proposed Urban Land Development Authority Act (currently a Bill) being discussed in Parliament appears to have the power to throw out planning laws that protect koalas and endangered regional ecosystems in any part of the State that the Minister declares to be an 'urban development area'.

I note the EPA was listed as one of the agencies that was consulted and I also note that there was a generic reference to targeted consultation having taken place with industry, local government and community organisation stakeholders. However, it appears that the Beattie government has yet again pulled out the 'let's ask ourselves if we think we're doing well' game that it plays so often. The powers this new statutory authority will have are extensive and appear to override many other important acts. In addition, there is provision for many issues to be dealt with by regulation. It is an ominous combination of powers for an agency created by the same government that has passed laws to fine and sack mayors and councillors who dared ask their people their opinion on an important issue. Whether those laws were overturned or not does not change the fact that the Beattie government proposed them, introduced them and passed them. Yet now we are being asked to believe that we can rely on the compassion and good judgement of this same government to replace the safety net of an appeals process on development issues. The housing crisis certainly needs urgent attention, but I do not believe that creating a Frankenstein of a statutory authority is any real answer.

**Mr DICKSON** (Kawana—Lib) (3.46 pm): I rise to speak to the Urban Land Development Authority Bill. The Sunshine Coast is one of the fastest growing areas in this state. If we are to protect our wonderful lifestyle and the environment, we must manage the growth better in the future. We are already suffering the consequences of growth with infrastructure that has not kept up with the needs of our community. The Sunshine Coast needs more hospital beds, better roads and a decent public transport system. What it does not need is yet another state government authority with the power to make planning decisions that will put more pressure on that infrastructure. While the ULDA will initially have powers over specific areas, it will also be able to take over planning in other areas—notably

greenfield sites like Palmview in my electorate of Kawana. Developers are already lobbying for Palmview to be brought forward. At least one of these developers has applied to the Caloundra City Council to vary the local growth management strategy by rising height limits in Palmview—heights between eight, 10 and 12 storeys in a rural area. This was rejected by council but may well be approved by the ULDA acquiring planning control.

The ULDA is apparently going to streamline and speed up approval processes. While I am the first person to welcome a reduction in unnecessary red tape, approval processes are important in ensuring community input and consultation at the local level. We hear a lot about local government infrastructure and headworks charges on developers adding costs to the price of housing which makes it less affordable. If infrastructure is not made a requirement of a new development, how will it be provided for both existing communities and those thousands of new families who are coming to live in places like Palmview? Local government, including the new amalgamated Sunshine Coast council, is about to lose significant parts of its revenue stream when this government takes over our water. This will place additional pressure on councils to find revenue to pay for services and projects, including local infrastructure. If developments are being approved that could potentially not require the same level of contribution to infrastructure, the whole community will suffer the consequences.

It is not just local infrastructure that will feel the impact. Last weekend two public hospitals serving my electorate were both on capacity alert for a period. The new public hospital at Kawana is not due for operation for another seven years. The multimodal transport corridor, incorporating the CAMCOS rail corridor, is even further away. Caloundra City Council recognises that it is inappropriate to approve major greenfield developments such as Palmview until 2018. I make that point very clear: 2018. If anybody thinks of bringing that project forward, the consequences will be dire on the Sunshine Coast.

Will this government commit to fast-tracking infrastructure, such as hospitals and transport corridors, to match the ULDA's fast-tracking of development? That is a question that needs to be asked and one that needs to be answered. The stated purpose of the ULDA is to facilitate development for whose benefit? Clearly, the developers will benefit, but what about the communities and our lifestyle? We cannot have growth at all costs.

The make-up of the committee may be a stumbling block as may also be the removal of appeal rights for members of the community. How can this government take away the most basic right of Queenslanders to object to developments that are outside the local government planning scheme? A developer could apply to build a high-rise development, or whatever the case may be, outside the existing planning scheme of a local government authority, which is statutorily underneath the Integrated Planning Act, which was put forward by this House. We are going to create a rule that will override all the rules that are in place at the moment. But to make that more of a problem, we are going to say, 'We are taking away your appeal rights.' This bill states that people can appeal to the minister. I mean no disrespect to the minister, but he is only one person. He will not understand every single situation that is occurring. He is a busy person. How is the minister going to do that? That is why we have the Planning and Environment Court—to let people have the opportunity, if they are opposed to a development of some kind, to have their day in court.

I believe the Integrated Planning Act is the major problem. If the Integrated Planning Act was up to speed, and this government had been proactive in getting it up to speed, we would not have a problem with affordable housing today. The process that local governments have to go through to cater for the needs of the Integrated Planning Act is a really serious problem. We have all known about that for five or six years, but nothing has been done about it.

I applaud the government for introducing this legislation. I think it has a couple of problems, such as in the setting up of the board. Who is going to be on it? Earlier some of my colleagues spoke about putting two members from the LGAQ on that board. I wholly support that proposal and I think the government should consider that. I think the government should consider appeal rights in order to give Queenslanders a say. To take away the basic right of Queenslanders to appeal against a development goes against everything that we fundamentally believe in. We have to think of the Greens, we have to think of the Sunshine Coast Environment Council—we have to think of everybody who lives in the community. If we go outside the existing planning scheme of the local authority, that means we have the potential of going to court. But this bill that we are looking to pass here today takes away that right. It takes away the ability of the average Queenslanders to be able to appeal if they think we have it wrong. Occasionally we get it wrong. That is a mistake that all governments will make from here to eternity—not because we want to but because we make mistakes.

I ask this government to take on board those couple of issues that I have raised. I think they are fair amendments. If the government does not do that, I think it will be doing a backflip on this legislation sometime down the track or it will be accused of allowing itself to get into a position that it should not have allowed itself to get into.

I also ask the government to think about appointing a couple of LGAQ representatives to the board. They are people from local government authorities. They are people who know about planning. They are people who can give absolutely fabulous input. I do not care who they are, but they should be

given the right to be involved in this process. The government is taking away the ability of local government to make decisions in their own areas. The people who may make those decisions may not have anything to do with the area that this development is going to be approved in. I know that at the moment there are only five areas proposed, but that number will probably expand to 50 in no time.

The government should also think about how it is going to make this proposal work. When somebody buys into this low-cost accommodation and then decides to sell that property later on down the track, how is the government going to keep the price of this accommodation down? Is there going to be an ironclad guarantee that we still have affordable housing?

As I said earlier, I applaud the government for trying to go down this path. We are going to side with the government on this. We are going to fight it on a couple of amendments, because we believe in what we are saying. I ask the government to think about those amendments long and hard. Why should the government go back and reprint legislation if it does not have to? I ask the government to think about what the opposition has put forward. They are a couple of good suggestions.

**Mrs MILLER** (Bundamba—ALP) (3.54 pm): I am pleased to rise to speak in support of this bill, because I regard this legislation as landmark legislation to be put before this House. I would like to talk about the bill as it relates to my own electorate and also as it relates to housing affordability. Housing affordability is a major issue in the electorate of Bundamba.

Over several years I have been advised by not only developers but also real estate agents in Bundamba that the issue in relation to housing affordability is not so much the cost of housing, which they tell me has remained relatively static, but the cost of land. Earlier this afternoon I rang a few developers to find out just how much blocks of land cost in my electorate. I was told that the average cost of a 400-square metre block of land in Redbank Plains is around about \$145,000. For a 770-square metre block, it is around about \$190,000. In Augustine Heights, a block of land costs about \$220,000 and the most expensive block of land there available on the market today is \$309,000. In Bellbird Park the average cost of land is around \$170,000. In Collingwood Park, the cost is between \$170,000 and \$180,000. In Springfield Lakes, which is the Delfin development, it is about \$125,000 for a 300-square metre block of land and it is about \$220,000 for a 600-square metre block of land. I was also told this afternoon that if people wanted a bigger, sloping block of land on which they could put a pole house, that is around about \$220,000.

Planning is absolutely essential and master planning is important. I would like to talk about master planning, because I look at master planning not so much in terms of the developer use of the term, which can be used simply to sell land or as a marketing tool, but as proper master planning. Master planning should include not just houses, schools and parks but also I would like people to ask themselves when they are looking at master planning to look at where the cemeteries and crematoriums are to be located. We all die at some stage and people want to know whether they are going to be buried locally or whether there is a crematorium locally.

I would also ask planners to look at dumps, because dumps are very important in my electorate. In my electorate there is the big dump out at Swanbank. But where are the smaller dumps, because we all have rubbish. Everyone has garden rubbish. It is important for people to know how close the dump is to them. I also refer to scouts and guides. For people who live in the newer suburbs of Springfield, Springfield Lakes, Augustine Heights and Brookwater, the scout and guide groups are located at Redbank Plains and Goodna.

One of my real concerns is churches, because to me it is a great shame that there are no church buildings in the Springfield area. There are churches, which are comprised of groups of people, but there are no church buildings. There are no church structures that those people can actually call home. The Springfield Christian Family, which is led by Pastor Phil Cutliffe, meets in the state school, which is good. There is no problem with that church group meeting at Woodcrest College. But those people have met in that school for many years.

Other church groups are moving out of the Springfield community. They are having to look at putting churches in other suburbs, because they tell me that they cannot buy appropriate sized land for reasonable prices in these newer suburbs. So people who live in those suburbs can have a house and live quite comfortably. But they cannot get married in a church there, they cannot have a funeral service there, and they cannot have their kids christened or baptised there. Personally, I think that makes a mockery of the term 'master planned community'.

I am also the Premier's representative on the Ripley Valley task force. When I was appointed to that task force I telephoned the Ipswich Ministers Fraternal and asked them to look at Ripley Valley. I actually requested them to get out there early and purchase land there, because I did not want the mistakes that were made at Springfield to be repeated.

This afternoon I am pleased to advise the House that a number of churches have already purchased land in the Ripley Valley area. They are working very closely with all of us to develop community services.

**Mr Purcell:** They should build them for nothing.

**Mrs MILLER:** I take on board what the member for Bulimba just said, that some of those developers should be building churches in our new communities for nothing. Thank you, Pat. Maybe some of them will take that on board.

I point out how important social infrastructure is in underpinning new communities. The state government has a very fine track record in delivering infrastructure. We are very good at delivering schools very quickly and on time. In fact, at Springfield Lakes we built a school from go to whoa and it is now one of Queensland's state-of-the-art schools. We need to build social infrastructure that is based on sound planning and projected demographics for the area.

In relation to Ripley, I raise the issue of the Scott family farm. The Scott family are a generational farming family in Ripley. They have legitimate concerns in relation to some of their land being earmarked for sporting fields, which they tell me they did not know about until they turned up at a local town planning forum. They have been advised that the council can put a preservation order on their land. However, I am advised that no such order exists in law. I wish the House to note that I will be doing everything possible to assist Eric and John Scott and their families, as well as the local scout groups that have taken their cause on board.

In relation to housing affordability, for years Ipswich people have always been able to afford to live locally within the city, but now more and more of our families are being forced further out west. In fact, the *Queensland Times* property section, which is published every Saturday, advertises more and more properties at Gatton, Minden and Fernvale. My question is this: when Brisbane and interstate people move into my electorate and the electorates of Ipswich and Ipswich West, what happens to our own children? For generations the people of the area have been able to afford to live in Ipswich City, but now our children can no longer afford to live locally. Many younger families are told that Ipswich is booming, but they keep on asking me who is it booming for, because it is not booming for them. Many of them cannot afford to buy in the local area.

In terms of housing stress, in my view banks are not being honest in relation to foreclosures. Many locals report to me that they are having trouble paying their mortgages. They are concerned that the banks seem to want to assist them to sell out as quickly as possible, even at what they regard as low prices. A significant proportion of people in my electorate are in mortgage stress. I know this is the case because they turn up at my electorate office. Many of them ask me for assistance to get into public housing, which is very difficult for them to do. After nine interest rate rises, it is my view that the federal government and John Howard should hang their head in absolute shame because in my electorate not only are workers unable to afford to stay in their own homes but also they are unable to afford to rent homes.

An issue that I want to raise this afternoon is a new phenomenon in my electorate, which is the homelessness of grandmothers. I place this issue on the record because in the last six to eight weeks at least three grandmothers who are at crisis point have turned up at my electorate office. A husband and wife who are living on an age pension can usually just manage to afford to rent a two-bedroom unit at \$180 a week. However, if one of them passes on, the other has to live on a single age pension and can no longer afford \$180 a week. What happens to them then? They become homeless. They have to ask friends or family to take them in.

I turn to developers. Some developers complain about council infrastructure charges and what they claim to be the extraordinary costs involved. I am pleased that the council has announced some relaxation in relation to family members. In other words, there are concessions in place if mum and dad cut off a block of land for a family member. I think that is a very good thing.

In relation to the Urban Land Development Authority, I ask the best town-planners and the best brains in planning in Queensland to apply for these jobs. We need planners who understand community development. We do not want planners who only understand the hype about creating communities. We want planners who understand the local culture, the local history, the local heritage, the jobs that people are currently working in as well as the jobs of the future, the educational opportunities, health issues—issues such as obesity are very important in town planning—the role of churches and the support provided by community organisations such as the Scouts and Guides. As our population is ageing, I would ask those town-planners to particularly take into account issues in relation to ageing.

Enlightened developers understand those issues and support concepts of good town planning. There are good developers and there are those who are simply in the business to cut up land, throw a marketing pitch, some of which is full of deceit and lies, and then sell up and go off with a fistful of dollars. In my community we want developers with a community conscience who understand social and community support issues. We want developers who form real partnerships over a long time with the community, the churches and the schools.

I am fortunate to represent the Bundamba electorate, which is experiencing extraordinary growth. I look forward to working in partnership with the Urban Land Development Authority and the developers. My plea is that we look after the workers in our community such as cleaners, teachers, tradesmen and

women, mothers with several kids who are struggling on pensions and age pensioners. It is important that we look at housing for all and the housing affordability needs of everyone in our community. That is why I am passionately committed to bills such as the Urban Land Development Authority Bill.

In my local community I am on the record as being a passionate advocate for the disadvantaged in my community. Everyone should be walking along the same path together. I do not want to see homelessness in my community; I do not want to see people living in tents in my community, but that is what I am seeing now and I want to see the problem fixed. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms DARLING** (Sandgate—ALP) (4.07 pm): I, too, rise to speak in support of the Urban Land Development Authority Bill 2007. At the last election the Beattie Labor government made a firm commitment that we would keep the Australian dream alive by introducing a new housing affordability policy. I commend the Deputy Premier for her strategic thinking and practical plan.

We must do something urgently to alleviate the housing pressures people are facing. The lack of affordable housing is of great concern to me. Residents of the Sandgate electorate regularly come to see me about the lack of housing and spiralling rents in the electorate. We need a range of solutions and we need them now. I will also continue to push for local and federal governments to adopt the Homelink proposal developed by my colleague the minister for housing as I believe it will go a long way to alleviating those pressures.

Today I am thrilled to support the bill. It makes sense for the government to lead by example and initiate quick action for government owned sites. One of the first priority sites to be identified is Fitzgibbon in my electorate. I wish to place on the record considerations for the new Urban Land Development Authority when preparing a development scheme for the identified site at Fitzgibbon. The three most pressing issues raised by my constituents are the need for affordable housing, transport and green space. I have always believed that the Fitzgibbon site could accommodate all of those things.

As the Fitzgibbon site is currently owned by the Department of Housing, the community and nearby landholders who have inspected local plans for the area have been expecting some future development of public housing on the land. Department of Housing clients and those on its lengthening waiting list have held out hope that public housing would be constructed on this site. I think it is worthy of consideration in the development of the mix of housing types on this site. I believe that the site can accommodate a large proportion of public housing and social housing, as well as affordable accommodation options and higher density living options. I also believe that consideration should be given to the mix of housing across the four Brisbane sites as a whole. Different proportions of public and private housing will suit each site, and the authorities should consider leveraging better returns from one site to invest in another.

The second major issue for consideration is the need for large tracts of green space and native vegetation to be maintained in the northern suburbs of Brisbane. The paperbark trees on the site create a much needed green space in the area and support a variety of wildlife. I would hope that around half the site could be protected as a reserve. The bill will ensure that all environmental concerns are taken into consideration when planning on the site. The densest part of bushland on the Fitzgibbon site is actually to the north of the site and the sparser land to the south adjoins Carseldine station which would make it ideal for development.

The residents of Fitzgibbon and the neighbouring suburbs of Bracken Ridge and Carseldine have recently participated in the Brisbane City Council's neighbourhood planning process and have already recorded their views on future uses of the Fitzgibbon site. I was pleased to note that the overwhelming proportion of public comments on housing density supported the notion of increased density around public transport or infrastructure hubs. People living in urban areas understand that to maintain the green space there needs to be a trade-off with the height of dwellings. I certainly do not support increased heights in buildings along the waterfront, and density would be equally unsuitable in suburban areas with large block spaces. But I know that most of my constituents support higher density accommodation closer to railway stations. Unit accommodation is much sought after by single people and small family units. It is an excellent option for older people or people with disabilities who are not able to tend their gardens anymore.

Finally, accommodating the transport needs for the increased population that will result from these developments is essential. The Bracken Ridge and Fitzgibbon suburbs are still growing, and many constituents have asked for a train station between Bald Hills and Carseldine. I will be asking the new authority to make sure the best transport solutions are considered in the master planning process for the Fitzgibbon site, including the needs of the current residents.

At first glance, two possible solutions are a new train station or a bus-rail interchange at Carseldine, but I do not want to pre-empt a decision without considering the full plan, the needs of local travellers and the environmental sensitivities of the site. I know that the member for Aspley will agree with me that there is growing new housing developments on either side of the railway track surrounding the Fitzgibbon site anyway. We have a TAFE at Bracken Ridge, we have the QUT site, we have a lot of

people travelling to different areas so we can support a variety of transport options, and we do not really want to lock ourselves into one solution until we have done a comprehensive study of the area and ascertained the transport needs of everybody. In any case, public transport must be boosted to support the new and existing residents.

I make no apologies for focusing my speech entirely on the Fitzgibbon site. I plan on pushing the needs and views of my constituents the whole way through the process. I have already expressed my views on the potential for this land to the people in the northern suburbs. There are a lot of things that could come out of the master planning process but here is a list of some of the many possibilities that could be accommodated on a master planned site in the northern suburbs: a large meeting space or performance space for use by the community; smaller centres for not-for-profit community organisations; purpose-built overnight respite accommodation for people with disabilities and older people and their carers; a swimming pool with disabled access; public housing 'singles units' and family accommodation; emergency accommodation; here is one I really want—a museum to display the cultural significance of the area and its original inhabitants or perhaps some artwork reflecting the original inhabitants of the area; a day care centre; recreational areas; walking tracks; bicycle tracks; integrated bus and rail transport; the member for Aspley indicates shops; and, of course, a full range of accommodation choices. I am very excited by the potential for this site and I look forward to discussing further possibilities with my constituents. That is just a wish list.

The current suburb of Fitzgibbon is a very interesting suburb and it is probably not known to many members in this place. It is distinctive because it has no community infrastructure other than housing—there is no church, there are no shops. There are bus stations. It is purely residential. Members probably would not have heard of it unless they know someone who actually lives in the suburb. To have a development neighbouring the existing community of Fitzgibbon is a really exciting prospect. This development would provide a real heart and soul to Fitzgibbon.

The bill will ensure that planning principles give effect to ecological sustainability and best practice urban design and will also facilitate the provision of a range of options to address diverse community needs. Any member of the community will be able to have their say on any land under the charge of the Urban Land Development Authority, and I will be encouraging my constituents to do so. The bill clearly explains the steps that must be followed before any area of land can be declared an urban land development area. This includes public advertising and public submissions. Private land owners in a declared area will receive additional notification, including the ability to comment on the master plan and make a submission which will be considered by the minister.

The Urban Land Development Authority will be focused on urgent need and will act only on targeted land. The people of Queensland need urgent relief. I cannot stand by and watch as people leave their communities of support which is something I see on a daily basis in my electorate. I cannot stand by and watch families sleep in their cars or move into tents and, sadly, I see that as well. I welcome this creative and practical solution. I congratulate the Deputy Premier and her departmental staff, and I commend the bill to the House.

**Miss SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (4.16 pm): In rising to speak on the Urban Land Development Authority I want to paint a picture of what could be. Are we going to talk about the North Bank proposal as being an answer to housing affordability? Are we going to talk about high-rise towers in the Brisbane River as outweighing the public concern about what those entities would mean for future urban design? But, the saving grace is that it is all about housing affordability! I start with these comments because there are a lot of glib promises being made about what the Urban Land Development Authority is supposed to deliver. This magic concept of solving the very real problem of housing affordability in our community has been waved around like a golden wand to overcome people's concerns about the extraordinary ministerial powers that sit within this legislation.

I use North Bank as an example because we have already seen under this state Labor government an extraordinary proposal for high-rise towers in the Brisbane River. But allegedly the trade-off would be that the public benefit is served because certain infrastructure and other benefits flow by giving away this land for these particular developments. Under what is proposed with this Urban Land Development Authority, it is very possible that the public will find that they have no real say in their local communities to oppose abhorrent development which is championed by the government of the day. Under this legislation, the extraordinary powers that it would give to the authority and then, in turn, to the minister could mean that we will get not the vision of people suddenly having access to affordable housing but these types of developments that are a result of done deals behind closed doors which do not deliver the greater public benefit—and, that is, to ensure that appropriate development is maintained in our communities.

Let me use another example. I have a very real concern—and I want to raise it and seek the minister's assurances that it will not happen—about the development of the Mooloolaba Spit. It is an iconic area, though such areas have not been flagged by the government for inclusion in this legislation that it is proposing. Currently there is a master plan process underway for this area. And what a surprise! The draft master plan that came out under the imprimatur of the department of natural

resources in consultation with the Maroochy Shire Council was totally contrary to what the public had called for. It was high-rise development of up to 12 storeys on crown land on the Mooloolaba Spit. I raise this as an example, in addition to the North Bank proposal, because this is what could happen. Under an Urban Land Development Authority and a complicit minister, we could see a move to cut out the community's right to raise legitimate concerns about where it is inappropriate to have high-density housing because there has already been a push for it behind closed doors with those who have done the deals.

I certainly do not want to see high-density development of the Mooloolaba wharf site. I certainly want to see the minister reject the current draft plan which proposes extremely dense development on that site. For anybody who loves Mooloolaba, or for anybody who loves any part of Queensland and has concerns about appropriate development, let me say that this draft master plan, which is out and has not yet been rejected or modified by government, would actually double the commercial space that is already available in Mooloolaba. That gives you a concept of things that concern me. That is what could happen if such a plan does not get modified to an appropriate level that meets and addresses the concerns of the local community. We could end up with abhorrent, highly dense and inappropriate developments.

I want to concur with some of the comments made by my colleague and Deputy Leader of the Queensland Coalition, the member for Moggill. There are some genuine concerns about the extraordinary powers in this legislation, and that is why we are putting forward a number of amendments which we believe will provide genuine rights of review—for example, the appeal right which is not allowed for in this legislation.

We also would like a sunset clause, because the concern is that these entities start off with supposedly strategic objectives but then grow beyond their original stated aims into just another bureaucracy. For example, the Office of Urban Management was supposed to be a strategic body, but people in industry—and not just those at the big end of town but those at the small end as well—will tell you it has gone from being a strategic decision-making body into a body that has become log-jammed and involved in quite detailed and individual decisions. So it has been growing as a bureaucratic entity and struggling to function under its original intention.

What will we see with this Urban Land Development Authority? If it is left without some review, will it also do what all good bureaucracies have done under this Beattie Labor government and continue to grow and go beyond its original stated intention? We believe it is important that the stated intention is actually clearly focused and that the outcomes are delivered in a set period and it is then subjected to the review of this place.

This is quite a dramatic piece of legislation which the public has not had a significant opportunity to really look at. I want to talk about why this government is bringing it forward. When I first saw the density levels that the state Beattie government was talking about for the South East Queensland Regional Plan—with the ambitious target that 50 per cent of the growth would be accommodated in greenfield sites and 50 per cent in infill development—I thought: how on earth can it accommodate the infill development with growth targets in local government areas? At that time it occurred to me that it would probably force councils to adopt certain growth targets by certain periods of time or they would move towards some centralised planning authority that would impose those densities by a master planning process without significant input from the public. Sure enough, we have seen that one of those scenarios is in fact unfolding in this legislation we have before us.

So 50 per cent of south-east Queensland growth that this government is trying to put into the South East Queensland Regional Plan has to occur at infill development, and this is really what is behind this legislation. When those plans start to filter out into the community, the community will soon realise that their voice is being stripped away from them and that they will not have a real and significant say on what that density will look like. When that happens and the community sees actual examples of that, there will be a great deal of concern.

Yes, there are some problems within the processing that has occurred under IPA, and my colleague flagged that, but once again this legislation does not deal with some of the systemic issues that need to be addressed. There needs to be an overhaul of the IPA process. There needs to be a consistent process and a timely way of dealing with applications to ensure that everybody who goes through these town planning processes—and not just those from the big end of town—gets a timely response. But this legislation only deals with the big end of town. It does not deal with the systemic problems that the mum and dad investors and the small business operators are still left to deal with.

There are issues that need to be dealt with in the planning schemes and the approval processes in this state that can quite rightly still balance the concerns of the community, but this legislation does not deal with those issues and that is why we continue to have concerns. There must be a process that does not just look after the big end of the development market and forget about the mums and dads and all the others who are left to deal with the red tape on their own because they do not have the expensive political consultants who work for them behind closed doors to aid their cause in putting forward their pet projects.

So 50 per cent of the density has to come from infill. As I have said, the concern is that this could impose the grand vision of the government on some communities which is contrary to the nature of the area and what the people actually want. It just does not wash that this government says it will consult because we have already seen what consultation meant with the forced council amalgamations. How on earth can we trust the government to truly consult and take on board the concerns of communities if a high level of density is fitted over their community which is contrary to the nature and style of the particular area?

I would put forward an alternative vision to high-density infill that this government seems hell-bent on. While there are some places within the CBD or an urban hub where we appreciate that high density may be appropriate, there are a lot of places where it is not appropriate. It certainly is not appropriate in the Brisbane River, it certainly is not appropriate on the Mooloolaba Spit and it certainly will not be appropriate in many other areas which are yet to come into the public arena but which people will find they have no right to have a say on.

The alternative vision to put forward is this—that there really needs to be a true grasping of what decentralisation is about. Maybe it is time we started talking about whether Brisbane should continue to grow at the levels which have been promoted by this government. Why should Brisbane continue to grow at the levels that have been pushed and accelerated by this government? There is an opportunity to grasp an alternative vision about planning—it is about true decentralisation, it is about having a network of vibrant, sustainable communities, it is about having satellite cities and communities which have their own network of services but with high public transport corridors between them. In areas like Gympie, Maryborough or Toowoomba, we should have an alternative vision. It is about having high-speed railways to these areas rather than trying to put a whole lot of people into an urban footprint, into existing communities with the density that this Labor government is talking about without the infrastructure.

There is this naive concept that 50 per cent infill into an existing urban area is smart urban development in regard to infrastructure development, but if we start to look at some of the costs of retrofitting infrastructure and accelerating growth in existing highly dense areas, we actually find it is not always the smartest way to get the best outcome for the infrastructure dollar. There has to be a balance and that is what we are talking about. The balance is not in the growth patterns that this government is promoting.

There is an alternative that provides not only good outcomes for the environment but good lifestyle options. It is about grasping the infrastructure that allows communities to be sustainable; it is not this 200-kilometre city vision that this government seems to have. If this legislation is not amended to include some of the measures we are proposing that would put the brakes on the extreme elements, it could mean quite a draconian authority in the hands of a government that has already painted a vision where it is happy to have towers in the Brisbane River but not really address some of the concerns about genuine housing affordability.

The genuine issues of housing affordability go beyond just what this legislation deals with. There has to be an ability for people to access land in a timely way. They have to have the certainty not just in large, master planned projects but also in the smaller end of the market to know that they can get timely approvals. But there also has to be a look at the additional raft of legislation and costs the state increasingly is imposing on the process.

I believe there is an opportunity for affordable housing in many other areas of this state. If the government had the foresight, and perhaps the humility, to accept our argument that there is an alternative vision for genuine decentralisation there would be an opportunity for affordable housing in many other areas where there is sustainable infrastructure and services to deliver that.

In summary, the IPA concerns that we have raised are still not addressed in this legislation. Our call for appeal rights is something we feel very strongly about. But we note that with the government's record on consultation with the public there is a lot of concern that this legislation will not involve genuine public input in master planned projects but particularly in some of those projects that come before the community that could mean significantly increased density over and above what those communities can sustain into the future.

From an environmental point of view I will put this on the table. It is interesting that cities can be up to 10 per cent hotter than towns and surrounding landscape. There are other issues associated with increasing the density of an urban footprint. When people are considering whether density is good for the environment, they need to take into consideration some other balancing issues in regard to the costs associated with people living in close proximity, in air conditioning, with a lot of hard pavement and the accelerated run-off that comes from those particular areas. These are some of the things that we put forward in a call for a plan that does not concentrate just on density but also looks at a decentralised and well-planned network of vibrant communities. It is not about shoehorning growth into one very limited part of the state.

**Mr JOHNSON** (Gregory—NPA) (4.32 pm): In rising to speak to the Urban Land Development Authority Bill 2007, I concur with the remarks made by the shadow minister, the honourable member for Moggill. The government needs to recognise today the importance of the amendments that the member for Moggill proposes to move in the consideration in detail stage this evening.

This is a very important piece of legislation. I think the purpose of affordable housing has been canvassed by many on both sides of this House during this debate today, but the important factor to note is planning. Something has gone horribly wrong with the Integrated Planning Act, and I think the government should hold itself fully responsible for the problems that arise out of that act.

I remember when I was minister for transport back in 1997 I launched the Integrated Regional Transport Plan. That plan was about proposing where transport routes, utility corridors and transport corridors would run so that we could have urban development and not see the destruction of that urban development two or three years down the track because a corridor for transport was not right or something else was not right in relation to the public utilities.

I would like to take members back to Sydney in the sixties. I remember a property was built in North Sydney just over the Harbour Bridge. I think it was a 12-storey building and after about two years this building was bulldozed for the Warringah Highway to go through to Manly. This is the sort of thing that we do not want to see here. It is all very well to talk about urban development, and I say to the Deputy Premier this afternoon that I support her concept for low-cost housing. We have to support people to get into housing, but I remind her to go and visit Parkville on the northern side of Melbourne. That is a residential estate built in the sixties for migrant families who come into this country. A lot of the crime and the social dislocation to families in Melbourne today happens in those community buildings in Parkville. The crime rate has gone through the roof. Divorce rates have gone through the roof. The social impact on that community is so grave at this current time that the Victorian government is looking at bulldozing those estates and redeveloping that proposal to try to get rid of some of the social and evil destruction that has crept into that community.

What is most important to address here is what the social impact will be before the planning is done. Nobody disagrees with trying to get people into urban housing, but we need to look at the recreational needs of those people. We have to also make certain that the transport corridors are in place. We talk about building on the northern shore at Hamilton. That is all very well, but when are the transport corridors going to be built there—rail and bus? We already have a congested Breakfast Creek and inner suburbs of Hamilton, Clayfield, Hendra and right through to Nudgee. We know what the drag is on those suburbs as we progress in peak hour. Some mornings I catch a plane to Longreach or Emerald at six o'clock and you would want to leave at four o'clock to make sure you beat the peak hour.

I want to stress again the importance of regional planning. I heard members this afternoon talking about what the Rudd government is going to do. I hope the Rudd government, if ever there is one elected, does not revisit the platform of the Hawke/Keating government, where we saw interest rates in some cases at 22 per cent.

**Mr Malone:** That will make affordable housing!

**Mr JOHNSON:** Absolutely. You talk about \$500 or \$600 per week. Some of these poor unfortunates cannot even afford to buy their tucker. Thank God we have Peter Costello and John Howard running the camp at the moment because we have the lowest interest rates—

**Ms Bligh** interjected.

**Mr JOHNSON:** The Deputy Premier can laugh all she likes, but it is because of their good management strategies. You have the chaff to spend on infrastructure now, on the social policies that you are pushing in your government to promote some of these developments, and you know full well, Deputy Premier—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Moorhead): Order! Member for Gregory, can you please direct your comments through the chair.

**Mr JOHNSON:** I am talking through you, Mr Deputy Speaker. But while I talk I am also directing my remarks to the Deputy Premier. She is squirming over there in her seat and she knows full well. She cannot even look me in the eye; she is looking away.

**Ms Bligh** interjected.

**Mr JOHNSON:** Cross your heart, all right. I will keep reminding you of some of the failures that you are going to have your signature on. I am sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker. I will just bend that microphone over there so I can see you around the corner. There has been talk of Traveston Dam and the planning there. I hope that you do get 25 inches of rain after the dam is built because I will tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker, it still will not bloody well fill the dam because it will go straight in the ground.

**Mr MICKEL:** I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. That is unparliamentary language.

**Mr JOHNSON:** What is unparliamentary? Sit down; you are taking up my time. That is not a point of order.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Gregory, resume your seat.

**Mr JOHNSON:** That is not a point of order.

**Mr MICKEL:** It is a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The member should conduct himself in a professional way.

**Mr JOHNSON:** You sit down.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I am on my feet.

**Mr JOHNSON:** It is in the dictionary; I learnt it.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Gregory, resume your seat. It is my job to rule what is out of order. You did use a word that is unparliamentary and I ask you to withdraw.

**Mr JOHNSON:** Yes, but he is provoking me.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Gregory, I ask you to withdraw the word that is unparliamentary.

**Mr JOHNSON:** Well, whatever has upset him, I withdraw.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! You need to unconditionally withdraw. It is unparliamentary.

**Mr JOHNSON:** I unconditionally withdraw. Do you want me—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Gregory, it is not about what the member for Logan finds offensive. It is the fact that the word is unparliamentary. Just withdraw.

**Mr JOHNSON:** I unconditionally withdraw whatever the member for Logan or the minister for industrial relations finds offensive. I might remind you, Mr Deputy Speaker, I was corrected for not speaking through the chair; he is not even sitting in his own chair.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Gregory, you said the word starting with 'b'. That is the word that I ask you to withdraw.

**Mr JOHNSON:** I withdrew. I will say something worse in a minute. That will get you going.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Gregory, resume your speech.

**Mr JOHNSON:** You have not got me going yet. I will liven you up in a minute. Those opposite talk about affordable housing. I talked earlier about the concept in Melbourne. They will not have to build affordable housing, they will have to build more prisons to house some of the problems they create.

The point I stress this afternoon is the social carnage that we will see as a result of this approach if those opposite do not get the planning right. It is so very important that we do not create an environment where we see families fracture and break up because of the lack of associated infrastructure in high-density housing areas. I am talking about sporting facilities, recreation parks and walking paths. I heard one of the government members speak about that this afternoon and I concur with her sentiments. The important thing is that social infrastructure is part of the planning process.

I said earlier in my contribution that the IPA is not working. How is this system going to work? We have seen the forced amalgamation of local authorities. I hope and pray that works. Thank God the member for Moggill brought to the attention of the parliament that there is no comeback and no appeal process in this legislation where local government can have a say. They are not a party to this. It is a backroom deal with the minister's office. Big business can get approval and on they go. That is where the IPA falls over, where the democratic process fails again and fails local government.

I believe this is a very important aspect of the legislation. We need to see that there are no unfair deals done and the wider community has an appeal mechanism to get a fair and equitable outcome. We do not want to see social disintegration. We want to make certain that the schools and hospitals can be utilised.

Those opposite talk about growth in south-east Queensland. Under this legislation the only other place where they are talking about development is in Mackay. There are other good places in Queensland that the Deputy Premier could have a good hard look at. She could look at places like Emerald, Charleville, Longreach, Mount Isa, Charters Towers, Biloela, Kingaroy and Dalby. They all have good social infrastructure—good hospitals and good schools. We could get people to live and work there.

Western Exporters in my electorate of Charleville currently employs 150 people in their goat and sheep abattoir. They are shy about 40 workers. They cannot get them. It should be all about building infrastructure where jobs are going to be created. I believe that is what social planning should be about in the early stages. It is very important that we get that planning right. It is no good building

infrastructure, say, at Bowen Hills when people have to get on a train and go to Ipswich to work which is an hour and a half to two hours away in peak hour. We have to make certain we have the people and build the infrastructure where the jobs are.

I believe we have the concept wrong. If another 150,000 people are going to be in the urban sprawl of Brisbane then they have to be employed somewhere. We have to find schools for them. We have to have hospitals for them. We have to have recreational areas for them. We already have an overtaxed transport system now. Thank God Campbell Newman, the Lord Mayor of Brisbane, is trying to address that issue.

The other important issue concerns the rail line to the north coast. We need fast trains and the lines duplicated. We need to get the 'sun-gold' concept working—that is, where we have fast trains going from the Sunshine Coast, as far north as Noosa, right through to Coolangatta. We need to make certain that we can carry people on that corridor at a minute's notice and not with a half an hour wait. We have to properly utilise trains to do that. The same applies to buses.

The member for Mansfield, I think it was, made comment on the bus corridors today. I know I take credit for some of the south-east bus corridor. It is about responsible planning. Those opposite cannot do responsible planning without interfacing with the relevant local authorities—the Brisbane City Council or the Mackay City Council or whoever. The important function of the elected representatives in our communities is to make certain that they are consulted. They are the ones that know their local communities. They are the ones who are elected by the people to be the custodians of the development prospects and whatever else may happen in their communities.

We see that the northern corridor of Pine Rivers, Caboolture and Redcliffe will be opened up as a merged shire. I hope that common sense prevails in relation to the transport infrastructure that is required there. I refer here to the CAMCOS corridor from the near north coast right through Kawana up through Coolool to Noosa. This government is talking about 15 years in this regard. For God's sake, in 15 years time there will be another 500,000 people living there and there still will not be electric trains.

The minister is procrastinating and cannot make the hard decisions. If I were sitting in the chair we would make the hard decisions and we would do it straight away. It would not be light rail, it would not be buses; it would be heavy rail so that we could interface it with the Brisbane system, the Gold Coast system and right through to Toowoomba. It is about integrated planning and proper development and a proper vision. I do not think this government has any idea what the vision is all about because it is just concentrating on moving—

**Mr Mickel:** You sit there in question time accusing us of borrowing.

**Mr JOHNSON:** I know what the costs are.

**Mr Mickel:** What are the costs and how would you pay for it?

**Mr JOHNSON:** I know how to cost it. That is your problem. I will tell the minister how to do it. What we would have done in the first place was built the Wolffdene Dam and Brisbane would have had plenty of water now. We would not be now spending \$9 billion on a water grid. Those opposite are getting \$8 billion worth of GST money every year. That money would go towards some of these projects in question.

The Deputy Premier gets up and walks away. She is beaten all right. She knows where she has it wrong. She can walk away but I will keep following her. I can assure the Deputy Premier that I will keep reminding her about this. She can have all the snakes she likes. She is a bit snaky. She is a snaky person, I know.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr JOHNSON:** I am sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker, if I have offended you. I certainly would not offend you. It is not in my make-up to denigrate people. I have been provoked by the two ministers opposite. I will get on with it. The important thing is not to—

**Mr Mickel** interjected.

**Mr JOHNSON:** We did some good things like the Nundah bottleneck. Who fixed that up? We did. We fixed up a lot of things.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr JOHNSON:** Mr Deputy Speaker, can I ask for your protection, please.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Moorhead): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the chamber. Please let the member for Gregory be heard.

**Mr JOHNSON:** He is getting himself primed up to sit in the Premier's seat. We all know it. I put on the record this afternoon that we have to be so careful that with this condensed housing we do not see the start of a ghetto era in Brisbane. That ghetto era will start if the planning is not done correctly. I cannot emphasise that enough. I have seen it in Melbourne. I have witnessed it in Sydney. We have seen migrant populations move in. Governments of both persuasions have got it wrong in the past and

they have not integrated those people into the surrounding communities. They have not moved them to other parts of the state. We finish up with social problems. We do not know whether we have little Italy, little Greece or little Arabia. In the early 1960s in Sydney they integrated those people. Now we are not seeing that integration.

That is why there are problems in western Sydney now. Are we going to create those kinds of environments throughout cities in the south-east corner or are we going to get the planning right? With regard to the IPA, I was the minister when Mango Hill was constructed and developed and I believe they got it right. It is about young families being able to buy their homes and live in that community for 25 years knowing that the kids can catch the bus to the local school in a safe environment.

**Mr Finn:** How is this going to stop that?

**Mr JOHNSON:** I am talking about high-density housing and the fact that we need to get the planning and associated infrastructure that goes with that right. That is what I am talking about. I have said before that I am worried about the development at Hamilton, because we need to ensure that there are railway lines and bus routes interfacing and all of the other infrastructure that goes with that. I appeal to the Deputy Premier this afternoon to look at ways the government can create policies of encouraging industry to develop jobs in those great places in regional Queensland where there is no shortage of water and there are good schools, good hospitals and good recreation facilities. Doing that will mean that they relieve the overtaxed issues from the south-east corner and spread the population to other parts of the state.

Many members in this House have connections—I can see quite a few of them—with western Queensland and they got their start in those areas. It is very important that we look at ways to encourage people to move into those regional areas to take up those jobs in order to cater for the needs of the people who live there. The government has announced that with the forced amalgamation of councils we will see stronger shires and stronger communities as a result. The government ought to put the cap on now and wear it, because if they are going to be stronger communities the government needs to prove to the people of Queensland how they are going to be stronger communities and should do exactly as I say—that is, go out there and put development in those areas and create alternatives. The government should work hand in hand with organisations like the Remote Area Planning and Development Board that are endeavouring to get development opportunities in rural and remote areas.

If 500,000 people move out of south-east Queensland and settle across regional and rural Queensland, the choking that is occurring in the south-east corner would be alleviated straightaway and it would create purpose within the regions. It would also create an environment in that it is cheaper to build housing in rural Queensland and cheaper to get people to and from their place of work because they would find work in those areas. It is the same with the coalfields on the Central Highlands and throughout the Bowen Basin and the north coast. That is where the dollars are, and that is where this government should be focusing the development projects.

**Ms JONES** (Ashgrove—ALP) (4.52 pm): I rise in support of the Urban Land Development Authority Bill. This morning in his contribution the Leader of the Liberal Party said that this bill moves us into a brave new world, and he is right. Unlike the Leader of the Liberal Party, one of the main reasons I am a member of this parliament and indeed a member of this Labor government is that I have a strong belief that everyone has a right to decent housing no matter if they are a millionaire or on the minimum wage like my brother. As members know, before I was elected I had a strong involvement in dealing with the housing affordability crisis we are seeing right across Australia. With the total absence of a national housing strategy or in fact any leadership on tackling the housing crisis in this country at a federal level, state governments are doing the right thing and are taking the brave steps we can to improve the situation for thousands of young people and young families who simply cannot afford not only somewhere to buy, which is all the Liberal leader seemed concerned about, but even somewhere to rent.

Over the last six years I have seen firsthand where councils have, as Dr Flegg delicately put it, constipated possible housing developments on large tracts of land the state government owns across the state. As the member for Sandgate said, there is such a site in her electorate at Fitzgibbon, and Rode Road at Chermside is another good example. Despite the member for Moggill's assertions that this bill makes no reference to providing affordable housing—and I guess this could be a problem when you continue to sack all of your staff—he should read the bill because the bill makes it very clear that the provision of a range of housing outcomes is the No. 1 driver behind these changes. For the record, page 1 of the bill at clause 3(2)(b) relating to the main purposes of this act states—

the provision of a range of housing options to address diverse community needs;

If the member for Moggill would like to, he could read subclause (2)(e), which states—

the provision of an ongoing availability of affordable housing options for low to moderate income households.

Much has been said about the powers vested in the minister, particularly in the urban development area. I suggest to the member for Maroochydore and the member for Gregory who have raised concerns that they go and visit the Kelvin Grove Urban Village which is less than three kilometres

away from where we are right now. I was fortunate to work for the minister for housing from the moment this was simply a concept plan on a piece of paper to its official opening. The Kelvin Grove Urban Village is a master planned community and brings together residential, educational, retail, health, recreational and business opportunities into a vibrant new precinct. The urban village includes more than 1,000 units of housing with a mix of public housing, Brisbane Housing Co. units, student accommodation, seniors units and private residential.

The development was project managed and delivered by this government through the Department of Housing in partnership with QUT and private developers. But the concept and drive to turn this 16 hectares of under-utilised land two kilometres from the CBD into an urban centre housing thousands of Queenslanders during what is the worst crisis since World War II is a credit to this government. This government has a very strong record in this regard, and I heard the member for Gregory raising concerns that we are going to build ghettos and the like. That is what Tories always say when we talk about affordable housing—not that I am saying that Vaughan is as bad as them. I quite like Vaughan. But our record speaks for itself.

The Kelvin Grove Urban Village is award winning. It is a nationally award winning master planned community. It won the 2004 Planning Institute of Australia national award for excellence. It also won the 2002 Royal Australian Planning Institute national award guess what for, colleagues? For urban planning achievement. This is something we have a very strong record on. This government had the vision and the experience to deliver in urban areas, and this bill is no different. We are tackling the housing shortage head on. The private market is clearly not delivering and it is not meeting the needs of our community. As a government we must continue to do all we can to best use the state land that we own to deliver housing for all Queenslanders. I commend any measures to increase the housing supply in this state and I commend the minister for her leadership, as clearly demonstrated by this bill.

**Mr CHOI** (Capalaba—ALP) (4.57 pm): I rise to support the Urban Land Development Authority Bill 2007, a bill which I believe confirms this government's commitment to first homeowners and young families right here in Queensland. I thank the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure for introducing this very important legislation. This government is not blind to the difficulties facing Queensland families who are struggling all over this great state to provide a safe and secure home for their families. As we all know, the Prime Minister's statements about keeping a lid on interest rates are just empty promises to families who are struggling to achieve the Australian dream of owning their own home or in fact just maintaining their mortgage. I have seen a statement put forward by the opposition on the National Party web site where it has attacked the member for Rockhampton and accused his department of failing Queensland. The opposition is quick to make accusations and attack the minister, but I have not yet seen anything but negative rhetoric being offered in the alternative by the opposition. I also see no effort from the opposition by way of asking its federal colleagues to spend more money on funding public housing in Queensland.

I refer to recent remarks made by the minister for housing on which his passion for action on this very significant issue is painfully clear. He said that the waiting list grows and the federal government continues to shift funding away from public housing into the private market. I am in agreement with the minister's further comments that of course the private market is a necessary part of any housing industry, but it is becoming more and more apparent every day that the private market is simply not providing sufficient or even adequate services for those who need them most in our communities. People come to see me in my Capalaba electorate office almost on a weekly basis who are devastated by the rises experienced across-the-board in the private rental market.

Since 2004 private rental properties in Capalaba alone have risen by over 12 per cent each year to the point at which a four-bedroom house in Capalaba is now asking somewhere between \$355 a week to over \$400 a week. Just the other day a couple came to see me. They simply cannot comprehend how their rent has gone up by over \$50 a week in the last month. They just came to talk to me to try to get their heads around this exorbitant figure. They wonder where that \$50 will have to come from—from their food or from their medical expenses. An amount of \$50 a week may not seem a significant figure to some, but I can assure members that, added up over a fortnight together with the cost of other essential items such as food, electricity, clothing and transport, it is a huge amount of money that at times people in Capalaba just cannot afford.

In speaking to my constituents I had to keep my feelings of frustration well in check as I tried to explain the reasons behind such steep rises in the market. But when all was said and done, there was not a great deal that I could do for them—until today. This is why I support this bill. It is a step forward, not just buck-passing, which is what the opposition seems to be doing. This bill is a step forward towards a better outcome for housing in Queensland.

This bill will establish a powerful body that will be empowered to slash red tape and free up land across Queensland for new housing projects. The state government, through its Housing Affordability Strategy, is making good on its election commitment to accelerate the carefully planned release of new land for housing development. The authority to be established by the bill will ensure that there are no unnecessary delays in the development of such land by assuming responsibility for development approvals on land under its control, which has the potential to save homebuyers thousands of dollars.

The opposition has itself confirmed that the state of Queensland is proving irresistible, with over 1,000 people moving to this great state every week. But, of course, as the Premier has already stated, such rapid growth needs to be managed carefully. The federal government's rental assistance scheme is not providing a workable solution. It is not helping those families who are most in need. It is not giving any kind of real help. At best, the scheme is a stopgap measure, but it is no match for the steep rises in rent that have occurred as the scheme itself increases by only around four per cent each year. Far more effective weapons would be, firstly, to build more, not fewer, public houses and to direct federal funding for this purpose; secondly, to increase land availability; and, thirdly, to reduce the holding cost of land development by reducing red tape. At the moment the federal government's only response to the crisis experienced by Queenslanders is a comment by the Prime Minister that Australian families have never had it so good.

This bill is about helping Queenslanders to get into their own homes and to not have them standing in line waiting for a mere tuppence from the swollen coffers of the federal government. To quote the words of the president of the Australian Council of Social Service, the key issue is availability—the availability of land and the affordability of land. This bill is about making housing affordability a reality, not a dream. This state government is sticking to its proven track record of working to find solutions and getting those solutions enacted so that all Queenslanders can benefit.

Recently I received a couple of emails from some of my constituents, particularly from some environmental groups, who expressed concerns about the removal of their rights to appeal. I can certainly understand some of their concerns, but I say to those people two things. Firstly, the removal of appeal rights applies only to major development areas, not right across Queensland. I think their concern is valid, but the issue is focused on areas that this government believes are of major developmental importance. Secondly, as a member of parliament who sits in a room with people who cannot afford to pay their rent, it is important to understand that we have to find a solution. Sometimes there are conflicts of interests and conflicts of focus in our communities. At times we need to make some very hard decisions, and this is one of those times. I have to say that there is no silver bullet that can reduce the exorbitant prices that we are seeing in our marketplace. But this bill is clearly an attempt by this government to tackle the issue of housing affordability. Doing nothing is clearly not an option. I am pleased to commend this bill to the House.

**Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (5.04 pm): I rise to speak to the Urban Land Development Authority Bill 2007. On many occasions in this chamber I have raised the issue of the difficulties that families in my electorate experience in being able to afford to buy a home and, indeed, to even have the opportunity to have a home available in their price bracket. Currently, rents in my electorate are \$300, \$330 and \$250 a week and many of those houses that are attracting those rents are quite modest homes. The cost of housing in my electorate ranges from \$500,000 to \$300,000. I printed off a real estate brochure which advertises an executive home with water views for \$495,000. I know the suburb in which that house is located and you would have to stand on your tiptoes and lean slightly to the right to be able to see the water. But anyway, that house is attracting a premium for its water view.

**An honourable member:** Glimpes.

**Mrs CUNNINGHAM:** 'Glimpses' is the operative word. It is very difficult for families to be able to afford to enter the home ownership market. Every time there is an industrial development in the region—and I am certainly supportive of the economic benefits that they bring—there is also a renewed round of pressure on people on fixed and low incomes. They have invested in the social capital of the electorate but they are forced to relocate because they simply can no longer afford to live there. Whilst that will happen in any community, I think the extent to which it is happening in my electorate—and I am sure it is also occurring in the south-east corner—is an indictment on us as a society. It has been said before that an indicator of how we are travelling as a society is the way we treat our older people, our young people and the poor.

I heard the member for Bundamba recite some prices for bare land that is for sale in the Ipswich area. She referred to \$200,000 or \$300,000 for a block of land. There has to be a house put on that. That means that both mum and dad have to work. They cannot afford to get sick. They cannot afford to have kids. The cost of housing really puts pressure on families.

Several weeks ago the federal Labor candidate for the seat of Flynn held an affordability summit, to which I was invited and attended. The shadow deputy Treasurer was in attendance, as was a real estate valuer, a small businessperson and a representative of one of the social welfare groups. I also spoke at that forum. We were all singing off a similar hymn sheet in that we were talking not only about access to affordable housing but also affordability in areas such as petrol prices and grocery prices—all of those basic services that affect how a family copes and how a family manages. Whilst there were no direct conclusions to the summit—it was more an airing of perspectives—it really pointed out that all sectors of the community share the same concerns.

Some years ago now the federal government changed its focus from investing in housing construction in cooperation with the state government to rent assistance programs. I do not think that has been a good single focus. I am not saying that that should not occur. I certainly would not like to see

the removal of all safety nets in terms of the level of rents paid and assistance given to people who need a top-up on their rental payments. But I believe the best answer to affordable housing is housing that is funded by governments—state and federal—because those two spheres of governments have the ability to put a cap on the rent. Even under our current state government Queensland Housing puts a cap on the rent paid, which I believe is 25 per cent of a person's gross income. But that is still a really big chunk out of a person's income given that some people have commitments, whether they are child maintenance payments or other financial obligations, which they must fulfil. I am still of the view that government built and owned housing is the best way to manage an affordable housing program.

In Gladstone accommodation for singles was built. I have already put on the record my appreciation to the minister for housing for those 22 housing units, which were filled before they were opened. There is now a waitlist of a significant length for that accommodation. That is singles accommodation for men and women and there is no age limit and it has already been filled. It is well managed by Roseberry Community Services Inc. However, more of that style of accommodation is needed desperately. I encourage the minister for housing to consider that.

Seniors units are also at a premium. Heritage Village, which is supported by the Queensland housing department, has land for more units. Again, I put on the record my call for the minister for housing to fund more of those housing units. They are beautifully designed. Anyone who lives there or visits would have to say that the housing department has done a brilliant job in terms of the style and quality of that housing. We just need more of it.

**Mr Bombolas:** I have some in my electorate.

**Mrs CUNNINGHAM:** The member can send them up to mine. Six or seven years ago I raised another accommodation option for older Queenslanders. I know that the minister had a trial on foot in relation to this. Other members have talked about the people who lose a partner and go from a double pension to a single pension, which really has a significant impact on what they can afford. In Victoria they trialled modular units that were craned in or skidded in, depending on the layout of the block, to the home block of a person's son or daughter. They could be plumbed into the existing water and sewage systems while still being quite self-contained. It allowed the children of the parent in need to keep a weather eye on their mum or dad while giving their parent independence. Then when the need for that accommodation had passed either through higher care needs or sadder circumstances, the units could be removed. That solves the concern that a lot of local governments have about on-the-sly rentals. These self-contained modular units provide a great answer for a particular segment of the community, that is, parents who lose a partner but still need somewhere independent and affordable to live and who have a family member prepared to accommodate them in this way.

In my electorate a number of affordable accommodation options have been lost due to industrial development. One particular set of units was located behind the Club Hotel. As was their right, the owners evicted the tenants who almost without exception were older gentlemen who had no partners and fairly poor self-care skills. They could go over to the club and have a counter lunch and other lubrication, and then come home quite safely because they lived close by. Those units were ideally located for the people they catered for. The residents were asked to leave and the units were refurbished and sold or used for industry workers. That happened on a number of occasions in the electorate. Those people have very poor care skills because they come from a generation where the wives did all of the home care, cooked the meals and did the washing and the cleaning. They never learnt how to do those things. They are a group in our community that has particular needs and they certainly deserve our consideration.

When the state development department purchased homes at Targinie, a lot of good sound homes were and are being demolished rather than kept for rental purposes. Whilst a few are still being rented out, gradually those are being weeded out. It is sad to watch. Some of those homes needed to be demolished because of their state of repair, but many of those houses were in a sound and habitable condition. It is discouraging to know that those places are being demolished or removed when the need is so great.

I put on the record my support for the comments of the member for Gregory about high-density housing. If a family with children is asked whether they would rather be in a high-rise or nowhere, they will always say the high-rise. However, that is not an appropriate environment for young kids. Kids are synonymous with noise and running around. If developers are going to build high-rises, they have to incorporate secure play areas with things such as closed-circuit TV because of some of the low-lives who, for the wrong reasons, are attracted to areas where children play. Such things have to be incorporated into the development.

I am conscious of the time. I know that another speaker wishes to rise after me. However, I put on the record some concerns of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland, bayside branch, which has already been referred to once or twice. The Wildlife Preservation Society stated—

This Bill will reverse years of consultation and planning and allow developers to ignore community values, destroy waterways, develop on contaminated land and wipe out habitat for koalas and other wildlife.

This Bill takes away community rights, removes the provisions of any restrictive legislation to protect the environment, removes requirements that certain types of development be assessable and overrides local government planning schemes.

I seek leave to table that submission from Sheila Davis.

Leave granted.

*Tabled paper:* Copy of Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland Bayside Branch media alert, dated 4 September 2007, titled 'What a way to celebrate Threatened Species Week—Queensland environmental and social laws at risk'

**Mrs CUNNINGHAM:** The only other issue that I wish to put on the record is my concern about the overriding of fundamental legislative principles. As I said, I am conscious that others wish to speak and I will be making contributions during the consideration in detail phase of the bill in relation to the loss of appeal rights and other issues that trample on the rights and liberties of members of our community. I support legislation that has the potential to provide affordable housing to our community, but that must be done with accountability.

**Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—Lib) (5.16 pm): When it comes to housing affordability, the Beattie Labor government struggles to come up with an effective strategy to meet the needs of Queenslanders who want to own their own homes. When it comes to housing affordability across the spectrum of people who want to buy and live in their own homes, this government fails all of the tests.

By comparison, the Liberal-National coalition at the Commonwealth level has done more to improve the prospects of Queenslanders looking to own their own homes than any other government in this country. It is doing this in a number of ways. Firstly, it has repaid the \$96 billion in Labor Party debt that it was left with in 1996. In effect, the \$8 billion a year that Australians were paying on Labor's debt is now being spent on services like rental assistance and new housing stock, helping people to help themselves while at the same time encouraging investment in new houses and units to help provide homes, jobs and prosperity for Queenslanders. The other effect of being net debt free—

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** They do not like the truth, but they are going to hear it. The other effect of being net debt free is that the pressure on interest rates is being reduced. Under Labor, average mortgage rates were at 12.75 per cent, went beyond 19 per cent and, in the worst of the bad old days of Hawkie and Keating, went beyond 20 per cent. Now they are at 7.5 per cent. Members can compare that to the best that Labor could manage. In the period from March 1996 to December 2006, under the Liberal-National coalition real wages grew by almost 20 per cent. In Australia, the friend of the worker and the friend of the person who wants to own their own house and enjoy prosperity is the federal Liberal-National coalition. In the period from 1983 to 1996, under Labor real wage growth was at minus 1.4 per cent. Real wages growth went backwards under Labor and went up by 20 per cent over 10 years under a federal coalition.

I turn to unemployment. How can someone own their own home if they do not have a job? Paul Keating, the man who famously told people to 'Go and get a job' when there was not one going, had youth unemployment at better than 27 per cent. Under the federal National-Liberal coalition, unemployment is at 4.2 per cent. Additionally, long-term unemployment has been reduced by more than 120,000 people.

Inflation, which under the Keating-Hawke years was at best 5.7 per cent, is now consistently in the two per cent to three per cent range, averaging 2.5 per cent for the last five years. The federal government has also undertaken tax relief. Under Labor, wage and salary earners were paying 34 per cent of their income in tax to the government on a wage up to \$38,000. From 1 July next year people will be able to earn up to \$80,000 and only pay 30 per cent tax. We remember the last time the Labor Party was in charge and was talking about tax. We remember the L-A-W law tax cuts. They were enshrined in legislation. They were never delivered. They were scrapped and thrown out the door. At the same time, net household wealth in Australia has more than doubled under the federal coalition from \$2.1 billion to \$5.4 billion.

These details and others like them are contained in a small brochure called *The Howard Government—Doing what's right for Australia*. I table that document for the benefit of members' edification. Obviously those on my left need a short but concise history lesson, and this document does provide it to them. It makes interesting reading.

*Tabled paper:* Brochure titled 'The Howard Government—Doing what's right for Australia'.

By contrast, what does state Labor do? We already know that the Beattie Labor government will in a few short years time be \$52 billion in debt. While the federal coalition government repays debt and reduces interest payments, state Labor—in the way of Labor governments since time immemorial—puts its hands in the pockets of the taxpayers and decides it is going to trouser another \$52 billion and pay off more borrowings and increase interest payments. In 2007-08 state Labor will be the biggest spending, biggest taxing government in this state's history. In doing this, the major growth in state expenditure is coming through wages growth in the bureaucracy which I detailed when I discussed the budget a couple of months ago.

It is also interesting to note in terms of housing affordability the transfer duty that has been collected by the Queensland state government. In fact, so rapacious has been this government's revenue collection that since 2001-02 state transfer duty collected has increased by 169 per cent. At least 60 per cent to 70 per cent of that transfer duty collected is stamp duty on the purchase of homes. I table a small graph which I have put together that outlines the transfer duty received and the increase in the revenue that this state government has taken in stamp duty over the past five years.

*Tabled paper:* Document, containing graph and table regarding Queensland State Transfer Duty.

As a sop but not as a real measure, the government last year provided some additional concessions for the acquisition of vacant land from 1 January this year—a common Beattie Labor government trick: announce the concession in the budget but do not actually deliver it until six months later. At the same time, transfer duty rates increased from 1 July—straightaway—on dutiable property over half a million dollars. It is interesting to note the comment on page 89 of the 2006-07 budget papers in relation to the increase in the dutiable property rates which states—

This will partially be offset by an increase in the concession for home purchases.

Note the use of the word 'partially'. Obviously this was another revenue grab by a money-hungry government last year. In the current state budget the Treasurer attempted to make much of the halving of mortgage duty—another impost on housing affordability. There was the usual trick: announce it in June but deliver it six months later from 1 January 2008 and fully reduced on 1 January 2009. This is nothing but a sleight of hand and is the implementation of the intergovernmental agreement which sees the state receiving windfall GST revenue of in excess of \$8 billion this year while at the same time slowly, agonisingly, despairingly reducing its old inefficient money-grabbing taxes such as the mortgage duty.

The comparison could not be more clear. At the federal level the coalition government does all the things that are important to improve housing affordability. It reduces unemployment, it reduces interest rates, it increases real wages, it provides outstanding economic growth, it repays Labor debt reducing the pressure on interest rates and it introduces the biggest package of tax reform and tax relief for taxpayers in Australia's history. At the state level we have increases in debt, up \$52 billion, and increases in revenue from stamp duty, up 169 per cent over five years to \$2.842 billion. It delays reducing mortgage duty despite the intergovernmental agreement and it continues to delay investment in infrastructure needed to sustain growth both on the urban fringe and in non-urban centres.

It is not surprising that after this litany of failures and in the lead-up to a federal election Beattie Labor, in slavish adherence to the dictates of its union masters, all of a sudden recognises it must do something about housing affordability and develops, as if it had never been thought of before, a Housing Affordability Strategy. And what a strategy it is! A whole six pages! The first page is a cover sheet, so we can take that one out. The second page has a photo of the Premier and the Deputy Premier and a bit of spin and a bit of blurb, so we can take that one out. That takes us down to four. Then we have four pages and the top half of each is covered by a photograph. The whole Office of Urban Management, the whole Treasury department, the whole gamut of the government produces two A4 pages of a Housing Affordability Strategy. What an outstanding outcome!

**A government member:** You're only dirty that it is not printed by Willprint.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I take that interjection, because if it was printed by Willprint there would be a lot more pages.

**A government member:** And we know who would be paying for it.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Don't you worry about that. We have here what the federal government did about it: the Productivity Commission report on first home ownership, 290 pages of a document that actually examines the problems and comes up with the solutions and deals with the issues in an in-depth and proper financially costed way. It identifies the supply side problems and the demand side problems. It does identify bottlenecks in the development assessment process. It does identify problems in the land supply and release process. It does identify things in the supply side process. It is a properly thought through, fully investigated, complete and utter report of 299-odd pages, as opposed to two A4 sheets of paper produced by this government because it knows a federal election is coming and it wants to get on the bandwagon.

It would be interesting also to know the authors of this massive tome produced by the Deputy Premier and the Premier. It is also interesting to note that the number of press releases announcing the release of the affordability strategy is more than four times the strategy itself. Between 5 May and 3 September 2007 there were eight pages of press releases announcing the great work that this government is doing. In fact, I think the press releases are a better housing affordability strategy than the Housing Affordability Strategy itself. If nothing else, that fact alone shows how addicted this government is to spin and how little it cares for delivering affordable housing to Queenslanders.

It is also interesting to note that a 217-page bill containing 250 clauses and a schedule dictionary is considered an effective way of reducing red tape. The bill contains all of the details which leads to the establishment of the nine-member Urban Land Development Authority. The members of that authority are all appointed by executive government. To date the government has given no indication of how it proposes to select its appointees. It is interesting to note that part 6 of the bill provides that the Urban Land Development Authority represents the state. Section 96 provides that the main function of the authority is to give effect to the purposes of the act and those purposes are, of course, set out in section 3 of part 1 of the bill. They, as the member for Ashgrove has identified, indicate the availability of land for urban purposes, provision of a range of housing options, provision of infrastructure, planning principles and provision of ongoing availability of affordable housing options.

It is also interesting to note the proviso in section 97 of the bill under the heading 'General powers'. Subsection (1) of section 97 of the bill starts off with the words 'Subject to any ministerial direction'. The question to ask is what limits, if any, there are on ministerial direction in the exercise of power under this provision and to what extent the minister's direction is reviewable or justiciable under the act. In effect, the Urban Land Development Authority is a creature of the minister and executive government. It is not answerable to anyone but the minister.

When one considers the provisions and powers that are set out in section 97(1) and (2), one has to ask why it is necessary to have such powers which are not reviewable by this parliament or any other independent authority, which is what we would normally expect with a government like this one which professes to uphold the tradition of the separation of powers. Increasingly, we know that this Beattie Labor government pays lip-service to the doctrine of separation of powers while seeking every way it possibly can to get around them.

It is also interesting to note the membership of the authority and again the lack of independence from the executive government. Section 106 sets out the eligibility for membership and lists six broad fields of qualification. However, it is interesting to note that there is a catch-all provision that enables the minister to appoint anyone under section 106, because it says if the person 'has other knowledge and experience the Governor in Council considers appropriate'. This is the Labor mates' appointment clause.

Debate, on motion of Mr Nicholls, adjourned.

## QUEENSLAND AMBULANCE SERVICE

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

That this House calls on the Government to convene an immediate independent inquiry—

- to identify solutions to the current ambulance crisis; and
- to ensure the ambulance tax paid by every Queenslanders provides a world class, responsive, value for money ambulance service, as promised by the Premier.

Once again in this parliament we are debating our response to another crisis. It is another crisis in the long list of crises that have been inflicted on Queensland by the Beattie Labor government's failure to plan, failure to administer and failure to do its job properly. Queenslanders do not need reminding about that long list of crises. They know about the health crisis, the water crisis, the power crisis and the kids in care crisis. Now they know they have an ambulance crisis. There is not a member in this House who can honestly deny that the greatest amount of traffic through their electorate offices in recent months has stemmed from a dissatisfaction with the Ambulance Service. Some heart-wrenching examples have been brought to the public's attention in this place over the last few weeks and that is the real human impact of the ambulance crisis.

By bringing this motion to the House tonight and calling for an immediate independent inquiry, I want to say on behalf of the opposition that all we want is some results. All we want is the Ambulance Service that the people of Queensland deserve. I want to quote from a statement made by the Premier back on 23 December 2002. I want to quote it tonight because what the Premier said on 23 December 2002 is exactly how I feel tonight. The Premier said—

All I have wanted right from the start is fair and reliable ambulance cover that serves all Queenslanders and makes sure they are protected when sick, injured or in need of help.

That is what I want. That is what the opposition wants. What we want for the people of Queensland is what the Premier promised back in 2002. What we want for the people of Queensland is what the government promised when it implemented the ambulance tax—that tax that takes money out of the pockets of every Queenslanders every time they pay their electricity bill. Queenslanders have no choice but to pay that tax, but they have not got value for money and they have not got the Ambulance Service that was promised. That is why the second part of this motion that I moved tonight seeks to ensure that the ambulance tax that is paid by every Queenslanders provides a world-class, responsive, value-for-money Ambulance Service as we were promised.

In March 2003 the Premier said, and I will quote him again—

Funds raised by community ambulance cover will be spent on ambulance services—on those world-class ambulance officers and paramedics. The Queensland Ambulance Service needs a predictable, long-term funding source to maintain its world-class service standards.

Well, the Ambulance Service got the long-term funding source. It gets the money from every Queenslanders when they pay their electricity bill, but what the people of Queensland have not got back in return is the world-class service that was promised by the Premier. That is what we want to see happen. That is what we want to bring about. That is why this motion is here in the parliament tonight. It is not about political points. It is not about a debate with a win or a loss for either side of the House. It is about making sure that Queenslanders get value for the money they pay in the ambulance tax, that they get what the Premier has promised, that they get what they deserve—an Ambulance Service they can have confidence in, an Ambulance Service that will turn up when they have an emergency situation. Queenslanders need some confidence that when they ring an ambulance in those very trying situations an ambulance will turn up and be reliable.

As I said, there have been some horrendous examples brought forward in this parliament over recent times to illustrate the extent to which the Ambulance Service is under pressure and is failing to demonstrate a capacity to meet the requirements of the people of Queensland. I want to make it very clear tonight that the motion that I move bears no reflection on the men and women who work in the Ambulance Service. Those officers are continually being asked to work long hours over and above what should be considered necessary, over and above what anyone would expect as being reasonable. They are the people who bear the brunt of the government's failures. They are the people who, because of their own professional integrity, try to meet the increasing demands that are placed upon them due to the government's failure to properly administer the service. They try to maintain the service in impossible conditions. Those people have been treated very badly in the whole process. They have been threatened with all sorts of retribution if they speak out. They are not allowed to have their stories heard. They are not allowed to let the people of Queensland know what the situation is in the Ambulance Service. In common with the strategy right across the government, these public servants have been threatened with retribution if they speak out and put their hands up and tell the people of Queensland the extent to which the Ambulance Service is failing.

So let me make it very clear that this motion before the House tonight is for the ambulance officers as well. It is for the paramedics and the ambulance officers out there who are trying to do an impossible job in impossible circumstances. They are victims of the government's failure every bit as much as the little old lady who waits for two hours for an ambulance but cannot get the service she needs to be taken to hospital.

The government also promised in its election platform that it would spend another \$100 million over three years on a raft of initiatives to further improve ambulance response times. That was an election promise that was repeated over and over. It is another promise that has not been delivered. So tonight is about ensuring that the government delivers on its promises. Tonight is about recognising, first of all, that there is a crisis. I think everybody can come as far as that. Everybody can recognise that there is a crisis and that something has to be done. But what has to be done that will deliver the promises that the government has made?

What we do not need is more political spin. What we do not need is another clever minister and his troop of PR people putting out press release after press release trying to convince us that the situation is as it is not. That is a tactic we have seen in every other crisis that we have had to confront in this parliament. We saw it in the health crisis. We saw it in the electricity crisis when the current minister for transport was the relevant minister. His example is one that the current Minister for Emergency Services should take note of and not follow.

Rather than trying to deny the crisis, rather than trying to hide the crisis, the minister should be confronting the issue in a way that will ensure that it is resolved. The only way to do that is to have some sort of an independent authority, somebody with some managerial expertise, look at the situation and determine what has to be done to ensure that the millions of dollars that are being taken out of the pockets of Queenslanders in the form of the ambulance tax comes back to them in the form of an Ambulance Service that they can have confidence in, that they can have pride in and that they can be sure will be there to deliver that mantle of safety that should be a feature of an Ambulance Service wherever it operates properly in the world.

Queenslanders were promised a world-class ambulance service. They were promised that service. They have paid for the service. They have paid for the service over a number of years now. The time for waiting for that promise to be fulfilled is long past. This motion tonight is about ensuring there is bipartisan support for and a bipartisan approach to this issue in the parliament. We need to put in place an independent body—a group of people—to make sure that the money that is being collected to provide us with an ambulance service does just that; that it does not continue to disappear into that black hole of government consolidated revenue. The promises that the Premier has made and that previous ministers have made need to be delivered to the people of Queensland. I say to the current minister, who has not been in the job very long: if he wants to make his mark in the job then he should support this initiative and get the result that we all want to see.

**Mr MALONE** (Mirani—NPA) (5.40 pm): I second the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. This motion is about supporting the hardworking, front-line employees of the QAS. In my role as opposition spokesman, I certainly take my hat off to the people in the QAS who are working on the front line under very difficult conditions. They are doing a great job under those circumstances.

We are debating tonight the vital issue of management of our state Ambulance Service and the absolute failure of the Beattie Labor government to take its management seriously. This is because the Department of Emergency Services, more than any of the other departments, has become a plaything of the Beattie government—so much so that hardworking, front-line staff are fed up with the cronyism and the protection of ALP mates and hacks at the expense of the sound operation and management of the service.

The QAS has been plagued by problems since the Premier decided to use its services as a vote buyer to become Premier. He was the one who rushed out on the eve of the 1998 election and promised all Seniors Card holders, pensioners and their dependants free ambulance cover. Peter Beattie mindlessly scrapped our common-sense and workable subscription scheme and threw open the service to buy votes. And what happened? When he became Premier a lot of people thought, 'Let's start using this free service.' The result has been that demand has soared but Peter Beattie and his ministers sat back and did nothing to provide the resources that were necessary for an ambulance staff to meet their demand.

Peter Beattie and his ministers ignored the problems until it became overwhelmingly obvious that extra resources were desperately needed. He then hit us with an ill-conceived and totally unfair ambulance tax. Who can forget the problems the Premier caused by, without thinking, whacking a tax on every electricity meter in the state? Many electricity consumers, most in small businesses, were forced to pay two, three, four and five times—and up to 21 times that I am aware of—but the Premier did not care that the money was needed to provide us with what he promised would be the world's best ambulance service.

We have now had Peter Beattie's ambulance tax for more than four years. In that time Labor has raked in almost half a billion dollars. Everyone in Queensland has the right to ask the Premier tonight, 'What have you done with half a billion dollars?', because by any standard we do not have the world's best ambulance service, as was promised by the Premier. We have had so many problems, so many crises, so many miscalls, so many excuses that no-one believes the Premier or his ministers anymore. The problems have occurred right across the state.

Everyone has a story of failure, or staff being stretched, or calling 000 and being sent a fire engine, or major ambulance stations being closed, or promises being made and nothing being done. We have just been through the estimates hearing and it was revealed that almost \$15 million and possibly up to \$20 million was not spent by the government on new stations in its Capital Works Program. We have had promises of new stations and new equipment, but in reality the money was not spent. We have had all the promises of 140 new ambulance vehicles and then it was revealed that Queensland's main ambulance builder for 40 years has shut up shop because it could not get orders for new vehicles from the government.

Clearly the minister is not interested in listening to the staff in QAS. During the estimates process I asked the minister whether he would consult with ambulance paramedics on a one-to-one basis or even through the newly formed EMSVA group of paramedics that were putting together a small organisation to look after the welfare of their members. He indicated to me and to the committee that he would not listen to those people; that they had to direct their concerns through the union. Clearly the minister is not interested in hearing the staff's concerns. He is not interested in doing anything about the cronyism in the middle and upper management of the service. He is not interested in the sick and stress levels in the department, and he is not interested in the failing services. He is not interested in doing a thing to redress the current problems that we have in the service. Yesterday and today the questions asked in the parliament really demonstrated that the minister has no real interest in addressing the concerns we have in the Ambulance Service. We have ALP ads using Ambulance Service personnel in uniform that are running 24 hours a day, seven days a week in areas in Queensland.

Time expired.

**Hon. N ROBERTS** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (5.45 pm): I move the following amendment—

That all words after "House" are deleted and the following words inserted:

Notes—

- the failure of the previous voluntary subscription scheme to provide an adequate level of funding for the Queensland Ambulance Service;
- that the Community Ambulance Cover levy has provided the QAS with a stable and secure funding base;
- that since 1998, this Government has more than doubled the budget to the QAS, to a record \$404.4 million this financial year including the recruitment of an additional 250 ambulance officers; and
- commends the professionalism of Queensland's ambulance officers in the service they provide to Queenslanders.

In moving this amendment, I assure Queenslanders that the Queensland Ambulance Service is delivering a world-class service to the people of Queensland. In recent months the opposition has consistently peddled misinformation about the Queensland Ambulance Service in an attempt to undermine the confidence Queenslanders have in the service. One particular piece of misinformation is that the money raised by the community ambulance cover is making no difference to the quality of service being provided, and that is simply not borne out by the facts.

Since the CAC was introduced in 2003, the Queensland Ambulance Service has recruited an additional 503 ambulance officers, commissioned an additional 194 ambulances, completed 33 new or refurbished stations and purchased nearly 650 defibrillators. As members would be aware, the community ambulance cover levy was introduced in 2003 to deliver a secure and stable funding base for the Ambulance Service. It replaced a failing subscription scheme which was no longer meeting the costs of providing an ambulance service to subscribers.

The Beattie government has maintained and actually increased funding to the Queensland Ambulance Service every year since the CAC levy was introduced. For example, between 2003-04—which is the first year of the levy—and this financial year the amount collected by the community ambulance cover levy increased by \$21 million but the total ambulance budget was increased by over \$128 million. This is clear evidence that the government is increasing expenditure on the Ambulance Service far in excess of that collected by the levy.

This year's record budget of \$404.4 million includes the biggest ever staff increase in one year in the Ambulance Service's history—250 ambulance officers on top of the 220 ambulance officers recruited last financial year. As well as that, we are commissioning over 140 new ambulances, of which 30 to 40 will be additional vehicles on the road. We are building three new ambulance stations and 17 redeveloped or replacement stations, and delivering around 135 new defibrillators.

The last coalition Ambulance Service budget was \$158 million. This year's Beattie government budget is more than double that, at \$404.4 million. The record speaks for itself. The opposition has claimed that stations are regularly closed at night and that three stations were closed in Brisbane last weekend, and that is simply incorrect. Contingency plans ensure that front-line ambulance services are maintained at all times. In fact, last Saturday night there were four more crews rostered on duty in Brisbane than is normally the case. One crew from Petrie station was relocated to Deception Bay to cover an unfilled shift, and crews from surrounding stations were deployed to maintain coverage in Petrie. Crews were also allocated to cover sick leave replacement shifts at Grovely and Chermside, and they were out on the road on Saturday night as would be expected.

It is important to remember that the Queensland Ambulance Service is a mobile service. Paramedics in vehicles deliver ambulance services not ambulance stations. The opposition claims that paramedics are leaving in droves. That is incorrect again. During the 2006 calendar year the separation rate for the Queensland Ambulance Service was 3.92 per cent, significantly less than the whole-of-government separation rate of 6.11 per cent. The opposition also claims that staff are being asked to work up to 20 hours straight. That is an allegation that has been shown to be incorrect on a number of occasions.

But it does highlight the inconsistency of those opposite. On the one hand the opposition claims that officers are working too long but on the other hand they continue to argue for 14-hour rostered shifts. Under roster reform the maximum rostered shift is now 10 hours which provides a safer and healthier outcome for paramedics and enables resources to be matched to areas of high demand.

Roster reform will also complement the introduction of an average 38-hour week from October this year. One significant benefit to ambulance officers is that that will enable them to access up to nine weeks leave a year which is made up of both annual leave and accrued time off. There is no doubt that the Queensland Ambulance Service is facing increased demand for services and our ambulance officers are doing an outstanding job in meeting that increased demand. For example, in the 2006-07 financial year the service attended 10,757 more code 1 incidents in under 10 minutes than in the 2005-06 financial year. That is why the government is providing the resources and funding needed for ambulance officers to get on with the job.

**Hon. JC SPENCE** (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (5.51 pm): I am pleased to second the amendment moved by the Minister for Emergency Services. The opposition's contribution to this debate so far has been predictable and disappointing. We have heard no serious policy analysis from the Leader of the Opposition or the shadow minister. We have not had an analysis of the challenges, the pressures or the possible future directions that the Ambulance Service is going to take. We have had shallow point scoring on this issue yet again.

I think we all do agree on a number of things. We have very good ambulance officers in this state. We all agree that those officers generally work under pressure. We all agree that they do a very fine job every day in working to protect and ensure the safety of the people of Queensland. We all agree that ambulance officers generally go above and beyond the call of duty and are dedicated to doing the very best possible job they can.

This government is very committed to making sure that the Ambulance Service gets the budget it deserves and the budget that the people of Queensland need for them to do their job. That is why this year alone we have increased the budget by almost \$50 million. That is an extraordinary increase for one budget. In this budget we intend to employ another 250 ambulance officers, buy another 140 new ambulances, build three new stations and redevelop 17 existing stations. That is a huge commitment by any government in any one year.

The challenge is to deliver these new officers. They do not come easily. I know that the Ambulance Service has been actively recruiting for officers internationally. It has done a very good job of attracting ambulance officers from the UK particularly. The facts of the matter are that these days ambulance officers are very highly trained paramedics. They generally do a three-year degree course. Just like doctors we cannot produce them overnight. That is why unfortunately we have had to actively recruit overseas.

Just as in the case of doctors it is very sad that we have to look elsewhere for our trained professionals. The fact is that we have not been doing enough training in our universities to make sure that we have sufficient paramedics on line. Nevertheless, I know that the new minister and his department are doing everything they can to meet the ongoing demand in this state.

As the minister for police I know that our police officers work daily hand in hand with our emergency service officers, particularly our ambulance officers. They have a very good relationship. While politicians might squabble from time to time about issues our emergency services personnel work across government and across state and federal boundaries with other agencies. For example, in Queensland our police have access to four helicopters run by Emergency Services and another six helicopters partially funded by Emergency Services. If the SERT team or any other police want a helicopter at any time they are able to access them.

**Mr Messenger** interjected.

**Ms SPENCE:** I knew that would get the member going. He hates to hear some facts. As well, our police officers routinely have joint exercises with our Emergency Services officers. Just this year police officers joined with staff from Emergency Management Queensland for Exercise Fishermen 2007—a training exercise testing responses to a possible incident with a visiting nuclear powered airship. Officers from all agencies attend joint training courses at the Australian Institute of Police Management and the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service Academy and do the senior officers development course. As the minister for police I put on the public record that as far as my agency is concerned ambulance officers are doing a fantastic job of assisting police officers in their work.

I guess I am old enough to remember the days when ambulance officers were down at the shops on a Saturday morning with the chocolate wheel—

**Mrs Sullivan:** Under the National Party.

**Ms SPENCE:** Under the National Party. They had to raise their own funds. Poor families like my own really had to stretch themselves to contribute to the ambulance scheme. Lots of families were unable to find the funds to contribute. Of course we are in a much healthier situation in Queensland now. Everyone contributes to our ambulance service. We have a government that can put the money into that service that it desperately needs.

**Miss SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (5.56 pm): The government's amendment to the coalition motion is an admission by the Beattie government that the Ambulance Service is failing due to bad management. It acknowledges that the budgets and staffing have increased and that the majority of ambulance officers are professional. But it provides no solution to the increasing problems which are occurring.

We agree that the budgets have increased and the majority of ambulance officers are professional and hardworking. Our criticism is that the system is failing and that it is due to bad management. No solutions have come from government members tonight—just more of the same from government. Those opposite say they are spending more money, they say they have fixed the problem but still we are seeing a litany of tragedies unfold which were avoidable.

How horrific do the horror stories about the Ambulance Service have to be before there is an inquiry? Will the government only act when a scandal the size of Dr Patel breaks? Has there been such desensitisation to the accumulating list of tragedies that individual examples of unnecessary deaths are palmed off as ho-hum nonevents because the government's spin doctors say the minister has fixed the problem by announcing more money and staff. Such a belief is not just dangerously naive but insulting to the bereaved families who are still waiting for answers.

There is a crisis in the Ambulance Service, not just pressure as the Premier claims. Many good ambulance officers have been burned out and have got out. Despite the government's claims of additional resources with the ambulance levy and despite its claims of having improved the system the proof is the opposite. We the state National-Liberal coalition believe an inquiry into the Ambulance

Service is needed to identify the real solutions rather than this trite defence that if we continue to raise these concerns somehow that is being critical of those very officers who are out there trying to do their best. That is just wrong.

For example, we know that there are stressed out officers and when they get out due to stress they do not find support from the government and the bureaucrats. In fact, they find they are penalised in the courts. There is no support system for the stressed out officers who face the difficulties that are unfolding in the Ambulance Service.

There are other lessons to learn from the Dr Patel saga when it comes to the crisis in the Ambulance Service. The real issues are not just about one person's failure but that the health system was so sick it could not address the systemic problems we have with announcements of more staff and more money. The same is true of the ambulance system. System failures need not only more resources but also better management and care for the staff who have been failed by those who lead them.

Too many good ambulance officers are leaving in increasing numbers because the system is failing them and in turn failing Queenslanders who depend on an ambulance service, which we want to see returned to being a national best and a world-best service. As I have said, we acknowledge the outstanding and dedicated work of so many ambulance officers and support staff working in desperately difficult circumstances. Yesterday in the parliament I mentioned the story of Vito Catenaro and I thank his wife Silvana for being willing to talk publicly about this event. I know the Catenaro family and the pain they have gone through since Vito, 39, collapsed in June last year. His wife rang the ambulance for help. Mrs Catenaro wants answers but also some assurance that in speaking publicly something will be done to truly fix the problems so their story is not repeated for others. But that assurance has not been met by the government's response so far and certainly will not be achieved by its claims in the parliament tonight.

The Catenaro's home was only five to eight minutes from an ambulance station in Brisbane and on the fateful morning that this 39-year-old man collapsed it took 30 minutes for an ambulance to arrive, and it was not the first ambulance dispatched but rather it was the second ambulance that got there because Mrs Catenaro found that the first one had driven past their home—and she saw it drive past—and she found out later that it had been diverted to another call. When Vito Catenaro stopped breathing, the communications centre, according to Mrs Catenaro, was unable to provide CPR advice because the computer had broken down and the operator had lost the on-screen advice about what to do. Whatever the reasons for this series of errors, she has asked about the training that has been put in place since then to address this and what systems there are to guarantee that if one error happens it does not escalate into a situation where events such as this happen. They are still waiting for answers. We have not heard any answers with the government's assurances that it is spending more money and there are more staff, because the same problems are occurring. It is time for an independent inquiry to truly address this issue and bring real solutions forward.

**Ms DARLING** (Sandgate—ALP) (6.01 pm): Our ambulance staff need to be commended, not criticised. Last year they responded to a call for service once every 39 seconds. Some 274,034 of those calls were emergency code 1 calls. That is a remarkable achievement by our Ambulance Service. What is even more remarkable is the fact that our paramedics continue to provide a world-class service despite significant growth in demand. As our population grows and ages, our demand for ambulance services continues to increase. On top of those drivers we know that we have just been hit by one of our worst flu seasons, and Queensland is not unique. Ambulance services across Australia and even across the world are reporting growth in demand for services. We know demand for ambulance services is increasing. We know it is putting challenges on our Ambulance Service, and we know that our paramedics are busy.

We have acted to address these challenges. This budget saw the announcement of an additional 250 paramedics this financial year to increase the number of ambulance crews on the road—the biggest ever increase of paramedics in a single year. Already since 1 July the Queensland Ambulance Service has recruited 112 new staff. Our government has announced a \$70.35 million new state-of-the-art Queensland emergency operations centre to provide the most sophisticated and technologically enhanced platform to manage and coordinate our Ambulance Service, ensuring that every caller gets the closest and most appropriate response to their emergency. As part of an enterprise agreement in 2002, the Queensland Ambulance Service introduced a new roster system. This roster system was designed to ensure our ambulance resources were rostered to meet the needs of the Queensland community and at the same time ensure the rosters were safe for our staff and for our patients. We cannot ask paramedics to perform high-level clinical procedures when they are in the 14th hour of a busy night shift. That is not fair on the patient and it is not fair on the paramedic.

The opposition wants to take our service back to the dark days. It wants to go back to rosters that did not meet the community demand for service. It wants to go back to asking our paramedics to work unsafe hours. What we need is to ensure that our staff are rostered to meet the needs of the community and in a manner that is safe and as supportive as we can make it. Let me be clear: the Beattie government is committed to rosters that meet our community demand for service and are safe and

supportive of Queensland Ambulance Service staff. Let me again remind the opposition that we are just getting over one of the worst flu seasons for decades which has placed considerable strain on our health and ambulance services.

The Queensland Ambulance Service has performed outstandingly well, and the Queensland government and the Queensland community commends the service. While the opposition chooses to criticise, we are giving it the support it needs. I want to commend the staff at my local ambulance station at Bracken Ridge. I also note in the gallery two of my constituents, Amy and Vicki. Welcome to Parliament House. You have come on an interesting evening. I have taken up an issue for the local staff at the Bracken Ridge ambulance station that they have raised with me about signage and road markings, and I am determined to see it fixed. They are doing a great job and they know that my door is always open if they need to raise any other issues. I congratulate them for their hard work.

**Dr FLEGG** (Moggill—Lib) (6.05 pm): Every day Queenslanders wake up to news of yet another crisis, disaster or failing within the Ambulance Service. I listened to the minister make the same mistake that I have heard successive ministers make here, particularly in the area of health, and that is to think that numbers fix people. Numbers do not fix people. Numbers of dollars, numbers of vehicles, numbers of staff and numbers of stations all may mean something, but numbers do not fix people. What the minister should learn is that, when he sees things going wrong every day as we do, there is something wrong in the system. In most of my electorate of Moggill a person's chance of getting an ambulance in a critical emergency within 10 minutes is less than one in four. I have constituents in Brookfield and in other places who have died waiting for an ambulance.

If you live on Bribie Island you do not have much chance of getting an ambulance within 10 minutes. Sometimes you do not get an ambulance at all; you get a fire truck with firemen with no equipment whatsoever to evacuate an emergency. When you see things going as badly wrong as they are here, you have to ask yourself why, and that means having an inquiry. The government has not been able to sort it out. It needs to have an inquiry. When we could not get coal through on the Goonyella corridor, the government had an inquiry because it could not work it out and the inquiry told the government that it lacked rolling stock. When the health system was failing last year, we had a series of inquiries—the Forster and other inquiries—which identified issues like the bureaucracy, the culture of bullying and so forth.

If you do not know what is wrong, you cannot move forward. So what is wrong that we do not get the Ambulance Service that Queenslanders need to be safe in this state? Is it because the ambulances are queued up in our hospital system ramped up outside emergency departments? Maybe an inquiry would tell the government if that were the case. Is it the funding? Maybe an inquiry would tell us. We know full well that when the present Premier introduced the levy expenditure on ambulances was about \$250 million. With \$100 million worth of levy, that only increased to \$281 million. So maybe it is the funding. Maybe it is the fact that people have been promised the world in ambulances—free treatment for anything at all no matter how minor.

Maybe it is the level of staffing. Maybe it is the same as the health system. Maybe they are all bureaucrats instead of people out on the road saving lives. Maybe it is the morale. Maybe it is bullying and unions standing over people. Maybe it is the bureaucracy. Maybe it is the fact that we have offered ambulance call-outs free for the most trivial of conditions. Maybe it is to do with vehicles. Maybe it is to do with stations. The reality is that there is a serious problem that is costing lives and that is threatening lives. This government needs to get to the bottom of it and fix it. That is why the opposition has called for an inquiry. We have a new minister. I believe he is a person of goodwill. He should be listening to what communities are telling him.

Something that I have learnt from having a background in medicine is that, when a system can barely cope under normal circumstances, it gets found out when there is an emergency. We have had a bad flu season, but it is just that: it is just a normal flu season. We should wait until we get a pandemic, like that which occurred in 1919 or in 1969, or a bird flu outbreak. We should wait until a natural disaster occurs in a highly populated area. We have a system that cannot cope under normal conditions and a system that cannot cope with a routine flu season. The government is not going to be able to save the lives of Queenslanders come an emergency. I ask the members opposite to hold an inquiry. Maybe all of the reasons that I have stated are the causes. But the system has to be fixed.

**Mr WEIGHTMAN** (Cleveland—ALP) (6.10 pm): It is with great pleasure to rise to speak of the great achievements of the Queensland Ambulance Service and to place on record my support for the fine work of the paramedics and the QAS staff across the state. I would especially like to acknowledge the wonderful service that is provided by the paramedics and the patient transport officers in my electorate of Cleveland. I believe that I am in a very good position to make that statement. I worked very closely with members of the Ambulance Service while I was working as a police officer in the Redlands for many years. I also say that because some of these people who work down there are good friends of mine and I speak with them on a regular basis. I am also a community support member of the Cleveland Local Ambulance Committee. I support the great work that these people do in this area and I really applaud them for their work.

Conversely, the members opposite seek to denigrate the fine work that is undertaken by these dedicated men and women. Despite the clear evidence to the contrary, the opposition has sought to undermine the outstanding work of the Queensland Ambulance Service for blatant political purposes. Despite what the opposition says, the QAS enjoys an enviable reputation in the Queensland community, and deservedly so. The QAS delivers an outstanding service to the community 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Yes, those people work very hard.

Also, conversely, the QAS has one of the best support systems for emergency service workers in the world. The Priority One program exists to support the staff and it is available 24 hours a day for all staff and their families. It is not just me or the government members saying that. An independent survey undertaken nationally across all ambulance services has confirmed that the Queensland Ambulance Service receives a 97 per cent satisfactory rating from the people who know best—the patients of the service. Any organisation in the public or private sector that achieves that sort of rating from their consumers deserves our congratulations, not the sort of treatment that is dished out by the opposition.

Other members of this House would be aware that for the fifth consecutive year the work of ambulance officers has been voted the most trusted profession in the Australian community. This sort of recognition comes only from ambulance officers consistently providing high-quality ambulance services and prehospital care to patients and other members of the community.

We have heard from other members about the wonderful achievements and advances occurring in the QAS. I am extremely grateful that such a professional service is just a 000 phone call away. I can tell members that I have used the Ambulance Service on a number of occasions in order to be taken to hospital and to be transported from one hospital to another owing to illnesses that I have suffered. I can tell members that I have nothing but great appreciation for the time that the service provided on those occasions. I know that the local ambulance committee in my electorate also feels the same way about the work done by the Ambulance Service in my area.

I note that community support for the QAS continues to grow with the number of local ambulance service committees, volunteers and first responders increasing every year and record attendances at this year's state local ambulance committee conference, which was held in Roma. In fact, across the state the QAS enjoys the invaluable support of 183 local Ambulance Service committees.

Our Ambulance Service continues to meet or exceed the expectations of the patients and the other members of the community. As we have heard, the QAS is delivering world-class services in an environment of a rapidly growing and ageing population and with significant increases in demand for services. The Beattie government is committed to providing the QAS with the resources that it needs to maintain that service. This year's record \$404.4 million budget is proof of that fact. I support the amendments moved by the minister.

**Mr KNUTH** (Charters Towers—NPA) (6.15 pm): I rise to speak in support of the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. Every Queenslanders is dismayed at what has happened to our once infallible, world-class Ambulance Service. Under consecutive conservative governments, the Queensland Ambulance Service was well managed and met the needs of patients for emergency care. Even the former Labor Premier Wayne Goss was able to manage the Ambulance Service, but not Premier Beattie. This is without excuse. Premier Beattie became the first Queensland Premier in history to be unable to manage the Ambulance Service and the first Premier to introduce an ambulance tax on the public because he claimed that the government could no longer afford to prop up the Queensland Ambulance Service owing to too many people not contributing or subscribing to the Ambulance Service. After much protest from many sectors of the community to what was an unfair new tax, the Premier stated that it was the only way to fix the Ambulance Service and to create a better, well-funded Ambulance Service. But after six years of turmoil, the question must be asked on behalf of so many Queenslanders: why is our Ambulance Service in such a deplorable state when it was promised so much financial relief?

Many incidents have been raised in this House as examples of how overworked and understaffed ambulance officers try to deliver a valuable service. Following a controversial roster reform that does not work, and which has been proved to not work, Charters Towers now has no night-time Ambulance Service. The ambulance station was closed by this government between the hours of 11 pm and 7 am, despite servicing an area the size of Tasmania, which stretches past Pentland in the west, Greenvale to the north—which is 207 kilometres from the station—Reid River and Ravenswood in the east and Belyando Crossing, which is 200 kilometres south. These roster changes were never supported by the community nor the Ambulance Service officers at Charters Towers.

Never before—for as long as anyone can remember—has Charters Towers not had a night-time Ambulance Service. This is the first time that Charters Towers does not have a night-time Ambulance Service. This is the year 2007. The government is closing down our night-time services. We now have local ambulance officers who finish a 10-hour shift and who are then called out at all hours of the morning to travel up to 440-kilometre round trips and who are then expected to have their wits about them to attend to accident victims and to save lives.

On 1 July, a Charters Towers man was left to bleed for 13 minutes on the main street before the ambulance arrived. The man was knocked unconscious in Gill Street in an unprovoked attack just before 1.30 am—a time when the ambulance station at Charters Towers was closed. This incident occurred on the same street as that which the ambulance station is located. Usually the paramedics would be dispatched and would attend the scene within minutes, which could mean the difference between life or death. Yet the station was closed. What type of service is this? Emergency services is about having staff available ready to attend accident victims in the fastest and safest time frames.

On Saturday, 18 August at 12.30 pm a Charters Towers man was badly injured and nearly lost his leg in a machinery accident. To this day he is still in hospital. Owing to fatigue and the lack of staff as a result of the unwanted roster system, it had taken 18 minutes before only one paramedic turned up. As the paramedic was alone, the auxiliary fire and rescue service was called before the paramedic was able to assist the accident victim. The Townsville rescue helicopter was called, but it was busy. So the Mackay rescue service delivered the man to Townsville Hospital at 4.35 pm—four hours later.

The Beattie government must listen to the paramedics and throw out the roster system and identify the solutions to the current ambulance crisis. Otherwise the Ambulance Service will end up becoming a greater catastrophe than the health crisis. It will reach the point at which the fire and rescue services will be delivering babies in the back of fire trucks. The government's spin doctors must recognise that no matter how much spiel and spin they use to cover up the facts, families are being traumatised by a now malfunctioning Ambulance Service.

It is unquestionable that ambulance officers and paramedics are leaving in droves. The new roster system has failed dismally since the Beattie government introduced it in 2002, and it has caused mass exodus, low morale, high fatigue levels and longer response times. Our local ambulance officers do a wonderful job. However, they have been hamstrung by the Beattie government's mismanagement, bullying and intimidation. That is why Queenslanders deserve an independent inquiry to investigate the reasons for the current ambulance crisis and to ensure that the ambulance tax paid by every Queenslanders provides a world-class, responsive, value-for-money Ambulance Service as promised by Peter Beattie.

**Mr WENDT** (Ipswich West—ALP) (6.20 pm): We all know that each year the demand for ambulance services continues to grow as a result of Queensland's growing and ageing population and that this has put enormous pressure on our ambulance and hospital services. However, I feel that the Queensland Ambulance Service should be commended for managing this extraordinary increase in demand and, in fact, that the achievements and innovations introduced by the Queensland Ambulance Service should not be underestimated.

I consider that the QAS is on the front foot in regard to responding to demand for service and has drawn on contemporary research to develop options to further manage and respond to the growth in demand. Importantly for Queenslanders in need, the Queensland Ambulance Service has introduced a number of clinical advances in the pre-hospital treatment of patients, with nearly all ambulances throughout Queensland now carrying morphine to help relieve pain and suffering.

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! Given that we are facing some challenges in the auditory department, could members keep their conversations and interjections down please so that Hansard can hear the member.

**Mr WENDT:** In addition, advanced care paramedics have commenced training in advanced diabetic emergencies using dextrose rather than glucagon. This goes hand-in-hand with the adoption by the QAS of the very latest recommendations by the Australian Resuscitation Council for CPR and cardiac arrest management.

As part of the Beattie government's initiative to reduce the morbidity and mortality rates associated with meningococcal septicaemia, the QAS has introduced the use of ceftriaxone into the drug regime for paramedics. Since its introduction, seven patients have been administered the drug for suspected or confirmed meningococcal disease. The QAS is also progressing a statewide approach to the management of coronary disease. This will allow QAS officers to be able to administer a 'clot-busting' drug to patients in the field who are suffering a heart attack, which is a big step forward and is at the cutting-edge of cardiac care.

The delivery of healthcare services to the rural and remote communities of Queensland continues to challenge service delivery agencies. However, to address those issues the Queensland Ambulance Service, in conjunction with James Cook University and Queensland Health, has developed the Graduate Certificate of Rural and Remote Paramedic Practice. This has resulted in 48 paramedics currently undergoing training in this program, and on graduation those officers will work with rural doctors and nurses to deliver an expanded scope of practice to our most remote and isolated communities. In addition, the statewide implementation of the electronic patient care record has now been completed. This initiative allows for case details to be recorded on toughbook computers rather than on paper, allowing for faster and more reliable recording of patient information.

The Beattie government is delivering to the QAS the resources it needs and the community ambulance cover has been a key part of that. I think the member for Moggill said that numbers do not really matter. In fact, since the introduction of the community ambulance cover this government has provided 33 new or refurbished ambulance stations or field offices, including the completion of 10 new or replacement stations in 2006-07. The government has funded an additional 250 ambulance officers across the state in the 2007-08 budget, in addition to the 503 ambulance officers already funded by this government, which it should be noted is the single biggest increase in the number of ambulance officers in any one year, and as such will assist the QAS to manage the demand for services currently being experienced.

The government has funded an additional 194 ambulance vehicles. I am advised that the QAS will commission another 140 new ambulance vehicles this year to ensure a cost-effective and sustainable fleet. In addition, the government has purchased nearly 650 extra defibrillators. It should not be forgotten that this government has also funded and purchased 636 Motorola GP339 radios in 2006-07. Those new portable radios provide paramedics with a constant link to communication centres to ensure their personal safety as well as that of their patients.

These initiatives and achievements provide clear evidence of a contemporary ambulance service delivering high-quality, efficient and effective ambulance cover across the Queensland community. As such, while those opposite continue to run down the QAS, members on this side of the House will continue to give them our full support.

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

**AYES, 45**—Attwood, Bombolas, Boyle, Choi, Darling, Finn, Fraser, Gray, Hayward, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Jones, Kiernan, Lavarch, Lawlor, McNamara, Mickel, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, O'Brien, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Purcell, Reeves, Reilly, Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Struthers, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Weightman, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Male, Nolan

**NOES, 29**—Copeland, Cripps, Cunningham, Dempsey, Elmes, Flegg, Foley, Gibson, Hobbs, Hopper, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, Lee Long, McArdle, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Nicholls, Pratt, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Rickuss, Dickson

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

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

**AYES, 45**—Attwood, Bombolas, Boyle, Choi, Darling, Finn, Fraser, Gray, Hayward, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Jones, Kiernan, Lavarch, Lawlor, McNamara, Mickel, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, O'Brien, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Purcell, Reeves, Reilly, Roberts, Shine, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Struthers, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Weightman, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Male, Nolan

**NOES, 29**—Copeland, Cripps, Cunningham, Dempsey, Elmes, Flegg, Foley, Gibson, Hobbs, Hopper, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, Lee Long, McArdle, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Nicholls, Pratt, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Rickuss, Dickson

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Sitting suspended from 6.35 pm to 7.35 pm.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT REGULATION (NO. 2) 2007

### Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

**Mr HOBBS** (Warrego—NPA) (7.35 pm): I move—

That the Local Government Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2007 (Subordinate Legislation No. 219 of 2007) tabled in the parliament on 4 September 2007, be disallowed.

The Local Government Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2007 (Subordinate Legislation No. 219 of 2007) was introduced to expire section 159ZY of the recently passed Local Government Reform Implementation Bill 2007. I contend that this is an invalid regulation that the government has tried to implement. It would have been simpler for the government to bring the legislation before this House today for debate.

**Mr Seeney**: It wasn't game.

**Mr HOBBS**: I am sure that it was not game to bring that before the House.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hoolihan): I remind the member for Callide that he will have his opportunity to speak.

**Mr HOBBS**: The government does not want to bring on a further debate, but the reality is that it has to happen. The only way that councils and the community can have peace of mind is to have this regulation repealed properly, not in the half-baked, harebrained way that this government has done it.

The act, under section 159ZZA, allows for the expiry of part B. This part expires at the end of 31 December 2011 or at an earlier time fixed under a regulation. The legal advice is that section 159ZZA refers to the whole of part 1B whereas the intention of the government in this regulation is to expire only section 159ZY which refers only to the polls. The act quite clearly states on page 46—

This part expires at the end of 31 December 2011 or at an earlier time fixed under a regulation.

It is expiry of the whole of part 1B. The government has not done that. The legal advice that we have is that this regulation is invalid. It is particularly important to note that the regulation was assented to on Friday, 31 August and it is not retrospective. The offending section regarding the fining and sacking of councils remains active from 10 August when the bill was assented to. There is a period during which the legislation is active even with this regulation. The government has said that it will not fine or sack people, but who out there in the broader community would believe it? Nobody. This whole exercise of local government reform has been full of deceit and lies so that at the end of the day there is no trust. The government should quite clearly bring on that legislation that they were forced to introduce after backing down on this issue. It should be passed and it could have been passed this week. This government has not been backward in coming forward when it comes to ramming legislation through the House. When the government knew it had made a mistake why did it not pass the legislation in the last sitting week? It certainly should have and could have dealt with it in this sitting week.

It is clear that the government does not want to have another debate on local government and that it would prefer to sneak this regulation through in the dead of night with no debate so that people in the community do not see the government having to try to defend itself in this place.

The state government defended the directions hearing in the Supreme Court in which the Queensland Local Government Association is challenging the constitutional validity of section 159ZY. This matter is before the court so I will not go into a lot of detail. However, I will say that the state government argued that the application should be adjourned for several weeks to allow the amendment bill to proceed through the legislative process and that a regulation had been assented to on 31 August to expire the offending section. Guess what? Chief Justice de Jersey threw it out.

The Chief Justice directed that the LGAQ file and serve submissions and any other material by 18 September 2007 and that the state of Queensland file and serve submissions in response and any other material by 2 October 2007. He directed that there be liberty to apply on either party giving two clear days notice in writing and that the list clerk allocate a date for hearing of the application on the earliest date convenient to both parties. He also directed that costs be reserved. At the end of the day, that means that the government submission was rejected—absolutely rejected—because this regulation will not solve the problem. First of all, as I mentioned before, it was not even retrospective and it should have been. It should have been retrospective to cover that particular period. The government at the end of the day is really trying to sneak this regulation through without any real debate.

Now we have the minister out there once again—and I say this tongue in cheek—telling the truth to the people. He is saying that the National Party is trying to say that the regulation has no effect and that the National Party is trying to reinstate having penalties for referenda and polls. How stupid is that! After what we have been through, how stupid is that! If you are dumb enough to actually come out and keep on saying that, you have no credibility at all. We are doing this because it is invalid—absolutely invalid. If you want to go out there and try to peddle that sort of rubbish in the broader community, you have no credibility at all.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hoolihan): I remind the member for Warrego that he is speaking through the chair.

**Mr HOBBS:** Through you, Mr Deputy Speaker, the minister has no credibility at all. After what we have been through and what you have accused us of, suddenly now you are saying we are out there trying to keep those penalties in place. For heaven's sake, have some credibility. Grow up, I say to you, Minister, because the broader community is not really taking you seriously at all.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Warrego, you were asked to direct your speech through the chair. You are speaking directly to the minister and I would ask you to desist.

**Mr HOBBS:** Through you, Mr Deputy Speaker, the minister has successfully been the only local government minister in this state to in fact universally have local governments opposed to him. He is meant to be the local government champion. He is absolutely not that at all. I say to the minister, through you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that he needs to have some credibility in this whole thing. There has been deceit going on right from the very start. He was out there saying that the Triple S process was good and that we had to continue on with it, while behind the scenes he was working to destroy the very councils and processes they were working through. Really, at the end of the day, he has very, very little credibility.

Let me talk about another very important person. We have had numerous academics in recent times coming out and supporting us against the local government forced amalgamation process, such as Brian Dollery, Scott Prasser and Mark McGovern. We also have another one who has come out, and that is Professor Kenneth Wiltshire. He was on the news this morning about writing a history of Queensland, and he will be paid a princely sum for it. He did a story the other day and I will quote this for the minister so he understands what he said. These are not my words but his. He said—

However, the most outrageous element of this whole exercise is the trampling over democratic rights and civic participation. One would have to look to the worst fascist or communist regime to find a parallel for such an action, an action that forbade local authorities from consulting the people or conducting a referendum.

This is one of Labor's great supporters out there saying this about the government. He continued—

There have also been threats to sack anyone who dared to consult with their community.

Fancy that! He continued—

In the end, it was a heavy-handed measure, imposed on local communities from the top down without any regard for democratic process. The thousands of elected councillors who will be forcibly made redundant as a result of this move will be left wondering about the purpose of their past civic dedication.

Absolutely. He continued—

For a government which promised a referendum on water recycling and then reneged, operates a repressive freedom of information regime, and treats parliament with contempt, this is one of the bleakest episodes in the history of a State which already has a legacy of autocratic and despotic governance. In Queensland local government is now the graveyard, not the cradle, of democracy.

**Mr Moorhead:** That is you.

**Mr HOBBS:** To my friend in the back, this is about you. This is about the Labor government in Queensland written by one of your great supporters.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Warrego—

**Mr HOBBS:** Through you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that is what he is saying about you people. So when are you going to wake up that what you are doing to local government and the people out there in the broader community—

**Mr REEVES:** I rise to a point of order.

**Mr HOBBS:** Here we are, you have a guilty conscience over there.

**Mr REEVES:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to get clarification. The member is speaking about 'you people'. It is appropriate, as far as I am aware, that he calls people by their proper name in this House.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I uphold the point of order. You will speak through the chair and you will refer to people by their correct title, as will all other speakers.

**Mr HOBBS:** I will. Somebody else has come out as well. It is Bishop Bill Morris, and let me quote what he said. He said—

There is little evidence that the voices of those most affected by these amalgamations have been listened to.

This is Bishop Bill Morris. He continued—

Members of our faith community often generously give their time and energy to a range of wider community organisations. These organisations enable people to live life to the full.

He also said—

I would urge the State Government to revisit the issue and work together with local communities to seek the common good.

The minister comes out with one academic who talks about some planning issues and, yes, there are planning issues out there. It would not matter what size council you had. Whether we have small ones or big ones, there will be planning issues. So the government has nobody to back it up.

In this whole process, there is \$80 billion worth of local government assets out there, so it is a very big industry, and you have not even done a cost-benefit analysis of the impacts. There have been no social studies done, there have been no academic studies done, there have been no economic studies done of this whole thing. How can you go out there and try to do a total mass organisation of something when you do not even know what the impacts are? So it is very, very serious.

**Mr MOORHEAD:** I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The matters raised by the honourable member are not relevant to the disallowance motion before the House.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** There is no point of order.

**Mr HOBBS:** That is another example. We have members of this House who really have no idea at all what it is all about. They are simply following the lead of a minister who is incompetent. The minister is totally incompetent when you look at what has happened. He put an amendment through the House that is now being challenged in the Supreme Court because he did not even check his facts. Blind Freddy would know that all you have to do is get some crown law advice or get some advice from somebody, but the amendment is being challenged and there is a 99 per cent chance that he is going to lose it. The law is the law, as we all know. We have a situation now where the same minister has done another stupid thing in trying to put a regulation through that is most likely invalid. We believe it is invalid. We all know the law—there are different sides. But, at the end of the day, we have not got the smartest minister at all leading this particular charge.

All the federal Labor members of parliament are telling those opposite—and we know they are, because it has been all over the newspapers and across the whole world—that what is going on is impacting on them and their communities, and they know that. There are members in this House who are going to be severely affected by what is happening. If they have not heard what the people are saying, they have not been listening to people. There are so many issues out there that are hurting so many people.

We are debating this regulation tonight because of the terms of reference on which the council boundaries were drawn up. I will tell the House something that I did. I got hold of the minister's second reading speech, I got the terms of reference, I got a map of Queensland local governments and I drew the maps based on the terms of reference. I did it in about half an hour and—guess what?—I came up with roughly what the final result was. All the government did was tell the reform commission to draw those boundaries up. All I had to do was join the dots. It was as simple as that.

**Mr Fraser** interjected.

**Mr HOBBS:** The government talks about the independent reform commission. What rubbish! You are a fraud. You are incompetent. There is no way at all that you can defend that.

**Mr FRASER:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member for Warrego was clearly going beyond the bounds of what is allowed in this parliament in terms of using parliamentary language. I find his comments absurd and offensive, and I ask for them to be withdrawn.

**Mr HOBBS:** You would do, too. You have a glass jaw, mate.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Warrego, I warn you under standing order 253. You have been queried in relation to your comments about the minister. Do you withdraw?

**Mr HOBBS:** I withdraw.

**Ms Male:** Stand to your feet and withdraw properly.

**Mr HOBBS:** I withdraw.

**Mr Hopper:** Since when have you been Speaker? He makes the rulings, not you.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Darling Downs, I warn you under standing order 253.

**Mr SEENEY** (Callide—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (7.51 pm): I rise to second the disallowance motion moved by the member for Warrego. The member for Warrego has gone through the technical detail of the disallowance motion in some detail. What I will do is put on the record in plain English what this disallowance motion is all about, because it is important that people listening to this debate and reading this debate can understand readily what this is all about.

The government's so-called local government reform process has been widely recognised as the most unfair, unjust and ill-conceived piece of legislation or government strategy in Queensland's history. I think the people affected by it know just how unfair, unjust and ill conceived it has been. It is riddled with mistakes. It is riddled with bad judgements, but the disallowance regulation before the House tonight seeks to correct just one of those mistakes. It seeks to correct just one of those poor moments of judgement on the part of the minister. That is what this regulation is here for—to correct a moment of poor judgement on the part of the minister. However, this regulation is not the way to correct the minister's mistake and that is why the opposition will oppose it.

The regulation before the House tonight simply piles a mistake on a mistake. It is a mistake added to a mistake. The initial mistake was the decision that the minister made to try to intimidate mayors and councillors throughout the state from conducting polls. The minister sought to intimidate mayors and councillors and prevent them from consulting with their community and giving their communities an opportunity to have a vote on their destiny, to have a vote on determining their own future.

It was an outrageous piece of legislative arrogance. It was an outrageous amendment when it was introduced into this House simply because the government was losing the public debate. It was losing the debate with the communities that were affected by their so-called reform and it knew that if those communities were able to properly express their opinion in a way that could not be disputed it would show up the falseness of the government's claim and the falseness of the government's spin.

They knew that out there in the broader community, in that great urban mass that is not affected by the local government reform, in the urban population in Brisbane and in the other big urban centres, the truth would be exposed by the polls that were going to be conducted by the local governments—by the democratic expression of opinion that was going to be facilitated by those local governments which knew the extent of the opposition to this in their communities.

We all well remember the day the minister came into the parliament with an ill-conceived and rushed amendment that sought to make it illegal for councils to conduct such polls. They sought to make it illegal for councillors who represent communities to consult with those communities. The minister came into this democratic parliament and sought to deny democracy. He sought to prevent democracy in its purest form. He sought to make it illegal for people to vote. He sought to take away the right to vote from the people of those communities who were going to be affected by his legislation.

What a horrendous piece of legislative nonsense that was. Of course, eventually it was recognised as a horrendous piece of legislative nonsense. It was recognised as an arrogant, knee-jerk reaction to a situation that the government could not control. Despite its millions of dollars of taxpayer funded advertisements, despite its legions of spin doctors, the government was in a position where it could not control public opinion. It could not control the agenda. The truth kept bubbling to the surface and the government was determined to stop the communities expressing their view in a way that could not be denied.

So the minister came into this parliament with a piece of legislation proposing an amendment that was an outrage. It was an outrage to everybody who believes in democracy or any civil liberties. It was an outrage to anybody who believes in a fair go or any sort of fairness or justice, and of course it was shown up to be that. It was opposed universally. It was opposed by not only the people who were affected by local government reform but also everybody across Queensland. All of those people who previously took no interest in the local government reform issue suddenly found a reason to be interested. They suddenly realised the extent to which democracy was being denied and subverted, and the dictatorial attitude of the government gave them a reason to take an interest in the issue.

There was a backlash against the government. There was a backlash in the public opinion polls. There was a backlash that showed up in the government's own research. I know that to be a fact, and I challenge the minister to stand up and deny it. There was a backlash that showed up in the government's own research to this heavy-handed attempt to deny the people of Queensland any sort of basic democracy. That backlash was mirrored by the expressions of opinion that were only too freely given by the government's federal counterparts and the federal candidates. So the government needed to do something about it. The minister then came into the parliament with an amendment to the legislation immediately after it was passed. The bill that is before the House seeks to amend a piece of legislation that has just been passed by the House. That in itself admits the mistake and the folly of the minister's previous amendment.

That bill is before the House. What I say to the minister tonight is that I guarantee the opposition's support for that bill which is before the House and which will wipe this absurdity from the Queensland statutes, because it should be wiped from the Queensland statutes. The Local Government Act should be amended to remove this nonsense, this absurdity, this insult, this outrage that sets out to persecute people and convict people for conducting polls, for conducting democracy in its rawest form. That is the way that this mistake should be corrected. That is the way the minister should pay his penance for his stupidity. He should come into this parliament and debate the bill that is before the House that will correct this absurdity. But, rather than doing that, we have this attempt to do it by some sort of lesser means—that is, by introducing this regulation and sneaking it through without a chance for proper debate and proper consideration. This regulation is a second-best option. It is a second-best option as the member for Warrego has outlined. It is a second-best option for all the reasons he has outlined.

It is not retrospective. It does not cover that period between when the government forced through its original legislation and this regulation taking effect. It does not remove from the statute the offensive part of the legislation which has caused the public backlash, and rightly so. I say to the minister tonight, 'We will oppose this regulation not because we do not want to correct the government's mistake but because we want to correct it properly.' We want to debate the bill that the minister introduced that will wipe this absurdity from the statute for all time. That mistake needs to be corrected properly. It is but one mistake in the whole local government reform process.

The other challenge that I make to the minister tonight is that while he may come into this parliament and correct this mistake there are a lot of other mistakes in this process that need correcting too. There are a lot of other things that need correcting. This whole local government reform process has been rushed through in a way that inevitably means there will be mistakes.

While it is probably inevitable that this will proceed, I believe the challenge for the minister is to have some compassion and some understanding that the mistake he seeks to correct tonight is not the only mistake. There is a responsibility to provide opportunities to correct some of the other mistakes—for example, some of the boundary changes that are complete nonsense. Yet the councils involved have no option, have no opportunity to put their case and have their case heard.

There is the absolute absurdity that I have spoken about in the parliament today which puts union hacks in control of the transition councils and gives them the opportunity to determine the future of communities. Those are mistakes that need to be corrected just as this mistake needs to be corrected and corrected in a proper way.

Time expired.

**Mr HINCHLIFFE** (Stafford—ALP) (8.01 pm): I rise to speak against the disallowance motion that has been moved by the member for Warrego. To suggest that this is not a new matter before the parliament is frankly a bit of an understatement. This ground has been trampled over quite a bit. I have to say that this disallowance motion surprised me.

I thought that the member for Warrego was in favour of plebiscites and against fines and the dismissal of councils. It would appear, however, that by moving to disallow the regulation as made by the minister that the member for Warrego and his supporters are seeking to ensure that the provisions related to fines and the dismissal of councils are permitted.

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hoolihan): Order! Member for Callide!

**Mr Hobbs** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER**: I remind the member for Warrego that he has already been warned.

**Mr HINCHLIFFE**: I think it is worthwhile going back over some of the ground surrounding local government reform and the issues pertinent to the disallowance motion. Honourable members will recall that a number of councils outlined their intention to hold polls on the recommendations of the Local Government Reform Commission. This was viewed by the government, quite rightly, as a waste of council and ratepayer resources. The recommendations of the Local Government Reform Commission are not subject to referendum provisions. The determination of local government arrangements is clearly a matter for the state parliament—this parliament. The House has made this clear through the passing of the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and the Local Government Reform Implementation Bill earlier this year. There should be no question about this.

The opposition has suggested that the government is afraid to debate the reform legislation again. I think some reference to the results of the votes on both of those occasions would indicate that the government has nothing to fear in that context.

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER**: Order! Member for Callide!

**Mr HINCHLIFFE**: But it appears to me that there is a question about this. Non-government members in the House seem to think that this matter should be decided by street marches—an interesting proposition from the National Party in this place. They also supported referenda or plebiscites once upon a time.

The independent commission has determined the proposed boundaries of local governments in Queensland. In the same way that federal and state electoral boundaries are not subject to referenda it is not appropriate for polls to be held on recommendations of an independent commission on local government boundaries. In an attempt to ensure that councils did not waste ratepayers' money on a pointless exercise, the Local Government Reform Implementation Act made provision to prevent councils from conducting polls about local government reform matters. These provisions for dismissal and other sanctions were intended to save ratepayers from the unnecessary, frivolous expenditure involved in conducting plebiscites which have no bearing on the outcome of the boundary reform. At the end of the day, the results of these polls will not change the boundaries. The new boundaries are now law.

We hear all sorts of reflections on academics who are supposedly great Labor supporters. I think the honourable member for Warrego does not know Dr Ken Wiltshire as well as I do. He is one of my former lecturers. He was certainly no great supporter of Labor governments in the past and continues to show that he is not necessarily a great Labor supporter today. I wonder in his list of people who he wants to claim as great Labor supporters who are out there now criticising the government whether he wants to include the bishop that he made reference to as being some form of Labor hack.

In the context of the debate around the issue of holding plebiscites about local government boundaries we saw a desperate and slippery Prime Minister inject himself into a range of state government matters across the country over the last month or so. On local government arrangements in the state of Queensland he recently injected himself into what is clearly a matter for this parliament to determine.

I note the comments of the federal member for Maranoa, Mr Bruce Scott, in the 1 August edition of Cunnamulla's *Western Star*—

Mr Beattie's plan for these drastic amalgamations should have been highlighted to the people of Queensland prior to the 2006 Queensland election so they could exercise their democratic right on polling day with all the information about future plans for the State.

That is an interesting proposition from the federal member for Maranoa. I ask members to consider this quote with a couple of key phrases changed. It would read, 'Mr Howard's plan for WorkChoices should have been highlighted to the people of Australia prior to the 2004 federal election so they could exercise their democratic right on polling day with all the information about future plans for the country.'

I ask members opposite: where was our referendum on that issue? But I respect our Constitution and I respect the decision of the House of Representatives, the decision of the Senate and, indeed, the decision of the High Court of Australia. It is clear, however, that the so-called conservatives are happy to rip up our Constitution.

With constitutional propriety in tatters at the Prime Minister's feet, with him determined to waste federal taxpayers' money on these pointless plebiscites, the Queensland government, quite reasonably and sensibly, has now decided it will not take action against those councils undertaking polls on local government reform. The provisions that seek to prevent councils undertaking polls on local government reform have been expired by regulation and approved by the Governor in Council on 30 August.

Effectively, the opposition, through this motion for disallowance of the regulation, has a position where it would like to have councillors subjected to fines and possible dismissal if they conduct a referendum.

**Mr SEENEY:** I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I find the member's dishonesty offensive and I ask that his comments be withdrawn.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr SEENEY:** I find that offensive and I ask that it be withdrawn.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! It has to be a personal reflection. There is no personal reflection and there is no point of order.

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** As I was saying, with this motion for disallowance of the regulation the opposition's position is that it would like to have councillors subjected to fines and possible dismissal if they conduct a referendum which the Local Government Association of Queensland, and indeed the opposition, have been encouraging them to do. To that effect, I table a copy of a recent article from the *Queensland Country Life* which highlights this.

*Tabled paper:* Copy of article from Queensland Country Life, dated 30 August 2007, titled 'Vote on forced amalgamations'.

While the shadow minister and the LGAQ are actively out there encouraging councils to have a referenda, in this chamber the shadow minister is actually trying to stop a regulation that will allow them to do so without potential fine and dismissal.

**Mr HOBBS:** I rise to a point of order. That is a personal reference. It is absolute lies, and I ask that it be withdrawn.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan):** I would ask the member for Warrego to clarify his point of order.

**Mr HOBBS:** I would like to, Mr Deputy Speaker. The member for Stafford mentioned my name and said that I was encouraging councils to have a referenda, yet I was trying to stop this government from bringing in legislation that would allow councils to do so without dismissal. That is not the case. He knows that we have been quite clear that we do not intend—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Your clarification of the point of order is sufficient. There is no point of order.

**Mr HOBBS:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I find it offensive. He mentioned me as the shadow minister and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Do you withdraw?

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** I withdraw any reference to the shadow minister. But I will reiterate that the opposition has been out there encouraging councils to have these referenda and now the opposition comes into this chamber and is actively trying to stop a regulation that will allow councils to have those referenda without potential fines or dismissal. It is extraordinary in the extreme but bizarrely typical of this opposition. I note that across the length and breadth of Queensland genuine supporters of sound progressive local government are getting on with the transition process. That is the view and attitude of the minister. That is the view and the attitude of this government. Alternatively, there are some who are continuing a cause that is in law lost and, at the most ridiculous, where plebiscites are being held in local authorities which are not the subject—

Time expired.

**Mr HOPPER (Darling Downs—NPA) (8.12 pm):** In simple terms, this regulation is simply no good. The only way to fix this issue is to totally repeal the act as the shadow minister said before, because from 10 to 31 August this part of the act was still active which means that the councils that called for a poll during that time can still be prosecuted.

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr HOPPER:** I see you floundering over there. You do not have a clue. Through you, Mr Deputy Speaker—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hoolihan): And kindly continue to direct your comments through the chair.

**Mr HOPPER:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I will try to direct my comments through the chair. The fact is that this government is scared of another debate. We have clearly won every debate on this issue hands down. The people of Queensland are totally behind us yet members opposite sit here and cop it, and I will tell the House later in my speech exactly why those opposite are doing this under the dictatorial leadership of Premier Beattie. But we have clearly won the debate.

The government has legislated to sack councils if they hold a poll, but the government has to sneak this legislation through. Isn't that just the character of the Beattie government? Councillors are elected to represent the will of the people, and the will of the people is to activate their democratic right—a vote—on what will happen to their local areas, their local government, their local shires and their local representatives. That is exactly what this is about. What do we have? The heavy-handed Beattie government comes in and says, 'If you have a poll, we will sack you.' How bad is that? How detrimental to democracy is such a statement, yet all members opposite have totally supported that. It is simply unbelievable.

What have we seen? The Prime Minister has said that he will pay for the polls. So the federal government will pay for the cost of a poll. This legislation is so detrimental to democracy that the federal government actually had to step in. When has this happened before in Queensland? One of the reasons this legislation was introduced is that when Wayne Goss was Premier of Queensland he had a chief adviser. That chief adviser's name was Kevin Rudd. For Kevin Rudd to win the federal election he has to win six seats in Queensland. What did he say to Wayne Goss? He said, 'Well, remove your threat! Put Peter Beattie up the back. Put him up the back! Sit him up the back! Keep him on the backbench! He's your threat! Keep him there!' Whenever a dictator has someone stand against him he will always get back at them, and this is payback to Kevin Rudd because the people of Queensland will not vote for him in the federal election and that will make the Premier very happy. He will use our local government and destroy democracy in Queensland as payback to get even, and those of you sitting over there have been led on and you are just—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I remind the member for Darling Downs that I have already ruled on 'you people' or 'you over there' in this debate.

**Mr HOPPER:** I apologise, Mr Deputy Speaker. Of course I have more respect, but this is very personal to me and I do happen to get a bit wound up and I beg your forgiveness. Through you, Mr Deputy Speaker, the fact is that members opposite are like a yoyo in that they are on a string and are being led by the Premier. As I said to the minister in my speech during the debate on the legislation, I do not hold anything personal against the minister because he has been told to do this job. If it were not him, there would be someone else in his position. The minister has been handed the poison chalice, and it will come back to bite him. There is absolutely no doubt that this will come back to bite him, as it will come back to bite all government members.

This is a threat against democracy, and the people of Queensland simply do not accept a threat against democracy. This has totally divided councils. I have had councillors come to me and say that they do not want to end up with a criminal record. Mayors are divided against mayors because they really want the people to have a say but they are scared of getting the sack because they have to be in power until March to try to keep the councils together because they are going to be totally unionised and taken over by the union movement when the government puts its union members in there. That is the second part of this—that is, to unionise local government. The third part will be to politicise it. Labor will put a ticket up in most of these councils. In these big regional councils Labor will put a ticket up and then the other parties will have to match it. So there are three factors: get even with Rudd, politicise local government by putting a ticket up and unionise local government by bringing the union thugs in. That is exactly what this is about.

For the first time the people of Queensland have actually seen what the Labor Party is all about. They are starting to realise that it is just full of union thugs. The government stopped councillors from entering parliament unless they resigned from council, because that is where we get our base. Why don't those opposite have to leave their unions before they stand for parliament? That does not happen. The introduction of that legislation was the first stage of starting to destroy democracy in Queensland. And what do we see now? The right of people to have a say has been taken away. It is disgusting! I would hang my head in shame if I were any part of a government that did that but, as I say, it will come back to haunt those opposite.

I stood in this House and heard the Premier and his minister say that councils were broke. How many councils have had to be sacked in Queensland? An administrator was put in up north, but what about in the past? None! The Johnstone shire is the only one that has been in trouble. I have seen

councils in my electorate get into trouble but they have worked their way out of it because they are made up of decent representatives elected by the people to represent the people. This government painted a picture that was so arrogant and deceitful that it is totally unacceptable, and the people of Queensland have woken up to it. There is still two years until the next state election, but woe betide members opposite because Queensland will have its say. Queensland will have its say, and because of this issue the Beattie government will put John Howard in government for another three years. That is the one good thing about this legislation.

Because of this legislation, over the next three years the minister will be able to pay off his mortgage, if he has a mortgage—I do not know his personal situation—with decent interest rates. When I bought my first farm under Keating, I was paying 21.5 per cent interest on my loan. That is exactly what will happen if Rudd takes over federally. So this legislation has actually done a good thing for Queensland. It is quite interesting to watch the members opposite destroy themselves. It is quite enjoyable to see the absolute deceit and arrogance in this Queensland government.

The people need to have their democratic right honoured. That is exactly what this disallowance motion is about. We heard the member for Stafford say that the shadow minister did not want that. Our shadow minister is the one man who has taken the fight right through on behalf of the people of Queensland, and I admire him for that. This government has taken away our rights. Our local government boundaries are now simply disgusting. A person who lives in Yarraman is going to be represented by someone in Toowoomba. A person who lives in Taroom is going to be represented by someone in Dalby. It is just senseless legislation. That is why we have called for a poll. If the poll has shown that the majority of the people do not want these amalgamations, when we win government Howard Hobbs, who will be the minister for local government, will give people the right to deamalgamate those councils. Councils will come to us in droves, because by then—

**Mr Hinchliffe** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hoolihan): Order! Member for Stafford, you have already had your chance.

**Mr HOPPER:** Councils will come to us in droves because they would have had an absolute bellyfull of the unionised representation which has been snuck in. It is simply unacceptable. I do not accept it. The people of Queensland do not accept it and woe betide the government.

**Mr O'BRIEN** (Cook—ALP) (8.21 pm): I will have what he is having. I rise to speak against this sad, pathetic and confusing motion that has been brought before the House this evening.

**Mr Hobbs:** Tell us about the rally up there at Port Douglas.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hoolihan): Order! Member for Warrego, you have been warned and you have been warned that you have been warned. You will be asked to leave if you continue.

**Mr O'BRIEN:** I will get to the rally. I will speak about that. I sat here the other night when we debated the Local Government Reform Implementation Bill until four in the morning. During that debate opposition speaker after opposition speaker lined up to put the boot into us about the meaningful and decent reforms that we have put into local government in this state. They banged on and on and on about democratic rights, the ability for people to have their say, the importance of people having referendums and how we have taken away their democratic rights. Then a couple of Sundays ago on the *Insiders* program I heard the Premier say, 'Yes, we were too heavy handed. We are going to change that. We are going to fix that. We are going to bring reforms into the parliament to fix that.' I thought that would have been welcomed by everyone. I thought that members on both sides of the House would have welcomed that. It takes a big man to admit when he is wrong, and that is what the Premier did. The minister has come in here and implemented the commitment that the Premier gave to make sure that councils are not sacked for holding that referendum. That was a good decision and a wise decision.

Now tonight we come in here and the opposition is trying to stop us from stopping people having referendums. I am really confused. There is some leap in the logic here. We are trying to stop those provisions that would see councils being sacked for holding a referendum and the opposition is trying to stop us from doing that.

I just cannot understand what the members opposite are trying to achieve today. Is the upshot of what they are saying that they think that councils should be sacked for holding a referendum? That may not be the intent of this disallowance motion—I am happy to concede that—but that is the consequence. That is the result. If this disallowance motion is agreed to, the consequence is that the statute stands and councils are still liable to be sacked if they hold a referendum. That is the exact opposite of what the members of the opposition were trying to do.

Where is the logic here? Where is the progression of coherent thought that gets us to this position? I am really struggling to get my head around it. None of the opposition speakers has been able to explain to me that logical progression. It is just simply beyond them. I think they are cutting their nose off to spite their face. I understand the members want to keep this debate raging. I understand they do not want to move on and that they want to make as much political mileage out of this as they possibly

can. That is fair enough. That is their right. That is their privilege, and good luck to them. Go for it, guys. But what the members opposite are doing tonight is completely confusing. It is completely against everything else that they have said thus far, and it is quite strange. It is quite surreal.

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr O'BRIEN:** Yes, it is a stunt. Referendum or not, people have had a say. The member for Warrego talked about the rally at Port Douglas. Yes, that was a big rally. There were about 1,000 people there. They had their say. They were not silent. They were heard.

**Mr Seeney:** Why didn't you listen?

**Mr O'BRIEN:** Because I do not think they are right. I think that the reform is necessary. The Douglas Shire Council that the members opposite are trying to defend was really incompetent and that incompetence continues to this day. That council held a meeting today at which four of the seven councillors voted against supporting the iconic legislation which those thousand people were trying to protect. So no council deserves to be sacked more than the Douglas Shire Council, because it just continues—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr O'BRIEN:** I am on the record as saying that that council should have been sacked. I thought it should have been sacked in December last year. Those 1,000 people want to make sure that their lifestyle is protected. That is fine. That is why we are bringing in iconic legislation. But now the four spoilers on the Douglas Shire Council are trying to oppose that as well.

There have been other ways that people have had their say, not just through the Triple S process that lasted for two years. Councils could have held referendums every other Saturday if they had wanted to during those two years of the Triple S process. There was a process during the deliberation of the reform commission by which people could have a say. In this House, since the reform commission has brought down its report and it has been adopted by the government there have been petitions presented and there have been protests held. I am sure all members would have received letters, emails, faxes—all sorts of communications—that have allowed people to have their say and to express their dissent to the local government reform act.

I concede that there is dissent out there. There are people out there who seriously oppose the change, and that is their right. They have been heard. There was another lot of protesters at this House yesterday led by Bob Ansett. Were they having a say? Have they been denied their democratic right? Have they not been heard? Of course they have been heard. But we do not agree. That is the difference. We think that change is necessary. The experience of amalgamations, such as the amalgamation of the Cairns and Mulgrave councils, has shown that bigger councils work better. They provide better results. Amalgamations provide economies of scale that allow councils to have some serious cash to run decent programs and to put in decent infrastructure. That has been the result of the amalgamation of the Cairns and Mulgrave councils. It takes time to get there, to bed down those changes and see the full benefit of those changes. But it does happen and it will happen right across this state. It will happen in every corner of this state where these councils have been amalgamated.

Those amalgamated councils will have large budgets. They will have more officers to deliver services—not just councillors playing politics but real officers doing real jobs, whether it is community development, economic development, laying bitumen or whatever it is that the community wants. People will get much increased capacity out of these changes.

I reject totally any assertion that people have been denied a say. People in the Douglas shire in particular have been heard loud and clear. We do not agree with them. We think that the changes will benefit that community that has suffered under poor governance for the past three years. We think that in the long run those communities will receive much better services.

The gist of what we have tried to do is stop affected councillors from using ratepayers' money to run referendums that will not change anything. There is nothing preventing, say, the member for Warrego from running a referendum. He can sit at a state school for a couple of Saturdays in a row and run a referendum. He can tick people off a roll as they come in. He can run a referendum if he wants to. If he is so passionate about running these referendums, he can sit at the state school at Port Douglas and hold a referendum. He can advertise it in the paper so that people can have more of a say, if that is what he thinks needs to happen. However, we are trying to stop affected councillors, who are the noisiest protesters about these changes, from using ratepayers' money to run referendums that will change nothing.

Essentially all that is happening is that councillors are coming into an election period and they are trying to raise their profiles. They are trying to be hairy-chested about their opposition to this change. That is all good. It is all part of a vibrant democracy. People exercising their right to free speech is all part of a vibrant democracy. I think about some of the things that the federal government has done that I would have liked to have seen referendums on: gun control, GST, the war in Iraq, green zones on the Great Barrier Reef.

**A government member:** Nuclear power stations.

**Mr O'BRIEN:** Nuclear powers stations. Should we have referendums on those things? I do not think we should. We live in a representative democracy. In this place we are the representatives of the voters of Queensland and we have had a say. We are going to implement local government reform. It is going to be one of the great reforms of this government. It is going to make communities stronger, it is going to make councils stronger and the people in the communities are going to get much better services.

**Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (8.31 pm): The process that this government used to make local government changes was wrong. The process was wrong. Despite what the member for Cook said, people were disfranchised. They were left with a sense of utter hopelessness. They had never encountered legislation like this before, through which this government has removed the rights of the community to have an effective say. Yes, they could have a say but it was not effective. They did not have a chance to make a difference to what the government had proposed. They felt disfranchised and they still do.

However, I do not understand this disallowance motion either. I do not understand the logic behind it. The process of using a regulation to change legislation is very poor process indeed. It is not supported by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. For years the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee has been trying to minimise this type of process in the legislative bills that are put to this House. During my time on that committee, the committee always criticised this process as being the poorest way of changing legislation and protecting the rights and liberties of the community.

Having said that, I cannot support a disallowance motion that effectively says that I support the threats that this government made towards local government in relation to their right to hold polls. With all due respect to the National Party and the Liberal Party and whilst I can understand that they find the use of regulation to change legislation abhorrent, which it is, I am certainly not going to go on the record in support of a disallowance motion that effectively smacks local government in the mouth again, because the government has already done it enough.

Local governments in Queensland have operated well for many years. They are not without fault, and neither is the state government nor the federal government. But they were duly elected by the community. They answered to the community and at the next local authority election, if they did the job poorly and enough people in the community were upset with them, they will be gone. It is the same with state elections. I am sorry to say this to the minister and others in the government, but I hope that this does bite the government at the next election because unless the community is effectively able to say to a government of any persuasion, 'When you disfranchise us, it will have an effect', the government will become even more arrogant than it is now.

There are those in my communities at Calliope and Gladstone including the mayor of Gladstone who are in favour of the amalgamations, but many in the community are opposed to the process. The community is angry about the fact that we sat in this chamber while government members said, 'Of course they will have a say; the commission's recommendations will come back here', yet they had no say about who was on the commission. Our local councils were working on Size, Shape and Sustainability in good faith. Until the morning of the statements by the Premier and the local government minister, they had no idea that what they were doing was wrong.

The government can slam local councils all it likes, but they were doing a good job. They were acting in good faith. They are not perfect. It is not that they did not make mistakes, but they tried flaming hard. They do not pay themselves a huge amount of money, but the government will have to after this because it has already acknowledged that councillors will have to be paid as full-time employees with an income similar to that of a backbencher or a minister. This is not about saving any money.

The process of threatening and intimidating councils with section 159ZY of the act was wrong. It always was wrong and it always will be wrong, according to me and according to my community. However, I will not support a disallowance motion that effectively means that I have to support the dribble that was in this local government act.

**Mr WELLINGTON** (Nicklin—Ind) (8.36 pm): I rise to participate in the debate. I read the regulation that the opposition is proposing to disallow, and it says that section 159ZY of the act expires on the commencement of this section. I table that.

*Tabled paper:* Local Government Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2007 subordinate legislation No. 219 of 2007.

I go to section 159ZY of the act, which in two pages sets out that an existing local government must not conduct a poll in its area and it talks about the penalties for councillors and local governments if they proceed with a poll. I think that it is good to remove that penalty provision. I note from the *Notice Paper* a bill that proposes to do that very thing. Before the House is a bill that will remove the possibility of local government councillors conducting a poll and we also have a regulation that proposes to do that on the date that the regulation becomes law. That could be tomorrow or very soon. I think that both the regulation and the bill, which will come on for debate at a later date, are fine. I suppose at the moment in this chamber we are seeing politics at its best.

I am aware of the due process that it is recommended should be followed, which is that if there is to be a significant amendment to an act of parliament the best way for that amendment to take place is by way of an amending bill and not by way of using a regulation to amend a significant or a very important part of an act where there may be very clear inconsistencies between the regulation and the act. I do believe there is a more appropriate way to remove section 159ZY from the act. Personally I believe that the most appropriate way is through the amending bill that is currently before the House to be debated at a later date.

I understand that in this year there are only a few sittings left before we rise for Christmas. Many other bills are on the *Notice Paper* and I think that they are all just as important as this. I imagine that if people want to take it to the end they could certainly challenge the validity of the regulation in the courts but my expectation would be that, by the time the money had been spent and the matter was proceeding through the courts, we may actually have had the debate on the very bill that is already on the *Notice Paper*. Again I think we would see a very fruitless exercise.

I do not know that this is going to be a proud day in the history of this parliament when members reflect on the debate that we have had in this chamber. Suffice to say that I certainly will not be supporting the opposition's disallowance motion. However, I need to put on the record that I believe that the most appropriate way to amend the significant clause in the act is by bringing forward the bill that is currently on the *Notice Paper*. I realise that for the government to do that many, many hours in this chamber would be taken up with that debate. Then there would be questions raised about guillotining or removing people's opportunities to be heard. Listening to the debate tonight, there has simply been a repeat of the very comments which were made in this chamber at a recent sitting. I will resume my seat and listen to other members' contributions during this debate.

**Ms DARLING** (Sandgate—ALP) (8.39 pm): I rise to join in this debate. At the outset I have to say that I am actually quite embarrassed for the opposition. The shadow minister has made a real bungle here by trying to disallow a regulation that would give councils the surety they have wanted when it comes to legally conducting polls. There is plenty of evidence that the shadow minister has somehow been tripped up in his own rhetoric and has forgotten what he is fighting for. One can tell that when one reads his hastily prepared press statement from 1.55 pm today trying to back himself for tonight's debate. It is a release that is insightful indeed. If members will bear with me I will read a little bit for their information. In the middle of the press release where he gets to the guts of what he is talking about he states—

The incompetent minister initially introduced hastily drafted laws that would allow him to sack and fine councillors who held referendums or polls on amalgamations, laws which are now being challenged in the court. While the government has since backed down and introduced amendments—

Yes, that is right—

—to remove the sacking threats, those laws are still yet to be debated and there is no indication the laws will be passed this week. This effectively means the threats of sackings and fines are still part of the Local Government Act and could remain so until October. Now this week we've got a regulation, again hastily drafted, which we believe is invalid. The coalition believes the only way to effectively resolve this issue and remove the threat hanging over the head of councillors is to pass the legislation as soon as possible, not through a dodgy regulation.

**Mr McNamara:** Poppycock!

**Ms DARLING:** Poppycock, as the member for Hervey Bay has contributed. I will withdraw that. Poppycock may not be parliamentary. Perhaps it is not a lot of truth or not a lot of understanding about what we are trying to do. Might I be so bold as to offer some strategic advice to the shadow minister and to the members opposite: take the glory of a win. The opposition members pushed their point about community referenda during the debate on the legislation. The Premier and the minister have admitted that perhaps they acted too hastily in drafting the amendments that prevented local governments conducting referenda. The government will now amend the legislation and remove the penalties. The amendment by this subordinate legislation will ensure that these sections expire. The minister has explicitly stated that councils that stage polls or referenda will not face dismissal or sanctions as the Beattie government continues to move forward with statewide local government reform. The opposition has actually pushed a point of view that was accepted by the government. I guess it is such a novelty that they have forgotten how to take credit for a success.

But now it is time to get on with reform. Polls planned by a small handful of councils are clearly pointless and unfortunately offer nothing but false hope. This has been further borne out by the wasteful Senate inquiry which is just a cheap political stunt and nothing more than a waste of taxpayers' money that will ultimately achieve nothing. On the point of taxpayers' money, I found a distressing press statement put out by the Leader of the Opposition back in the middle of August. I will quote from his press statement where he states—

I urge every council and every Queenslanders who is opposed to Labor's forced council amalgamations to have their say through the plebiscites that will now be conducted through the Australian Electoral Commission, at no cost to councils or the state government.

I will tell members opposite that there is a big cost to the taxpayers and it is a huge waste of money. I can understand, the way the Howard government behaves sometimes, that members opposite do not understand properly the method of funding by the federal government and the way that taxpayers' money is going into this.

The results of these polls will not change the boundaries. The new boundaries are now law. We are not going to move against councils conducting polls or referenda; we are moving on. The provisions for dismissal and other sanctions were drafted in the first place to save ratepayers from the unnecessary expenditure involved in conducting referenda which have no bearing on the outcome of boundary reform. It is outrageous that John Howard is offering to pay for these polls that mean nothing; it is an avoidable waste of taxpayers' money. John Howard is not offering to change any boundaries with the polls he is proposing, he is just offering a taxpayer funded stunt. His bill does not even have the words 'local government' in it. The opposition minister was instructive in his comments to the Senate inquiry last week. First he admitted that this was a stunt by saying that he was aware 'that this would enable the federal law to override the state law', something the member seems to think is acceptable. Then he made an extraordinary attack on Bob Longland and his commission by saying they were 'instructed to draw the boundaries the way they wanted them'.

**Mr McNamara:** An absolutely disgraceful slur.

**Ms DARLING:** A disgraceful slur, that is right, member for Hervey Bay. In his usual boots-and-all style he jumped in to cover his mistake. The government has accepted the recommendations of the independent Local Government Reform Commission. The greater majority of Queenslanders have also accepted the recommendations and know that reform across the local government sector is required and it is required immediately. It is now time to move on. It is time to get on with the job. The majority of councils are doing just that all around the state. They have had their first meetings, they are electing chairs and interim CEOs and they are doing the right thing by their community. I urge those councils affected by amalgamations to do just that for the good of their communities. I urge those councils intending to stage polls to think carefully about it because they are achieving nothing. I urge them to put politics aside and to act responsibly for their communities and their ratepayers—because ultimately this is about the future. It is clear that the opposition, however, is not moving on. To come into this House and move to disallow a regulation in an effort to allow councillors to be sacked or fined is an incredulous waste of time. It exposes the opposition as the champion of cheap politics. I think it truly believes that its vote goes up every time it utters the word 'amalgamation'. Talking of polls, opinion poll after opinion poll suggests that it is not the case when it comes to the opposition and its standing in the community. I implore the opposition to get out of the gutter and to work constructively with the community to implement these long-required reforms.

I have some quotes that I would like to read from respected industry and community leaders who actually do represent the needs of their members and the community. Firstly, Queensland Farmers' Federation Chief Executive Officer, John Cherry, has said of the reforms—

In the last four years there has been a 35.5 per cent increase in per capita council rates, three times the inflation rate.

He states that other areas of government and business have been subject to efficiency reviews to ensure their customers are getting value for money in an efficient and financially prudent way and it is not unreasonable that councils get the same treatment. He further states that Queensland councils carry the highest average debts and charge the highest levels per capita income of any state in Australia and that ratepayers need to be assured that their operations are both sustainable and efficient. I urge sensible councils to save taxpayer and ratepayer money and put aside plans for a referendum that will serve no purposes.

The Property Council of Australia's Executive Director, Robert Walker, stated that mergers were a good outcome for ratepayers and would lead to better planning and development schemes. He is quoted on 30 July as saying—

More professional councils will bring about a greater certainty for the community and the planning industry on the future of these areas.

The Vice-President of the Sunshine Coast branch of the Urban Development Institute of Australia, Ron Piper, predicted that the local government reforms would be a short-term pain for a long-term gain. I am sure he never envisaged that the opposition would play silly games and try to extend the pain—or maybe he did. This motion just makes no sense. It is a waste of two hours that could be spent debating issues of importance to the people of Queensland. It just shows the desperation of the opposition. It is trying to rehash a debate which has finished.

Some of the fresh faces on the opposition benches have a chance to show some leadership here. I encourage those members opposite with their eyes on the future to show their leadership potential and make the bold step of embracing reform for the future of Queensland. If they keep looking backwards while trying to walk forwards they will trip themselves up. Let us get on with the job of providing financially secure local government to all Queenslanders. I will, of course, be rejecting this motion.

I do want to say some final words on how lucky we are and how proud we should be of our local government minister. I congratulate the minister for guiding these reforms with his eyes firmly set on the future. I have heard the minister speak at a couple of local government council conferences, such as Blackwater and Mount Isa. He did not miss a beat. He knew exactly what he was talking about. He was on topic.

**Ms Male:** Best local government minister ever.

**Ms DARLING:** He is the best local government minister we have ever had.

Time expired.

**Mr McARDLE** (Caloundra—Lib) (8.50 pm): Both sides of the House tonight have made it quite clear that the initial intention and provisions contained in the bill were at best erroneous and that the act had to be amended to ensure that people who conducted polls—councils or councillors—were not subjected to penalties or sanctions of any sort. But the opposition is making it very clear that we have a real concern, as every member of this House should have, about whether the process we are going through here tonight is a valid process at law. If not, the obligation rests on the opposition to bring those issues to the attention of the House and the public.

We know under section 159ZZA, expiry of part 1B, that inserted section 159YA expires at the end of 31 December 2011 or at an earlier time fixed under a regulation. We know that that section quite clearly states that the whole of part 1B will lapse or will expire at that date or the whole of part 1B will expire at a date fixed by a regulation. We have a subordinate piece of legislation here that is a regulation that attacks the act and attacks the intention of section 159ZZA of the act. We have in our opinion an invalid regulation attempting to overturn a section of an act where the terms of the act are quite clear as to the requirements for expiry to occur. It is certainly not 31 December 2011, and the express provisions in the act state that the whole part expires on that date or by a regulation.

For the regulation to be valid, it needed to address the terms of section 159ZZA. If it dealt with both of those issues, then the matter could proceed. The important point is this: we currently have a Supreme Court action in which the Chief Justice yesterday refused to allow a stay of the proceedings based upon the bill currently before the House being dealt with by the House, which would have in effect concluded the legal action in the court. That particular bill came before the House on 22 August 2007, so the relevant time period to debate that bill has expired and this House can legitimately debate that bill tonight or tomorrow. That bill concludes that particular section from the date it commenced to the date it extinguished. What we have got in this subordinate piece of legislation in addition is a time line of 10 August to the date the regulation takes effect where, irrespective of what the government says it will or will not do, an illegal act may well have occurred.

So there are two provisions under which a Supreme Court action could continue. Firstly, there is a window between 10 August and this particular regulation coming into force, whereby the act is still illegal in the eyes of the Local Government Association or, secondly, the procedures under which the regulation was brought before the House today are contrary to the terms of section 159ZZA. In those circumstances, the proceedings could theoretically go on in the court.

No-one in this House here can make a determination on those legal principles at this time, but we certainly know that if the bill were debated here tonight there would be no question over whether or not what had taken place could face a challenge successfully in the Supreme Court. That is what this is all about. It is about the right of the opposition to raise important concerns about the validity of a bill, the validity of a regulation. We will not be stopped as a consequence of people saying stupid comments to us such as, 'You are trying to put back in place what we are trying to take out.' That is a nonsense. We are doing the job we are supposed to do. We are doing the job this minister is supposed to do—that is, to ensure that the processes contained within the House and undertaken by the House are valid. We will not back down because of that issue under any circumstances, particularly stupidity.

**Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—NPA) (8.55 pm): I have been in this place for a long time now, almost 18 years, and I have not seen a regulation presented or drafted in such a sloppy way. That is why the opposition is bringing this disallowance motion to the parliament today. I listened a while ago to members opposite who stood there and said that we really have nothing to worry about because the government was never going to act on that repugnant section of the Local Government Act that gave them the power to sack people for just exercising their democratic right.

If the government had no intention of actually acting on it, we really have to ask why the haste to bring such a sloppily drafted piece of regulation into parliament to try to expunge the effect of what is a very, very draconian piece of legislation to sack people for exercising their democratic right. I can tell you why. It is simply because this government now has all of its fingers in the dyke trying to stop the bleeding. It has now gone a fair way past community concern, which still exists, but now it is in serious danger of being embarrassed in the Supreme Court of Queensland.

As we saw yesterday, Chief Justice de Jersey refused to give this government what it wanted in basically not allowing the action taken by the Local Government Association of Queensland to go ahead in appealing against this repugnant section of the legislation—that is, 159ZY. If we look at the legislation which the government amended here not long ago, the Local Government Act, it says—

159ZZA Expiry of pt 1B

'This part expires at the end of 31 December 2011 or at an earlier time fixed under a regulation.'

If you look at the regulation-making power—the Henry VIII clause—that the government is seeking to use as a justification for regulation No. 219 of 2007, it goes on to say 'expiry of act of section 159ZY'. So it is seeking that one particular section of the legislation will have no effect whatsoever. It is quite clear when you look at the head of power that exists in the local government amendment, which was passed as law in this parliament back in August, that 159ZZA refers completely to the entire expiration of part 1B. Part 1B is from page 177 to page 215.

The government has made a mess of this and it is now desperately trying to put the genie back in the bottle. It let the genie out of the bottle, but it did not like the public reaction because the public reaction was that people do not like to be told and then threatened and punished and made criminals simply because they exercise their democratic right. So we saw the minister, who displays an element of intelligence and capability but lacks common sense in this place, come in here in desperation after being rolled by the Premier. He is not driven by any sort of latter-day conversion to the belief in freedom of speech but is poll driven because the people out there do not like an attack on freedom of speech. He had to bring an amendment bill into this parliament that seeks to do away with that repugnant clause.

That amendment bill is sitting in this parliament, and I think it was due to be debated either tonight or tomorrow. That amendment bill would do the right thing. That amendment bill would remove that repugnant section 159ZY to do with the conduct of the polls and clause 5 which would have dealt with the dissolution of councils in that legislation as well. What we have here is the government, in classic *Monty Python* fashion, running around like Basil Fawlty saying, 'Don't mention the war.' We are going to put up a facade to say, 'Don't mention the war. Don't talk about it. That's in the past.' It is attempting to quarantine what is a dreadful, pussy abscess on the legislative statute books of this parliament. This is what the government is trying to do. It is trying to quarantine it. It is trying to put a bandaid over it. It does not want to excise it. It does not want to apply the appropriate step, and that is to remove it completely from the statute books. So it is seeking to quarantine it and hoping that it is going to go away.

We know that it is not going to go away. It cannot possibly go away because it will still be on the statute books. This regulation is invalid. This regulation is sloppily drafted. The appropriate way to do away with this blight on democracy in Queensland is to pass the amendment bill which takes it off the statute books and undoubtedly restores the right of people in Queensland to express freedom of speech, and that is to have their say by being able to decide what happens in their own local government area.

**Mrs KIERNAN** (Mount Isa—ALP) (9.01 pm): I rise to speak against the motion, and rightly so. Let me walk through the situation as I understand it. The original legislation which passed—No. 31 of 2007, the Local Government Reform Act—said that section 159ZY and 159ZZA provides for the expiry of this part of the act on 31 December 2011 or an earlier time fixed under a regulation. Regulation No. 219 was laid before the parliament in accordance with requirements removing section 159ZY on the commencement of this section. Pursuant to section 159ZZA, the section would expire at the time set out in the regulation. The member for Warrego is moving that the regulation be disallowed. I am bushwhacked; I really am. What hypocrisy does he show when the disallowance of this motion would serve to reinstate sections 159ZY to 159ZZA?

I can assure members that the original intent of the section was there to protect the ratepayers and local authorities. Referendums are a waste of ratepayers' money, and when the Prime Minister waded in with his plebiscite it became an Australia-wide waste of money. I have been howled down in this House for not supporting the west. Let me assure the House that I, as the member for Mount Isa, with 10 councils in my electorate—and which takes up, I might add, 23 per cent of the state—have achieved a lot more with a lot less politicking than the opposition has done since April.

The end result of this disallowance motion, if it had a hope of getting up, would be that the government could sack councils if they held a poll. This is why the government has undertaken to remove this section, and I congratulate the Premier and the minister on listening to the calm voices and not the hysteria.

Since the passing of the legislation, the Premier admitted that this was not the best approach and we were committed to removing this section. I put it to the shadow minister, and forgive me for questioning the motion, but exactly how bright is it? Or is he actually agreeing with the government in the first instance? I as a new member am struggling to understand the purpose and intent of his motion. There is no logic. The best I can work out is that this motion is pure politics and dumb politics at that. We may well have the theatre of this place. However, the real world is our electorates. I fully understand in the real world any change, whatever its nature, is difficult and can bring with it fear.

I continue to express concern at the actions of a minority of individuals in a very small number of my councils and the way they conducted themselves. In the end only one council voted to hold a referendum. It was more about politics, I might add, than about the community having a say. In the end, good sense prevailed and this motion to hold a referendum was withdrawn. This is a passionate issue. This government is the first to admit that. To be very clear, the Premier and the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport made statements in the parliament that the government will not take any prosecution action arising from decisions by councils to hold plebiscites on local government reform.

Here I go again, just so that I understand it. The section of the Local Government Act 1993 which relates to those actions is 159ZY. A regulation was made last week to expire section 159ZY of the Local Government Act 1993. A bill is also before parliament to omit section 159ZY and any reference to section 159ZY from the act. The government has also announced that it will not take any action concerning any contravention of section 159ZY that may have occurred prior to making the regulation and the passing of the bill. The opposition argued that those provisions should not exist, and every move has been made to do that. So here we are having this debate, and quite frankly I cannot decide if the opposition is schizophrenic or just plain stupid.

On Thursday, 16 August the Leader of the Opposition put out a release that said the state coalition has welcomed the Prime Minister's announcement to ensure Queenslanders are given a say on council amalgamations. Jeff Seeney said the federal legislation to override fines and sackings would be welcomed by councils and their communities across the state. I was looking forward to seeing a further release from the Leader of the Opposition once the Premier had announced that the provisions would be set aside but, no, what we see here tonight is a move by the opposition to revive these penalties that may apply to councillors who carry out a poll. The opposition wants to see local government councillors now fined or dismissed for taking action in relation to a poll. They are moving to disallow a regulation that would prevent sackings and fines of mayors. It is quite incredible.

It gets even more bizarre. The Leader of the Opposition is urging every council to contact the AEC and arrange their local plebiscite, and for all parties, particularly Peter Beattie, his ministers and members, to then accept the voice of the people. They were Mr Seeney's words. Let us not pay any heed to the fact that the Australian Electoral Commission is resisting the pressure from John Howard to be compromised in his desperate re-election campaign. The deputy electoral commissioner, Mr Paul Dacey, gave evidence to the federal Senate inquiry which is examining proposed Commonwealth legislation to provide for taxpayer-funded plebiscites on amalgamation. He and the AEC do not want to play the game. This inquiry and the bill itself are cheap political stunts—nothing more than a pitiful waste of taxpayers' money that will ultimately achieve nothing. It is a bit like the motion tonight, I think.

**Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—Lib) (9.08 pm): No-one should be under any illusion that what we are doing here tonight is pure politics on the part of the ALP. The local government amalgamation issue stands out as one of the all-time political mismanagement cases we have seen from an increasingly desperate Labor government. Conceived in haste, implemented in secrecy and delivered incompetently, the process of local government reform is increasingly being delivered by a Keystone Cops government. I can just picture it. There is the old jalopy out the front. The Premier gets on board with Senior Sergeant Fraser, the minister, driving the wheel and off they careen in one direction on local government amalgamation. Then a brainstorm occurs and the Premier calls out a change of directions and the whole vehicle totters down the road, takes a left at 90 degrees—

**Mr Springborg:** A hard left.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** A hard left at 90 degrees and goes down an increasingly bumpy track. A few of the members are being shaken off. The member for Redcliffe is not feeling so flash. The member for Mount Isa is finding it pretty rocky. It is all going pretty crook, and the jalopy is veering along.

Then another brainstorm comes and he says, 'No, we are going back on the course. We are going back where we came from. We are doing 180 degrees and heading back from whence we came.' It is difficult to understand that this is a genuine political strategy. I have had some experience in some less than clear-cut political strategies and even I cannot see the reasons for this debacle.

The minister has now delivered three pieces of legislation and a regulation in the space of six months. He strolled into the House in April to deliver his bill to forcibly amalgamate local councils after being part of a government that promised at the last election to work with councils on the Size, Shape and Sustainability process. That promise was thrown out the door.

After the outcome of the Local Government Reform Commission review, new enabling legislation was introduced by the minister. Then after learning that councils may in fact ask their communities what they may think of this process the minister rushes into the House with hastily prepared amendments to his own bill to penalise any councillor who actually dares to conduct a poll. Then in a typical hairy-chested moment both the minister and the Premier stand in front of the TV cameras and declare they will sack any councillor who conducts a poll. This is a step too far even for people who may have

supported amalgamation and those who may not even have considered the amalgamation issue as one of importance to them. When Bob Abbott declared that we were back in the bad old days, it really rocked them back in their boots.

I guess what really happened is that the ALP's polling in marginal federal seats started giving the federal ALP boys a bit of a loose feeling in the lower bowel. They picked up the phone, sent out the word and said, 'Change course team.' Lo and behold the changes were made. The fine art of the mea culpa, practised so exquisitely by the Premier, was demonstrated yet again—'Blame me, it was my fault, hand on heart.' On a Sunday TV program the Premier announces his change of heart and his poor old faithful minister still driving the jalopy down the track is left to carry on on his lonesome. Down he goes.

So we get another piece of legislation amending the poor old Local Government Act. Never has one bill been amended so many times in such a short period for so poor political reasons for so few people. That bill is the bill that is currently before the House. Then last Friday we had a regulation trying to achieve a change that quite frankly does not appear to be allowed by the act and in particular section 159ZZA, expiry of part 1B.

A number of people have raised this. Why oppose the regulation? Because it is not a competent regulation. It is the demonstration of incompetence by this government. It would be far better for the minister to bring on the bill and to pass the legislation that is still before the House and to clearly remove the offensive provisions of the act without doubt and without question and without the use of the Henry VIII clause that this government increasingly relies upon despite the warnings of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee and despite the commentary by all reputable commentators on legislation not to use Henry VIII clauses—that is, acts providing for regulations to amend acts either their own or others.

I listened to the member for Gladstone. I did agree with her that the process is fraught. The use of the Henry VIII clause is not supported by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. Until 1997 its use was actively discouraged. The government should do the right thing. The government should vote with the opposition on this disallowance motion and the minister should bring the bill forward for debate in a proper and full way and then try to gag debate on that bill.

**Mr MESSENGER** (Burnett—NPA) (9.13 pm): It is with great pleasure that I rise to contribute very briefly to this debate and support the coalition shadow minister's disallowance motion. It is complicated legal argument which has been succinctly described by the shadow Attorney-General and also the members for Southern Downs and Clayfield. Many of those opposite have tried to muddy the waters and they seem mesmerised by the Premier.

The reason we have this motion is the abhorrence of the little Labor monster section 159ZY. We want to see it destroyed. We want to see it wiped off the statute books which is the term that the member for the Southern Downs used. The opposition and also the Local Government Association do not believe that this government regulation will kill this abhorrent provision of the legislation, section 159ZY. It will be like trying to shoot a vampire with a silver bullet. The only way that we can be sure that section 159ZY is dead and gone forever and never to return again into this Legislative Assembly is by using the wooden stake of legislation rather than regulation.

The motion if passed tonight will be a small step towards fixing this unholy mess caused by this Labor government's mismanagement of local government. How many people would have died if the Labor Party's Triple S program of council amalgamations, boundary realignments and shared services were allowed to progress as we all thought they would have? None. That is the question.

We are going to have raised rates, fewer services and less democracy in this state if this Labor government is allowed to have its way. There is a message of hope and that message of hope is that when we are elected as the government we will de-amalgamate. There is that message of hope for those communities brave enough to have referenda.

**Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport) (9.15 pm): I commence my reply to the disallowance motion tonight by, for the benefit of all members of the House, extolling what is the present state of the law in Queensland at the moment—that is, since the *Gazette* was published last Friday, 31 August, the provisions that would seek to penalise or otherwise fine councils or councillors for conducting any polls are no longer the law in Queensland. The regulation was passed by Governor in Council, duly gazetted, and thereafter the law of Queensland no longer includes any provision to provide for a penalty upon a council or councillor and no ability to seek dismissal of the council and the councillors for conducting a poll.

The effect of what would be tonight's vote put forward by the National Party should the government join with the National Party and Liberal Party would be to reinstate the provisions that would seek to penalise or otherwise fine councils or councillors. The reality is that as of today—a regulation validly made through the Governor in Council—that does not form part of the law of Queensland. What an absurdity that tonight two hours of the parliament's time has been consumed by the opposition seeking to reinstate penalties and fines upon councils and councillors conducting those polls. That, in the end, would be the effect if the government were to join with the opposition tonight.

In that regard I welcome the support of the Independent member for Gladstone and other Independents, as I gather, in joining with the government and not seeking to provide for this disallowance. The fact that the Independents see through the stunt that the National Party is trying to prosecute here tonight speaks volumes because it exposes the National Party's tactics in this chamber for exactly what they are.

This is purely about the politics of the parliament not about the substance of the matter. This is purely about their political pursuit of an issue not about the substance of any opposition. If it were about the substance of any opposition we would not be having this debate tonight. The reality is that to walk into this chamber to move a disallowance motion that one hopes is not going to be successful because one actually does not support the end result surely has to be one of the acts of folly and one of the more earnest abuses of the parliament's time that can be comprehended in recent times.

It has been the case that the government has been clear about the fact that we said we would not enforce the provisions in section 159ZY. We introduced a bill into the parliament to remove those sections formally from the statute books. As of last week by regulation we expired those provisions out of the law of Queensland. That much is clear. What is also clear is that the regulation was validly made. It is well known that the power to make a regulation that exists in section 159ZZA of the act provided for the ability to expire that part of the Local Government Act. As is well known, the whole includes the part and the general includes the particular. It was entirely competent for the Governor in Council to make the regulation to expire section 159ZY out of that part.

In that regard there would be no question ever about the validity of that regulation until such time as the parliament moved to disallow it and successfully voted to disallow it. So the folly of the argument of the opposition is this: it is questioning the validity of the regulation by seeking to disallow it. It is only at the point in time that a regulation is disallowed that its validity comes into question. So rather than this being an exercise by the opposition where it seeks some point of principle, the end effect and the result of its actions here tonight is that it seeks to draw the regulation into question and by its own actions it seeks to make the case to remove that regulation from the law of Queensland. In that regard, the tactics of the National Party in this parliament tonight are exposed for the political stunt that it always has been in this instance.

There is some piety by members of the opposition about whether this change in the law can be achieved by a regulation, quite apart from the fact that the original bill provided for the ability to expire that part of the legislation. Let me be really clear on one front. I have often spoken in the debate about whether referenda are required or appropriate in boundary determination. The part of the Local Government Act that was authored into the Local Government Act in 1996 when the National Party was in government, which it likes to pretend is some deep constitutional right, and that existed before 1996 is the provision for referenda. As we all know—and government members are well aware of this—the provisions of the bill at the time in 1996 also included the ability for the minister of the day to overturn the result of a referenda. So far be it from the case that the notion of the referenda was determinative or absolute. It was in fact always subject to the minister of the day otherwise moving to overturn a referenda. I have never once heard from the shadow minister for local government an admission that that was in fact the case.

But more importantly in the context of tonight's debate about whether a regulation is competent to expire this part from the bill, what was the mechanism that the National Party sought to utilise to overturn a referenda to implement an amalgamation against the will of the people in 1996 when it drew up the legislation? It was a regulation. So tonight we have had two hours of debate about whether a regulation can competently expire a part of the Local Government Act, and of course it can. We know that much to be true. The piety from the opposition is that it was somehow offensive to the parliament to have a regulation passed to that effect. But the hypocrisy of its argument is exposed by the fact that in 1996 not only did it never hold true the notion that a referendum would be absolute and determinative; it also provided that the way in which a referendum would be overturned was by regulation—exactly the path that the government has undertaken to ensure that as quickly as possible, as of last Friday, no longer is it the law in Queensland that councils can be subject to fines or penalty for seeking to conduct polls.

The reality of the situation is this: the National Party sought to engage in this debate tonight because it saw a political opportunity to occupy the time of the parliament on this front. That is the same reason that the LGAQ is continuing to waste ratepayers' money in pursuit of a legal challenge to the same provisions of the Local Government Act that, as I have said, firstly, we are not going to enforce. Secondly, we have introduced a bill to remove those provisions. Thirdly, by the regulation—the regulation that the opposition seeks to disallow tonight—we have already expired those provisions out of the law of Queensland as of last Friday, 31 August. Why then is the LGAQ continuing to pursue and occupy the time of the Supreme Court in Queensland using ratepayers' money in the pursuit of that case? The answer is that its motivation is quite simply aligned with that of the National Party in this place tonight, and that is the pursuit of a political agenda in the context of a debate in which it has provided no leadership during the whole conduct of the reform exercise.

It aligns also neatly and somewhat amusingly with the political interests of the Prime Minister. There has been no reference to constitutionality and democracy by those former federalists that used to be known as the coalition parties in Australia. There has been no reference whatsoever to the great trashing of the concept of states' rights and the very foundations on which this country came into being in 1901, that is, the concept of the Federation. There has been unconstitutional and unconscionable conduct by the federal government, through the Prime Minister, in seeking to dismantle the proper, competent and constitutional jurisdiction of the Queensland parliament to legislate in the area of local government.

Why is that the case? What we know is this: out there in the community there is a notion that John Howard, through introducing legislation that will provide taxpayer funds to conduct polls, is in some way seeking to provide for change to the boundaries that have been determined through the independent Local Government Reform Commission. In fact, when it comes to polls what the Prime Minister is offering is complete and utter false hope. Nowhere in his intervention when it comes to the conduct of polls does the Prime Minister mention local government once. Nowhere in the Commonwealth's proposal does the Prime Minister propose to change one single boundary. What he is actually offering and what he is actually peddling is constitutional false hope.

So we see a circumstance where the Prime Minister is seeking to say something, his lips are moving, but he is not really saying anything. He is offering a notion to people out there in the community that he may well change something although he will not. The reason that he will not is that deep down he does not want to and deep down he knows he cannot. The Prime Minister is trying to pretend that he is interested in the vote of the people in the shires of Queensland when he is actually interested in his own vote. We have a Prime Minister who is 10 points behind, with 10 weeks to go, who is prepared to do and say anything and to spend taxpayers' money on anything and to trash any notion of what is an appropriate way to act in a constitutional sense in the pursuit of re-election. Why are none of us surprised about this? Because the bloke has got form. This is the typical sort of desperate, kamikaze, gonzo politics that the Prime Minister practises in an election year. It is the desperation of a Prime Minister who is seeking to latch on to any issue but not to do it in a way that holds substance. It is done in a way that only peddles false hope and when he is at his meanest and his trickiest best.

What we see in the debate tonight is the absurdity of the opposition coming into this place, occupying the time of the parliament, putting forward an argument and hoping against all hope—hoping with all its might; hoping desperately—that the government does not join with it and vote for this disallowance motion. Because what would the effect of that vote be? The effect would be that through the authorship and the advocacy of the National Party in this state the penalties for conducting polls on local government amalgamations would be reinstated. The absurdity of the opposition's folly in putting forward this disallowance motion and the political agenda that underpins it is exposed by dint of the contribution from the member for Gladstone. I acknowledge the member for Gladstone. Indeed, all of the Independent members have some opposition to the local government reform process, but they clearly saw through the partisan nature of the intervention and the folly conducted by the opposition here tonight.

We saw in the last sitting of parliament that the opposition had resorted to quoting from the satirical newspaper *The Bug* in seeking to ask questions about the policy agenda being pursued by the government. I cannot imagine that a satire that involved a National Party walking into this place and saying, 'We believe councils should be sacked for conducting polls,' would make it even to the most far-flung parts or the deepest imaginations of the authors of *The Bug*. Certainly, the ability or the imagination to have such a satirical exercise included in *The Bug* would be something that I am sure will entertain those authors of *The Bug* for an upcoming edition. But what I might say—rather than referencing that great piece of literature which is *The Bug*—is that this is more essentially like groundhog day. We see the same arguments being used by the opposition against a reform process that is being passed into law. In that regard, I point out for those people who do review this debate the contribution of the Leader of the Opposition tonight who specifically said that he believed that the amalgamations would proceed.

I confirm to the Leader of the Opposition that that is absolutely the case. It is absolutely the case that the amalgamations, the boundaries that were proposed by the Local Government Reform Commission, have been put into law. They are the law of Queensland. The boundaries are in place and the elections will occur on 15 March for those new councils.

I can also absolutely confirm to the Leader of the Opposition—who I suspect knows this, given that admission—that nothing that the Prime Minister is offering to the communities of Queensland is going to change that by one centimetre. The Prime Minister is not offering to change one boundary by one centimetre. To the extent that the Prime Minister is engaging in this exercise, he is exposed for seeking to muddy the waters on the federal election front to seek to pursue a matter that concerns the state government in Queensland. Why would a Prime Minister be doing that? Because the Prime Minister is so far behind the federal Labor Party he is seeking to muddy the waters.

We see the Australian Electoral Commission, quite rightfully and quite appropriately, resisting and resisting forcefully the attempts of the Prime Minister to compromise the Australian Electoral Commission. Section 394 of the Commonwealth Electoral Act quite properly provides that federal elections should not be clouded by the conduct of other polls or other elections. That is the original intent of section 394. In seeking to fund with taxpayers' money plebiscites that will not change any boundary, the Prime Minister has tried to compromise the independence of the Electoral Commission and, quite rightfully, the Electoral Commission has sent him back from whence he came. The Australian Electoral Commission is focused on conducting a federal election.

Let us be really clear about this. In the final analysis, this is not going to be an issue that will determine the federal election. This is a Prime Minister who called an election three years and one week ago. As of today, and as of every other day, the question is rightfully asked of this Prime Minister: why do you go beyond each and every day three years since you called the last election? Why do you not step up to the mark and call the next federal election? Why do you not step up to the mark and call the federal election and, more to the point, fight it on federal issues? Why do you not account for the interest rates rises that you promised would not happen? Why do you not account for the WorkChoices legislation which has undermined the fair go in this country? Why do you not account for the continued presence of our troops in Iraq? Why do you not call the federal election, instead of attempting to run into every issue, to muddy the waters, and attempt to fight it on state issues? Why do you not show the courage of a true leader and call the federal election today, fight it on federal election issues, face your day of reckoning and see Kevin Rudd elected as the next Prime Minister of this country?

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

**AYES, 24**—Copeland, Cripps, Dempsey, Elmes, Flegg, Gibson, Hobbs, Hopper, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, McArdle, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Nicholls, Seeneey, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey. Tellers: Rickuss, Dickson

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

Resolved in the **negative**.

## ADJOURNMENT

**Hon. RE SCHWARTEN** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Leader of the House) (9.38 pm): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

### Tieri Caravan Park

**Mr KNUTH** (Charters Towers—NPA) (9.38 pm): I table a petition on behalf of the residents of Tieri, and in particular the people who reside in the Tieri Caravan Park.

*Tabled paper:* Non-conforming petition regarding the closure of the Tieri caravan park and building of single accommodation in the caravan park.

The petition calls on the government to support the workers and families who live at the Tieri Caravan Park.

Earlier this year the residents of the park received notice that the park would be closed on 27 June to make way for a proposed accommodation village. Unfortunately, the mining company Xstrata never considered the outrage that this closure would have caused within the township of Tieri. Some residents have lived in the caravan park for more than 15 years. Some children have spent their entire lives in the caravan park and some families have spent up to \$60,000 upgrading their units. The majority of the people who live in the caravan park service the community, working in the local supermarkets, shops, the council and other service organisations. All of them are community minded and contribute to the social fabric of the community. They volunteer at school functions, for the Scouts and the Guides, and for other worthwhile charities around the town. They look out for each other and have created a neighbourly atmosphere within the confines of the park.

When the residents first heard about the eviction, they established the Tieri Caravan Park Residents Committee. The members met with members of Xstrata to discuss options for the residents of the caravan park who are being forced from their homes. Xstrata offered to provide some accommodation for some park residents in the township, but they could not guarantee that they would be safe from eviction from this accommodation down the track.

In May this year I wrote to the minister for natural resources. I pointed out that Xstrata's intention to replace the caravan park was not consistent with the current purpose of its lease. The residents were relieved by the minister's response, which reassured the residents that their existing caravan park facilities would need to remain. Although the minister's response is positive, I present this petition on behalf of 510 petitioners to inform the House that the residents are very concerned about losing their caravan park and that it must remain at all costs.

The whole ordeal raises some concern about the exclusivity of mining towns and how the future of these towns is completely in the hands of the companies that manage the mines. Across the highlands, there are these massive single-person accommodation villages springing up all over the place. Although that accommodation may be cheaper than providing housing for workers, it destroys families and places great strain on marriages. Surely the institution of the family is worth protecting more than the profit margins of multimillion-dollar companies.

I applaud the courage and the conviction of the residents of the Tieri Caravan Park for protecting their homes and the priceless value of living with their families where they work. I also applaud the support from the residents of Tieri towards the park residents, which demonstrates the wonderful character of the community.

### **Latham, Mr L**

**Mr PURCELL** (Bulimba—ALP) (9.42 pm): Tonight I would like to speak about a good friend of mine, Laurie Latham, who is also a constituent of my electorate of Bulimba. Members who attended the parliamentary prayer fellowship breakfast would have met Laurie and would know what a lovely gentleman he is. Earlier this year Laurie celebrated his 87th birthday and he still continues to work hard for the community in a voluntary capacity in his role as president of the Morningside Meals on Wheels.

In his working career Laurie was employed in the Government Printing Office from 1940 until his retirement in 1980. During this time he was a member of the executive committee and twice served as the father of the chapel. From 1954 to 1962, Laurie was the secretary of the Morningside State School P&C Association. A school committee meeting in 1958 endorsed the proposition that a swimming pool should be built at the school. The cost of the pool was 14,000 pounds, with the P&C to raise half the funding.

Although Laurie's children no longer attended the school, Laurie continued to serve as secretary until the completion of the project. The official opening of the pool took place on 10 March 1962. Laurie served as vice-president of the Balmoral State High School P&C Association from 1957 to 1961. During the 1950s Laurie was also secretary of the Bulimba and District Progress Association. In the 1970s he taught English to migrants on a voluntary basis.

In 1980 Laurie started as a volunteer at the Balmoral Uniting Community Centre in Morningside. In 1971 he was appointed assistant administrator before becoming the administrator of the centre in 1993, which was a position he held until only a few years ago. He was also the parish secretary of the Balmoral Uniting Church. Laurie was also one of the sponsors of the Family Day Care Centre located next door to the centre. Sadly, the day care building burnt down in 2000 but it has since been rebuilt, bigger and better than ever before, by Laurie and his committee. In his position of sponsor, Laurie was involved in many meetings and conferences and kept abreast of legal and government policies regarding the care of children.

Also during Laurie's time as administrator the centre was renovated to such an extent that it looked like a new building. Laurie oversaw all the work and liaised with the tradesmen, architects, suppliers and the church during this time. Naturally, this was a very stressful experience for Laurie, but he coped with all the stress in his usual manner of quietly persisting and getting the job done.

Laurie Latham has given over 50 years of voluntary service to our local community. At 87 he is certainly at an age when he could be relaxing and enjoying time with his family instead of continuing to work voluntarily for his community, but that is not Laurie's way. His dedication, care and love for his fellow man is boundless and he is certainly an inspiration to us all. Laurie, may you live forever.

### **GPS Monitoring of Sex Offenders; Gold Coast, Police Resources**

**Mr MESSENGER** (Burnett—NPA) (9.44 pm): This Labor government releases dangerous sex offenders back into community in secret and has chosen the cheap option when it comes to monitoring them. The Queensland coalition will continue to pursue the best form of electronic monitoring of those sex offenders, which is the global positioning system.

In making her bizarre statement this morning, the minister is obviously still embarrassed by an incident in which a child rapist, a dangerous sex offender who was supposed to be confined to his home at night, was allowed to roam free and undetected for 18 hours before being picked up by police. If this Beattie Labor government is going to let dangerous sex offenders out of jail, it needs to know where they are at all times, and not just whether or not they are at home as is the case with its inferior radio frequency tracking devices.

In her example this morning the minister failed to realise that the New Zealand trial only used the passive GPS system that allows prisoner movements to be tracked on a daily basis when information is downloaded, rather than the active monitoring option which can give location updates every five to 10

minutes. The minister is wrong in claiming there was no active real-time monitoring of sexual offenders, with both the Minnesota and Florida Department of Corrections successfully using live-tracking GPS devices. This means that authorities are alerted almost immediately if an offender is not complying. This government is soft on dangerous sex offenders and has chosen the cheap option when it comes to monitoring them.

The disturbing revelation that police were unable to respond to an emergency call from a home where a teenager allegedly later murdered his mother highlights the Gold Coast's desperate need for more police resources and staff. It is appropriate for the police commissioner to launch an inquiry into the incident, but the Gold Coast district's front-line police staffing levels also need to be examined.

Officially the Gold Coast has nine police stations and approximately 688 police to look after a permanent population of around 500,000. That makes an official police to population ratio of only 1 to 720 while the state's average is 1 to 340. However, what about the police officers on sick, long service or maternity leave? What about the police officers who are absent because they are training or on promotion boards? How many tourists visit the Gold Coast each day? 60,000 or more.

It is no wonder that Police Union representative Dennis Fitzpatrick has said that there are nowhere near enough police on the ground in first response on the Gold Coast and in most other places in Queensland. The situation on the Gold Coast is critical. It is time that the minister came clean on the real number of police on the Gold Coast and throughout Queensland. It is time that the police minister stopped denying the staffing crisis in the Queensland Police Service.

Time expired.

### **CQU Norths Chargers**

**Mr HOOLIHAN** (Keppel—ALP) (9.47 pm): I have stood in this House before and paid tribute to a local Rockhampton football club and I should make the disclosure that this year I am the vice-president of that club. Not only Rugby League wins through this club but also the Indigenous peoples of central Queensland. I speak of CQU Norths Chargers Rugby League Club.

This year, for the second time in three years, the club won the Rockhampton Rugby League grand final by beating Fitzroy Gracemere, which incidentally is sponsored by the member for Fitzroy. The team beat them 34 to 24. They have now played off against a Gladstone side and a Yeppoon side and will play Gladstone Brothers in the extended league grand final. Besides the Chargers who did it two years ago, only one other club has won both league finals in the same year, and that is Brothers.

The club has been very successful, not just the A-grade side that plays in the extended league but all levels of the club. In excess of 50 per cent of our players are Indigenous. The club includes many members of the Toby family who are noted sportsmen in central Queensland. Our captain is James Waterton from Mount Morgan. Our coach, Michael White, is a respected member of the Indigenous community and a former ATSI commissioner.

I note that the Minister for Natural Resources and Water is in the House tonight as the Acting Leader of the House. He has paid tribute to the people from central Queensland in that the two areas of land that have been handed over by the state government to Indigenous land trusts have occurred in the electorate of Keppel. The Darumbil people are the land based Indigenous community and the Woppaburra people are on Great Keppel Island.

It is a tribute to the Indigenous people and the football clubs. Fitzroy-Gracemere also has a very strong playing strength of Indigenous people. It allows a lot of the youth in those Indigenous communities to be involved in sporting clubs and to show their abilities. They work hard for the club. They hold their head high. They wear the pale blue with the black and white V with a lot of pride. I wish them all the best when they play Gladstone Brothers this weekend for the extended league grand final.

### **Tarong Energy**

**Mrs PRATT** (Nanango—Ind) (9.50 pm): We continually hear about Aboriginal people having an affinity with the land. I understand that because although I have lived in many areas throughout the eastern states it was not until I moved to Kingaroy that I found the place that spoke to me, the place where I hope to be buried and the place with which I have that affinity.

Many property holders have the same affinity with their land, whether it be a generational one, the fruition of a dream or a legacy built over years. Affinity with the land is not a race based thing but it is a reality. Land acquisition for the greater good of the state or country infringes dramatically on that affinity. Representatives from Tarong Energy and the government either do not feel it, do not understand it, do not recognise it or simply dismiss it. There are many things people do not understand or recognise about another's life.

The sacrifice that these people are required to make for the future of the state is one of those unrecognised facts. But it should be recognised, and that is why I bring it up again tonight. This might be my last chance to try to explain and make people understand that these people are making an enormous sacrifice so that each member in this place has electricity to cook meals at night and heat their bath water. So please recognise their sacrifice and, Minister, please do not let these people be ripped off. There are an enormity of projects required to run the state, be it road infrastructure, water resources, energy or the essential services, and for each and every current or new piece of infrastructure there will be many people who are affected and those people and their sacrifices need to be recognised.

I have mentioned the impact on the property owners and communities of the delays of the Tarong fuel source decision so many times in this chamber and in private conversations with the minister that I am beginning to think I sound like a cracked record. I believe that the minister should have ensured that the people would not be impacted upon any longer than necessary, but not informing the people of Tarong's decision today will be seen as a heartless act, and by refusing to name a date when he would divulge that information he has compounded that heartlessness.

The minister has allowed these victims of a government owned corporation's decision to suffer continuing distress. What was done today was an incredibly cruel thing. I think most people would believe that these people have suffered enough. The minister stated that the government will make the decision speedily, that the way forward will be very clear and he expects to be able to do that in the very near future. If Tarong after all this time and with all its due diligence has made its decision, I have to question why the minister is sitting on it. I think that the reasons need to be clarified.

I have approached Tarong Energy on many issues and they have been helpful in many ways. I have spoken often to the minister as well. I have said it before and I will say it again over and over: these people have suffered enough. This government needs to recognise the sacrifices of anybody who has to give up something they love for the good of the state. It happens so often and too many times the pain, anguish and distress is discounted. People have actually reported to me that the distress caused to their elderly parents killed their father. That is an extremely disappointing way for any government to treat its citizens.

### **Cook Electorate, Federal Funding**

**Mr O'BRIEN** (Cook—ALP) (9.53 pm): The retiring member for Leichhardt owes the constituents of Cook \$9.5 million. Prior to the last federal election he made two commitments. One was to provide \$5 million for new facilities at the Weipa Hospital. I have spoken about that matter in this parliament before. It is suffice to say tonight that less than \$500,000 of that \$5 million has been actually committed from the federal government towards that hospital in Weipa. That is the first \$4.5 million that Mr Entsch owes the citizens of Cook for his promise.

The second commitment that Mr Entsch made prior to the last federal government election in 2004 was \$5 million for the Daintree buyback. At face value it appeared that he had delivered that \$5 million for the Daintree buyback when he gave that \$5 million to the Australian Rainforest Foundation to protect Daintree land. But when is \$5 million not \$5 million? When it is promised by the federal government is when it is not \$5 million. What we have found out now is that the Australian Rainforest Foundation has used that \$5 million, and money that has been given to it by the state government, to purchase land in the Daintree, but it is now using the fact that those development rights have been taken away to seek compensation from the state government for the very loss of the rights.

When is \$5 million not \$5 million? When the federal government gives it with one hand and tries to take it back from the state with the other. The Australian Rainforest Foundation has applied via the Douglas Shire Council for compensation on 22 blocks of rainforest land purchased with state and federal government funds and donations from philanthropists. The ARF is attempting to access funds from a program that was designed to compensate property owners in the Daintree who did have legitimate aspirations of building a home on the land and are now unable to do so due to the prescribed conservation zones in the planning scheme.

The state government has put \$15 million into the Daintree buyback and what happens is that we voluntarily buy that land back from people and it eventually goes back into the national park. What the Commonwealth is trying to do is use its agent, the ARF, as essentially a real estate agent. It is trying to double dip into the state fund. The state has already given it some money to purchase this land, the Commonwealth has given it some money to purchase this land and now it is trying to go back around the corner and get more money from the state government through its compensation fund. It is an absolute tragedy. It means that the \$5 million promised by the Commonwealth government is not \$5 million at all. I want that \$9.5 million.

### Traveston Dam

**Mr GIBSON** (Gympie—NPA) (9.57 pm): Tonight I rise to rebut the mistruths and deceit that this government peddles when promoting the proposed dam at Traveston Crossing. The Deputy Premier referred to a report by the Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation which apparently supports Queensland Water Infrastructure. How many pages does this report contain? I table a copy for the benefit of the House that shows that this report is nothing more than a letter.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 23 August 2007, from Phillip J Cummins, Chief Technical Principal, Dams and T S Hanson, General Manager, Civil Infrastructure to Graeme Newton, Queensland Water Infrastructure Pty Ltd, relating to the Traveston Crossing Dam.

It is three pages—that is all. And guess what? When one reads the three pages it is peppered with reservations such as: 'At this stage in the process ...', 'It is noted that detailed investigations ... will be undertaken', and 'In the final design a solution ... may be developed.' On seepage it says 'a reasonable estimate if not conservative'. That is not exactly a ringing endorsement. These are the words the Deputy Premier did not want the people of Queensland to hear.

What of the Premier's assertion in this House that the argument about Traveston Dam is over? The Premier obviously has not been paying attention to an event sponsored by his own government. The 10th International River Symposium and Environmental Flows Conference has been occurring here in Brisbane. It would appear that at this conference the argument about Traveston Dam is not even close to being over. World-renowned experts are arguing against Traveston Crossing Dam. Griffith University scientist Angela Arthington has spoken out against the dam, along with Patrick McCully. It appears that, try as the Premier may, the argument about Traveston Crossing for a dam site is far from being over.

Before Queensland Water Infrastructure rushes out to buy a report that purports to prove the dam has environmental support, I would like to include for the record that Mr McCully is the author of *Silenced Rivers; the Ecology and Politics of Large Dams*. He is a former member of the World Commission on Dams forum and he is currently on the steering committee of the United Nations Environment Program's dams and development project. He is an individual this government should be listening to but obviously is not prepared to.

As the argument about Traveston is not over, unfortunately neither is the water crisis. The tragedy tonight is that a real solution to the water crisis—one that has the support of the community, one in which the environmental impact is minimal, one where the land is already purchased and could have commenced 17 months ago—is the raising of Borumba Dam. No-one has forgotten the ironclad guarantee that the Deputy Premier gave in Gympie last year to examine Ron McMaha's proposal for the raising of Borumba Dam and water harvesting from the Mary River. Here we are nearly 12 months down the track and that guarantee is rusting apart. I table for the benefit of the House the latest letter sent to the Deputy Premier—a letter she is yet to reply to—urging her to examine the benefits of raising Borumba Dam as a matter of urgency.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 20 August 2007, from R E McMaha to the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure (Ms Bligh), relating to dam proposals.

The people of Queensland deserve a real solution to the water crisis. The raising of Borumba Dam can do that immediately, not the proposed dam at Traveston Crossing after 2012.

### Barron River Electorate, Community Celebrations

**Mr WETTENHALL** (Barron River—ALP) (10.00 pm): Last week I had the honour of participating in two fabulous community milestones in the Barron River electorate—the 50th anniversary of the Yorkeys Knob State School and the 20th anniversary of the Marlin Coast Bowls Clubs. Yorkeys Knob State School opened with 19 children in Wattle Street in February 1957 in a one-room building under headmaster and teacher Mr Batchelor. The school now has 180 students. In 1979 the students moved to the current site under the watchful eye of the groundsman, Walter Boyle. Wally's passion for the grounds and the school community is carried on by groundskeepers Chris and Bella Dennis, who recently won an award at the Cairns Gardening Titles for their work at the school.

The old school building is now the home of the Yorkeys Knob State Emergency Service and of course Alan Cullington and his dedicated team from the SES were on hand to make sure the anniversary celebrations went without a hitch. The celebrations included entertainment by the current students and a fascinating display of memorabilia, including Mary Williams's book on the history of Yorkeys Knob, photos, examples of students' work and even extracts from the 'naughty' book. Many of the original students from 1957 were present as friends were reunited and stories and memories were shared. I congratulate and thank the students, staff and parents and the anniversary organising committee, comprising Julie Grayson, Andrea Davidson, Louise Elliott and Amanda Brown, who were assisted by Jody Styles, Perri Slowikowski, Jenny Cullington, Colleen McCabe, Pat Kearney, June Corrie and Kerry Hawkins. All of the events and displays were a resounding success.

The Marlin Coast Bowls Club in Trinity Beach had its 20th birthday on 26 August. The club has always been run solely by volunteer members and they have much to be proud of over their two decades. The facilities have been progressively improved, including the installation of lights 10 years ago and the installation of synthetic greens. The evening games for nonmembers are popular with locals and visitors and are an effective recruiting tool for the club.

The club nurtures major talent, and club member Stephen Lockey is preparing to again represent Australia in the Lawn Bowls Multi-Disability World Championships, while junior member Kaytlyn Smith won an encouragement award at the 2007 Australian Multi-Disability Lawn Bowls National Championships. I wish them and all club members success in their competitive endeavours.

The club has enjoyed a great tradition of service from members, such as the late Jack Johnson and Nobby Blundell and founding life member Gloria Goldfinch, who clearly enjoyed the party. I congratulate all the dedicated volunteers, including Neville Sellwood and Ian Eckles, and the current executive committee comprising Bob Smith, Dave Spicer, EJ Herwig, Marion Sellwood and bowling presidents Jill Kefford and Barry Hare

Both anniversaries celebrate the best of the thriving community spirit in far-north Queensland, and taking part as the local member reminds me of why I have the best job in the land.

### **Nurse of the Year**

**Mrs STUCKEY** (Currumbin—Lib) (10.03 pm): John Flynn Hospital located in Tugun in my electorate hosted the third annual art show and exhibition in support of their Nurse of the Year entrant on Friday evening, 24 August, which also was Cancer Council Queensland's Daffodil Day. A cocktail party and a percentage of sales from artworks raised funds for John Flynn's nominee nurse, Mandy Eade, which will benefit the Cancer Council.

Whilst Mandy has only been a registered nurse for close on two years, she has worked as an employee at John Flynn Hospital for 11 years. When studying for her nursing degree, she worked in the sterilising department and before that was a member of the administrative team. Currently on the general surgical ward, ward 2A, Mandy said that it is within the realm of this ward that unfortunately they diagnose many patients with their cancers. As the majority of people who work on this ward are touched personally or immediately or know of someone who has cancer or who has passed away with cancer, Mandy chose to enter the Nurse of the Year campaign as it is not a government funded cause and she believes strongly that it needs the financial support. I wish Mandy every success in the 2007 Nurse of the Year quest and commend her for embarking on this worthy quest.

During the campaign's history, the Nurse of the Year entrants also spread the message of cancer prevention and early detection to countless Queenslanders in all areas of the state. Since its establishment in 1961, the Queensland Cancer Council has relied on the support of Queenslanders to provide a vital link between the public and people with cancer in the belief that together we will find a cure. Commencing in 1971, the Nurse of the Year campaign has raised over \$25 million to assist with cancer control. With 54 entrants this year, they are trying to break the figure raised by last year's entrants of \$1.6 million.

Cancer patients in rural and regional Queensland are being neglected by this Labor government which refused to increase the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme for 20 years. A statewide campaign is underway to lobby members of this state government to show they have a heart and assist cancer patients in isolated areas to access specialist medical services and accommodation.

Even the Gold Coast—the sixth biggest city in Australia—does not have a medical oncologist at its major hospital. This is an appalling situation and one that is causing untold angst to patients and their families who are forced to travel to Brisbane. Here we saw the cruelty of this government in action as it turfed palliative care patients and staff at Robina Hospital out of their ground floor ward and into a less appropriate location in Southport with merely a couple of weeks notice.

By entering this campaign, Mandy and other entrants aim to reach a broad section of the community with public speaking and meeting community groups. Mandy personally feels it was well worth participating and getting involved. It is such a pity the Queensland government does not feel the same way, because it is showing a total dereliction of its duty of care to cancer patients. The Cancer Council of Queensland helps promote research and investigations in respect of the cause, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancers, and it deserves a whole lot better support than it is getting from this government.

### Redlands State Emergency Service Awards

**Mr WEIGHTMAN** (Cleveland—ALP) (10.06 pm): Recently some real heroes in the Redlands community were acknowledged for their outstanding efforts to make our community safer at the Redlands SES awards presentation evening. I thank the minister for making the night a memorable night for all attending, where some worthy people were recognised for many years of good service to the SES.

In my past life as a police officer, for 26 years it was my job to play a role in protecting members of the community. I got paid to do that; however, the heroes of the Redlands community who were honoured at the awards evening volunteer to help our community when help is most needed. These are local residents who put their hands up to do the work when it is most needed. They train hard in their own time, and they need to train hard because lives often depend on their abilities. Too often we think of our SES volunteers as people who do crowd control or who are used as extra bodies to help the police during searches, but they do more. They help in complicated land searches, repairing storm damage, assisting in white water rescues and many more tasks that require high levels of expertise and safety.

As the state member for Cleveland, I want to continue building a better lifestyle for all of us who live on the bayside. That involves building a better community, and it is the volunteers in our community who are the fabric who keep our community sewn together. I believe that volunteers are the true heroes in our communities.

Award recipients that night were Tom Short, for a remarkable 15 years of dedicated service, and Gary Soutar, Peter Gould and Doug Brunner who were honoured for their 10 years of valiant service to the SES. They are wonderful examples for the rest of our community. The presentation evening was also an opportunity to say thankyou to the 90 fantastic volunteers who make up the Redlands SES. These are the same people who volunteered to go up north during Cyclone Larry to assist in the clean-up operations. They enjoy a very good reputation for being a well-organised and very disciplined volunteer SES group. I know they train hard to improve their range of expertise in a variety of fields. This makes them a sought after commodity in times of disaster. On behalf of a very grateful community, I would like to thank the volunteers of the Redlands SES on a job well done.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 10.08 pm.

### ATTENDANCE

Attwood, Barry, Beattie, Bligh, Bombolas, Boyle, Choi, Copeland, Cripps, 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, Lucas, McArdle, McNamara, Male, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Mickel, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nicholls, Nolan, O'Brien, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Pratt, Purcell, Reeves, Reilly, Rickuss, Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, Scott, Seeney, Shine, Simpson, Smith, Spence, Springborg, Stevens, Stone, Struthers, Stuckey, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Weightman, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson