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WEDNESDAY, 13 FEBRUARY 2008

The Legislative Assembly met at 9.30 am.

Mr Speaker (Hon. MF Reynolds, Townsville) read prayers and took the chair.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS

National Sorry Day

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, on this very significant National Sorry Day, I respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which this parliament is assembled and the custodians of the sacred lands of our state. I warmly and sincerely welcome to the public gallery traditional owners and elders, and particularly today I warmly recognise and say to the members of the stolen generation that we are glad you are with us on this very, very important occasion.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have had a very significant occasion here at the parliament this morning, joined by our colleagues in the gallery. I thank the Premier and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for attending that ceremony and making this such a significant day when our Prime Minister delivered his statement of sorry to the national parliament.

Privilege, Local Government Reform

Mr SPEAKER: On 1 November 2007, the member for Warrego rose on a matter of privilege and alleged that the Premier had misled the House in relation to the drafting of the Local Government Reform Implementation Bill. In essence, the matter relates to the nature and timing of the consultation with the Local Government Association of Queensland through the state transition committee about the drafting of the legislation.

I advised the member for Warrego to write to me in accordance with standing order 269. The member subsequently advised me that he would not be proceeding with the complaint. The Premier wrote to me about the matter, and I table that correspondence for the information of the House.

Tabled paper: Copy letter, dated 1 November 2007, from the Premier to Mr Speaker, relating to matter of privilege raised by Mr Hobbs.

I intend to take no further action in respect of the matter, but I think it important to advise the House that the complaint was not proceeded with.

SPEAKER'S RULING

Privilege, Alleged Misleading of the House by the Minister for Natural Resources and Water

Mr SPEAKER: On 30 October 2007 during the matters of public interest debate the member for Darling Downs alleged that the Minister for Natural Resources and Water had misled the House on 11 October 2007 during question time. The member subsequently wrote to me and asked that the matter be referred to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee. The Acting Minister for Natural Resources and Water also wrote to me about the matter.

There are three elements to be established when it is alleged that a member has committed the contempt of deliberately misleading the House. Firstly, the statement must, in fact, have been misleading; secondly, it must be established that the member making the statement knew at the time the statement was made that it was incorrect; and thirdly, in making the statement the member must have intended to mislead the House. The member for Darling Downs alleges that during an answer to a question on notice on 11 October 2007 the Minister for Natural Resources and Water made five misleading statements relating to a lease held by Mr George Toomby.

I have studied *Hansard*, tabled documents and the material supplied to me by the member for Darling Downs and the Acting Minister for Natural Resources and Water. Official reports and advice from government officials referred to in the correspondence from the acting minister support the statements made on 11 October by the Minister for Natural Resources and Water. I table that correspondence for the information of the House.

Tabled paper: Copy letter, undated, from Hon. John Mickel, Acting Minister for Natural Resources and Water, to Mr Speaker, relating to matter of privilege raised by Mr Hopper.

The minister's statements do not appear to be inaccurate or misleading. I therefore find that there is no basis to demonstrate a prima facie contempt of deliberately misleading the House. I intend to take no further action in respect of the matter.

However, I will make some observations about the manner in which this complaint was raised. I note that the member for Darling Downs raised this matter of privilege during the matters of public interest debate. I remind all honourable members of my ruling of 1 November 2006, where I stated—

... sessional orders provide a time for matters of privilege to be raised.

As Speaker, I take a very dim view of members not complying with the spirit of the standing and sessional orders by not raising matters as a matter of privilege, but using another time on the business program, such as the matters of public interest debate, private members' statements or the adjournment debate, to raise and air matters of privilege.

I also note that in his letter to me the member for Darling Downs has not alleged, nor provided any evidence, that the minister knew at the time the statements were made that they were incorrect and that the minister intended to mislead the House. Again I refer to my ruling of 1 November 2006, where I stated—

In the case of allegations of deliberately misleading the House... I expect as Speaker sufficient particulars of not only the allegedly deliberately misleading statements, but particulars of the evidence against which an allegation is to be judged. The letter should provide clear analysis demonstrating that any statements made were not only misleading but also deliberately misleading.

I urge all honourable members to remind themselves of the procedures for raising matters of privilege in this House.

PETITIONS

The Clerk presented the following paper petitions, lodged by the honourable members indicated—

Coombabah Creek, Fishing Boundary

Ms Croft, from 2,695 petitioners, requesting the House to abolish proposed plans to move the current no fishing boundary in Coombabah Creek.

Parrearra, Housing Development

Mr Dickson, from 325 petitioners, requesting the House to give residents of Sunbird Chase, Parrearra, and adjoining streets, the opportunity to comment on the proposal for housing development for their area, in line with normal application process.

Rapid Transit System

Mr Langbroek, from 67 petitioners, requesting the House to design the Rapid Transit System—Western Route Gold Coast Highway, for the long term benefit of the community, not around a four-day Indy event.

Mental Health Services

Mrs Pratt, from 1,215 petitioners, requesting the House to address the needs of people with severe mental illnesses as a matter of urgency.

Gracemere Ambulance Station

Mr Pearce, from 819 petitioners, requesting the House to urge the Minister for Emergency Services to appoint suitably qualified Queensland Ambulance Officers to Gracemere Ambulance Station as a matter of priority.

Mareeba Shire Planning Scheme (Myola Zone)

Mr Wettenhall, from 870 petitioners, requesting the House to call the Minister for Infrastructure to not allow the Mareeba Shire Planning Scheme (Myola Zone) to proceed.

Kulangoor, Landfill

Mr Wellington, from 265 petitioners, requesting the House to reject the application for a landfill site at Ferntree Creek Road, Kulangoor.

Powerlink Easement

Mr Wellington, from 427 petitioners, requesting the House to find an alternative to the proposed Powerlink easement through the Eumundi, Eerwah Vale, Belli Park, Ridgewood and Cooroy West community.

The Clerk presented the following e-petition, sponsored by the honourable member indicated—

Bromelton State Development Area

Mr Lingard, from 215 petitioners, requesting the House to extend public consultation on the Bromelton State Development Area and provide transparent decision systems for future land use.

Petitions received.

TABLED PAPER

MINISTERIAL PAPER TABLED BY THE CLERK

The following ministerial paper was tabled by the Clerk—

Minister for Main Roads and Local Government (Mr Pitt)—

- Government's response to Public Accounts Committee Report No. 77: *Review of Auditor-General Report No. 1 for 2006—Results of Local Government Audits for 2004-05—Local Government Investment Credit Risk*

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Stolen Generation, Sorry Motion

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier) (9.39 am): Today, 13 February 2008, is a day of national significance. It is a powerful and emotional day for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians alike, a day when we as a nation consciously make our own history.

This morning I was pleased to join you, Mr Speaker, and other members of the House in attending a breakfast reception held here in the parliament for Indigenous leaders, elders and members of the stolen generations and their families. This was an emotional experience for all present. As you know, Mr Speaker, I was overcome by the emotion of the morning as I addressed the people who had gathered in the room. This morning the faces that were looking back at me were all filled with tears.

Again it struck me that the pain that is being acknowledged today in the federal parliament of this country is not a pain that is an ancient history. It is a raw and ever-present reality for so many Queenslanders who live in our neighbourhoods and whom we represent as part of our electorates. There were many hurting hearts in that room, as there are right across the country, and the power of that emotion was very tangible. This morning I acknowledge the presence in the public gallery of those Indigenous Queenslanders who have attended parliament for this momentous occasion.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Ms BLIGH: Today this country took an historic step towards true national reconciliation. Today the federal government of Australia, under the leadership of Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, made an unreserved apology to Indigenous Australians who were members of the stolen generations, to their families and to their descendants and recognised that each and every one of them has been affected in their own way. This morning in the national parliament Prime Minister Rudd fully acknowledged and apologised for the pain and suffering experienced by Indigenous Australia as a result of laws and actions that were sanctioned and legislated by the parliaments of this country, including the Queensland parliament; laws and actions that tore apart Indigenous communities, and that forcibly removed children from the guidance and love of their parents, their families and their culture.

The Prime Minister has provided an opportunity for all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to turn a new page on reconciliation. While the national apology will not of itself fix the many problems experienced by Indigenous people, it is an important and significant beginning. To truly embark on reconciliation, past practices must be severed with a loud declaration of apology. We cannot face the future with a sense of hope unless we recognise and acknowledge our full history—our finest moments and our most shameful ones.

Those who had an opportunity to listen to the proceedings in the federal parliament this morning could not help but be struck by the significance of the moment and the powerful symbolism in the federal parliament. In my view, that symbolism was all the more potent because it was such a bipartisan moment in the history of Australian politics. The symbolism of Prime Minister Rudd and opposition leader Brendan Nelson joining together in a genuine act of unity and partnership was exactly what the recommendation for an apology was all about when it was first made. Unfortunately, for very many political reasons, that recommendation led to a 10-year argument in this country. From the outset what was needed was unity and partnership so that we could take these difficult and intractable issues forward.

On this issue I want to commend Prime Minister Kevin Rudd for his leadership and the opposition leader, Brendan Nelson, for his leadership of the conservative side of politics. As I watched both leaders of our nation in the parliament, together greeting Aboriginal leaders and together managing this issue, I thought it a very potent symbol of unity and partnership.

This House is no stranger to such an apology. On 26 May 1999, the Queensland parliament voted to say sorry to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Queensland for the past policies under which their children were taken away from them. This was a significant day in the House. I acknowledge the leadership of my colleague Judy Spence, the now Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Sport, for her leadership on that issue and as I recall for moving the motion that day. On that day we acknowledged and apologised for the part that our state parliament had played in Indigenous suffering.

Unfortunately, for many reasons, the apology of May 1999 did not enjoy bipartisan support such as we witnessed in the federal parliament today. At the conclusion of my statement I will move that my statement be noted. I have advised the Leader of the Opposition of my intention to have the statement noted. This allows the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Southern Downs, the opportunity to make his own contribution to the debate this morning. I offer this opportunity in a genuine and sincere effort to give the Leader of the Opposition the opportunity to join with his federal colleagues in overcoming some of the previous reluctance of his side of politics on this issue. I make this offer in a genuine and sincere effort to see replicated here the sort of unity and bipartisanship that we witnessed this morning. I hope that that offer is accepted in the spirit of sincerity with which it was made.

For me, another very powerful aspect of today's apology, which I think is a very important statement, is that the wording was as focused on the future as it was on recognising the past. It focused on a future where injustices of the kind being remedied today are not repeated; a future where Indigenous Australians can enjoy the same opportunities and the same quality of life that all Australians expect; a future where all Australians, whatever their origin, can put to rest the pain of yesterday and work together to create a tomorrow of equality, respect and mutual responsibility.

I endorse the national apology made in our federal parliament today. As I did on 26 May 1999, I acknowledge the resilience of the Indigenous people of this country. Their determination to survive the unjust policies of the past is a testament not only to their personal and individual strength but also to the proud and resilient nature of their culture.

Motion to Take Note

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier) (9.46 am): I move—

That the House take note of the statement.

Stolen Generation, Sorry Motion

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.46 am): This is indeed a very significant day for this parliament, as it is a significant day for the Commonwealth parliament. No-one should underestimate in any way whatsoever the extraordinary and extreme suffering of many of our Indigenous Australians over the last 200-odd years. On no occasion have I or any of my colleagues on this side of the House ever sought to diminish that. No Australian should underestimate or even seek to understand the suffering that those people go through, because unless one has lived it one can never completely understand it.

Over a period this parliament has considered this issue, and I will come to that in a moment. The best gauge of what we can actually achieve for Indigenous Australians is to assess our actions and not just our words. Today that was profoundly and significantly alluded to by Prime Minister Rudd when he moved the sorry motion in the national parliament. The most significant gauge for what we will seek to achieve and the way that we will be judged in the future is how we have taken the words and been able to weave them into real action that means something for Indigenous people, not only in our state but throughout Australia.

A little over a decade ago this parliament passed a motion of regret. Nine years ago this parliament passed a motion of sorry. As I indicated, the greatest gauge for what we can achieve for Indigenous people is to look at what we have done with our words. As a parliament we probably should be saying sorry to Indigenous people for not doing enough since we said sorry in this parliament nine years ago.

Let us look at the indicators that are significant for the people of Australia. Let us look at what it really means for Indigenous health, what it means for Indigenous child mortality in Queensland, what it means for the disparity of life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, what it means for alcohol and alternative substance abuse in those communities, what it means for housing, what it means for unemployment and what it means for so many other indicators. When we look at those things we can see that we have very badly failed those people since we passed that motion in this parliament almost nine years ago. I ask this parliament to reflect on that, because it is extremely salient in the context of what the Prime Minister said today.

In my conversation with Indigenous communities in recent times and previously the amount of relative disadvantage is very, very apparent to me. But what is also very apparent to me is an extraordinary resilience on the part of those Indigenous communities to overcome that disadvantage which they have not been responsible for—and not only that but being proactively and properly engaged in that process and empowered along the way. That is one of the reasons that we have always felt that there needs to be a special place and special involvement for Indigenous communities, and that is why in the past a coalition government in this parliament established the DOGIT communities. We can have a debate about the effect of those or otherwise, but it recognised that a significant cultural difference existed there.

One thing that has happened in recent years is that there has been a reactive approach to Indigenous policy. There has been a reactive approach to the problems that permeate in those communities. In many ways I think that is unfair because some of those problems are reflected across the demographic of non-Indigenous communities but because they are captured in a particular area it is very easy to sensationalise them. Those people are very, very keen to address their concerns. That has been the engagement they have wanted to be involved in with not only the state but the national government over a period of time.

I want to turn momentarily to the issue of the stolen generation. The stolen generation, as we are calling it today, is no doubt in many ways a blight on the history of this nation. No-one should argue

against that. But, as much as there was great wrong done by many of those people who took those children, we also need to understand that many of those children were taken at the time because it was felt that there were child safety issues, that there were malnourishment issues and that children ran the risk of actually being harmed or even killed. We can make some sort of subjective or objective judgement today about the rights and wrongs of all of those things. I would dare say that some of those children may not have been alive today if they had not been put into certain circumstances, but many of those children were torn asunder from their communities and those communities and their families were destroyed as a consequence.

It is also salient for us to consider in this parliament today that we are removing children from Indigenous communities for many of the same reasons that they may have been removed then. We are doing it in different circumstances. That really pains me. It pains me that we have not been able to get on top of many of those issues—the issue of child abuse in Indigenous communities, the issue of the number of Indigenous children who have been sexually abused, the issue of the number of children in Indigenous communities who have not been sent to school, the issue of a number of Indigenous children who do not have proper nourishment. They are matters that should trouble us in this parliament, and it should really trouble us a lot more that we have not necessarily addressed those issues.

Also in my conversation with Indigenous people in recent times and in the past many of them have said that, whilst an apology is an important symbolic gesture which they would welcome, others have said—and we have seen this in the mainstream media in recent days—that it means little; they are more interested in actions. If we look at some of the reports here, they should give parliament concern about the issue of words. These are just some of the reports that this parliament has considered and has been the architect of: *Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy: Strategic Plan 2004-08*; *Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Agreement*, 19 December 2000 and Summary; *Partnerships Queensland Overview: Future Directions Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy in Queensland 2005-2010*; *Indigenous Partnerships Agreement*, *July 2007*; *Towards ... a Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health Study: A Scoping Paper ...*; *A statistical overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia*; *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2003*; *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2005*; *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2007*.

Maybe what we have to commit ourselves to do today beyond the tokenism is to take these words and actually do something with them. We know full well that there are a raft of other very significant reports which have been prepared at the direction of this parliament and at the direction of this government, not least of which of course was Boni Robertson's report only a few years ago into the issue of alcohol abuse and the problems of domestic violence in our Indigenous communities. I dare ask: from any indicator I have seen has there been any improvement in those areas? The answer is generally no.

In conclusion, simply overcoming more than two centuries of cultural divergence and dispossession is not something that we are going to achieve overnight. It concerns me greatly in the response of any government that we see something which wants to provide an immediate answer, something that can overcome the sensationalisation of the problems which are focused on in Indigenous communities—problems which may or may not in certain circumstances be greater than in the general community but nevertheless attract a lot of attention by the mainstream media and others. Two centuries and more of dispossession, two centuries and more of cultural divergence, two centuries and more of the issues that have arisen are not going to be solved overnight. Of course we need short-term actions and solution. But not only that; we need to understand that generations of dispossession, generations of disadvantage, cannot be overcome overnight. There has to be a very, very simple and significant commitment from this parliament, in a bipartisan way, to be prepared to do it in the long-term and not just apply short-term stopgap measures.

I acknowledge the Indigenous people in our gallery today. I can never understand your hurt. I can never understand your pain. All I can say is that we as a parliament will endeavour to do better on the things that actually do make a difference for your life and for the lives of your children in the future.

Mr SPEAKER: On behalf of the parliament I thank both the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition for their statements on this very, very significant day.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Photographs in Chamber

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise the House that a photographer from the *Courier-Mail* will be present in the chamber for the remainder of this session operating under the present media guidelines.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Floods

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier) (9.56 am): Early this morning the monsoonal low that has brought heavy rain, strong winds, flash flooding and rising river heights to our state moved offshore. However, its impact is still being felt.

The search for a teenage boy who was reported missing at Marian Weir, west of Mackay, yesterday afternoon has resumed this morning. Mr Speaker, I am sure the thoughts and prayers of every member of parliament go out to both him and his family this morning during their very anxious and painful wait.

Emergency services personnel were kept busy in other parts of the state overnight. Two people were rescued from the roof of a car caught in floodwaters near Miriam Vale late yesterday. Townsville's emergency rescue helicopter rescued a man and his dog from a bus near Giru. At Yeppoon, more than 120 jobs were lodged with local SES crews over the last 24 hours, primarily sandbagging and roof tarping. SES volunteers from Mount Morgan travelled to the Capricorn Coast to assist. A similar number of jobs have been fielded by SES volunteers in the Sunshine Coast and Wide Bay regions, while SES crews in the state's south-east attended almost 20 jobs, mostly to fix leaky roofs.

Queensland's rivers are running strongly. Flood warnings are current for the Haughton, Burdekin and Don rivers in north Queensland, the Connors and Isaac rivers in central Queensland, and Lower Condamine, Balonne and Moonie rivers in the south. Roads remain cut, and communities and residents remain isolated and inundated.

Queenslanders who have wondered in recent years when the rains will return could be excused for asking now when will it stop. However, the drought is not over. The pain for those affected by heavy rain and floods is shared by those who have missed out on rain all together. That is why our government will continue to provide assistance for rural Queenslanders in drought, as well as getting on with the job of helping those affected by floods in recent weeks.

South-East Queensland Schools Project

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier) (9.59 am): I am pleased today to make a major announcement of seven new schools for south-east Queensland. These schools will be built on greenfield sites in the western corridor of Brisbane, the Redlands area and on the southern and northern ends of the Sunshine Coast. The sites have been chosen on future population projections and are key growth areas in the south-east corner.

Work is set to get underway early next year, with four schools set to welcome students in the door from the start of 2010—one on the Sunshine Coast, two in the western corridor and one in the Redlands area. The remaining three schools—two in the western corridor and one on the Sunshine Coast—will be open to students in 2011.

The schools will be built under an innovative new public-private partnership model—the SEQ Schools Project. The private sector will be engaged to maintain and manage the schools, and all education services will be provided by the state. The private sector will take responsibility for the construction and ongoing maintenance of the schools over a period of about 30 years. The scope of the ongoing tasks to be undertaken by the private sector includes building repairs, cleaning, janitorial duties, groundskeeping and security. By giving responsibility for these services to the construction partner in the private sector, the school's principal and educational staff will be able to focus entirely on what they do best—educating young Queenslanders.

Partnering with the private sector can offer us the best of both worlds. There is no doubt that here in Queensland we have been more cautious than many other jurisdictions when it comes to adopting public-private partnerships. That is because we rank value for money for taxpayers No. 1. This public-private partnership delivers by offering state-of-the-art schools in our community while maximising value for money for taxpayers.

The SEQ Schools Project will build on the success of our first educational PPP—the award-winning Southbank Education and Training precinct. We also investigated the successful New South Wales New Schools PPP projects, which are delivering 19 schools with significant value for money for the government and significant performance improvements for the community.

The South-East Queensland Schools Project will utilise a supported debt model for the PPP, allowing companies to use lower rate public sector borrowings during the low-risk operational stage of the project. To my knowledge, this is the first PPP that will utilise a supported debt model using public sector borrowing rates anywhere in Australia.

As part of the south-east Queensland plan, we made it clear that we would investigate the possible joint delivery of new schools. Teachers and students at a school built under a PPP will continue to receive services that are as good as or better than anything now provided. These schools will still offer the same standards of academic excellence, the same range of services and the same duty of care for our students.

I know that for some within the trade union movement public-private partnerships are a new and untested way of delivering infrastructure and services. Our government takes the concerns very seriously and is committed to working through these issues with the relevant trade unions as we pursue this project.

Today's announcement does not mean that every new school in Queensland will be built under a PPP model. Q-Build do a very good job and will still have a major role to play. Over the next 20 years we are set to build 42 new schools in Queensland at an estimated cost of more than $2.8 billion. The construction of each of these schools will be determined on a case-by-case basis and it may be that traditional methods of procurement offer better value for money.

Our priority is the delivery of quality educational facilities at the best value for money for taxpayers. If that means that we should take the opportunity to build these seven new schools under a PPP model that has reaped benefits in other jurisdictions, in my view we should do just that. We are uniquely placed in Queensland to build these new schools under a PPP model, while also building new schools under traditional procurement. We will then be in a position to compare the outcomes. We will be reporting back to the people of Queensland, the parents and this parliament on the progress of this project.

Water Management

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for Infrastructure and Planning) (10.03 am): The state government takes water security very seriously. That is why we are spending $9 billion building the south-east Queensland water grid. That is why the Queensland Water Commission has worked with the community to ensure that south-east Queenslanders could meet and then beat Target 140 during the last eight months.

We have taken a responsible approach to work with the community—householders and businesses—to deliver the results without resorting to scaremongering. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the opposition. A perfect example of this is the opposition's approach to the implementation of level 6 restrictions last November. At the time, the member for Maroochydore released a media release which stated—

Draconian Level 6 water restrictions under the Bligh Government could cost up to 20,000 jobs and $5 billion according to a Government report.

When she asked the Premier about it in Parliament, the member for Maroochydore said—

Your government report reveals that this could cost up to 20,000 jobs and $5 billion. Is this Labor's definition of economic conservatism?

This is yet another perfect example of the deputy opposition leader's approach to water security—hysteria about water restrictions and calls for water resources to be built everywhere except the Sunshine Coast. The Leader of the Opposition was unable to provide any positive policy alternatives when given the chance yesterday, but it is not too late for the new opposition leader to encourage his deputy to engage in serious debate.

Let us look exactly at the member for Maroochydore's claims—that is, 20,000 jobs gone and $5 billion wiped off the bottom line of south-east Queensland businesses. If the deputy opposition leader's claims were correct, we would have seen shopping centres and malls across south-east Queensland deserted over Christmas. It would have been the opposition's very own version of the movie *I Am Legend,* but instead of Will Smith being the only person alive in New York, the member for Maroochydore would have been walking down the Queen Street Mall seeing all the shops boarded up because of her assertions about the government's water policy.

I am not sure where the member for Maroochydore did her Christmas shopping but there were certainly lots of crowds in the mall when I was there, and the Wynnum IGA was jam-packed with people getting their last minute groceries.

Mr Reeves: The Wynnum IGA?

Mr LUCAS: Yes, the Wynnum IGA. The Australian Retailers Association estimates that retails sales from mid-November to Christmas Eve were up across Australia by 7.4 per cent—the largest increase in nearly a decade. The association estimates that $35.4 billion was spent across Australia in that period, with 20 per cent of that in Queensland. In real terms, retail turnover in Queensland increased 1.7 per cent in the December quarter—compared to a national increase of 1.3 per cent—to be 8.1 per cent higher than a year earlier and three per cent higher than the national increase of 5.1 per cent.

Total employment in Queensland increased by 4,400 jobs in December 2007. Over the 12 months to December 2007, total employment rose by 59,900 in Queensland. Our unemployment rate in December was 3.7 per cent—the fifth consecutive month in a row at that level. The national unemployment rate was 4.4 per cent. I call on the member for Maroochydore to make a fresh start in 2008 and stop making ridiculous and hysterical claims. The facts do not support her assertions.

Mr SPEAKER: I call the Minister for Education and Training and Minister for the Arts.

Miss Simpson interjected.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Deputy Premier and the member for Maroochydore to desist. Another minister has the call.

South-East Queensland Schools Project

Hon. RJ WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Education and Training and Minister for the Arts) (10.06 am): The Premier announced this morning that we will be seeking expressions of interest from the private sector to build and maintain a package of new schools in the Sunshine Coast, the western corridor and the Redlands areas. This follows our commitment under the South East Queensland Regional Plan and the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan to ensure that we provide the infrastructure necessary for these growing communities.

South-east Queensland is the fastest growing region in Australia and with that comes an increasing need for infrastructure such as schools. Our government is committed to delivering new schools in developing growth areas and leading infrastructure development across the region. The South-East Queensland Schools Project will involve the private sector being engaged to not only build and deliver the schools but provide the ongoing maintenance and management of school facilities.

A major benefit of the project is that it will allow the principals and educational staff of these schools to focus on curriculum based issues. The responsibility of services such as maintenance, cleaning and groundskeeping will be managed by the private sector, freeing up more time so that principals can concentrate on what is most important—that is, the quality of the educational curriculum that is delivered in every classroom to every student.

The South-East Queensland Schools Project will build on the success of our first educational public-private partnership which has delivered the award-winning Southbank Education and Training Precinct to provide for the Southbank Institute of TAFE. The Southbank PPP was last year judged the Best Global Project in the international Public Private Finance Awards. In bestowing the honour on the Southbank project, the judges recognised that it best met the criteria for its innovation, design quality and sustainability, financial efficiency and effective risk assessment and management. The Southbank project has given us significant experience in developing educational PPP projects which we will use to deliver this package of schools.

We have also investigated the New South Wales New Schools PPP projects which have delivered significant value for money for the government and the community in that state. We will seek expressions of interest from the private sector this month to develop this new package of schools. The locations for the schools, as announced by the Premier, have been based on future population projections. These new schools will ensure that our rapidly developing areas receive the high-quality and well-maintained educational facilities that they deserve.

Can I add my commendation to the Prime Minister, the federal opposition leader and our colleagues in the federal parliament for the significantly important bipartisan commitment to Sorry Day today. On behalf of the education community of Queensland, can I say that there is no more powerful vehicle for the liberation of disadvantaged communities, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, than a good quality education. Our government remains committed to providing facilities to deliver that outcome.

Water Grid

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Treasurer) (10.10 am): The water grid took another step forward earlier this month with the transfer of SEQWater to the new Queensland Bulk Water Supply Authority. With the finalisation of the compensation arrangements, the next transfer scheduled is Aquagen due by 1 March. The remainder of the bulk water assets will transfer progressively by 1 July this year. The council's compensation package is $1.9 billion for the 17.8 per cent of the assets the government is acquiring. Collectively, south-east Queensland councils overstate through the Queensland Treasury Corporation more than $2 billion. The compensation arrangements provided by the state are more than generous.

I acknowledge the support that many mayors across the south-east corner have provided for the final arrangements, particularly for their acknowledgement of the state's concessions during the negotiations. In essence, we have paid more than 80 per cent of the debt south-east Queensland councils owe for 20 per cent of just one class of their assets. Additionally, in relation to the shareholding in South East Queensland Water, the councils are also getting the deal of the century with compensation amounting to around $360 million, $200 million of which will go to the Brisbane City Council alone. This is a fair and equitable level of compensation for this asset, particularly when you consider how the councils came to have the significant shareholdings in this asset.

Many members would be aware that eight years ago South East Queensland Water was in fact 100 per cent owned by the state. We gave councils an 80 per cent shareholding in the company and they paid not one red cent for it. Eight years later we are paying them $360 million to compensate them for their shareholding. It is only the electioneering Lord Mayor of Brisbane who continues to bang on for a special deal for SEQWater. I would say to the Lord Mayor of Brisbane: this is a pretty special deal. Not many Queenslanders who picked up shares for nothing eight years ago would complain that they were being paid hundreds of millions of dollars in compensation eight years later. In essence, the lord mayor has won lotto and now he wants to put the balls back in the barrel and have another crack.

Today I also wish to advise the House not only of the establishment of the Queensland Bulk Water Supply Authority and the Queensland Bulk Water Transport Authority to bring each of the acquired assets together into single entities but also of the appointment of the chairs and directors of the boards. Ms Annabelle Chaplain will chair the Queensland Bulk Water Supply Authority. Ms Chaplain is the perfect fit for the position, being the current chair of SEQWater and a board member for nine years. The other Bulk Water Supply Authority members are Mary Boydell, Tom Fenwick, Lee-anne Bond, and Ian Fraser. The Queensland Bulk Water Transport Authority will be chaired by Steve Roberts. Mr Roberts is the current chair of the Southern Regional Water Pipeline Company and has over two decades of experience in the resources centre. His board will include Catherine Sinclair, Graham Thomsen and John Orange. We have experienced torrential downpours in the past month, but water remains our most precious asset. So these are important appointments for the future of effective water delivery as we confront the unknowns of climate change.

Queensland Police Service, *Report on Government Services*

Hon. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Sport) (10.12 am): I am pleased to say that the Queensland Police Service continues to be one of Australia's highest performing jurisdictions. The *Report on government services* released by the Productivity Commission shows that, while there is always room for improvement, our police are doing an excellent job. The 2008 report shows our police performed better than the national average in the key areas of police professionalism, public safety and common neighbourhood concerns. Complaints against police have again decreased from 38 for every 100,000 people to 35 per 100,000 people. This is a tremendous result considering that this figure was 47 for every 100,000 people just two years ago.

Our police are also above the national average in the key categories of 'Police perform their job professionally', 'Most police are honest' and 'Police treat people fairly and equally'. The 2006-07 Queensland police annual statistical review showed overall crime has reduced by 19 per cent over the last six years. This year's *ROGS* reflects this trend by showing Queenslanders generally feel safer than their national counterparts and are less likely to fear crime in their neighbourhood. This is despite the efforts of the member for Noosa and other members of the opposition doing their very best to turn these figures around. It just shows that no-one is listening to them.

We have continued to deliver record police budgets, with the 2007-08 budget injecting $1.437 billion into policing. A continued decrease in statewide crime rates is evidence that our support for policing is paying dividends. Other key highlights in the *ROGS* are: Queenslanders' sense of safety increased significantly on public transport, with daytime results increasing by over nine per cent and night-time results by over 10 per cent. 93.6 per cent of Queenslanders feel safe alone at home during the day and 85.6 per cent feel safe at night compared to the national average. Queenslanders are less likely to be victims of property crime, with all categories below the national average. 38.6 per cent of Queenslanders were concerned with motor vehicle theft compared to the national average of 46.6 per cent. Queensland was also below the national result in terms of concerns about illegal drugs, housebreaking and physical assault.

On another matter, yesterday I told the House about the actions of three police officers who entered wild seas to rescue a family of six from a sinking yacht at Airlie Beach. I understand that Sergeant Russell Pike, Senior Constable Simon Docking and Constable Bree Sonter will be nominated for appropriate recognition for their brave acts. As minister, I want to put on record my appreciation for their courage in risking their lives in extremely dangerous conditions to get two adults and four children to safety. They have done the Queensland Police Service and the people of Queensland proud.

Real Property Constructions

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology) (10.16 am): Yesterday I informed honourable members about the collapse of Sunshine Coast based company Real Property Constructions Pty Ltd. RPC's collapse appears to be another case where a building company's serious financial position was brought about by its involvement with investment and marketing companies which are also known as wealth creation companies. They might be better described as wealth destroying companies.

I am informed that investigations by the Queensland Building Services Authority shows that Real Property Constructions was involved with several of these wealth creation companies and identities which introduced clients to RPC at a price. These include the Australian College of Financial Education Pty Ltd, the Investors Club, the Blackburne Property Group, Onsite Direct and Gary Omara. The BSA has uncovered that RPC was paying about $30,000 in commissions to these wealth creation companies on a typical house of $210,000, which is about 14 per cent of the total price. Members can work out for themselves just what a rort that was, and I note the agreement from the shadow minister. This obviously has a direct and dramatic effect on the builder's gross profit.

To compound matters, the commissions were payable at an early stage of the contract. $10,500, or 35 per cent of the commission, was payable when the slab was poured. Clearly at this early stage of a contract payments for work done would not have been sufficient to cover the commission and the costs incurred. At the enclosed stage of each building the balance of the commission was then due. It is not uncommon for these so-called wealth creation companies to lock the builder into fixed prices, giving them no capacity to factor in rising costs such as subcontractors' charges and materials increases. Building companies might find themselves tied into taking on jobs from the wealth creation companies meaning they cannot say no to a new contract because of the terms of their agreement with the wealth creation company.

The critical issue in this case was RPC's unsatisfactory financial managerial and administrative practice which gave the impression the company was making more from jobs than it actually was. This company did not have a proper understanding of its business performance which then prevented this management from identifying problems until it was too late. For the life of me I cannot understand why anybody would have anything to do with these wealth creation companies.

Floods; Emergency Services

Hon. N ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.18 am): Emergency services workers continue to monitor and respond to the impacts of heavy rains and associated flooding across Queensland this week. The clean-up and recovery effort has already commenced in some communities. Again, I wish to pay tribute to the work of our SES volunteers and emergency service workers across the state.

The Department of Emergency Services is consulting local governments about damages, with a view to determining whether joint state and Commonwealth funded assistance can be activated. The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service provides an outstanding service protecting Queenslanders and their property. In recognition of this, the service was allocated a record budget of $360 million this financial year—an increase of $36 million over 2006-07.

I want to be reassured that we are maximising these resources on the front line. Prior to Christmas, I announced that the Department of Emergency Services would review the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. Today I am releasing the terms of reference for the review. For the information of the House I table those terms of reference.

Tabled paper: Copy of terms of reference for review of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service

This review will not mirror the recent audit of the Queensland Ambulance Service. Unlike the Queensland Ambulance Service, demand for Queensland Fire and Rescue Service assistance has remained relatively stable in recent years. For example, over the past five years, ambulance demand has increased by a massive 46 per cent compared to 9.7 per cent for the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. It must also be recognised that the QFRS, unlike the Ambulance Service, works in critical areas such as compliance and enforcement.

According to the Productivity Commission's report on government services released last month, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service responded to 50 per cent of cases within 6.9 minutes, well under the 14-minute benchmark. Indeed, 97.6 per cent of cases are responded to under that 14-minute mark. That is a credit to our fire and rescue officers. This report also showed that property loss in Queensland was also the lowest of any Australian state at just $23 per person, down from $29 last year.

The review into the QFRS will examine how it is equipped to respond to changes in technology, workplace health and safety issues, new fire regulations and environmental issues such as climate change. The review will undertake a comprehensive financial analysis and closely examine the service's business model, identifying any potential savings that could be redirected towards the front line. This

review is about enhancing front-line service delivery and ultimately keeping Queenslanders safe. The firefighter and public sector unions have been advised of these terms of reference and we are committed to working with them.

On another matter, late last year the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service requested the assistance of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission to resolve outstanding issues between the service and the United Firefighters Union regarding a recent job evaluation report. This matter remains before the commission—the independent umpire—and a resolution is sought through conciliation in accordance with the terms of our enterprise bargaining agreement.

Wild Rivers

Hon. CA WALLACE (Thuringowa—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Water and Minister Assisting the Premier in North Queensland) (10.21 am): Mr Speaker, as you noted and as many ministers have said this morning, today is an historic day. The Rudd federal government this morning apologised to the stolen generation in an historic and moving ceremony. Like many other MPs in this House, I watched the ceremony held at the federal parliament this morning.

Today I would like to bring to the attention of the House the work of the Bligh government in enhancing Queensland's relationship with its Indigenous peoples. The Bligh government is delivering on its commitment to enlist the traditional land management skills of Indigenous people to manage Queensland's new wild rivers.

The state is employing 20 wild river rangers to work with landholders, communities and traditional owners to protect and promote the state's wild river systems. Six wild river rangers are based in the Gulf of Carpentaria, three rangers in Pormpuraaw and another at Kowanyama. These locally employed rangers have started or will start by the end of the month and will work with elders to preserve wetlands and ecosystems of high biodiversity or cultural significance. The remaining 10 rangers will be appointed to various areas after negotiation with local Indigenous peoples. The rangers will record traditional stories, local species and habitats, look after visitor management, manage weeds, feral animals, fire and other threats to these wonderful river systems.

This initiative has been delivered within the Looking After Country Together framework, a whole-of-government policy aimed at improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement in the management of our land and sea country. Queensland leads the way in the resolution of native title matters by way of agreement. This is a great indicator of our commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.

Importantly, over 50 per cent of all the Indigenous land use agreements registered nationally have been here in Queensland. As at 31 January 2008, 166 ILUAs were registered in Queensland compared with six in New South Wales, nine in Western Australia, 82 in the Northern Territory and 31 in Victoria. Queensland also leads the way with 42 determinations. We have proudly transferred 1.3 million hectares of land and established 62 land trusts to hold the land since the commencement of the Aboriginal Land Act 1991 and the Torres Strait Islander Land Act 1991.

Coal Industry

Hon. GJ WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy) (10.24 am): The Bligh government is at the forefront of exciting new technology to help combat climate change. Drilling is well underway deep in the Denison Trough in central Queensland in the search for clean coal solutions. The ZeroGen project could become the first in the world to combine coal gasification with carbon capture and storage to produce electricity with low carbon dioxide emissions.

It is a two-pronged approach and it is all about smarter, cleaner power. The first aims to convert coal into hydrogen gas to generate power. For this, ZeroGen plans to build a demonstration power plant close to the Stanwell Power Station near Rockhampton. The second aims to capture carbon dioxide released in the combustion process at the site and store it underground in deep saline reservoirs in the Northern Denison Trough. We have committed $300 million to the project from our Clean Coal Fund.

With delays in the FutureGen project in the US, the international spotlight will move somewhat more to Queensland. We are also on the front foot with an oxyfuel project being developed by CS Energy near Biloela. This involves using a conventional power station, burning the coal in pure oxygen, making it easier to capture the carbon dioxide. It is expected to demonstrate that our coal-fired power stations fleet can be retrofitted with this technology to achieve deep cuts to carbon emissions. That is important in a state with more than 32 billion tonnes of high-quality, low-cost, easily accessible black coal.

Coal will continue to play a role in the global electricity mix even as we move to more renewable green solutions. Our key challenge is to use it in a responsible and environmentally sustainable way. One of the world's leading economists on climate change, Sir Nicholas Stern, said that clean coal could be Australia's gift to the world.

With ZeroGen and our oxyfuel project, Queensland is showing leadership. We have set up a Clean Coal Council chaired by the Premier and it has come up with sensible, workable solutions. We are doing this because we take our responsibilities seriously and are planning for the future.

Equine Influenza

Hon. TS MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries) (10.26 am): Queensland is well on track to being completely free of equine influenza much sooner than we envisaged. The Bligh government's campaign, spearheaded by the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, is progressing so well that on 1 February we were able to transition the green zone that covers most of the state to a white zone.

White is the classification that covers unaffected areas and allows free movement of horses between these areas without testing or quarantine requirements. A waybill or other documentation required by the destination state is still needed. The strategy of strict movement conditions, good biosecurity and the vaccination program, combined with the cooperation of Queensland horse owners, has brought us to the point where eradication will soon be achieved.

The last five months have been very difficult for horse owners and for the industries that rely on them but the hard work of everyone is now paying dividends. There have been no new cases of infection reported since Christmas, and the longer we go without seeing new cases the more confident we are that the disease has burnt out.

We are aiming for the amber zone in the south-east corner to revert to a white zone in late February. The red zone could be reclassified as a green zone by mid-March 2008 or early April. There is a strong possibility that Queensland could be declared completely free of equine influenza by June this year.

As was stated recently by the Premier, there are now no equine influenza infected properties in Queensland, but there is no room for complacency. It remains absolutely crucial that any suspect cases of horse flu are reported to a local vet or DPIF immediately. Before we can be declared EI free, the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries will be conducting an intensive surveillance operation. Some 1,080 properties will be sampled throughout the amber and red zones at no cost to the owners. We are well and truly on track. This is a testament to the hard work of Biosecurity Queensland and the goodwill and cooperation of Queensland's horse industries and the community.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Deeral, Mr E and Bonner, Mr N

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.29 am): I give notice that I shall move—

That this parliament recognises the enormous contribution of Queensland's only ever Indigenous parliamentarians: Eric Deeral and Neville Bonner.

In the spirit of bipartisanship, I would be pleased if the Premier would second the motion when we debate it tonight.

Mr SPEAKER: The Premier has indicated that she will.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Stolen Generation, Sorry Motion

Mr SPRINGBORG (10.30 am): My question without notice is to the Premier. Premier, as I indicated earlier this morning, actions—not just words—are very important when it comes to Indigenous policy, a matter which was reflected by Kevin Rudd this morning when he moved the historic sorry motion in the federal parliament. He said—

Unless the great symbolism of reconciliation is accompanied by an ever greater substance, it is little more than a clanging gong. It is not sentiment that makes history; it is our actions that make history.

In light of the government's failures in Indigenous child health, child safety, education, incarceration rates, alcoholism, unemployment and mortality rates since the passing of the sorry motion in this House in 1999, is it not true that this government's record on Indigenous affairs has been little more than a clanging gong?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. I have to start by saying how very seriously disappointed I was this morning that the Leader of the Opposition comprehensively failed to take the opportunity that I offered him in a genuine sense of bipartisanship. All I can say is that I would respectfully suggest to him that he goes and watches the footage from the federal parliament this

morning and he watches the actions of the leader of the coalition federally, Brendan Nelson. There is no better example of leadership on this issue on the conservative side of politics. I have worked with Brendan Nelson as an education minister. We have had our disagreements on many things, but, frankly, I welcome the opportunity to take my hat off to him for what was a very powerful display this morning, by both leaders, of unity and bipartisanship. What it was followed by this morning was nothing more than the most graceless and mealy-mouthed excuse to avoid the issue. There was an opportunity there to rectify the failure of 1999 and it was comprehensively missed.

Let us talk about actions. Let us talk about some of the things that this government has done that are beginning to make a difference to the lives of real Indigenous Queenslanders. Let us talk about the alcohol management plans—many of which were opposed and undermined by people on that side of the House, many of which were given no support by the then shadow ministers. Restricting alcohol in any community is tough. It would be very hard to do it in my electorate; it would be very hard to do it in most electorates represented in this chamber. But we as a government bit the bullet and said after a comprehensive analysis by Tony Fitzgerald, 'We need to tighten up the availability of alcohol,' because, frankly, all of the money that is being put into services by local councils, by state governments and by federal governments of all political persuasions cannot fully realise its potential when all of the responsible adults and leaders in that community are not sober.

Unless people can actually live a sober life—and alcohol is one small part of it—we cannot possibly get the best out of those services. Sure, some of those plans have worked better than others, and I am meeting with the mayors on Friday to talk about how we can toughen them up and make them better again. We will keep moving on this issue until we see results. But nobody—no-one in those communities, Tony Fitzgerald when he proposed it or this government—expected that 200 years of abuse and 200 years of alcoholism were going to be overcome in one fell swoop overnight.

In terms of education, which is one of the areas in which we do see a spot of sunshine on the horizon, I congratulate all of the teachers in our remote communities doing everything in their power to give young children a better chance, and I would be happy to have an extension of time to talk about all of the services that are going into those schools.

Time expired.

Indigenous Education

Mr SPRINGBORG: My second question without notice is also to the Premier, and I again remind the Premier when it comes to Indigenous policy that actions—not just words—are the most important things. Last year the Premier signed off on and handed down a state budget that actually admits that it will not sustain the writing standards of Indigenous students, and I table that.

Tabled paper: Copy of table from 2007-2008 Queensland State Budget Ministerial Portfolio Statement for the Department of Education, Training and the Arts containing output measures relating to early phase of learning (Prep Year—Year 3).

The budget plans to take the number of Indigenous students achieving national benchmarks for writing from 88 per cent to 75 per cent for grade 3 and from 88 per cent to 84 per cent for grade 7. As the minister for Indigenous communities, will the Premier explain how and why she is planning to lower literacy standards for Indigenous students?

Ms BLIGH: I am very pleased to answer the question to allow me to talk in more detail about some of the things that are happening in our schools in Indigenous communities. Let me start by talking about what is happening at Spinifex State College.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition asked his question with silence from the frontbench on the other side, and I would ask you to do the same. This is an important issue and I would ask you to be respectful with regard to the questions and answers.

Ms BLIGH: I will preface my comments about schools in these communities by saying how important it is to acknowledge the difficulties and the problems, to monitor and to assess what is working and to report honestly where failure is occurring, but it is equally important to acknowledge and reward success. If we want to get our best teachers to go into these communities, if we want to see our police officers serve in these communities and if we want health workers to spend time working with these communities, we have to single out those people who are doing an outstanding job, those communities that are working well and where we are seeing progress being made, and Spinifex State College is one of those areas that I want to pay some attention to this morning.

Spinifex State College is a residential facility in Mount Isa that provides an opportunity for young people from around the gulf, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to have a residential place to live in Mount Isa while attending Mount Isa schools, Mount Isa State High School for the most part. This is an opportunity for these young people to get all of the benefits of a boarding school experience—that is, to be in an environment where they are learning about life, learning socialisation skills and getting a good

academic experience—while at the same time be close enough physically to their communities to go home for important occasions, to get home for weekends and to be part of the cultural life of their community. This college has been operational for, I think, six years, and for those of us who—

Mr COPELAND: I rise to a point of order. The question related specifically to the targets for Indigenous reading levels in last year's budget. The Premier has had two minutes and has not mentioned those—

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. If there are frivolous points of order again, I will give the Premier—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Excuse me! If there are frivolous points of order again, I will give the Premier an extension of time. I would ask you to respect the chair.

Ms BLIGH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I now have the document referred to by the Leader of the Opposition in front of me. I am sorry that I cannot finish the story on Spinifex, but I would encourage members to have a look at it because it is a great testament to good work. Again we see from the opposition half-truths. I drew attention to this yesterday—same old, same old National Party bag of tricks. What I have in front of me—and I would ask for an extension of time so that I can address the details of this question.

Leave granted.

Ms BLIGH: The output statement being referred to by the Leader of the Opposition is the chart that we see in every budget paper whereby every agency sets a target, reports on what they actually achieved and then sets a new target for the next year. They set a target in 2006-07 in Queensland education for 74 per cent of children in the writing category of Indigenous Queenslanders to meet the literacy benchmarks. And what did they achieve? They achieved 88 per cent. So they overachieved. That is what happened: they overachieved! They overachieved, and I take my hat off to them and I congratulate the teachers who did the work. Not satisfied with insulting members of the stolen generation this morning, the Leader of the Opposition is now insulting the teachers who do the work. The next target lifts the 2006-07 target from 74 per cent to 75 per cent.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms BLIGH: Yes, it is a very cautious target lift, and I look forward to them overachieving that target again this year. If that is the best that the opposition can do—come in here and insult the teachers who work in Aboriginal communities, who are overachieving on their targets, who have more Aboriginal children meeting the national benchmarks than ever expected—then it will never make a difference on this issue, just like it did not in the 32 years that it oversaw the most shocking circumstances in Indigenous communities

Gold Coast, Community Cabinet

Mrs REILLY: My question is to the Premier. Could the Premier advise of the public response to the community cabinet that is going to be held on the Gold Coast this week?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. This weekend is going to be a very momentous occasion for the Gold Coast not only because we will be taking the cabinet there but I suspect much more importantly for the people of the Gold Coast—without making any reflection on their excitement about seeing my ministry—we will be providing an opportunity for members of the Gold Coast community to come and visit Skilled Park stadium. This stadium is an important piece of infrastructure not only for sporting and community activities on the Gold Coast but also for economic opportunities in and around the Gold Coast region.

The Gold Coast is our second largest city. It is the fastest-growing city in the country and it is time that it had a world-class stadium. Skilled Park stadium will put the Gold Coast on the Rugby League map of this country. It will be the best—

A government member interjected.

Ms BLIGH: I am coming to the Titans. This stadium will provide the best regional stadium anywhere in Australia. It is state of the art and it will be the jewel in the crown of regional football. Of course, it will be a very fitting home for a team that I believe is well on the way to becoming the No. 1 Rugby League team in Queensland, and that is the Titans.

We are offering an opportunity to Gold Coasters to come on Sunday to see Skilled Park before it officially opens with the first game. This is a chance for people to visit the facilities, to have a look at the change rooms, to walk on the turf and to get a real sense of what this stadium will be like. There will be a big program of entertainment for them and 22,000 people have now accepted that invitation. The 'house full' sign is up. We have been overwhelmed by the response. I think this is a very important opportunity for Gold Coasters to see Skilled Park stadium.

After those people have done that in the morning they will have the opportunity to come and talk with the cabinet and to meet with me and the members of my government. There are 180 requests for formal deputations with me and my ministers. This will be one of our largest community cabinets. With almost 200 formal deputations, when you add on an hour of informal deputations, members can imagine the numbers that will turn out to take the opportunity to have a real conversation with ministers who want to talk about real issues. It will be a conversation about education, health, child safety, water, infrastructure and transport. It will not be a conversation about the Labor Party and the shape of the Labor Party and whether we should merge with any other party, or whether we should split, or whether we should have a leadership battle. It will not be a conversation in which my members will talk about themselves.

Indigenous Infant Mortality

Mr McARDLE: My question is to the Premier. When it comes to Indigenous policy, actions are clearly more important than mere words. Since this House passed its sorry motion in 1999, can the Premier explain why infant mortality rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people under 24 are between 1.7 and 2.7 times greater than that for non-Indigenous Queenslanders? According to the Premier's *Partnerships Queensland 2006 Baseline Report*, her government has failed to put much substance behind its 1999 sorry motion. Can the Premier tell Queenslanders why?

Ms BLIGH: I meant what I said this morning. Today is a day of national significance and this morning in question time we are witnessing an attempt to undermine the importance and the dignity of the events that took place this morning in the federal parliament of this country. I agree that actions are important, but I would not refer to the apology given to the stolen generation of this country as 'mere words'. This is what we are hearing repeated in question after question this morning, 'mere words', as if it is a trifling matter, as if it is something of little or no importance, as if we can progress without recognising our history.

People might think me foolish for this, but this morning I expected better. I felt a sense of great momentum and history as I watched what was happening in the federal parliament. I thought there was an opportunity here for us as a parliament—a mature opportunity after a decade of debate on this issue—to rise above that debate and to join together, as Brendan Nelson did, to take this issue forward. It is no compliment to the Leader of the Opposition that people will now be able to say of Mr Springborg, 'He's no Brendan Nelson.'

However, I am pleased that the opposition has drawn attention a number of times to the baseline report. These baseline reports are an absolutely critical part of getting it right in terms of the actions that are put in place. For too long too many governments of all political persuasions, including Labor governments, have done their best and put in resources and have tried to put in place new programs. Governments of all political persuasions have genuinely allocated additional funds and put new services into these communities, but they have failed to measure whether they are having any success and to report that measurement so they could work out what was working, where the problems were increasing and where they were decreasing. That is what the baseline data is about: it is an honest, open and transparent assessment of what is working. I acknowledge that the baseline date also demonstrates how much further we have to go. Nobody in this country would claim anything otherwise.

I caution the opposition from continuing to use this chamber today to undermine the dignity and the importance of this national day of significance. There is an opportunity here; do not waste it.

North Queensland

Mrs KIERNAN: My question is to the Premier. North Queensland is the powerhouse of the Queensland economy. Can the Premier advise the House of any recent moves to enhance this important part of the state?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. She is a great champion for north Queensland, and north-west Queensland particularly. I am very pleased to advise the House that in the past two weeks I have announced the possibility that we will see a powerline linking central Queensland to Cloncurry, bringing power into that area to expand mining. If that proposition succeeds, Mount Isa and the north-west region will be linked to the national electricity grid. That is very significant for all of those mines that are looking to expand and for those companies that are currently exploring and seeking to realise the potential of this area.

This powerline link is being explored by a private consortium. It has been declared a project of state significance by the Coordinator-General. Although it is a long way from being ticked off, it is very encouraging to see it take such a great step forward. I congratulate the member for Mount Isa on her very hard work on the issue of energy in that area. Our vision for north-west Queensland is to link it as far as we can into the energy provision of this state to see it grow.

But what is the advice that the Leader of the Opposition is getting from his newly appointed parliamentary secretary on matters relating to north Queensland? Members may well be surprised to learn of the calibre of the advice. On 29 January, the shadow parliamentary secretary, Mr Knuth, advised ABC Radio—

I've called for a north Queensland state and I'm still passionately behind that.

I thought that must have been a slip of the tongue, but he repeated it four days later saying, 'I still believe that this needs to be pursued.' More worrying than that, he then told ABC Radio—

And there is a big push out there for a North Queensland state and at this present moment there is a committee that's in the process of being formed. WE are waiting to organise that meeting to get... interested people involved.

Today I think the questions are: who is 'we', where does the Leader of the Opposition stand and where is the Queensland Liberal Party on this issue? Clearly the shadow parliamentary secretary has been having a conversation with north Queensland and north Queenslanders have said to him, 'If this guy is going to run the show, we want out. We want to get as far away as we can get.'

Is the Leader of the Opposition taking the advice of his parliamentary secretary? Is that advice based on a conversation he has had with north Queenslanders? It has been three weeks and the leader has not separated himself from this nonsense.

Time expired.

Indigenous Health Care

Miss SIMPSON: My question is to the Premier. When it comes to Indigenous policy, actions are more important that just words. Two years ago the government committed to building the Yarrabah primary health care centre. The Premier said that in that year alone the government would spend $6.3 million to fast-track its construction. The government did not spend $6.3 million in that year. Indeed, two years have passed since then and as at the last budget the government has spent only $1 million. What is the Premier going to do to ensure that the health minister stops failing, stops dawdling, and stops providing false promises and false hope to Indigenous communities when it comes to primary health care?

Ms BLIGH: They just cannot help themselves, can they? The member is able to replace the word 'mere' with the word 'just', but she cannot quite move away from the fact that they dismissed the whole notion entirely. It was nothing short of hypocrisy for the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to this morning attend and address a meeting of the stolen generations when on two occasions she voted against the apology in this House and this morning failed comprehensively to join with the people of Australia and overcome her previous reluctance.

I am very happy to talk about the provision of health care in Indigenous communities. A number of people in this chamber are too young to remember and would not have had the opportunity to visit Indigenous communities in the mid to late 1980s and early 1990s. Members of the Goss government did have an opportunity to go into those communities and I well remember their comprehensive shock at the state of health facilities. People were being treated and provided with vaccinations, for example, in corrugated iron huts. Doctors were being asked to work in circumstances that could only be described as Third World. Conditions were unhygienic and disgusting. Nobody on the other side of the chamber can ever hold their head up on the question of health provision in those communities.

Now in most of the communities the health facilities meet community standards. While often we ask our doctors and nurses to work with very difficult, complex and often terribly violent and tragic cases, the facilities that they work in are as good as they would find in other communities and so they should be.

That does not mean that it has always been easy to locate those facilities. For too long serious issues associated with the way that land has been managed in DOGIT communities have stood in the way of getting public facilities where they need to be, when they need to be there. The PCYC on Palm Island is a classic example of that. Some councils have been reluctant to work with the state government to get facilities in place and have put in place hurdles involving native title that have hindered the placement of those facilities.

I congratulate the mayors of all of the communities for last year signing the Indigenous Partnership Agreement, which was referred to by the Leader of the Opposition. As a group they unanimously committed to ensuring that native title does not get in the way of the placement, location or construction of those sorts of public facilities.

I am also advised that health services are being provided at Yarrabah. In fact, the service is operational and has started. I congratulate the health minister and, more importantly, I congratulate the staff who work in Queensland Health. These are not easy placements and many of them are doing an outstanding job.

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the member for Barron River, it is very appropriate that I acknowledge in the public gallery today the former member for Cook, Mr Bob Scott, and his wife Jenny. I welcome them to the parliament today.

Climate Change

Mr WETTENHALL: My question without notice is to the Treasurer. I ask the Treasurer to inform the House of the latest efforts of the Queensland Government to tackle the problem of climate change.

Mr FRASER: I thank the member for Barron River for the question. He is a well-known advocate for policy response to climate change. As I said yesterday, climate change is not just the single biggest environmental issue for the community; it is the single biggest economic issue as well.

This government has set a 60 per cent target to cut emissions from Year 2000 levels by the year 2050, and more to the point we are putting our money where our mouth is. A sum of $434 million has been allocated to the Climate Change Fund, $50 million to the Queensland Smart Energy Fund and a further $50 million to the Renewable Energy Fund. We have created a whole industry behind gas generation, taking it from 1 per cent with a new target of 18 per cent.

We are doing this because we take this issue seriously. Professor Ross Garnaut is working with all the states and utilising the expertise of the Queensland Treasury to model our response. He is doing that on the back of significant pieces of work such as the review undertaken by Sir Nicholas Stern. Many people would be aware of that review, in which Sir Nicholas Stern said that a failure to respond to climate change could result in gross domestic product across the world being 20 per cent lower than it otherwise would be, which he said would be the biggest market failure ever seen.

As many people would be aware, Nicholas Stern is a British economist, a former chief economist and Senior Vice President of the World Bank, which is a well-known leftist, loony think tank. He is also from the London School of Economics, which is well known for its progressive economics and for being a gun for hire. I make those comments because it seems that that is how the Queensland coalition views Nicholas Stern.

A great document that I recommend to all members of the House is this Queensland coalition discussion paper. It states, 'Other jurisdictions have launched "desk top" reviews of research, such as the Stern Review...' The Stern review, which is held by the global community to be the single most important and seminal piece of work on this issue, is labelled a 'desktop review'. The discussion paper continues—

> Unfortunately, the findings of these studies have tended to cause more confusion, rather than informed debate. There are several reasons for this, including a view that the authors have been pointed in a pre-determined direction based on the politics of the day.

That is a reference to Nicholas Stern, a well-known gun for hire!

The Queensland coalition goes on to state, 'Trust, credibility and a local perspective need to be put back into the debate.' Too right they do! What we have here is the Queensland coalition being revisionist, rear-vision mirror, climate change deniers. The paper asks—

> How can Queenslanders get access to unbiased, relevant facts and make their own decisions on what local actions are relevant and effective?

I suggest that one place not to start is with the Queensland coalition discussion paper on climate change in which they bag Sir Nicholas Stern and deny climate change. These people are not about the future. They are trying to rewrite our history, deny the facts, deny our future and deny our response. The single biggest market failure to rival global climate change is the marked failure in the policy development of the Queensland coalition. I table the document.

Tabled paper: Copy of discussion paper by the Queensland Coalition titled "A sustainable future for Queensland: Minimising our impact on the environment and the changing climate".

Time expired.

Indigenous Policy

Mr NICHOLLS: My question is directed to the Premier. Actions speak louder than words. Last month, former Premier Beattie said that the Commonwealth should be responsible for Aboriginal affairs and federal health minister Nicola Roxon said that removing responsibility for Indigenous affairs from the Premier's government would 'help ensure real improvements are made to indigenous health'. Why does both the Premier's former leader and her federal colleague have such a poor view of her record as a former communities minister and how can her government have failed Indigenous Queenslanders so badly since saying sorry nine years ago?

Ms BLIGH: This morning we are seeing question time being used as an hour-long justification for the failure of the Queensland National Party, aided and abetted by the Queensland Liberal Party, to join in the spirit of reconciliation that is alive across this country this morning. They have comprehensively walked away from a golden opportunity to rectify all of their miserly, graceless activity in the past. Now they are using question time as a prolonged ugly justification of that failure.

Before I continue my answer, can I just clarify in relation to my previous answer that I am advised construction has started at Yarrabah. I think I said services and I am happy to clarify that matter. I understand that the construction process has started.

Let me talk about words. I am advised that on the new coalition web site if you go to the tag 'Policy' you will find the following six headings: 'Delivering essential infrastructure and services', 'Improving the environment and Queenslanders' lifestyle', 'Supporting a caring culture'—that includes things like health—'Investing in skills and education', 'Driving economic development' and 'Restoring trust in government'. I am advised that under not one of those headings—not one—will you find the words 'Indigenous Queenslanders' or the words 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders'. So committed is the coalition to expunging words from their lexicon that they have not used the words 'Aboriginal', 'Torres Strait Islander' or 'Indigenous' in one single policy area on its web site.

Today is a day for honesty and I, along with other leaders around the country and other thoughtful Australians, honestly acknowledge that there is so much more work that needs to be done to improve the lives and the disadvantage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Can I just ask those mumbling on my left—and I say that in a considered way—to please let the Premier have the floor.

Ms BLIGH: The significance of the apology today—what the opposition keeps referring to as a mere word—is that it is a first step. Nobody claims that it is all the steps. Nobody claims that it is the steps that need to be taken. It is nothing more than the first step. But without the first step it is very hard to take the second, the third, the fourth and the fifth. I have to say that I am very deeply disappointed by the actions of the coalition this morning. In fact, not only does the opposition diminish itself but it demeans this whole parliament.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Redcliffe, I acknowledge the presence in the gallery today of teachers and students from Brisbane Boys' College at Toowong in the electorate of Mount Coot-tha, which is represented in this House by the Treasurer, Mr Andrew Fraser.

Moreton Bay Marine Park

Ms van LITSENBURG: My question without notice is to the Minister for Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation. Would the minister please advise the House on progress with the draft rezoning plan for the Moreton Bay Marine Park, as this is of great interest to many of my constituents in Redcliffe? How is the state government addressing issues which have been raised since the draft plan was released?

Mr McNAMARA: I thank the honourable member for Redcliffe for her question and for her close attention to and involvement in the development of a first-class Moreton Bay Marine Park which meets the needs of all of the users of the park now and into the future.

Much of the public debate about the Moreton Bay Marine Park has been about access to the resource. While access to the park is indeed a very important issue—and I want to debunk utterly and absolutely the suggestion that recreational or commercial fishers will be banned from the park; that is simply untrue—nevertheless, it is vital to recognise that the Moreton Bay Marine Park is about much more than just access to seafood. It is also about equipping Moreton Bay with the resilience to withstand the challenge posed by climate change. Moreton Bay will be a critical test of how we as a society protect the biodiversity of the bay—the fish, the coral, the seagrass, the dugong—in the face of global warming that we now know is coming, against the two degrees of warming which is now locked in by 2050, no matter what we do.

Regretfully, Moreton Bay also serves as an example of how out of touch, duplicitous and just plain kooky the opposition remains on the issue of climate change. The Leader of the Opposition continues to fudge, prevaricate and dissemble on climate change. While not as point-blank odd as his shadow parliamentary secretary assisting him in north Queensland, who told this House a little while ago that climate change was an emotive term 'designed to frighten people into accepting unsubstantiated facts', nevertheless the Leader of the Opposition continues to talk out of both sides of his mouth on the issue of climate change. He continues to seek to muddy the waters by talking about warming oceans and erupting volcanoes, rotting vegetation and emissions from microbes—anything but accept that human beings have a very important responsibility in relation to contributing to emissions. The time is now right for this sort of blame spreading and fence sitting to be put away. The time for Google research and equal access for kooky conspiracy theories is over. It is time for those who would seek to lead this state to simply acknowledge, as Stern and the IPCC and the A21 report have all done, that climate change is certainly being driven by human actions, and to deal with it.

The Moreton Bay Marine Park is in the middle of a consultation stage. It is open till 7 March. We are receiving many, many, many submissions, and they will all be dealt with in due course. Last week I went out on the bay with the executive of Sunfish. This week I will be meeting again with representatives of the Moreton Bay Access Alliance. We will be listening to and talking to stakeholders to make sure that we get the marine park we deserve. What this government, however, will not do is give a wink and a nod, as the Leader of the Opposition does, to the climate change sceptics. The Leader of the Opposition seeks to have it both ways on this critical issue—talking about climate change but dog whistling to the kooky critics at the same time. Moreton Bay deserves better. Queensland deserves better.

Private Rental Market

Ms JONES: My question is to the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology. Recently one of my constituents—a young woman with a disability—was required by a real estate agent to pay two weeks rent up-front. This was actually in addition to and on top of her four weeks bond, and it was non-refundable. Can the minister advise what can be done to stop this practice by some real estate agents?

Ms Spence interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: The youthfulness of the member for Ashgrove obviously has outsprinted those opposite, as she does on so many other issues. The reality is that the member for Ashgrove acquainted me with this issue when it came across her desk. The fact of the matter is that this is an unacceptable practice. Real estate agents are entitled to take a holding deposit once they have allocated a property. They are not entitled to, as the member for Ashgrove has just pointed out to the House, ask seven or eight people who queue up to get a house to all pay an application fee—in this case it was a woman in a very destitute circumstance whom, as I understand, the member for Ashgrove personally helped out—and then take that application fee from those people and not refund it.

This is nothing short of a rort—an absolute feeding frenzy on the lack of affordability in the private rental market. That is what it is. That is why we had the rental review of the RTA last year, which the member for Ashgrove participated in. This practice is not only immoral but will soon be illegal. I say to any member of this parliament who has a real estate agent in their electorate who is doing it: please let me know. I will contact the REIQ and I will certainly out them in this parliament. My advice to those people who are doing it is to cut it out and cut it out now. It is offensive against the very spirit of decency in Australia. As I say, it is a rort—an absolute, out and out rort.

I outlined to the House this morning the rort that is those wealth creation companies. I note that the Leader of the Liberal Party has agreed with those comments and has actually felt the need to say sorry to the people who have missed out as a result of the rort. What a shame it is that he could not show the same leadership that his federal counterpart did this morning and distance himself from what is a repeated attack upon the whole decency of what we see happening in the federal parliament today. A decent Liberal would do that, but of course we know that he is not a decent Liberal. How he ever managed to get into that position I will never know. When he was saying sorry to these people, it tempted one of the people who lost out when he was tied up with the company to remark, 'Well, he's being an absolute hypocrite. What about the 2,000 people and all the loans that went under when he was with Boyce Garrick?' This is the Leader of the Liberal Party. This is the person that the Liberal Party makes its leader.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: You want me to sit down. I know that. I know that you do not want to hear the truth. This is what you want to do: you want to bury this. You want to bury this issue about the thousands of people that you rorted. You ripped them off and that is why you are not the Treasurer. This is what this lady has said about you.

Time expired.

Stewart Island, Continuation of Leases

Mr FOLEY: My question without notice is to the Minister for Natural Resources and Water. Minister, I have some constituents who have spent over $300,000 developing their home with a lease that has been in existence for over 40 years. They have now been told they have to leave the island. What is the minister's policy for allowing the continuation of leases or preferably freeholding leased land that has been in existence for over 40 years? The only alternative offered in this case seems to be that the people have to take their property away in a tinnie.

Mr WALLACE: I do not know the name of the island and I do not know the name of the lessees.

Mr Foley: Stewart Island.

Mr WALLACE: Okay. We have over 23,000 leases, licences and permits that cover over 100 million hectares of Queensland. In fact, it is said that I am the third largest landlord in the world after the Chinese government and the Russian government. I am not 100 per cent au fait with every particular case, but I can say to the honourable member that I remember him sending me a letter about this a little while ago and I am just trying to remember the details of that particular lease in the depths of my head.

Opposition members: Ha, ha!

Mr WALLACE: An ugly head at that.

Mr Johnson: Get out the old tape measure.

Mr WALLACE: That is right—too much football, the honourable member for Gregory. I can say to the member for Maryborough that I think we have extended that lease for those particular people for five years, so he will be able to deliver the good news to them. From memory, that lease is in a very sensitive area and the EPA had a number of concerns. My colleague the minister for the environment is nodding.

When we renew leases, we have to be very careful that we do not have any negative impacts on the environment et cetera. We do that through consultation with our colleagues at the EPA, with local governments and with other persons across the state. I would ask the member for Maryborough to deliver the good news to them that we have extended that lease for five years because I am sure they would appreciate hearing that.

Department of Child Safety

Mrs STUCKEY: My question without notice is to the honourable Premier. Premier, when it comes to Indigenous policy, actions speak louder than well-intentioned words. I refer you to the Department of Child Safety's role—

Government members: Shame!

Mr SPEAKER: Order on my right! I would ask that the member for Currumbin be heard.

Ms Spence: It is getting more and more embarrassing.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Sport, I just asked while you interjected that the member for Currumbin be heard. I ask you to respect that.

Mrs STUCKEY: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I will start again. My question is to the honourable Premier. Premier, when it comes to Indigenous policy, actions speak louder than well-intentioned words. I refer the Premier to the Department of Child Safety's role in forcing a vulnerable young rape victim to return to the place where she was serially raped. Premier, why and how could the government force a vulnerable, 10-year-old rape victim to be returned to the place where she was serially raped at the age of seven despite the expressed concerns of her family and guardians?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. Clearly what we have got here this morning, as I have said, is a protracted and prolonged justification for the inability of the coalition to do what every other—

An opposition member: Answer the question.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Ms BLIGH:—conservative in this country has been able to do today. I really think it begs the question of whether this tactic was a joint party room decision. Did the Liberal Party of Queensland really agree to participate in this disgraceful performance here today? I would say to each and every one of the Liberals sitting over there—

Mrs STUCKEY: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. I find the Premier accusing me of disgraceful behaviour to be offensive on this serious issue. I ask her to withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. It is not a point of order because it was not individually directed at you.

Ms BLIGH: I would say to the members of the Liberal Party who are sitting across there today that if they have not agreed on this tactic and if they are participating in it, frankly, if this is the price of unity with the Queensland National Party then the price is very high. You should be ashamed.

What we are seeing here today—and we see it in the content of this question and we saw it and heard it in the speech from the member for Southern Downs—is the deliberate attempt to obfuscate and confuse child abuse with what happened to the stolen generations. I assumed this morning that people understood what the stolen generations were about but the questions here demonstrate that they do not, so let me take an opportunity to explain it for the benefit of the member for Currumbin and others.

Previous legislation of this parliament and parliaments of other states of Australia provided expressly that children could be removed for a number of reasons. The first was if they were the subject of abuse, whether they were Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, and so they should be. The second reason they could be removed was if they had been neglected and deprived of their basic daily needs, such as food and shelter, irrespective of whether they were Aboriginal or not. That was appropriate and it still is.

But there was a third category and that third category just said 'if they were Aboriginal'. That meant no abuse needed to be proved, no neglect needed to be established, the colour of your skin was the justification for your removal. It was a deliberate policy to break up a culture, and that is what makes it theft. To come in here today and confuse that with people who deliberately abuse and neglect their children—

Mr Copeland interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Premier, I will grant an extension of time, but can I just say this. The member for Cunningham used to make these comments in the back row. You and others around you are continually making these comments, and they are distracting to me and other members of the House. I call the Premier.

Ms BLIGH: For those people who had their children removed from them—those people who were good parents who provided a safe, happy and healthy home for their children—to have that experience compounded by an allegation that their children were removed because they were the subjects of abuse or neglect is a double insult and it rubs salt in a very raw and very exposed wound. That is the implication of the question here this morning. It is the allegation that was made directly by the member for Southern Downs in his contribution. It is a disgraceful confusion of the circumstances and the legislation that prevailed that led to the stolen generations.

Let me come to the case that has been raised here by the member for Currumbin. This case has been well and truly canvassed in the public arena. As I understand the case by the facts she has given, this is the matter that was the subject of a complete and thorough investigation that saw Child Safety officers involved in this decision disciplined. In every area of human activity—whether it is in the Queensland Police Service, whether it is in Queensland Health, whether it is in our schools, whether it is in Child Safety—there are officers who from time to time make bad judgements, do the wrong thing and fail to exercise their duty appropriately. That happens in every system, in every state, in every country in the world.

What matters is that we do everything we can to minimise that and eliminate it. That means that when it happens it is investigated by a body that has all the powers necessary to conduct an investigation and where a matter of substance is found the appropriate action is taken, and that is what happened in this case. That has been well and truly canvassed in the public arena. For the member for Currumbin to come in here and use it to in any way imply that children who were stolen from their parents because of the colour of their skin were the subject of abuse is a very poor reflection on her as a human being.

Mrs STUCKEY: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. Again, I find the Premier's words offensive. I did not imply at all that there was any association to the stolen generation.

Mr SPEAKER: You find them offensive. I call the Premeir.

Ms BLIGH: I withdraw anything the member finds offensive. The facts remain. The member for Currumbin and her Liberal colleagues made a decision this morning to join with one of the most disgraceful displays of National Party racism, frankly, that I have seen in this chamber for a long time. Today should be a day of dignity. That is how this chamber started. It is what happened in the federal parliament. We did not see members of the federal parliament stand up and use it as an opportunity to attack 10 years of the Howard government. This was an opportunity for us to collectively recognise the past in a dignified, accepting, genuine and bipartisan fashion.

I am deeply disappointed that the Queensland National Party has chosen this tactic. I am even more disappointed that it has been joined by its Queensland Liberal colleagues. I would say to the member for Currumbin: the next time she is handed a question by one of the National Party hacks in the leader's office, be careful.

State Schools of Tomorrow

Ms PALASZCZUK: My question without notice is to the minister for education. Last year the minister announced four multimillion-dollar projects to modernise some of the state's oldest schools—in eastern Ipswich, Brisbane bayside, Innisfail and, of course, Inala. Will the minister tell the House how these projects are progressing, what consultation has been undertaken with local communities and how their ideas will be taken on board in relation to how these schools should be developed?

Mr WELFORD: I thank the honourable member for her question and for her dedication to this great initiative to substantially upgrade schools in areas where students need and deserve better facilities. In July and August last year, I announced that the Brisbane bayside, Inala, east Ipswich and Innisfail areas were the first to be chosen to be part of our government's $850 million State Schools of Tomorrow project. Our plan is to spend millions of dollars in each of these areas to modernise and redevelop clusters of our state schools.

I am pleased to say that communities of these areas are playing an active and important role in shaping our schools of tomorrow through extensive community consultation with parents, students, teachers, P&Cs and community groups. Initial public consultation in Innisfail, eastern Ipswich and Inala concluded in late 2007, while consultation with the communities of the Brisbane bayside schools continued right up until last Saturday. All those communities have been having their say about how to reform and improve the cluster or bank of school facilities that serve their area. The comments received as part of that consultation will be taken into account in developing the final proposals which will need to be submitted to the government and endorsed by cabinet for a final decision.

I understand that there has been concern by some of these communities about the future of their schools as part of this modernisation project. I certainly can understand people's attachment to schools. All of us have in one form or another some attachment to the schools we originally attended in our local communities. However, we must be careful not to confuse that attachment with the role that school facilities play in providing a quality education for students. We should be careful not to overstate the personal or cultural heritage that schools might have in comparison to the functionality of school facilities, equipment and classrooms to the learning outcomes that students achieve. No-one in a formula 1 race continues to race a car from the 1920s. No-one who wants a formula 1 school system can countenance students continuing to be forced to learn in substandard classrooms and facilities.

One of the most important influences on children's education is the quality of the schools in which they learn. Many of the classrooms in our older schools are not suitable for modern learning, are not suitable for ICTs and are not suitable for the modern classroom practices that innovative teachers are deploying. When I travel around the state the thing that strikes me most is the contrast between our new schools and the older schools, and the comparative disadvantage that students in older schools suffer.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Burnett, I welcome to the public gallery today another group of teachers and students from the Brisbane Boys' College at Toowong, which is in the electorate of Mount Coot-tha, which is represented in this House by the Treasurer, Mr Andrew Fraser.

Indigenous Communities, Alcohol Abuse

Mr MESSENGER: My question without notice is to the Premier. When it comes to Indigenous policy, actions are more important than words. I refer the Premier to a government review of alcohol interventions in Queensland remote Indigenous communities. I note that there was a 13.6 per cent increase in hospital admissions in 2006 and that 60 per cent of the hospital admissions were a result of alcohol related violence. How long did the Premier know that there was a serious problem in remote Queensland Indigenous communities, and what did she do about it?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. What we have seen in this country today is the people of Australia unite through the symbolism of their national parliament on the conservative and the Labor side of politics in a great moment of reconciliation. There is one small pocket of exception to that. Here in the state that has the highest number of Indigenous people it is a matter of great disappointment to me that that pocket of resistance is here in our state, in our parliament.

Those who need yet another reason for why the Queensland coalition is comprehensively unfit for government—for those who have not seen it—should watch Brendan Nelson and watch the federal conservative party on the news tonight. If it is replayed on any station, they should take a moment to sit down and watch it because they will see leadership at work. And then they should read the *Hansard* of this morning's very sorry display from those opposite. It is nothing short of shabby. What we have seen is an attempt to belittle a great moment in Australian history, and I think it is a very sad reflection on each and every member opposite.

Specifically in relation to the matters raised by the member, he has been alerted to this because I raised it in the parliament yesterday. I read it out to the people of this parliament, as did the former Premier last year when he reported it in the baseline data. What we have done about each and every one of those things is also recorded in the documents that were referred to by the Leader of the Opposition. We have a long way to go, but no-one can doubt our endeavours, our efforts and our sincerity on this side of the chamber.

Infrastructure Spending

Mr FINN: My question without notice is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Infrastructure and Planning. Can the Deputy Premier please advise the House how much Queensland spends on infrastructure on a per capita basis? What are the key aspects that allow the state government to make that level of commitment to people across Queensland?

Mr LUCAS: I welcome the honourable member's question. This financial year the Queensland government will spend $14 billion on capital works. It is the biggest Capital Works Program in our history and the largest capital works program in the nation on a per capita basis. Victoria is spending $633 per capita, New South Wales $1,800, Western Australia $2,700 and Queensland $3,300. Why can we deliver a capital program like this? We can do so because of strong leadership, supported by the business and public of Queensland.

I am very keen to play my part as Deputy Premier, as part of this leadership team. The wonderful thing on this side of politics is that we chose a leader unanimously and we chose a deputy leader unanimously. It will be a very long time before the leadership bus ever hits this Premier. When we talk

about the leadership bus, it is a minibus when it comes to the Liberal Party. The problem is that no-one is in the bus; they are all lying down in front of it. Those opposite cannot deliver on water because they cannot deliver on leadership. Let us have a look at what they said about each other last year—

He hasn't gained my support nor my admiration on his political capacity and on that aspect, I am sorry—

—they are sorry for that—

I cannot support Mr Nicholls for the leadership.

Who is that from? It was the member for Moggill, sitting in the back, as part of their leadership team. I quote—

'No-one is going to say here that Queenslanders don't have a negative view of us,' Mr McArdle said. 'That would be a ludicrous comment to make.'

And certainly they do. They have backed up words with action in their leadership debate. I again quote—

They need to abandon this stupidity of a lucky dip, come to their senses and walk out of there with a leader with some credibility ... They are making a mockery of conservative politics and threatening any chance we have of success in the future.

That was said by the former leader of the opposition. He copped the bullet for telling the truth about the Liberal Party. Who else?

Ms Bligh interjected.

Mr LUCAS: He is very sorry about it. I again quote—

If Mr Nicholls were to win that particular toss of the coin or ballot or whatever, he would forever be known as 'Toss Up Tim' and from the Liberal Party's point of view we cannot have the leader of our party being denigrated from the outset.

That is the member for Robina at Skilled Park showing all the deft political and media skills that we can see in the Liberal Party. I quote—

This whole exercise has been enormously damaging and I have no intention of letting it degenerate, or letting Mr Nicholls degenerate it, into even more of a farce than it is at the moment.

That was the former leader in the leadership team, the member for Moggill. I quote—

I am not interested in running for the leadership. I am not going to run for the leadership. That is the end of that matter as far as I am concerned.

That was the member for Caloundra. That is leadership. He showed so much leadership—he was not going to be leader but then he became one. But the final word has to go to the member for Surfers Paradise. He said—

'It's like Bizarro world in the Superman series,' Langbroek told the Australian after he, leadership aspirant Tim Nicholls and two supporters boycotted last night's meeting.

In other words, there were eight of them and they could not even get them together. They cannot lead. Actions and words speak louder than anybody else could do.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Stolen Generation, Sorry Motion

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before question time concludes I want to make a comment. As Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, let me address my comments today in a bipartisan way to all members of this parliament on this National Sorry Day. Indigenous Queenslanders have been impressed today by the spirit of partnership and collaboration by Prime Minister Rudd and opposition leader Nelson. They yearn for that partnership and collaboration at a state and territory level across our nation. As Speaker I have taken a strong lead in terms of this parliament's engagement with Indigenous Queenslanders and I very sincerely hope that this spirit of partnership and collaboration can be developed across this parliament for the benefit of Indigenous people. Question time has now concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Indigenous Policy

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.31 am): This government can run but it cannot hide from its record on Indigenous matters in Queensland. The opposition asked the Premier in this parliament this morning to explain any improvements in baseline data whatsoever in crucial areas such as child safety, infant mortality and the average life expectancy of Indigenous people in Queensland. She was asked about a range of absolutely crucial indicators. Guess what? This government and this Premier failed.

We cannot yet judge Kevin Rudd and Brendan Nelson and our federal colleagues on their commitment in federal parliament today, but what we can do is absolutely judge this government on its words and its failure to act based on the passage of the sorry motion in this parliament almost nine years ago. That is three parliamentary terms ago. We have a chance to be able to judge this government on its actions.

What we saw from the Premier today was nothing short of disappointing. The Premier came into this place, aspired to bipartisanship in her statement—bipartisanship that I was able to provide—but then failed to comprehensively answer for her government's record when it came to the issues of improving the life expectancy, the welfare and the wellbeing of Indigenous children and the overall good management of Indigenous affairs in Queensland.

The Premier came in here and attempted to smear this issue. She came in here today and she did not have the answers. She attempted to smear opposition members who simply did their job in asking that this government be accountable for its words some nine years ago and explain its actions to date. All reasonable indicators are that this Premier and this government failed abysmally. The biggest losers are parliamentary democracy and the people of this state, particularly Indigenous Queenslanders, who hoped that so much would be achieved when this government committed itself to improving their lot nine years ago.

Moreton Bay Marine Park

Ms CROFT (Broadwater—ALP) (11.33 am): In 2007 the Queensland government announced changes to the environmental management of the Moreton Bay Marine Park. Included in the proposed changes is an area of the northern Gold Coast that many locals may not realise forms part of the Moreton Bay Marine Park. Coombabah Creek is a very popular fishing spot that incorporates an already existing green zone, Coombabah Lake.

The review of the Moreton Bay Marine Park has proposed an extension of this green zone by 1.1 kilometres in an effort to provide habitat protection for estuarine life and sustained fishing activities for generations to come. The eastern side of the creek is lined with residences and many locals have chosen to live in Coombabah because of this fishing and recreational area that exists so close to their homes. Understandably, many locals are now concerned about the proposal to extend the green zone to include a great local crabbing and recreational fishing spot that is regularly used by families and anglers who have fished there for years.

Today I tabled a petition on behalf of 2,695 petitioners demonstrating their objection to the proposed extension. The principal petitioner, Coombabah resident Mr Ian Graham, is a passionate advocate for the responsible recreational fishing use of Coombabah Creek.

Recently I visited the proposed green zone site by boat with Mr Graham and another concerned resident, Mr Wayne Young. The visit gave me a firsthand understanding of how locals appreciate and value the lifestyle they enjoy and gain from the access to this fishing location. I have met with the Minister for the Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation to bring this to his attention and the concerns of residents and their families.

I encourage all residents to visit the EPA web site and make a submission on the draft zoning plan by the closing date of 7 March. Residents are invited to be part of the consultation process and to lodge their concerns as they are indeed stakeholders whose local knowledge is important. I will continue to advocate on their behalf to ensure that the final draft of the Moreton Bay Marine Park review includes an outcome that will support the needs and concerns of local anglers and residents yet recognises the importance of mangrove forests and intertidal flats that are evident in this area.

Motor Vehicle and Caravan Sales

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (11.35 am): A number of my constituents have been in contact with the Office of Fair Trading over complaints involving the sale of motor vehicles and caravans by different motor vehicle and caravan businesses. I understand that the Office of Fair Trading has investigated these complaints and has advised my constituents that while it sympathises with the wrong that has been done to the complainants, the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000 does not allow it to prosecute or take strong action against those companies.

I use this opportunity to ask the minister for fair trading and Attorney-General if he would conduct an investigation into strengthening and providing more enforcement powers under the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act to the Office of Fair Trading. I will read into the parliamentary *Hansard* an extract of a letter I have received from one of my constituents. The letter reads—

What riles me now is that the Office of Fair Trading states that the legislation is such that all that they can do is appeal to the senses of fairness and the responsibilities in that even though photographic proof has been provided to show that it was a manufacturing fault. When they say no to taking blame there is nothing more that the Office of Fair Trading can do.

I reiterate that these matters have been thoroughly investigated by the Office of Fair Trading. I believe the complaints that I have received and that the Office of Fair Trading is certainly aware of justify and warrant a significant review of the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000 to see how that act can be strengthened to provide stronger enforcement powers to deal with businesses which are simply not doing the right thing in relation to the sale of motor vehicles and caravans.

Stolen Generation, Sorry Motion

Ms DARLING (Sandgate—ALP) (11.37 am): Today I am proud to be an Australian and I am proud to be a member of the Australian Labor Party. New Prime Minister Kevin Rudd is delivering on his program of change for this country and began with the most decent and simple of actions—respectfully recognising the original inhabitants of this land and saying sorry for past wrongs. The Prime Minister delivered a stirring speech and I was honoured to share this historic event with respected members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and my parliamentary colleagues and especially with a friend and constituent, Trish Hetherington.

In May 1999 the Queensland parliament apologised to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland for the past policies under which Indigenous children were forcibly separated from their families. This morning the Premier reiterated our commitment to practical partnerships with the Indigenous and non-Indigenous people of Queensland to address disadvantage.

As an elected representative it is essential that I acknowledge past policies that were destructive and harmful and I say sorry for those past wrongs and I acknowledge my responsibility to ensure that future government actions are informed, consultative and constructive. I am proud to be a member of the Bligh government and endorse the Premier's statement in the House this morning.

I would also like to honour the elders in my local area. Aunty Ruth Hegarty, for example, is a well-known author, activist and founding member of the Koobara Aboriginal and Islander Family Resource Centre and Kindergarten and works tirelessly on practical projects that help heal the wounds of dislocated members of her community.

Aunty Viola Hill, even when her own health is frail, always opens her door to those in need and helped established Ba'la Wandiny at Bayside Community Options in my electorate which offers a mentoring project to train Indigenous people in aged care and raises awareness about local issues. Finally, I would like to acknowledge an energetic and compassionate worker for Aboriginal rights, the late councillor Robbie Williams, and pass on my condolences to Trish and her family and friends.

Indigenous Mortality

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—Lib) (11.39 am): In May 1999 this parliament passed a sorry motion, and one would have thought that between then and now we would have seen a significant drop in mortality rates for Aboriginal and Indigenous people throughout this state. However, when I put to the Premier this morning that those rates for children and young people under 24 years of age were still between 1.7 and 2.7 times higher than the non-Indigenous mortality rate in this state, she did not even answer the question. She did not even address one comment to explain why her government had failed and the past Beattie government had failed to deal with one of the major issues facing our Indigenous people—that is, their death rate being well and truly above the state average.

The reasons for these deaths occurring are significant and many, but one thing that we cannot allow to continue is words not being followed by actions. We simply cannot mouth the words and then expect to have the result we want. We have to get down there on the ground and make these things happen. We at this point in time have lost one generation of Indigenous people in the last 20 to 25 years. We are now in the process of losing a second generation of these young Queenslanders who are clearly in desperate need of assistance from this parliament and this government. We need to address parenting issues, nutrition training, public housing, education and alcohol. We need to give these young people a reason to get up in the morning. We need to give them self-esteem. We need to give them economic viability, not handouts. They do not want that. They want to get on with their lives and they want to make the best for themselves, their families and their grandchildren. We have to work with them to ensure that the hurdles they have in front of them are overcome, not just use words. Words do not solve the problems. Action on the ground and working with the communities are what will make them better people and better Queenslanders.

Time expired.

Keppel Electorate, Traditional Land

Mr HOOLIHAN (Keppel—ALP) (11.41 am): We have today witnessed an historic moment in Australia's history. Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are asked to move forward together to provide an equal future for all Australians. Queensland has for some time worked together with various Indigenous groups to endeavour to help their people move forward, and we heard the ministerial statement by the minister for natural resources this morning.

On 20 January 2007 I was proud to be part of the return of land at Mount Wheeler near Cawarral in my electorate to the Darumbal people who are the traditional owners of land throughout the electorate. They formed a land trust to hold that land known as Gawula so that their young people can return to live on traditional land and in traditional ways. On 4 April another milestone was reached when land on Great Keppel Island, also in my electorate, was returned to the descendants of the five families left of the Woppaburra people who were removed early last century. That land was also to be held in a land trust for the benefit of those descendants.

In October the Darumbal and the Woppaburra people also entered into a traditional use of marine resources agreement with GBRMPA so that we can all work to preserve our reef heritage. The Woppaburra people also worked with the Great Keppel Island Environmental Education Centre and National Parks and Wildlife rangers to preserve the unique heritage of the central Queensland region. The elders of each Indigenous group have also worked with all levels of the Queensland government to achieve better relationships and conditions for all people but most especially their own disadvantaged people.

I have been pleased to work with Bob Muir and Chris Doherty, who have spearheaded the work of the Indigenous groups. Queensland has been at the forefront of addressing the many problems which arose when Aboriginal people were dispossessed of their land. Queensland has commenced the healing. Let us all as members of the parliament get behind our federal and state leaders as we move forward to make the 21st century a major success for Australia and especially our Indigenous peoples. We have a long road to walk together to right the previous actions of governments and other organisations—

Time expired.

Indigenous Mortality and Education

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11.43 am): Like the Leader of the Opposition, Lawrence Springborg, we do acknowledge that there have been injustices, damage and hurt in the past, and part of charting the future is acknowledging the past. But in the last nine years since the sorry motion was passed in Queensland we have also seen that not much progress has been made for Indigenous people in Queensland, and that is the true tragedy.

Ms Jones interjected.

Miss SIMPSON: I acknowledge that interjection from the member for Ashgrove, but I do not think she gets the point. In the last nine years we have still had a horrendously high number of Indigenous people dying 20 years earlier than other Queenslanders. It is still the case that Aboriginal infant mortality is 1.7 to 2.7 times greater than the non-Indigenous rate of infant mortality. There is still a problem in that young Indigenous people are not in schools and achieving the levels of education that would put them on par with other Queenslanders. There is no doubting the sincerity of the federal government's motion, but where is the sincerity in the actions of this government? It has words, but its actions are failing Queenslanders.

We are saying that as a parliament we should be concerned about these issues, because actions must speak louder than words—actions must speak louder than words. While words can be symbolic, they are like that gong that the Prime Minister talked about if they fail to meet those basic issues of life and death—life and death. It is appalling in this day and age to see the levels of infant mortality in this state, and we can all do better as members of parliament if we truly care about charting a different future.

Time expired.

Mount Isa Electorate

Mrs KIERNAN (Mount Isa—ALP) (11.45 am): The month of January 2008 was one of vast contrast. It was in the context of floods and drought that I had the pleasure to join the Premier in Winton to celebrate Australia Day. Winton and much of the shire has received wonderful rain. However, it was noted by the Premier on a number of occasions during the trip that only 30 kilometres to the north in shires such as Boulia they are still very much in the grip of a long and difficult drought. Further south communities like Charleville were battling floods and doing a magnificent job in building a temporary levy to hold the waters back. East to Emerald there were more floods.

The Premier and I had the wonderful pleasure of experiencing the devotion and dedication of the Elliott family in their quest on behalf of all Australians to share the rich history of our age of dinosaurs with the rest of the world. We enjoyed the hospitality of the wonderful people of Winton to share a truly bush Australia Day. We were taken to the mesa which will be the home of the Age of Dinosaurs Museum of Natural History. We met on top of the mesa with Indigenous elder Jocelyn and daughter Pearle, and it is with sadness today that I pay my sincere condolences to Jocelyn and her family in the sad passing of Aunty Alice James, Jocelyn's mother, a Pitta Pitta woman who will be laid to rest in Boulia in her homeland. Today is an historic day—too late for Aunty Alice and many others to witness, but we have all been empowered today to walk together as one.

Indigenous Communities

Mr NICHOLLS (Clayfield—Lib) (11.47 am): Today we have seen a government duck and weave and avoid its record. On a day like today when we examine our history of engagement with the Indigenous people of Australia and in Queensland, all we have received from the Premier is lecturing and hectoring. I believe that the Premier genuinely believes in the importance of reconciliation. I believe she knows and she wants to do better for Indigenous Queenslanders. I believe all parliamentarians in this place want to do that—they want to make life better for Queenslanders and they particularly want to address the suffering and the injustice that is experienced by many Indigenous people.

I have to say that my involvement in the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee has opened my eyes to the plight of Indigenous Queenslanders. Coming from suburban Clayfield with not a great deal of exposure, the travels that the committee followed in April last year to Palm Island, Mount Isa and other places opened my eyes to the very real plight that many Indigenous people suffer. As we travelled the state we saw and heard of the very real disadvantage that those people suffer. As I said, we travelled to Palm Island last April. When we were driving from the airport to the PCYC, a brawl erupted and disrupted the entire life of the community for 40 minutes. Everyone from the school and elsewhere were taken out of action for 40 minutes. Members of the community expressed concern about the safety of children, particularly the young girls at the local state school.

When the Premier said that in the late eighties and early nineties members of the Goss government experienced comprehensive shock at the Third World conditions on communities, I accepted that that was the case. That is still the case. Nothing has changed in nine years. How can it be? How can it be that in 2008 after all of this time, after all of the reports and after all of the money spent, schoolchildren are not safe at their local school? So, Premier, today's questions area—

Time expired.

Grocery Unit Pricing

Mrs LD LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (11.49 am): In recent days we have heard much about the scourge of inflation, the insidious legacy of the Howard government. There is probably nowhere that inflation bites harder than at the supermarket checkout. There is one simple reform, however, that would help us all in the fight against inflation: the introduction of grocery unit pricing in our big supermarkets.

A unit price shows the cost of goods per standard unit of measurement. It is a piece of information in addition to the selling price that helps consumers compare products and assess value for money. The Queensland Consumers Association, which first brought this issue to my attention, estimates that by using unit prices a shopper can save $16 on a $43 basket of 14 goods. That is a whopping 37 per cent saving. If these potential savings are multiplied across a weekly grocery bill, working families can save significant amounts. If these potential savings are multiplied across an economy and the $58 billion spent annually on prepackaged groceries, pretty soon we are talking real money.

Unit pricing is well accepted overseas, and the lesson learned is that for it to be effective it needs to be mandatory. A mandatory, effective unit-pricing system will help in the fight against inflation. It will save consumers money and time and will drive competition between retailers and manufacturers. The costs for large retailers will be relatively small. Small retailers would be exempt.

I am pleased to say that my colleague the Attorney-General and minister responsible for fair trading, the Hon. Kerry Shine, has shown considerable interest in this concept. I understand that he will be raising the matter at a meeting of the Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs in the near future. The best way to support unit pricing is to make a submission to the current ACCC inquiry into grocery prices. Inflation is a difficult genie to get back in the bottle.

Time expired.

Townsville Hospital, Cardiac Services

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (11.51 am): I table a letter that I am delivering to the CMC today along with a letter that I have received from a Dr Ayman Al-Masri, a cardiothoracic registrar employed by Queensland Health at Townsville Hospital. I do so in the interest of the public health and safety of north Queenslanders, many of whom are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Tabled paper: Letter dated 8 February 2008 from Preston Miller Lawyers to Mr Rob Messenger MP relating to the Cardiac Thoracic Services Unit, Townsville General Hospital.

Tabled paper: Letter dated 12 February 2007 from Mr Rob Messenger MP to Mr Robert Needham, Chairperson of the Crime and Misconduct Commission, relating to the Townsville Cardiothoracic unit.

In this letter I ask the CMC to support my call for the establishment of an independent public inquiry into the closure of the Townsville Hospital cardiothoracic unit in order to find out the truth and to protect and engender confidence in whistleblowers and witnesses. The whistleblowers to whom I have

talked are extremely fearful for their professional reputations and careers. They are of the opinion that only an open, independent, public inquiry can give them the protection that they need from a vindictive Queensland Health bureaucracy which is now, because of the CMC's decision to refer the allegations to Queensland Health's ethical standards unit, investigating serious charges made against itself. That is a ridiculous circumstance and a clear case of conflict of interest.

Some serious allegations have been made by whistleblowers. An Aboriginal man was alleged to have been refused surgery because of his race and a doctor who has a mortality rate three times the national average is allowed to operate while whistleblowers are punished by Queensland Health and not allowed to operate. The whistleblower has told me that he wanted to meet with the Minister for Health 10 months before the minister allowed the unit to be closed, which disadvantaged and put at risk the health of the whole population of north Queensland, including Indigenous Australians, but the minister refused to meet him.

A vindictive, politicised Queensland Health bureaucracy is now trying to cover up the truth by this sham investigation by the ethical standards unit. The only way the truth can come out is by a public, independent inquiry.

Sustainable Homes

Mr WETTENHALL (Barron River—ALP) (11.53 am): On 4 February 2008 I had the pleasure of opening Queensland's latest smart and sustainable home in my electorate at Lot 104 Davidson Close, Redlynch. The Queensland government's Smart and Sustainable Homes program involves collaboration between state and local governments and private industry to design and build a series of sustainable homes for public displays throughout the state. To be a smart and sustainable home, the designs must meet the Department of Public Works design objectives using the triple bottom line concept, which aims to achieve a balance between environmental, economic and social sustainability.

The Redlynch home is designed to encourage energy efficiency, to reduce maintenance and running costs, and to be comfortable and accessible for all types of families at every stage of their lives. The home is designed to catch the prevailing breezes and shield the house from sun and is comfortable on the hottest day without the need for air conditioning. Like 36 other homes that have been built as part of the program, the Redlynch home will be on display every weekend until July, enabling people to see firsthand what a sustainable home looks like so that they can seek out variations to standard building plans that are on the market today. Interest in the program has been high. Over 27,000 people have visited display homes in south-east Queensland, the Capricorn Coast and Townsville. Well over one million people are visiting the web site, www.sustainable-homes.org.au, and a range of printed information has been developed.

Other Queensland government policies and programs support sustainable housing. For example, the Queensland Development Code requires all new homes to have energy- and water-efficient features, and the Environmental Protection Agency is funding the Housing Industry Association to develop and promote the GreenSmart training program for builders and consumers. It is also working with the Real Estate Institute of Queensland to develop a training program for real estate agents to market sustainable homes as well as collaborating with the Urban Development Institute of Australia to develop the EnviroDevelopment rating tool for residential development. Sustainable homes are the way of the future and they can be built today, as the developer of the Redlynch home, Mr Rob Wallace of Raw Fusion Pty Ltd, and his builder, Macpark Pty Ltd, have demonstrated.

Indigenous Communities

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (11.55 am): This morning I sought an answer from the Premier on one of the most high-profile child abuse cases this summer and the Premier accused me of somehow diluting the symbolic importance of the national sorry motion. In effect, the Premier was trying to cover up her government's 'turn a blind eye' attitude that has allowed a culture of sexual and substance abuse to breed to epidemic proportions in many Indigenous communities in far-north Queensland. This 'just sweep it under the carpet' approach has led to chronic unacceptable behaviours in these communities to now become, in many cases, their social norms. These failings led former Queenslander of the Year Chris Sarra to call on the government to end the subhuman mindset that allows the delivery of second-rate outcomes to Indigenous communities, and I applaud him for that.

In 1999 this government said 'sorry', but it has not done much since in real terms to provide services and support. Indigenous communities need resources but, more importantly, they need political will. This government should hang its head in shame over its failings to children in this state in recent years.

I could have asked many more legitimate questions this morning. Case after case has hit the paper. Apart from the 'Lost childhood', we also had 'Officials lose a raped deaf girl', we had 'Five siblings neglected since birth', we had 'Department failing Aurukun', we had 'Brothers in danger but only one

was removed', we had, 'Abused boy left to rape other kids', we had 'Starving kids raid kindy'—and that is just a handful. These cases have shocked our nation and show a flawed government that thrives on a culture of secrecy.

In December we learned that hundreds of reports were withheld from police by Child Safety officers regarding children who were being sexually abused and neglected in Cape York communities. In what can only be described as a criminal offence against children, officers were told not to pass on information. The minister fails to respond to questions, too. So it is up to the *Courier-Mail* to provide data.

Time expired.

Eumundi Aquatic Centre

Mr BOMBOLAS (Chatsworth—ALP) (11.57 am): On an historic and emotional day, for members opposite the word is 'sorry'—s-o-r-r-y. I rise today to update members on a wonderful community recreational hub that the Bligh government has been involved in. It might have been a long time coming, but the Eumundi Aquatic Centre is finally here. Recently I had the honour of opening the $2.9 million complex, which is situated between the Eumundi tennis courts and the skate bowl. The Queensland government provided more than $1.4 million towards the construction of the centre, which features a heated 25-metre, six-lane pool, a 15-metre learn-to-swim pool and a toddlers pool.

It goes without saying that the government was proud to work in partnership with the Maroochy Shire Council. I congratulate Mayor Joe Natoli on his tireless work on getting this project up. Another key player was the Eumundi and District Community Association. With the help of locals, including stallholders at the very popular Eumundi Markets, the association contributed more than $500,000 towards the venture. I congratulate President Louis Formosa, members of the Eumundi and District Community Association and local residents who contributed in so many ways to the project.

On opening day it was clear that this project was relished by the community of Eumundi and there is a real sense of ownership. It is anticipated that more than 30,000 people will use the centre by year's end. This number of people includes registered season members, families and children from local schools.

The complex is a great recreational asset. It provides a popular meeting point for young people and will add to the vibrancy of the Eumundi township. I know it is only early days, but the aquatic centre could easily join the markets and the tasty local brew as an icon in the area. With Queensland being such a prolific producer of great swimmers, I wonder just how long it will be before we see a champion from the Eumundi Aquatic Centre.

Violent Assaults

Mr FOLEY (Maryborough—Ind) (12.00 pm): I rise to bring the attention of the House to an issue that I am sure disturbs all of us, that is, the increase in violent assaults that we read about on a sickeningly daily basis in our newspapers and see on TV reports. In my own electorate this has become quite a problem.

Just the other night two brothers were on a bit of a pub crawl. They were walking from one pub to another when a gang jumped out and gave them a very severe bashing. I talked to their parents about it and they said that their kids were not going to press charges as they feared recriminations from the multiple assailants. In this particular case, the mum had just spent many thousands of dollars on orthodontic treatment and her son's teeth were knocked out in an unprovoked and violent assault.

When I was a kid if there was a fight and someone was down and unable to defend himself, somehow the fight would automatically stop because people had a sense of decency. Usually if the fight did not stop a bystander would jump in and pull the person off, saying, 'Come on, he's had enough.' Now we are even seeing sickening cases such as random stabbings or unconscious people having their heads jumped on or kicked. That is worse-than-animal behaviour.

I urgently call on the police minister and the Attorney-General to look into this issue. I am aware that under legislation what I would call violence in company, that is, where there are multiple assailants, is considered to be an aggravation to the offence. Perhaps custodial sentencing or other very stiff penalties need to be looked at posthaste to ensure that we send the strongest possible message to people who engage in this behaviour, to let them know that it will not be tolerated.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wendt): Order! I welcome to the gallery today students and teachers from Brisbane Boys' College in the electorate of Mount Coot-tha, represented by the Treasurer.

QUEENSLAND COMPETITION AUTHORITY AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Treasurer) (12.01 pm): I acknowledge the students of the Brisbane Boys' College. It is a great school. I present a bill for an act to amend the Queensland Competition Authority Act 1997. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Treasurer) (12.01 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the bill is to amend the Queensland Competition Authority Act 1997, the QCA Act. The QCA Act provides the legislative framework for economic regulation in Queensland including—

- a monopoly prices oversight regime;
- a third-party access regime; and
- a competitive neutrality complaints mechanism.

The QCA Act has been in place for over a decade. This bill aims to bring the act up to date and be better equipped to deal with economic regulatory issues as they are today. The bill also implements the Queensland government's reform agreed to by the Council of Australian Governments, COAG.

In February 2006 under COAG's Competition and Infrastructure Reform Agreement, state governments agreed to establish a simpler and consistent national approach to economic regulation of significant infrastructure. The intention is to encourage greater investment in regulated export related infrastructure in particular.

The bill will improve the QCA Act by increasing certainty for regulated entities operating within Queensland's regulatory framework. This improvement is obviously good news for Queensland as Queensland will also be the first state to implement the COAG recommendations. This timely and decisive response shows how committed this government is to doing what it can to attract and encourage investment in significant infrastructure in the state. This reform sets infrastructure delivery front and centre for the Queensland Competition Authority. I move that the remainder of my speech be incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The first part of the Bill extends the existing prices oversight regime for state government business activities to also cover certain private sector monopoly or near monopoly businesses. The bill also introduces a new 'light handed' price monitoring regime.

The prices oversight and monitoring regime will only apply to private businesses that are already nominated under the state's third party access regime. This means only private sector businesses that have monopoly power and are provided by infrastructure facilities including port, rail, wholesale petroleum, gas, water or sewerage may be affected.

Mr Speaker, we are doing this because we recognise the increasing role the private sector plays in providing essential monopoly services to the community. Prices charged for these services can have a critical impact on the efficiency of those industries, which rely on these essential inputs. In the absence of a competitive market, it is important that there be an independent oversight of prices in order to ensure that services are provided at the most efficient level possible and at the most efficient price.

It provides the option for a consistent regulatory framework, particularly in cases where there is State regulation of a public sector activity in the same industry.

The bill also introduces an option for light-handed price monitoring regulation of monopoly businesses. Price monitoring regulation improves the level of price transparency as the authority obtains pricing data from a monopoly business at defined periods and periodically releases the data and any recommendations publicly on an ongoing basis. This is a light-handed transparent approach which allows regulated businesses to operate commercially with minimal interference from the regulator.

Under the prices oversight regime, recommendations made by the authority cannot be enforced by the authority or ministers. At this stage and in keeping with a light-handed regulatory approach that encourages minimal interference, the regime is a 'name and shame' model which is intended to provide monopoly businesses with an incentive to price fairly through a process that informs customers about the prices they are paying and the level of service they receive.

However, if a business is found to persistently abuse its position of market power in the delivery of essential services, the government is able to apply a more intrusive and decisive regulatory approach. Moving to regulate the business under the state's third party access regime (or further legislative amendment to allow pricing recommendations to be enforced) can incentivise a business to price efficiently.

Mr Speaker, while the government is committed to providing a light-handed approach that aims to attract investment in regulated infrastructure in Queensland, where necessary, we will do everything possible to protect the interests of Queenslanders when it comes to ensuring the fair supply of essential commodities.

It is anticipated, as proposed by the Queensland Water Commission, the new local government water retailers be subject to the new price monitoring provisions.

The second component of the bill implements a number of the recommendations in COAG's Competition and Infrastructure Reform Agreement. As I indicated earlier, Queensland will be the first state to implement these reforms which will streamline and simplify regulatory policy. The key changes involve introducing a new objects clause and pricing principles into the third party access regime. The bill also introduces new time limit provisions to regulatory decision making processes.

Including the new objects clause places an emphasis on efficient investment in and use of infrastructure. The new pricing principles will provide overriding guidance for the authority and ministers when making regulatory decisions. It will also help ensure that decisions are made on a more consistent basis over time as they will be made in the context of the overall objectives of the QCA Act. These new provisions in the QCA Act will help provide greater certainty for investors, access providers and access seekers as to how the QCA Act will be applied in particular circumstances. Again this will benefit and encourage infrastructure investment in Queensland.

The bill also establishes new time limit provisions in the third party access regime, which means the authority is directed to finalise its regulatory decisions within a six month time frame.

This provision recognises that timely decision making needs to be balanced with quality decision making. Accordingly, important processes such as public consultation periods are not included in the time frame. Further, the authority is able to make a decision outside the six month period provided it presents the government with written notice of the reasons for the delay.

To achieve the time frame required in the bill, it is important all regulatory participants have the opportunity to respond to requests for information from the authority in a timely manner. That is why the time limits will impose additional discipline on all participants in the regulatory process.

However, if providing information and responsiveness are found to be a problem in meeting the six month time limit, then the government will consider introducing appropriate legislative sanctions to provide support. Sanctions relating to the acquisition of information could take the form of, for example, financial penalties or compulsory acquisition of information.

Finally in respect of COAG's Competition and Infrastructure Reform Agreement, the bill provides an immunity from regulation for infrastructure that is developed under a competitive tender process approved by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) under relevant Trade Practices Act 1974 provisions.

This up-front immunity is proposed on the basis that a competitive tendering process can substitute for the regulation of prices that can be charged by a natural monopoly. This sort of immunity can simplify the regulatory process, add certainty and enhance timeliness. It should be noted the commencement of this provision will be delayed until the guidelines for the competitive tender process are finalised by the COAG working group.

A major improvement to the QCA Act incorporated in the bill is the introduction of 'Binding Rulings' under the third party access regime. This new section in the QCA Act will allow the authority to make a decision on a regulatory matter prior to or outside of a formal regulatory process. Binding rulings will allow the QCA to provide greater clarity and regulatory certainty prior to infrastructure investments being made.

By providing regulation in advance, binding rulings will reduce the risk faced by regulated entities and significantly encourage investment in regulated or potentially regulated infrastructure in the state. The rulings will also encourage more strategic and forward looking types of investment in infrastructure which involves spare capacity. Often investment decisions in regulated assets are made simply on the basis of capacity required to meet foundation contracts or existing demand. Further, the rulings may be used to provide regulatory certainty where investments are required urgently to meet extraordinary circumstances.

Finally, there are two further miscellaneous provisions in the bill that the authority will be required to take into consideration in third party access decision making processes. Firstly, the bill requires the authority to consider the effect of excluding assets for pricing purposes on a regulated entity's returns. While the authority cannot, nor should it, guarantee a return on all regulated investment in infrastructure, the risk of the regulator removing assets from the asset base and therefore decreasing the regulated entities rate of return can have an adverse effect on the incentives for the industry to invest in strategic significant infrastructure over time. This provision ensures the authority explicitly takes this potential impact into account.

Secondly, the bill requires that the authority should not reject a draft access undertaking on the basis of a minor and inconsequential matter. This provision signals a preferred regulatory approach whereby the authority does not question minor details that have no real effect on regulatory outcomes. While the authority is ultimately the judge of what it considers minor and inconsequential regulatory issues, the provision indicates that the authority should not become overly involved in access undertakings submitted by regulated entities.

In conclusion, the policy objectives which have driven the development of the bill are critically important in a growing state like Queensland where we need to be able to respond to the export market in a timely way. In particular, we need to ensure the regulatory framework supports and encourages investment in essential infrastructure.

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to say this has been achieved through broadening the range of options to include a lighter handed form of regulation such as the price monitoring provisions and providing access to binding rulings which will be an essential element of regulatory certainty. Furthermore, implementing the COAG recommendations will improve the quality and timeliness of decision making and outcomes under the QCA Act. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Dr Flegg, adjourned.

GAMBLING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 12 February (see p. 115), on motion of Ms Bligh—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (12.03 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill. In doing so, I echo the sentiments of the shadow Treasurer and member for Moggill by stating that the coalition will be supporting the bill. Before I proceed any further, I place on record my appreciation to the former Treasurer for making available Treasury staff for a coalition briefing.

This bill contains a host of provisions designed to enhance gambling industry regulation in Queensland. The main objectives of the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2007 are to strengthen existing regulatory provisions preventing minors from entering and gambling in casinos, provide for greater accountability in the conduct of more significant art unions, introduce a licensing scheme for people who test gaming equipment and implement certain recommendations of the review of the gaming machine operating authority reallocation scheme for hotels.

The bill is far reaching in its scope. It amends seven existing gaming acts, namely the Casino Control Act 1982, the Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming Act 1999, the Gaming Machine Act 1991, the Interactive Gambling (Player Protection) Act 1998, the Keno Act 1996, the Lotteries Act 1997 and the Wagering Act 1998. In light of this complexity, I will focus on some of the bill's more significant amendments.

Part 2 amends the Casino Control Act 1982. The key amendment here is clause 7 which strengthens the government's stance against minors entering and remaining in casino environments. This clause creates a new offence for adults who aid or enable a minor to enter or remain in a casino and a new offence for allowing a minor to gamble or attempt to gamble. The clause also increases the maximum penalties for which casino operators and employees are liable. Clause 8 is also significant as it increases the maximum penalty for cheating where the amount illegally obtained exceeds $50,000.

Part 3 amends the Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming Act 1999. Under these proposed amendments, agreements between third-party operators and eligible associations for the conducting of art unions are able to be reviewed. This is to ensure greater transparency and accountability in the conduct of more significant art unions. These reviews will focus on whether the agreement is made in the best interests of the eligible association, whether it has been made at arm's length and whether payments made under the agreement are reasonable.

Part 4 of the bill amends the Gaming Machine Act. Key provisions proposed under these amendments will introduce a licensing program for businesses that test or evaluate gaming equipment in order to subject them to greater control, conditions and reporting requirements.

In addition, the proposed amendments contained in clauses 11, 67, 70, 74 and 79 insert a new definition of 'problem gambler' into the Casino Control Act 1982, the Gaming Machine Act 1991, the Interactive Gambling (Player Protection) Act 1998, the Keno Act 1996, and the amendment of the Wagering Act 1998. This new definition is based on the national definition of problem gambling developed by Gambling Research Australia and endorsed by the Ministerial Council on Gambling. The new definition of 'problem gambler' is a person whose behaviour relating to gambling is characterised by (1) difficulties in limiting the amount of money or time the person spends on gambling; and (2) leads to adverse consequences for the person, other persons or the community.

The amendments to the Casino Control Act 1982 establishing an offence for allowing a minor to gamble or attempt to gamble at a casino establishment is something of a yarn. If it is already an offence for a minor to enter a gambling establishment, why does this further penalty need to be imposed? It testifies to the fact that the supervision of entry to these places is poor and therefore propagates a raft of questions. What measures will the Bligh government be undertaking to ensure the enforceability of its amendment bill? How can the government ensure that it will be more effective than the present system? I would ask the Treasurer to respond to those questions in his reply. Also, has this worry come about primarily because of the amount minors are losing or is it simply the fact that they are gambling? What leads the Treasurer to believe that these measures will be more effective than those we currently have? I also ask the Treasurer this question: if it has been revealed that supervision is wanting, how exactly will that be policed?

Perhaps the Treasurer, as I have said, would be kind enough to address all of those questions, along with providing some figures on the size of the problem relating to minors who gamble in casinos. The proposed new offence for a casino operator, employee or agent of the operator to allow a minor to gamble or attempt to gamble in the casino offers little protection for minors engaging in online gaming and Sportsbet and racing in TABs. Research cited by the government on its own 'responsible gambling' web site shows that those aged 18 and under are most at risk of developing addictive patterns of behaviour, including gambling, and are unlikely to have the skills necessary to manage these addictions. I can speak from personal experience here with one of our family members starting out having the occasional punt on Melbourne Cup day and now having a very, very serious gambling problem that sees him risking his future because of the amounts of money that he gambles.

Technology today provides ample opportunity for gambling at any time by the young people of Australia. Internet and telephone gambling are largely unregulated, and minors are able to sign up to online gaming web sites and deposit funds via electronic transfer. They are thus still able to engage in gambling activity, evading the scope of the law. I am not quite sure how any government could address this, but I do urge everyone in this House to do all they can to protect our young from falling into the trap that is problem gambling. TABs are still able to be entered and facilities accessed by minors, to the best of my knowledge. Perhaps the Treasurer would be kind enough to inform me if that is correct. I understand also that no attempts have been made to increase the penalties for this or to assist in the ceasing of these activities.

There are, according to some records, around 300,000 problem gamblers in Australia. Gambling and gambling in excess has become a huge social problem in our country, where Australians are gambling more than any other nation. This problem for Queenslanders is exacerbated by the number of gambling facilities in our state. There were some 40,171 approved poker machines in Queensland as at 28 February 2006. It must be noted that this number does not include the some 3,500 gaming machines housed in the state's four casinos.

There is no doubt that gambling puts a strain on Queensland families. Queenslanders are throwing away hundreds of millions of dollars that could be far better spent on providing their families with the necessities of life. Gambling is not only a concern in itself but also a significant social scourge that contributes to many other issues, including of course child safety. A high percentage of children are notified to the department these days due to neglect. In fact, in relation to the reporting of child safety notifications the highest spike is in the area of neglect, as parents spend their money on pokies or at the TAB and do not feed, clothe or keep children adequately. Alcohol and drug or substance abuse are other factors that disadvantage children physically and socially. Such is the pull of the pokies that we hear of children being left alone in cars and other risky situations.

It sounds like I am saying that all gambling is bad; of course it is not. Many of us enjoy it. Many of us have experienced the occasional punt. In fact, I know the honourable member for Moggill, who sits next to me, is far from shy when it comes to having more than the occasional punt. In fact, sometimes it is hard to drag him away from the tables. So when we had that absolutely pathetic drivel from the member for Mansfield last night, he picked the wrong man to call a wowser because that man is quite successful at what he does. However, the fact that some of us can gamble and have fun and know when to stop does not dilute the seriousness of the problem.

The Queensland Household Gambling Survey 2003-2004 found that many gamblers experienced adverse effects on their day-to-day lives as a result of their habit, unlike comments we have heard from others. I admit that these figures are several years old, but they were all I could find. Maybe other members will have more recent data. Of those surveyed, 29 per cent recognised that their work performance had been affected by their gambling; 15 per cent had changed their jobs because of gambling; 12 per cent had been declared bankrupt because of gambling; 18 per cent reported having obtained money illegally to gamble; nearly 40 per cent reported that they had borrowed money or sold something in order to obtain funds for gambling; 28 per cent said that they had not had enough time to look after their family interests because of gambling; and 22 per cent reported the break up of an important relationship due to problem gambling.

It is with these statistics in mind that the government must take a long hard look at itself and its responsibilities for the provision of education for gamblers. Are our problem gamblers being weaned from their habit or educated effectively against the dangers of gambling? I would argue strongly not. 'Gamble responsibly' is misleading and the leaflets, coasters and slogans are a cruel farce.

And so I return to the issue of problem gamblers. Government slogans such as 'gamble responsibly' that are peddled in casinos, in bus shelters and in television advertising campaigns are not assisting them. Short, sassy and sexy slogans on posters around hotels and casinos, where gaming is seen as a sophisticated form of entertainment, do little to curb the habit of the problem gambler. Another government brochure titled 'Looking for a few hot tips?', showing two appetising chillies, whet the gambler's appetite and do nothing to dissuade the gambler from his or her habit.

Mr Rickuss: A bit like the old Peter Stuyvesant ads.

Mrs STUCKEY: And the Winfield ads. I take that interjection. We have seen some quite appealing smoking advertisements over the years which have all been successfully banned.

Gambling is often described as an emotional illness. It is a term that shifts the focus of the gambler away from moral condemnation. Punishing these people alone does not make them really change. Emotional illnesses require rehabilitation, counselling and intensive support.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): Order! Member for Lockyer, the member for Currumbin is on her feet.

Mrs STUCKEY: Thank you very much for your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker. Delusions of problem gamblers can lead to prison terms, insanity and in some cases death. Studies have shown that the vast majority of problem gamblers admitted to starting gambling in their teens—some as early as nine or 10. I have to say that what I saw in some Indigenous communities recently would reinforce that. We have nine- and 10-year-olds actually gambling not in casinos or anywhere legal but in their communities. Amounts around $300 and $400 were discussed.

Mr Lee: What did you do when you saw that? Did you report it?

Mrs STUCKEY: I will take the interjection. I did not realise the children were playing with money when I walked past. I was told afterwards when I left.

Children are the ones most at risk of developing addictive patterns of behaviour, and to trivialise gambling to the point where it is a 'fun activity in moderation' is akin to leading a lamb to the slaughter. The advertising of gambling as a responsible action is perpetuating cyclic generational addiction and needs to be duly revised by the government.

Given this research, how can the Bligh government follow on from the Beattie government and justify the promotion of 'responsible gambling' as a positive means of informing our children of gambling and its dangers? All problem gamblers I spoke with at an open meeting of Gamblers Anonymous were of the opinion that the 'responsible gambling' literature and other advertising circulated by the government was misleading. One gambler wondered how you could put the words 'responsible' and 'gambling' in the one phrase. Instead he said it should read, 'Odds on you'll lose.'

It is no secret that the amount gathered by state government in revenue is growing rapidly. Certainly the gambling fund helps many community groups, but this Labor government is not returning as much as it could or, more importantly, should. Overall the percentage handed back to the community is not representative of how much this amount has increased. Put in simple language: gambling is a huge cash cow, yet the Bligh government is irresponsibly introducing more pokies but not investing anywhere near enough on support programs. A much heavier focus must be placed on warning gamblers of the risks they take when they place their bets or tip money into machines. The real odds should be advertised, and strong messages similar to those on cigarette packets, as we have already mentioned, should be distributed.

In September 2007 the Victorian Labor government announced that it was setting up a new problem gambling research and treatment centre in partnership with Monash and Melbourne universities. Funding was to come from the state's $132 million over five years 'Taking action on problem gambling' strategy. Compare this to the Queensland Labor government's paltry $9.4 million per year on 'responsible gambling' initiatives and you will see that the Victorian government is leaving us behind. Clearly these words are not dissuading gamblers, and the government's reluctance to commit decent funding means Queensland's dilemma will actually grow.

I mentioned earlier that I was listening to the drivel from the honourable member for Mansfield last night. He really is deluding himself about his government's commitment. He is in denial. It was a very mischievous statement, playing wedge politics here. As I have said, the coalition is certainly not beating the drum down the path of prohibition. If anyone is beating the drum on pokies at the moment it is the Labor Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd.

Organisations that I speak with on a regular basis truly despair over the lack of funding to run educational programs in this area. They can see the problem escalating before their eyes and they are asking for help. Frequent stories appear in the media about the proliferation of gambling opportunities and venues and the increase in cases coming before District Court judges as problem gamblers plead guilty to stealing for their habit. I know personally of three people who have lost their homes; they have gambled their entire homes away. One woman I spoke to went to jail because she stole from her boss. She found there was absolutely no support for her in jail to actually encourage her to deal with her problem or get any counselling.

Whilst this bill does contain some protective measures to curb youth gambling, much more needs to be done and I really hope that every member of the House acknowledges that. I urge the government to act in a more socially responsible manner. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs MENKENS (Burdekin—NPA) (12.20 pm): I rise to speak to the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill. I support this bill. The main objective of the bill is to improve the regulatory function in gambling through amendments to the seven principal gaming acts. The bill seeks to make amendments to these acts—namely, to implement processes relating to the third-party operators who assist in general gaming, to strengthen the government's stance against minors entering, remaining and gambling in casinos, and to introduce a licensing regime for those businesses that test gaming equipment. It also makes a number of miscellaneous amendments to the principal gaming acts.

At some time most adult Queenslanders gamble, whether it be at a casino or through lotto, bingo, horseracing, gaming machines or even at sporting events et cetera. In the majority of cases, gambling for these people is a light-hearted form of entertainment while mixing socially with friends. It may be a once-a-year event where people try their luck, at such events as the Melbourne Cup.

On the other hand, there are far too many people who let their gambling get out of control. These people are addicted to betting and this can lead to them losing all of their money and causing hardship to their family and friends. In some cases it destroys relationships and affects their work and their study. We hear of instances of both mum and dad going to the casino and leaving their young children in the car or at home by themselves—the parents are gambling away the money that should be used to feed the kids. We hear of many such sad instances.

Borrowing money to play or spending over the budget and using money allocated to buy essentials like food for the family are common instances in families where there are gamblers. They are also not setting an example for their children, and it is no wonder that the gambling addiction sometimes flows on to the minors.

Some people with gambling addictions believe that if they continue gambling they are bound to win soon, and if they lose they gamble again because they believe their loss can be won back soon. There are also people who believe that gambling will be a solution to their financial problems. Some people even believe that gambling will relieve stress. They do lose vision of the reality. They lose the vision that gambling is a game and that games are calculated so that the operator will eventually win. Gambling should be an enjoyable experience. It should be fun, and many people do have fun with it.

Dr Flegg: It's more fun when you win.

Mrs MENKENS: It is much more fun when you win, yes. I hope you have more success than I do because I generally do not win.

Mr Rickuss: No, I have seen him gamble.

Mrs MENKENS: We will not discuss the member for Moggill's gambling habits. Establishments and organisations that are registered for gaming are required to display responsible gaming information. I looked up various literature to see exactly what 'responsible gaming' is meant to be. From government web sites I quote the following—

Responsible gambling occurs in a regulated environment where the potential for harm associated with gambling is minimised and people make informed decisions about their participation in gambling.

Also—

Responsible gambling occurs as a result of the collective actions and shared ownership by individuals, communities, the gambling industry and the Government, to achieve outcomes that are socially responsible and responsive to community concerns.

These are fine ideals, but at the end of the day we do have to accept and take responsibility for the fact that gaming does prey on the innocent and more often than not it is practised by those people who are least able to afford it.

I note that higher penalties and new offences for casino gambling by minors have been addressed within these amendments. These are commendable and necessary, although there are times when I do question whether a 16- or 17-year-old—who is a minor—still should take part of that responsibility. In a situation where a casino operator, employee or agent allows a minor to enter or stay in a casino, the fines will be increased from $1,500 to $7,500 for the operator and $3,000 for the employee or agent. Another offence will be that of an adult aiding or enabling a minor to enter or remain in a casino.

There is an enhancement in the accountability and conduct requirements of those people and organisations that run art unions. This involves third-party arrangements where operators receive and bank money on behalf of eligible organisations who are holders of category 3 gaming licences. The category 3 gaming licence is one where the gross proceeds are more than $20,000. Art unions and games such as bingo are important fundraising efforts for many not-for-profit organisations. However, it is still important that checks and balances are in place to guard against personal gain by individuals who could be there.

Gambling as a form of recreation—whether it be on the horses, on the pokies at clubs or hotels, or at the casino—is very much a part of Australian life. Though only a small proportion of gamblers go on to develop problems, gambling for some can still have a major impact on their life. It is estimated that nearly 80 per cent of all Australians have participated in some form of gambling. For most people, the activity of gambling is an occasional recreational pursuit and it does not cause a problem. It is, though, for some a debilitating addiction affecting every area of their lives. Estimates by Professor Mark Dickerson of the Australian Institute for Gambling Research indicate that between one and three per cent of the population have a gambling problem. This is a considerable number, especially as one excessive gambler may affect the lives of many others such as family, friends and employers. Consequences range from relationship or family breakdowns and bankruptcy to criminal activity, potential imprisonment and the possibility of self-harm.

Pathological gambling—which is commonly referred to as compulsive gambling or a gambling addiction—is a progressive behaviour disorder in which a person has an uncontrollable preoccupation and urge to gamble. This results in excessive gambling—the outcome of which is the loss of time, money and emotional and mental health. The gambling reaches the point where it disrupts and destroys the gambler's personal life, family relationships and jobs. These problems lead to the intensification of the gambling behaviour, so of course we see a total cyclical movement.

Compulsive gambling is a hidden disease because there are no physical or visual symptoms. It has been said to me that it is far more difficult to cure addictive gambling than it is to cure addictive alcoholism. It is not like an alcoholic or a drug addict. There is no telltale smell on the breath and there is no stumbling, slurring of speech and so forth, yet the effects can be just as devastating or even more devastating than alcohol and drug addiction and can result in both financial and personal destruction.

Pathological gambling has been classified as a mental health disorder of impulse control. The impulsive behaviour builds up, and after frequent losses desperation occurs as the gambler becomes obsessed with getting extra money, often to the extent of stealing money and getting secret loans. Life is

very unhappy. The costs to the gamblers are only the beginning. Excessive gambling affects all those closest to the gambler—the family, the friends and the employers. The cost to society as a result of compulsive gambling is considerable, and it is now a major public health problem.

I have a wonderful constituent who frequently discusses with me the problems of her daughter. Her daughter is a compulsive gambler. She is a young woman still in her 20s. This young woman should have everything in life in front of her, but she has been reduced to the lowest common denominator of life by this affliction of compulsive gambling. Her mother tells me that this young woman has lost everything. She has lost her job—nobody wants to employ her—she has lost her self-respect, and she has lost all her living standards. Mostly the only food she gets is what her mother feeds her. As her mother says, 'I cannot let my daughter starve.' The situation is such that her brother has considered changing his name so that in the small community in which they live he would not be associated with his only sister. These are the appalling things that come through.

This wonderful lady—the girl's mother—is passionate about protecting children from the temptations of gambling. She believes, as do many other people, that gambling is a learned habit and that children should be protected from gambling because they also learn it from their parents. Protecting children from gambling is evident in this bill, and I certainly support that. However, what this good constituent has been bringing to my notice is bingo. This lady tells me about games where children as young as nine and 10 are all actively playing and the prize money is up to as much as $2,000. Then at times that prize money jackpots and the prize money could be more.

According to the Queensland Office of Gaming Regulation web site's frequently asked questions, children are able to play bingo. It does not specify a particular age. In the Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice, clause 4, it says that minors are prohibited but there is a note that says the issue of minors playing bingo is part of a broader government investigation into minors' participation in charitable and non-profit gambling, and the responsible advisory committee will consider the issue in due course. Clause 4.2 says that minors are excluded but it states that minors are excluded from where adults are gambling. That is fine, but based on the code of practice, bingo organisations are exempt from this practice.

I understand that the Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice indicates that the practice of prohibiting children from bingo applies only to category 2 bingo games, which are games in which the gross proceeds are between $2,000 and $20,000. I am far from being a wowser but—

Dr Flegg interjected.

Mrs MENKENS: Do you? That is good. I have spoken to a lot of people about this issue. I asked how they felt about children being at bingo. People said that they had wonderful memories of going to bingo with mum and playing bingo, and that is fine. I have no doubt of that. It is a family pastime; it is a lot of fun. It is an area that is essential for so many of our not-for-profit organisations. I do not question family pastimes. There are just not enough family pastimes in many families. But those families probably do not have a family member with a gambling problem. When you listen and talk at length with families who have a member with a gambling problem it does make you pause to think.

I ask members today to consider whether it is ethical to introduce young people to gambling, albeit only bingo, where the potential prizes are $1,000 or $1,500 or more. Is it ethical? We protect children from so many things, but does introducing children to bingo at an early age predispose them to becoming problem gamblers at a later age? I really do put that question to the parliament. I am following this issue very closely, because I believe that as a community and a government we have a moral issue to look at this issue much more closely than we have to date.

I do not have clinical facts or figures on this, if they exist. But I do support this good constituent in her fight and I believe that this issue must be investigated much more closely. That children attend bingo with their parents is not the issue. It is whether they are actually engaging in games of wagering with very high stakes. It is whether engaging in games of wagering is suitable for young children. To what extent does that affect their later behaviour? A prize of $1,000 may not seem very large to some adults, but it would be a fortune for a nine-year-old to collect, and of course an encouragement to go back and play again.

When we spoke to the gaming office about this, they said that it is something that nobody takes much notice of. But if a child collects a prize of a thousand dollars there is a string of complaints from a few adults and then it is forgotten about again—probably because they are upset that the child has collected the thousand dollars. I believe there is an issue here and it is time we started to look at it. It is a genuine issue. As members, we must look more seriously at the situation. Any legislation that outlines amendments designed to provide more prudent regulation within the gaming industry certainly deserves bipartisan support. To that extent I commend this bill to the House.

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (12.35 pm): I rise to speak to the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2007. We will be supporting the bill as we agree that more needs to be done to limit and discourage minors' involvement in gambling and strengthen the faith the Queensland community can have in the integrity of the gambling industry. However, much more needs to be done. Queenslanders

are constantly bombarded with the supposed attractiveness of gambling. Online pop-ups, scratch-its, lotto, the TAB and poker machines all promise the quick gratification of the so-called easy win. Gambling has become an obsession for a society preoccupied with the appeal of winning money. You cannot walk into a pub for lunch anymore without being exposed to the clicking of coins in a poker machine. You cannot search on the internet without pop-ups encouraging you to join some online gambling service. You cannot watch TV without ads about massive jackpots. This is what our children are submitted to daily.

Youth participation in gambling is at an all-time high. It has become too easy for young people to be involved in gambling activities. Any moves to decrease this participation will only be of benefit in the long term in respect of their avoiding problem gambling status. I applaud the actions of many hoteliers who have either refused to install poker machines or have removed them from their establishment to ensure a gambling-free environment is available for patrons and their family. As an example, Roger Okalyi, a Scarborough publican, hit the headlines when it was reported that he turned off all his poker machines because he was sick of watching people lose money. Late last year he sold all the pub's 40 gaming machines. Mr Okalyi noticed kids and pensioners alike regularly losing money. Despite the scepticism of others in the industry, he followed his heart and conscience and sold the machines.

More recently the South Sydney Leagues Club, at the urging of celebrity owners Russell Crowe and Peter Holmes a Court, voted to scrap its poker machines. On 20 August 2007 the *Townsville Bulletin* reported the $193,000 daily gambling habit of residents of Townsville and Thuringowa, pumping $40.5 million into the cities' 1,609 machines in the first seven months of last year. This is an unbelievable figure. The bulletin's editorial on the day slammed the scourge of gambling in our society. The editorial claims the story of addicts and their families should be used more widely by the government when charting the course of legislation.

We could take a page out of Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen's book when he outlawed poker machines in Queensland. Sir Joh foresaw the devastation that poker machines would cause the average family and had the intestinal—

Government members interjected.

Mr KNUTH: I will repeat that. They might have missed it. Sir Joh foresaw the devastation that poker machines would cause the average family and had the intestinal fortitude to keep Queensland pokie free. On 3 January this year Dr Brendan Nelson is quoted as saying—

... we have reached the point where enough is enough. For too much of the money that's going through those poker machines is coming out of the pockets of hard working battlers and often pensioners and the people in Australia who can actually least afford to lose that money.

If publicans and football club owners can rise to the occasion and see beyond the grab for easy money to be made out of poker machines equally so should all governments of this country. I wanted to bring that to the attention of this House.

Mr CHOI (Capalaba—ALP) (12.39 pm): I rise this afternoon to render my support to the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2007. Before I do so I seek your indulgence, Mr Deputy Speaker English, and the understanding of my colleagues in this House to make a few comments on what, in my mind, is a very significant day in our nation's history where we collectively apologise and say sorry to our Indigenous brothers and sisters.

Notwithstanding the fact that past legislation and policies were designed to discriminate against the first people of our land I do believe that we have to acknowledge that, in the name of perhaps doing good deeds, religion or whatever reason we saw fit at the time, unspeakable mistakes were committed against our Indigenous community. It is for that reason that we must say sorry and apologise.

I am sure that if most members of this House were asked to make a choice between having three square meals on the table, a roof over their head, better clothing and an education and knowing their parents they would choose to know their parents. It is in that context that we must say sorry and apologise to the first people of this land.

Today is not a day to score political points or make allegations about each other, whether perceived, real or fabricated. Today is a day to stand together and unify as a nation of people to tell our Indigenous brothers and sisters that we are truly sorry for what happened to them in the past. I ask the opposition to take the opportunity today to show leadership and bipartisan support in this regard. I thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for your indulgence in this regard.

I return to the legislation before the House. The objectives of the bill are to strengthen the existing provisions in legislation to ensure minors are not entering gambling venues, to improve processes relating to third party operators in the gambling industry and to look at recommendations from the reallocation scheme of gaming machine authorities for hotels.

I think it is stating the obvious that areas within clubs and hotels where gaming machines are located are not appropriate or safe environments for our children. Gambling is an adult pass time and we do not need to expose our children to the temptation and dangers of gambling at a very young age.

This bill strengthens the protection of our children from entering or participating in gambling. In my view, it is not acceptable to have children walking around on their own looking for their parents while mum and dad perhaps have one last pull on the machine. Life is hard enough for young people with academic and peer pressure at school without adding other complications like the temptation to gamble and the extremely negative effects this has on young people.

This legislation makes it an offence for adults to help minors to get into or stay in a casino during operating hours. It is also an offence for employees, operators or agents of casinos or hotel-casinos to allow a minor to get into and remain in the casino during operating hours.

I turn to improving processes relating to third parties in the gaming industry such as art unions. This government is keen to continue to support them as much as possible. Art unions are a very good source of fundraising for some of the biggest non-government organisations in the country. BoysTown, the Endeavour Foundation, Surf Life Saving and the RSL are just a few of the art unions that provide the opportunity to purchase tickets to win wonderful prizes from sponsors nationwide.

As with many major businesses these days, it has become necessary for some of these volunteer organisations to outsource some of their work so that their volunteers are freed up for other more important tasks. Third party operators enter into agreements with eligible associations to help with selling art union tickets, receiving and banking moneys from their sale and accounting for the proceeds from sales.

This bill will require that such agreements be in writing and in compliance with the regulations as set out. Most importantly a copy of the proposed agreement between the association and the third party operator must be provided to the chief executive. Any changes later proposed must also be advised to the chief executive. My understanding is that substantial penalties will apply for any failure in this regard. The process is monitored and it is hoped that the protective measures put in place will enable associations that need such assistance to be in a safe position to enter into such agreements.

The provisions proposed by this bill fulfil this government's aim to provide greater powers of scrutiny to the Queensland Office of Gaming Regulation. This is important as the substance of this agreement is directly relevant to the so-called wellbeing of the fundraising organisation. This bill will also allow the chief executive to assess the third party by criminal history checks, accountability measures, transparency of operating structures and reasonableness of the fee payment schedule entered into. All these things will be considered to make sure that the ultimate goal of fundraising for the organisation is not compromised.

The relocation scheme for gaming scheme authorities was originally put in place as part of the government's statewide cap on the number of EGMs that hotels could operate. The scheme operates within the cap. There are no EGMs introduced, simply redistributions under financial arrangement within the state of existing authorities. In this way, the EGMs remains capped and it is hoped that the distribution remains fair and equitable.

However, as part of the government's commitment to responsible administration of the gaming industry in Queensland it has undertaken a review of the scheme and its implementation. This bill has picked up the main recommendation from the review—that is, a removal of the restriction on the number of machines which a hotel licensee can decrease at a time. This will bring hotels into an equivalent position under the regulations that are currently enjoyed by clubs.

Whilst the provisions of the current act were justified at the time the market is now more informed. Licensees are now aware of the consequences of any decision to dispose of authorities, including the difficulty of re-entering the market. This will enable any concerns that changes may lead to the removal of such community facilities to be potentially relieved by a local club or another hotel in the same area.

I am sure that if asked there would not be a member in this House who has not been called upon to provide a letter of support for a local school, sporting club or other well deserving community group seeking funds from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund. The grant scheme is a wonderful way of putting funds back into the community. It is a major source of funding for local communities all over Queensland.

The government has two jobs to do here. Firstly, to support the smaller clubs which find it hard to stay financially viable and therefore need to rely on EGMs. On the other hand, the government has to balance this against its responsibility to the people of Queensland and ensure that minors are protected and the number of EGMs are restricted. In that sense, I believe the government is striking a good balance. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr WEIGHTMAN (Cleveland—ALP) (12.48 pm): I rise to support the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill. This bill maintains the strong commitment to open and accountable government held by all on this side of the House. The bill proposes to amend the seven principal gaming acts—the Casino Control Act 1982, the Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming Act 1999, the Gaming Machine Act 1991, the Interactive Gambling (Player Protection) Act 1998, the Keno Act 1996, the Lotteries Act 1997 and the Wagering Act 1998. The bill makes various amendments to these acts—one of which is 25 years old.

I sat here yesterday and listened to a number of members contributing to this debate. I heard the member for Moggill chiding this government for using the gambling industry as a means of generating a revenue stream. I heard the member for Mansfield continually ask the member for Moggill what he would do as opposed to what this government is doing. Unfortunately, I am still waiting for the answer. I will say this in good faith: gambling is intrinsically interwoven into the Australian culture. They did it on the First Fleet boats coming out to Australia, they did it under fire at Gallipoli and we do it on the first Tuesday of every November when a whole nation stops for a punt. Whether we like it or not, gambling is a part of the Australian psyche right up there with Vegemite, Holden cars, giving people a fair go and being fair dinkum.

I ask those who would stand in isolation and criticise those who would take action to tell me: how would they stop people from gambling, from using pokies, from imbibing in the great Australian pastime of having a punt? If they are fair dinkum about standing against gambling and they honestly disagree with the government using money from the gambling industry, then I ask them to go back to their electorates and have a conversation with the community groups. Go back to the P&Cs, the sporting clubs, the service clubs, the domestic violence support groups and all of those other community based groups that benefit from funds generated by the gambling industry and distributed by this government and tell them that they will not support their applications. The simple fact is that they would not—they could not. The extinction of pokies from our landscape is in the hands of the community and indeed in the hands of the clubs, not in the hands of the government—at least not yet.

This aside, it does not exclude the social problem of problem gambling. Problem gambling is one of the blights on this society as far as I am concerned. It has far-reaching impacts and manifests itself in many forms and many facets. It goes without saying that this government takes its responsibility in this regard seriously. In the absence of a solution to stop gambling, the Queensland government therefore is committed to achieving a balance between the social and economic benefits and the social and economical costs of gambling. It is about working towards solutions for the things it can control while at the same time acknowledging the presence of things it cannot yet control.

This bill, amongst other things, seeks to strengthen the integrity and probity in relation to the operations of art unions and casinos and improve governance in other areas. It also strengthens our control mechanisms over the various aspects of gambling, including discouraging minors' involvement in casino gambling. Amendments to the seven principal gaming acts will result in, amongst other positive outcomes, tighter controls over third-party operators involved in charity raffles; closer monitoring of gaming machine operating authority reallocations; stronger conditions and reporting requirements placed over gaming machine testing operators; greater penalties for cheating in casinos; new penalties for a breach of advertising provisions; and, as I said earlier, tougher penalties around minors entering and gambling in casinos.

I do not believe there is a significant problem with minors attempting to gamble in Queensland casinos and I believe that strong measures already exist to prevent under-age people entering these establishments. However, because it has been a quarter of a century since the act came into being, it is now time to send a renewed message. These amendments merely reinforce the government's strong commitment to ensuring that minors are protected and casino operators, their employees and agents of casino operators are aware of the gravity of their obligations in this regard.

Apart from increased fines under the amended legislation, casino operators are required to have adequate arrangements in place to prevent minors from entering and gambling in their casinos. This includes having proper procedures and suitably trained employees in adequate numbers to prevent such instances from occurring. These amendments are both timely and sensible. Part 3 of the bill is an amendment of the Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming Act. This amendment relates to the use of third-party operators selling tickets, receiving and banking money from sales and accounting for proceeds from sales. There is a genuine attempt to protect the eligible association with a category 3 licence and the third-party operator by requiring any proposed agreement to go to the chief executive for review. The chief executive officer may review the agreement as part of the investigation into the suitability of the association to be a holder of a category 3 licence.

The chief executive stops short of formally approving the agreement. What the new legislation proposes is that the agreement must be lodged at least 28 days before entering into an agreement and that any material changes to the agreement also be lodged with the chief executive officer. This ensures that there will always be an independent body involved in the process. The chief executive will assess the agreement to ensure that there is both probity and equity on the part of both parties. This in the long term can only enhance the integrity of the business and ensure that the public who support these organisations in good faith can in some degree be sure that the money that they have invested will go to the people they want it to go to and for the reasons that they wish.

The bill through part 6 relating to the amendment of the Keno Act 1996 also seeks to modernise gambling legislation by amending the definition of 'problem gambler' to reflect the national definition as recommended by Gambling Research Australia. Such amendments give Queenslanders added

confidence that the government is continuing to keep a close eye on gambling in this state with a view to maintaining appropriate regulation of the industry to ensure integrity, equity and probity at all times. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RICKUSS (Lockyer—NPA) (12.54 pm): I rise to say a few words on the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2007. I realise that the minister is looking at the seven gaming acts with regard to third-party operators and under-age children, but I encourage the minister to think outside the square on this issue, because many gaming venues have loyalty cards. I am sure those loyalty cards could be used to greater advantage if people are experiencing gambling problems in that it should ring bells and whistles when they have lost $100 in a night. That would protect not only the gambler but also the operators, because through those loyalty cards operators know exactly how much they are losing because gamblers win prizes for having those loyalty cards. There could be a further step taken where most players have to use a loyalty card.

Gambling operators have to become more responsible. I am not saying that the government has to become more responsible, but the operators who are making the big bucks from gambling have to become more responsible. I have seen hotels make very big money out of poker machines. Woolworths owns 3,000 or 4,000 poker machines now and is making big money from them. Surely we can think outside the square and throw some of the responsibility back to those people who are making the big bucks from gambling. The term 'responsible gambling' is almost an oxymoron, because I have been told that gamblers will only get back 83c or 85c in the dollar on what they gamble.

With regard to gambling and job creation, that is also a bit of a farce. When poker machines were first introduced I was talking to some people in my electorate who worked at nurseries and at fruit shops. The people who worked at the nurseries told me that before poker machines were introduced they used to have plant sales where they used to sell a couple more pot plants on pension day. However, when poker machines were introduced that just dried up. The people who worked in fruit shops told me that before poker machines were introduced they used to sell strawberries on special for $1 a punnet on a Friday afternoon. After poker machines were introduced that just dried up because people kept that money in their pockets because they wanted to spend $10 at the local poker machines that afternoon. So poker machines have made a difference, and even clothing stores have felt that they have not sold as much clothing since poker machines were first introduced.

I ask the minister to inform me in his summing-up if the Scandinavian countries or other countries have any real statistics on teaching gambling statistics and probabilities in high school and whether that has made any difference to problem gambling. Do people understand the statistics that they are virtually going to lose if they keep gambling at 85c in the dollar? It is different to horseracing where at least people have a chance. If they get to know a jockey, they might have a bit of a chance of getting in someone's ear, but on a machine they will lose eventually. Has there been any data done on that? Are we going to get any data on that sort of thing in Queensland? We could conduct a trial where we use statistics and probability studies as part of the maths course in our high schools and then follow that through. It has to be quite an exhaustive course that would have to be followed through, but it could pay off in the long run.

I encourage the minister to look outside the square. Unfortunately, gambling has become a way of life for many people and they do not mind putting a few bob into a poker machine. I find them dull and boring, but some people do find them encouraging and some people do not have an issue with them. I am sure some members opposite enjoy putting a few bob through the poker machines on occasions. We have to stop promoting gambling to the extent we do as a way of solving financial problems, because it definitely is not a way to solve financial problems. Future societies will look back on us and say, 'How could we let this go on in the way it has?' I encourage the minister to answer some of the questions I asked when he sums up. With those few words, I commend the bill to the House.

Sitting suspended from 12.58 pm to 2.30 pm.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (2.30 pm): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise to participate in the debate on the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2007. I note that a lot of members have already spoken in this debate, and I know there are still a number of members from both the government and the opposition side who are keen to participate. I would also like to put on the record my support for the government's amendments to further limit and discourage minors gambling in casinos. Today, a person is a minor until they reach 18 years of age. But many young people under 18 certainly look like they are well over 18 years. I am very pleased that the government is trying to further limit and discourage young people from being involved in gambling and in the casino industry.

Unfortunately, gambling is a very important part of many people's lives in Queensland and in Australia. I suppose it is up to the governments and our community as a whole to try to ensure that gambling does not take over the consumption of a lot of people's income. Unfortunately, some people seem more prone to spending a significant part of their income on gambling and, for them, often there are not sufficient funds left to meet their necessary expenses of living and raising a family. All too often we see people being involved in illegal activities or having to be declared bankrupt simply because they have spent more funds than they earn.

So I certainly would like to put on the record my support for the minister's and the government's attempts to further limit and discourage minors from being involved in the casino gambling industry. I would also like to indicate that I believe that we as a community need to work harder and not just simply blame the government and say that the government has to solve our gambling problems. As parents, as grandparents and as other members of the community, we all need to play a part wherever possible to try to ensure that if people want to participate in gambling activities they do so in a responsible and sensible manner. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms DARLING (Sandgate—ALP) (2.32 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2007. In particular, I wish to speak in favour of the amendments that the bill makes to the Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming Act 1999. As members may be aware, Queensland has long been regarded as the home of the art union raffle—a point reinforced by Fundraising Institute Australia recently when the Treasurer launched its tool kit to help support professional and ethical fundraising. The government's commitment to this cause is further evident in the broad benefits that are to be derived from the amendments to the Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming Act 1999.

Under these amendments, many charitable and non-profit organisations will potentially benefit from fewer overheads as they will be given advice from the Queensland Office of Gaming Regulation on whether an agreement is appropriate. That might include advice on whether fees being paid to third-party operators are fair and whether the services being offered are adequate. That will maintain public faith and trust in the game. Public confidence in the organisation and associated game will also improve because of increased oversight measures regarding the appropriate use of money by the organisations. These amendments will benefit both the public and charitable organisations. More funds raised will go to the charitable operators rather than commercial operators through better fundraising management.

I like to support charities through their raffles and art unions as well as through direct donations. I have been a regular supporter of BoysTown and Multicap for many years through buying their art union tickets. So far I have been unsuccessful in winning, but it is important to me to know that my money is getting through to the people who really need it.

As I mentioned earlier, the Fundraising Institute Australia tool kit provides sensible advice for charitable and non-profit organisations on how to successfully manage their fundraising activities, with tips on corporate governance; financial management, including risk and taxation; fundraising strategies; marketing; and measuring performance.

The Queensland government recognises the importance of charitable and not-for-profit organisations in our community. It is keen to support and encourage this sector to make the most of its fundraising. These charitable and not-for-profit organisations rely on donations and fundraising activities. So it is very concerning when donors are put off from donating because they are worried that the funds that they have given, or the money they have paid in art union tickets, is not reaching those in need.

The tool kit also provides advice for keeping overheads at a minimum so that the funds raised are maximised. I commend Fundraising Institute Australia for compiling this helpful guide. In 2005 the Queensland government was pleased to be able to provide a grant to help facilitate the project. The Queensland Office of Gaming Regulation worked closely with the institute to provide accurate legislative advice. The Queensland Office of Gaming Regulation can provide advice on legislation, guidelines, fees and tax rates for charitable and non-profit gaming. I also recommend its user-friendly web site, which includes information sheets and a frequently asked questions page.

I commend the Treasurer and his staff for their work in developing these amendments. The government and the people of Queensland can continue to have faith that charitable operators are maintaining appropriate standards. I know that BoysTown and Multicap will continue to receive my support for many years to come, even if I manage to be lucky enough to win one of those cars or one of their new houses. Those organisations provide so much support to people in need that I will continue to buy all the raffle tickets I need as well as provide direct donations to them. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (2.36 pm): I rise to speak to the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2007, which amends the seven principal gaming acts—namely, the Casino Control Act 1982, the Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming Act 1999, the Gaming Machine Act 1991, the Interactive Gambling (Player Protection) Act 1998, the Keno Act 1996, the Lotteries Act 1997 and the Wagering Act 1998. The purpose of this bill is to tighten the government's stance against minors entering and gambling in casinos.

The amount of legislation that exists for the forms of gambling that are available to anyone willing to part with their hard-earned cash never ceases to amaze me. Although this government is often despairing of the impact that gambling has on individuals and families, it actively feeds the problem by introducing legislation to allow more and more poker machines and gambling venues in Queensland. It amazes and horrifies me to see people lining up to feed the poker machines, and although the majority

are responsible gamblers—and that must be acknowledged—it concerns me greatly that the government continues to increase the number of poker machines, allowing more and more people to play them, hence more and more people becoming problem gamblers.

Gambling has become the accepted norm, if not a right, of all Australians, who throughout history appear to be renowned for betting on anything and everything. Poker machines have become the saviour of many clubs, pubs and other establishments that in the past often struggled to survive. Now, from the revenue gleaned from these machines, some clubs are building incredible monuments to the almighty gambling habit.

When the drinking age was lowered to 18 years of age, I believed that that was a mistake. History has shown that it was a mistake as more and more young people die as a result of alcohol—and now drugs. When poker machines were allowed into Queensland I thought that that also was a mistake. But I never imagined how heavily the clubs would rely on the monies that are extracted from the community through these machines. As with drinking and drug taking, those who gamble are becoming younger. That poses a great challenge for governments, and this legislation attempts to address this issue.

The legislation targets gambling institutions to ensure that they comply with laws prohibiting minors from gambling. The increase in fines to 200 penalty units for casino operators and 40 penalty units for employees will encourage compliance. It is not unheard of for adults to assist under-age persons to enter casinos and other premises to gamble, and that is rightly recognised as an offence. It is essential to stop any young person from gambling. It has been documented that the young can become addicted very quickly and gambling is an addiction for some very vulnerable and susceptible people. It is essential to deter the operators and employees from turning a blind eye to under-age gamblers and increased penalty units may ensure that they take their responsibilities seriously.

The price for a gambler can be very high. Gambling can cause extreme distress. Imagine a man coming home to tell his family the sorry tale of losing the rent, food or electricity money in a card game or any other game of chance. For many families with a gambling member, life can become a nightmare. The family can be left in hardship, unable to finance even the simplest of lifestyles and forcing them to seek handouts from welfare groups simply to pay power and food bills.

Recently the *Courier-Mail* published an article about a Queensland hotel owner who pulled the plug on his poker machines, saying that he could no longer stand to watch his patrons losing all their money and leaving in tears. That man needs to be congratulated. His name is Roger Okalyi. Two months ago he decided to turn the machines off and sell the licences. He felt that he would lose out in some ways and gain in others. What surprised me was the amount of support he received through the media and the general population. People phoned him to say, 'Well done; good on you.' If one hotelier can do that, I expect others can as well. However, too many people are greedy and they want the revenue from the machines. I congratulate Mr Okalyi on his choice. I hope he hangs in there and is a great success. I hope every family visits his premises where he is installing a family games room.

Once upon a time communities relied heavily and directly on the generosity of members to fund various projects and to help organisations to progress. Unfortunately, some people who once willingly and generously delved into their pockets to help charitable or other organisations now dig into their pockets to feed a gambling habit involving poker machines or other forms of gambling. There is no doubt that communities now rely heavily on applying to gaming funds to obtain money to undertake projects.

In this House it has already been revealed that in the past 15 years Queenslanders have put $14.4 billion through the pokies. Although it has been stated before it is worth repeating that the $18 million per week that goes through the pokies is a lot of money collected from Queensland families. That money should be spent on securing the future of families; it should be spent on feeding and housing families. However, the really interesting fact is that only $34 million has returned to the communities through grants. That shows the difference between what could have been and what currently is the situation. Of course, some funding does go to those who have a relatively rare win, but the public has the right to ask where all the money goes, because it is a huge amount.

Let us think about how many forms of gambling there are. Perhaps the most common flutter which many of us enjoy and which is possibly our only brush with gambling is the weekly lotto ticket. Every week millions are spent on those tickets. In addition, let us consider the revenue that passes through the casinos, the TAB, bookies at race tracks and gambling associated with every form of sport that one can think of, as well as other activities. A literal fortune in revenue is collected by governments. People have the right to ask about the benefits that flow from that revenue because currently every service that the government is responsible for is devolving or going backwards at a rapid rate of knots.

Personally, it would not worry me if I never gambled again. I do not use the freebie poker machine vouchers that the clubs send me every year on my birthday. Each week my husband likes to buy a lotto ticket, but he rarely relies on me to buy it for him because often I will forget to do so. It would not worry me one bit if I never gambled again. However, for other people gambling makes up for something that is missing in their lives. Gambling helped my own grandmother get through the lonely times after the death

of her husband. Often it is when people are vulnerable that they fall prey to an addiction, and that is how it was with my grandmother. I saw her go through the proceeds of the sale of her house in a few short years, and that was a very sad thing to see. Gambling led her to despair and it leads a lot of people to despair and even to suicide. Gambling habits that reach such extremes can have far-reaching effects indeed.

I thought it appropriate that today's *Australian* newspaper published an article about problem gambling, and I admit that later in life my grandmother became a bit of a problem gambler. The title of the article is 'Screw problem gamblers: Tatts'. Although the article relates to something that occurred in Victoria, I often wonder if this is the attitude of many gambling institutions. The article states—

Gaming giant Tattersalls wanted to "screw" problem gamblers, secretly colluded with its commercial rivals and hid documents to avoid scrutiny by the competition watchdog...

It goes on to state that an ex-employee—

... accused the company of shutting down a problem-gambling tracking system because it feared costly legal action.

The article goes on to say quite a lot, which I was going to read into *Hansard* but I will not. Basically the article states that Tattersalls did not give a dash about problem gamblers, and perhaps the same can be said of most gambling venues that obtain revenue from people who fundamentally handcuff themselves to poker machines.

I commend people like Mr Okalyi who got rid of his poker machines and took a stance. I wish a lot of other people would do the same. Gambling will continue to impact on our communities, our families and on individuals. Any measure to control and lessen its impact must be supported. I truly support the minister in his efforts to curb gambling by minors and I certainly commend the bill to the House.

Mr DEMPSEY (Bundaberg—NPA) (2.46 pm): I rise to support the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill before the House today. Anything that we can do to reduce the harmful effects of gambling is a good idea. I also note that the parliamentary briefing notes state that the total taxation revenue in Queensland from gambling for 2006-07 was $826 million. This represented 11.2 per cent of total tax revenue for that period. Gaming machine taxes and levies contributed $520 million of that sum. Further, that report stated that the Gambling Community Benefit Fund distributes grants to assist non-profit groups and volunteer based organisations in Queensland. In 2005-06 the fund provided grants totalling $35.3 million to 2,231 projects. That is to be congratulated. However, there are some anomalies in those figures.

It is a great shame that we have to sell off morals and increase negative antisocial behaviour to increase revenue for sporting and community groups. This legislation provides a balance between entertainment, having a good time and promoting an activity that can have a negative effect on families. Last night and throughout today members have spoken about other forms of revenue raising, such as bingo. Although bingo is in decline because of the antismoking regulations, which are great for the community, when people left a bingo session they knew that at least 66 per cent of the money raised would go back into the community. A community organisation would get that money and would be able to complete many initiatives throughout the community. In addition, the money raised through bingo contributed to the way of life of those people. It did not go into an endless pit and it was not taken out of the community.

Major art unions are also in decline. Most organisations that have conducted major art unions over many years know that they would sell more major art union tickets in a low socioeconomic area than in an affluent area simply because those people wanted that expensive car—they wanted that BMW—and they wanted that cash prize. Horseracing is also in decline, which is not just to the detriment of the gambling and betting community in those areas; it also has a social impact on those communities.

We also have to question why any threat to gaming machines is supported by this government through other legislation. The community was sold the idea that gaming money is returned to the community and sporting groups. However, figures recorded in the Bundaberg *NewsMail* reveal that less than 19c in the dollar is returned to the Bundaberg community by way of those types of organisations. Over $30 million left the Bundaberg community in the last three years with a return of less than $2 million. Obviously that $2 million went to the very needy in the community and a lot of worthwhile organisations. Every time the funding rounds come around there are people champing at the bit wanting to see those funds. We talk about the percentage of revenue that goes into communities through the community benefit funds, but it is still great to see that money going back to community organisations.

Licensed venues are also doing it hard with changes in smoking laws—in particular, community licensed venues that not only pass on their share of gaming funds but are also taxed and face increased levies. More money is going to the government from gaming than ever before. Average Queenslanders ask that a higher percentage be returned to support sporting and community groups in the spirit of the initial legislation that was put to the people of Queensland. Gaming is a part of the fabric of the nation from two-up on Anzac Day to Melbourne Cup sweeps to toad racing at local surf clubs. The big difference with these events is that the majority of the money is returned to the community, not as we see presently with this legislation.

In closing I would sincerely like to thank the government for supporting the antigambling initiatives within the schools and also Gamblers Anonymous and gambling counsellors. It is only a small percentage of the community who abuse gambling, but at the end of the day that group affects the larger community and those people are seen within the community as needing support. I support this legislation. I thank the government for the initiatives so far. I hope to see an increase in funding coming back to sporting and community organisations.

Mr FOLEY (Maryborough—Ind) (2.53 pm): I rise to speak on the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2007. Each one of us here has seen the myriad family catastrophes that happen when gambling gets out of control. I for one have been critical of the government in the past—not directly—in saying that putting a state government in charge of gambling revenue and expecting it to make laws is a bit like putting a paedophile in charge of a kindergarten. However, I must say today that as an Independent we have the luxury of being able to give credit where credit is due and criticism where criticism is due. I commend the Treasurer, Andrew Fraser, and the Premier for their strong moves in this area. Despite the revenue that may flow from gambling, they have seen the good sense and legislative decency in making sure that there are checks and balances in place for problem gamblers.

While the majority of amendments in this bill involve the rewording of various clauses in an attempt to more clearly define responsibilities by licence holders, today I want to focus on clause 11. The proposal is to change the definition of 'problem gambler' to the recommended national definition, as outlined by Gambling Research Australia and endorsed by the Ministerial Council on Gambling, which states—

Problem gambling is characterised by difficulties in limiting money and/or time spent on gambling, which leads to adverse consequences for the gambler, others or for the community.

I believe that this definition of 'problem gambling' is inadequate. While problem gambling is acknowledged by the definition, it is made to seem as if it is a minor problem in our community and that adverse consequences may or may not be experienced by a gambler if too much time or money is spent on this activity. Such a watery definition of problem gambling is misleading and I believe is woefully inadequate and potentially damaging because problem gambling is so incredibly destructive. How does the phrase 'adverse consequences' encompass the terrible human toll problem gamblers leave in their wake? Families are torn apart, lives ruined, homes lost and employment endangered, just to name a few consequences of problem gambling. I remember in my previous career as a partner in an accountancy and financial planning practice being approached by clients to lock their money away because they could no longer control the urge to gamble. They asked for it to be invested in such a manner that it could not be easily accessed.

According to Gambling Research Australia, the state of Queensland already has the most developed responsible gambling strategy and explicit definition of all Australian jurisdictions—namely, a 'problem gambler' means 'a person whose behaviour indicates a compulsion to gamble, an addiction to gambling, or an inability or disinclination to make rational judgements about gambling'. Again, I congratulate the state government on that very tough wording. The report further goes on to say—

Responsible gambling occurs in a regulated environment where the potential for harm associated with gambling is minimised and people make informed decisions about their participation in gambling. Responsible gambling occurs as a result of the collective actions and shared ownership by individuals, communities, the gambling industry and Government to achieve outcomes that are socially responsible and responsive to community concerns.

If the state of Queensland has already adopted the most comprehensive definition of 'problem gambling' in the country, why then should it be removed from the existing legislation and replaced with what I believe is a far inferior, watered down version? The answer may be found in the Gambling Research Australia report from which the proposed national definition has been taken. It states—

Most respondents indicated that they would not want reference to addiction, illness or mental health problems included in a national definition of problem gambling.

It is very interesting to note that the report goes on to say that problem gambling should not be classified as addictive, caused by mental illness or any other health problems unless it has been clinically diagnosed. However, to develop a national definition of pathological gambling requires further research focused on those stakeholders who need or want to make clinical diagnoses or who are required to intervene in cases of problem gambling where the problem gambler has been diagnosed with a pathological condition. People who are problem gamblers are not going to be quickly running around the place identifying themselves as problem gamblers, much less seeking a professional opinion about the particular cause of their gambling.

The two most contentious elements are 'loss of control' and 'preoccupation'. Those who have the most direct contact with problem gamblers—the counsellors who work in this particular area—are strongly of the view that these are the elements that most characterise problem gambling and should be included in the definition. Losing control and preoccupation—which for a loose definition could be said to be thinking about gambling all or most of the time—are phrases that govern problem gamblers themselves and are most typical in characterising their gambling behaviours.

Other stakeholders did not like the use of the terms 'loss of control' and 'preoccupation' because they argued that they suggest an unproven causal connection between external forces and people's behaviour and links to illness or mental health problems. 'Spending beyond one's means' was not an element that raised much discussion. It is taken for granted by most stakeholders that most problem gamblers—although not all—will be defined as such because they are experiencing financial difficulties. The least contentious element is adverse impacts upon the gambler's personal life, family relationships, vocational pursuits and the wider community. However, as noted above, most stakeholders think it is inadequate as a definition, given that it contains reference only to the consequences of problem gambling and not to the behaviours that give rise to these consequences.

The concept of gambling related harm was not seen by most stakeholders to be too vague a concept for practical use. Most, however, recognised the subjectivity of harms and that what would be harmful for one person may not be so for others. Most stakeholders take a very pragmatic view with respect to gambling related harm. If a gambler or family member or friend has sought help because of problems associated with gambling, then that is because either the gambler or the family member or friend has identified harm or harms so the person seeking help warrants assistance.

The concept of gambling related harm does not raise the problem of measurement. If only those being assisted are identified as being harmed or suffering adverse consequences, any measure of gambling related harm will fall short because that is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to measuring these things.

There were many varied comments about the definition put forward for comment, reflecting the above discussion of the various elements. Certainly, the removal of the words 'a preoccupation with gambling which leads to a continuous or periodic loss of control' would make the definition less contentious, although those who interact with problem gamblers—the counsellors and a good many members here who deal with the fallout from gambling in their electorate offices when family members and friends in dire straits come in—and see the tip of the iceberg of people we are talking about would probably see it as removing the most important elements of problem gambling.

Clive Allcock suggested a variation of the definition be put forward for comment that would probably be acceptable to most stakeholders in that it contains reference to both behaviours and harms. He says that problem gambling is characterised by difficulties in limiting money and/or time spent on gambling. I believe that is a very practical and user-friendly definition. However, Allcock's proposed definition and the definition we put forward for comment contain no specific reference to a continuum, which some stakeholders favoured. Several stakeholders also favoured short, sharp definitions because of their greater impact. Some stakeholders also preferred the word 'consequences' to 'impacts', and I certainly have some sympathy with that line of thinking.

In the light of the discussion in this and the preceding chapter, I would think that references to 'difficulties in limiting money and/or time spent gambling' is a great definition because it implies a continuum of gambling behaviours from those who have no difficulty, including nongamblers. The member for Nanango talked about the fact that she does not even think about it, and I have certainly put myself in that area when it comes to gambling. I would hate the gambling community to have to rely on revenue from me.

In closing, I believe that most decent-minded people would be pleased to hear of the courageous move by Scarborough Hotel owner Roger Okalyi, who turned off 40 busy pokie machines in his premises. Most people would realise inherently the links between poker machines and problems in our society. It is interesting to hear a publican say that he would replace that revenue with revenue from much more family-friendly activities.

The Rabbitohs co-owners, Russell Crowe and Peter Holmes a Court, made a similar decision in pulling the plug on 60 pokie machines in the Rabbitohs clubhouse. A lot of people applauded them for doing that. It could be argued that it is all right for Russell Crowe and Peter Holmes a Court because they can afford it, but I still think any decision which places morals and community wellbeing above mere money is a good thing.

Mrs LD LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (3.05 pm): I am pleased to support the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2007, which aims to strengthen and further enhance the integrity and probity of gaming operations in Queensland. The main objectives of this bill are to enhance the Queensland government's ability to deal with minors entering and gambling in casinos in order to prevent minors being exposed to the casino environment; to provide for the review of agreements between third-party operators and eligible associations in the conduct of more significant art unions; to introduce a licensing regime for persons who test gaming equipment; and, lastly, to implement the recommendations of the review of the gaming machine operating authority reallocation scheme for hotels.

According to the Australian Gaming Council, about 80 per cent of Australian adults participate in at least one gambling activity each year. The most popular form of gambling is the lottery, followed by instant scratch-it tickets, then gaming machines and then horse and greyhound racing. Betting on sporting events attracts about six per cent of Australian adults. We have recently seen new and

emerging interests to bet on. For example, it became popular for people to bet on elections at the end of last year. The percentage of adults attracted to this form of gambling is anyone's guess. What we do know is that just over 11 per cent of Australian adults play gaming machines regularly—that is, one to three times a week over the last year.

Queensland has a fairly recent history when it comes to poker machines. Gaming machines were first legally introduced in Queensland in February 1992. In contrast, New South Wales legalised poker machines in clubs in 1956. The reasons behind the Goss government introducing poker machines were as follows: to provide direct funding for sport, recreation and welfare programs; to provide an avenue by which participating clubs and hotels could increase their financial support in order to improve recreational services and facilities; to encourage the growth of tourism by the improvement of club and hotel facilities, services and entertainment; to provide additional employment opportunities in this state; to create extra revenue for the state; and to meet the legitimate wish of those who were attracted to playing gaming machines.

Of course, prior to Queensland having pokies it was common for Queenslanders, especially south-east Queenslanders, to visit clubs in New South Wales and in particular Tweed Heads. Pokie bus trips became very popular, and every Friday and Saturday night there was a mass exodus across the border for a show and a flutter. In 1996 a review of the introduction of pokies in Queensland confirmed that it was a very successful measure in terms of the aims espoused at the time of their introduction. That review indicated that clubs and pubs had benefited to the extent of $780 million in the first four years of operation, which in turn created 2,000 extra jobs directly generated by the industry and a further 2,000 jobs indirectly generated by the industry between 1992 and 1994. New investments in clubs occurred across Queensland.

Late last year along with the member for Aspley, Bonny Barry, and the member for Springwood, Barbara Stone, I attended the inaugural Women in Clubs breakfast hosted by Clubs Queensland. I thank Clubs Queensland for the opportunity to meet with such an inspiring and dynamic group of women to hear about the work that is being done by women in clubs. They advised that, at present, women represent only eight per cent of club CEOs and board directors, yet the majority of workers in clubs are women. The aim is to encourage more women into senior positions in clubs and to become part of the decision-making process for clubs and the club industry—an objective I wholeheartedly endorse. I note that Clubs Queensland is holding further seminars and get-togethers for women in clubs, and I encourage all members who are invited to those events to go along to them because they are very informative.

Along with the benefit of increased employment opportunity, the introduction of gaming machines saw the establishment of the Gambling Community Benefit Fund, which provides the ability for community, sporting and recreation groups to apply for grants. This fund has certainly been directly responsible for improvements in community facilities across Queensland. In the Kurwongbah electorate alone since 1998 a total of $4.3 million has been received by a wide range of groups. The benefits include new boats to our rowing club, vehicles for the PCYC, computers for our senior citizens, an array of sporting equipment, playground equipment and refurbishments, just to name a few. This injection of funds is greatly appreciated and its flow-on effect in our community is immeasurable. However, I do acknowledge gambling is one of those issues where reasonable people can reach quite different conclusions as to what measures should be taken to regulate and restrict its impact on the community.

On the one hand, it can be argued at a fundamental level that a properly informed adult should of course be free to make choices about their individual lifestyle and how they spend their money. After all, surveys and research over the past years report that it is less than one per cent of the Queensland population which falls into the category of problem gamblers. I notice from the statistical reports and research done by Queensland Treasury that the 2003-04 household survey has shown a reduction in the number of people categorised as problem gamblers from about 0.83 per cent down to 0.55 per cent. I understand that Queensland is the only state in Australia that has had a reduction in people who have been categorised as problem gamblers. Nevertheless, that equates to 16,000 Queenslanders. What some argue is that, because it is less than one per cent of the population, this shows that an overwhelming majority of adults who gamble, including the 40 per cent who gamble to some extent on a weekly basis, do not have a problem and they make an informed choice about how they spend their money.

On the other hand, it can equally be argued that it may well be that such research is too superficial. Many would point to the fact that over two million Australians, particularly children, feel the impact of gambling and there are hundreds of suicides each year that have gambling as a significant contributing factor. We have seen in the wider media of late the issue of poker machines and whether they should be further regulated, curtailed or prohibited very much gaining attention. There is a renewed call to ban or at least curtail the operation of poker machines, and that has been mentioned by many in this debate.

For my part, I do not believe prohibition is the answer. However, I do believe that the operation of poker machines should remain tightly regulated and closely scrutinised by government. This bill continues to ensure this occurs. The deeper issue of problem gambling is one which has been

constantly addressed by our government. I want to commend the current Treasurer, Treasurer Fraser, and in particular our former Treasurer, Terry Mackenroth, for the great work that was done in bringing Queensland to a standard where we have a comprehensive, responsible gambling strategy. It is a strategy that not only encourages but almost requires all those in the industry to sign up to a code of practice that has been strongly and widely accepted by the industry. It funds the help services and it recognises and seeks at all possible stages to assist those who fall into the category of problem gamblers. This, I think, is the responsible approach to gambling. I think this is the realistic approach to gambling. I believe that this bill further strengthens the government's regulation of gambling in this state. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (3.14 pm): I rise to contribute to the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2007. This bill seeks to amend various acts regarding gambling—namely, the Casino Control Act 1982, the Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming Act 1989, the Gaming Machine Act 1991, the Interactive Gambling (Player Protection) Act 1998, the Keno Act 1996, the Lotteries Act 1997, and the Wagering Act 1998. These acts relate to the regulation of gambling in a number of ways.

The main objectives of these amendments include to ensure art unions, which are an important way for eligible organisations to raise funds, remain properly accountable and operate appropriately. Eligible organisations include associations operating mainly for charitable, community, patriotic, sporting, educational, religious or similar purposes. We find these groups in most of our communities. They generally operate on a volunteer basis and provide invaluable community services in a variety of ways. In my electorate quite a number of organisations have been successful in obtaining funds through the community benefit funds and other avenues, and this has enabled them to continue or provide enhanced services. I know they are very grateful for the assistance they receive.

These amendments will also tighten controls over minors entering, remaining and gambling in casinos. A maximum fine of $750 will be imposed on a minor who is found in a casino during its hours of operation. In addition, if a minor gambles and wins, the minor cannot claim their winnings. Casino operators who allow a minor to enter will see a maximum fine rise from $1,500 to $7,500 and the maximum penalty for an employee or agent of an operator will rise from $1,500 to $3,000. A new offence will be imposed on any adult who aids or enables a minor to enter a casino. This particularly targets the lending of identification cards and attracts a penalty of $1,500.

There are also a number of other amendments which reflect changes to the gambling industry including the outsourcing of gaming equipment evaluation work. Generally, these amendments help to regulate the gambling industry to ensure appropriate standards and levels of accountability are set and to ensure the public can maintain confidence in the gambling industry as a way of raising funds for the benefit of the community as a whole.

Problem gambling is recognised as a significant issue in our society on both an individual and community level. Often people addicted to gambling or problem gamblers are those who can least afford the financial losses that are almost an inevitable consequence of their actions. Moreover, many problem gamblers have families to support and these families can often suffer due to reduced financial resources. However, financial losses are not the only impact of gambling and problem gambling in particular. Families are often sent on an emotional roller-coaster by an addict's frequent absences while they attend gambling venues. Some problem gamblers may also take the frustration of their losses out on their family and friends, so it not only affects them financially but also emotionally and physically.

In this way, problem gambling spills into the community in the form of family breakdown, abuse or crimes committed to fund this addiction. There are estimated to be tens of thousands of problem gamblers across the state of Queensland and hundreds of thousands across the country. Pokies are addictive by their very nature and are one of the free market industries. So problem gambling has become a major community issue.

The total taxation revenue in Queensland from gambling for 2006-07 was $826 million—a significant sum in anyone's language and no doubt an amount that the government has come to depend on. I was listening to a radio program last year about this issue in which I understood them to say that if a pub's income from pokies was $60,000 the pub would get a third, maintenance would get a third and the government would get the other third—not a bad income stream for the government.

A lot of people enjoy playing the pokies and gambling in other forms, and most control their spending well. But there is a significant number who become addicted. Some even become psychopathic. Gambling is such a problem that workshops have been conducted in schools by Lifeline counsellors and community educators who say that workshops are instrumental when it comes to young people's attitudes about gambling, which can tend to become an addiction for many of them later in life.

The counsellor said that 80 per cent of punters gamble responsibly and treat it as entertainment and gamble for fun by sticking to set spending and time limits and not chasing losses. The 20 per cent who do not are the ones who may go on to become problem gamblers. This demonstrates the importance of gambling legislation which tightens the access of minors to casinos, arguably reducing the possibility of them becoming addicted to gambling later on.

However, while this bill addresses casino related gambling, it does not address many other forms of gambling, including gambling by methods such as scratchies and other easy, attractive and accessible means. A young person in my electorate supported herself while at university through telemarketing. She was assigned to call people to sell tickets for Australian Powerball and other gambling games both in Australia and overseas. Most people solicited were retirees who, she said, often stated specifically that they could not afford to buy the ticket but felt guilty if they did not. Inevitably they ended up buying at least one ticket, often at a cost of up to $60. These kinds of blatant solicitations are a clear demonstration that the promotion of gambling is part of the problem. I believe it is crucial that it be regulated. Unfortunately, this bill does not address this area at all.

It does, however, seek to highlight the importance of art unions in terms of fundraising for charitable and community purposes. I would remind the House that until the late 1980s our free public hospital system in Queensland was subsidised by gambling funds. During that time Queensland was reputed to have the best public hospitals in Australia. Unfortunately, in the early 1990s, after the ALP took over government in Queensland, our public hospital system was changed dramatically. The Goss-Rudd combination disbanded our local hospital boards and ended nurse training in our hospitals.

Since that time profits made by government from gambling have been spent in other areas and on community projects rather than being injected into the health system where the funds are urgently needed. This bill is insufficient in certain areas. For example, it fails to address the promotion of gambling. However, problem gambling is a significant problem in our society, and it clearly needs to be far more stringently regulated than it currently is. For this reason, I support the bill.

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (3.21 pm): It had not been my intention to speak on the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill making, as it does, fairly minor changes to gaming legislation. Having sat here for a couple of days now listening to the pious, hand-on-heart ramblings, particularly of members of the Liberal Party, I felt compelled to add a little bit to the debate.

Before I touch on that, I point out that I am utterly intrigued by the member for Tablelands' perpetuation of what is nothing but an urban myth—that is, the notion that we at any point in Queensland's history ran our hospitals entirely on gambling revenue. That myth has been rebutted in this House time and time again. The member for Hervey Bay made a tremendous MPI speech on this just a couple of years ago.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr English): Order! The member for Ipswich has the call.

Ms NOLAN: The suggestion that it would ever have been possible to run a comprehensive public health system on the basis only of gambling revenue and that if we only returned to those days we would be right is simply laughable. It is simply ludicrous. We have been talking today about the fact that we raise $500 million—

Ms LEE LONG: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I believe the member for Ipswich is misleading the House when she says that I said that it was run by the—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order. Resume your seat.

Ms NOLAN: One of the things that has been complained about in this debate is that we raise $500 million out of poker machines. Obviously, there are other forms of gambling tax in addition to that. I do not have the figures in front of me. But we run a health system that costs several billion dollars each year.

Mr Fraser: Seven.

Ms NOLAN: Thank you, Mr Treasurer. We have a $10 billion top-up going into that over the next few years. So it is a $7 billion public health system and the suggestion is that it would be okay if we put the $500 million that we make from gambling revenue into the system and suddenly it would be restored. It is utterly ludicrous. It is utterly inane. It is factually incorrect and, indeed, it is stupid. I think members have a duty to be a little better informed than to come in here and perpetuate urban myths—speaking of which, the Liberals have been in terrific form in the last couple of days, and I will just respond to that briefly.

I am not a fan of gaming and I never have been. Indeed, that is a matter that has from time to time caused me some political pain. There is no doubt that the clubs in my electorate which rely on gambling revenue for their continuing expansion would prefer it if I were an enthusiastic supporter of that course of action. I think that sometimes we have to say what we believe. I have not been a supporter of gambling expansion. I have been honest and up-front about that from day 1. I make no bones about that.

Despite the hyperbole in this debate, however, I think it is fair to say that Labor governments in Queensland have made consistent efforts to ensure that gaming is managed responsibly. In 1991 the Goss government introduced poker machines to Queensland for the first time in response essentially to three things. The first was the exodus of revenue. As we all know, there were the bus trips to clubs at Tweed Heads. The second was the fact that the state was being punished by the Grants Commission for not maximising its revenue-raising capacity and, thirdly, and quite simply, popular demand.

There were three big drivers of that decision at the time. For the first six or seven years gambling was tightly controlled in a regulatory environment where government owned the machines, the tax regime strongly favoured clubs over pubs and pubs were, as I recall it, limited to just 20 machines. In 1997, under the Borbidge government, that regime was absolutely thrown to the winds when a white paper by the then parliamentary secretary to the then Treasurer, Dr David Watson, entirely opened up the regulatory regime. I know David Watson well and indeed I am very fond of him, but he is nothing if not a no-holds-barred free marketeer. That is exactly the kind of thinking that he applied to gaming regulation in his white paper in relation to gambling in this state.

There were a few things that happened. We replaced government ownership with licensed monitoring operators. So we reduced the government's hands-on regulatory role. The coalition government decreased the tax rate for clubs from 10 per cent to 7.5 per cent and the number of machines that pubs could have was increased in a stepped manner from 20 to a projected total of 45. The upshot of that was an absolute explosion in gaming in Queensland. In the two years that followed the coalition's white paper the number of gaming machines in hotels—and they are the ones that are more heavily promoted and more heavily used; they are the ones that make the big money—increased from 4,700 in 1997 to 10,100 in 1999. At the time the then Premier, Mr Borbidge, put out a press release championing this change. The press release was entitled 'Hotels reap the benefits of changes to gaming laws'. There was no mention in that press release announcing these changes of anything to do with responsible gambling.

I think that members should understand that history as they sit in here and listen to the pious pronouncements, particularly of Liberal Party members, on this matter. As I said, I am not a fan of gambling. That has always been my position. I have consistently been willing to talk to those who do not support it and to take the political pain. It has been a strong and consistent position from day 1.

The same, however, cannot be said of the coalition in this House. What we have seen in Queensland is that there have been gaming machines here since 1991 or 1992—15 or 16 years. In that time the coalition has been in office for just two years. It has had one go. Its effort when on the government benches was to completely throw the rules out of the window. It was to take off the brakes and double the number of poker machines in pubs. Yet anyone sitting here in the last couple of days would think that those opposite were pious, moralising wowsers from way back—that they had always had grave concerns about the serious social problems that poker machines bring.

Those opposite could have been champions but they were not. Nothing could be further from the truth than the assertion that they have always been responsible when it comes to this matter. I think it is fair to say that Queensland Labor governments have always made an attempt to manage this responsibly. I would support further cuts and I would support further efforts to manage gaming responsibly because, as I have said, I have never been a fan—

Mr Reeves interjected.

Ms NOLAN: The member for Mansfield and I have argued about this; that is quite true, always in a friendly way. But unlike that consistent position, the Queensland coalition has been all over the place. In opposition it opposed it; in government it took off the brakes, and I think that that is all that members need to know.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (3.29 pm): I rise to speak to the Gaming Legislation Amendment Bill and to add a couple of comments to those that have already been made about problem gambling. I also wish to provide a little history on gambling in Queensland. Many members here have the best of intentions and absolutely holistic motives when it comes to problem gambling. The concerns that have been expressed are very similar and have been articulated in a similar manner. Yesterday the member for Mansfield paid out the member for Moggill big time when he said—

The member opposite can go to any club in my electorate at 11 o'clock and talk to little Joan Smith from Upper Mount Gravatt who goes to the club to socialise with her friends and put $10 into the poker machines. She might even have a game of bingo at the Southside Sport and Community Club. The member opposite should go and tell her that she has a gambling problem.

The majority of members do not believe that that is a problem gambler at all. Those of us who have expressed concern about gambling as a problem are referring to people who intend to have a $10 punt but who go back and draw more money out and who go back again and draw more money out and leave not because they want to but because they have absolutely no more money to withdraw. They then have to go home and explain to their family why they do not have money for groceries or why they do not have money for other necessary accounts that need to be paid. That is the emphasis of the concerns that have been articulated by members. It is the problem gamblers we are concerned about—those people who, for a variety of reasons, have moved past the point where they can actually help themselves.

I also support moves to control the environment. If young people are exposed to gambling they can develop that affinity for gambling, and this legislation brings in stronger penalties for allowing under-age people to gamble in areas where poker machines are located. The minister's second reading speech says—

The Casino Control Act 1998 currently provides for two defences to this offence in addition to the defence of mistake of fact contained in the Criminal Code. Of relevance, it is a defence if the defendant had a reasonable belief that the person was 18 years of age or more.

Venues that have a lot of gaming machines have very strong security. They have people watching young ones who come in and out. I have to confess that the older I get the younger young ones look. If I were to work in that environment, I would probably ask anyone under—

Mr Lawlor interjected.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: Yes, but yours is not with cause. When they are under 25 they start to look younger and younger and I would probably be asking for ID for quite a significant number of people. The power to require identification in order to prove that the person is of an age to be in the casino or in the poker machine area is an appropriate one, and an exercise of that power should be done on a regular basis. I do not believe that any member, even the member for Mansfield, wants to see young men or women or older men and women completely destroy their lives because of an addiction that they should be helped with—an addiction that is no less physically destroying and soul destroying than smoking or other addictions that are deemed to be legal.

With regard to charitable organisations, the explanatory notes state—

Clause 13 inserts a new Part 3, Division 1A which is concerned with third party operators, being organisations which sell art union tickets, receive and bank money from the sale or account for the proceeds of sale on behalf of eligible associations who are holders of a category 3 gaming licence. A 'category 3 game' is a game, other than bingo, the gross proceeds of which are more than $20,000. The administration of the ticket buyer's database is an element of selling art union tickets.

It is my understanding that this will not affect the small raffles that many organisations use but rather relates to the major money-spinning art unions where accountability is not only appropriate but is reasonable on behalf of the community.

The other issue that I want to raise is one that the member for Ipswich touched on, and I think she did a very eloquent job. However, I wanted to make some comments in relation to the history of gaming machines. I must add as a rider that I have not copied the documents on this. The member for Ipswich went through the history of gaming machines under the previous Labor government and then under the Borbidge government. Whilst I was not in the parliament when pokies were initially introduced in 1991, I had many discussions with hotel operators at the time when Dave Watson undertook his review. The discussions that I had with hoteliers related to the impact that the tax structure and the allocation of gaming machines would have on their businesses. I am not a great supporter of gambling in the excessive sense—and I am certainly not inviting the member for Mansfield to have a piece of me either—there are a lot of people like little Joan Smith who spend $10 and have a ton of fun, and all power to them. However, I am not a great believer and a great proponent of gambling, particularly in its destructive form.

During my first couple of years in parliament owners of hotels came to see me, and these were men and women of responsibility. There were a couple in my own electorate who were people who had invested in the community greatly. They had contributed through supporting associations and charitable events in great measure, yet these hoteliers were about to go under financially because the tax regime and the allocation of machines were so disproportionately favourable to the clubs that the hotels were at risk of going bankrupt. These were not people who were sensationalising the issue. I made representations to Mr Watson at the time on the basis of equity—that, whilst a lot of the small clubs did return all of their profits to growing the club, there was a section of the club community that was growing exponentially and were big business but these businesses were still receiving a very favourable tax regime and gaming machine allocation to the detriment of the hotels.

Irrespective of whether the decision that was made by the Borbidge government was right with the benefit of hindsight, I believe that the decision was made in good faith and in an attempt to ensure that we had a broad spectrum of entertainment options, including in hotels and clubs, into the future. Again, I in no way condone excesses in gambling. Regardless of who made the decision in the past to introduce gaming machines and who made the decisions in relation to the control or lack of control of gaming machines, the number of them, who controlled them and how they were administered, we retain the responsibility to address the problems that those decisions have created. So whilst this legislation will go some way towards addressing the issues of problem gambling and under-age gambling, irrespective of our political persuasions we retain a responsibility to act when we see problems. We must address those problems legislatively where it is possible and, where it is not possible to address them legislatively, we must at least invest in programs and support mechanisms for those people who have developed problems.

I commend the minister for the bill as it has been presented. I hope it achieves what he is intending to achieve. I hope that over time anyone who wishes to take the opportunity to have a recreational gamble—whether that is through scratch-its, Keno or whatever—and can do so responsibly without impacting negatively on their families does so. I support the bill.

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Treasurer) (3.45 pm), in reply: I thank all members for their contributions to the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill, which was originally introduced into the House by the former Treasurer and current Premier, Anna Bligh. I thank members who have made very constructive remarks about the facets of the bill. In making some concluding remarks about those contributions, I note that for the most part there was little disagreement about the nature of the bill or the

proposals that are contained within it. But aside from that, there was some fairly expansive commentary about the nature of gambling more broadly. I will make some remarks about that. At the outset I table the explanatory notes for the amendment that I will move later in the consideration in detail stage.

Tabled paper: Explanatory notes for amendments to the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill.

I will answer a couple of the substantive points that were made by members of the opposition. The member for Currumbin asked about access to wagering for minors. In response to that, I can advise her that it is an offence for an operator of a wagering system to take a bet from a minor. The penalty for that is $3,000, or 40 penalty units.

The member for Lockyer, who is in the House, asked about research initiatives for young people in particular and at schools. I advise him that, through Gambling Research Australia, which is an organisation that we fund along with the other states, two projects directly addressing that point are underway. The findings from that research should be available in about 12 and 24 months respectively. We anticipate that those findings will shed some light on that fact in terms of to what extent we can identify those issues early and to what extent it might have an effect.

The member for Burdekin spoke about bingo, which remains at the cultural centre of some communities. In that regard, there is an exception. It is something that has been reviewed in the past but there is no available evidence to us or any reason for us to seek to revisit that at the moment. Obviously, if that situation were to materially change then that is something we would revisit.

The member for Currumbin also asked about the training provided or supervisor training for casino employees. Obviously, casino employees have to have either a casino employee licence or a keno employee licence. Under those licensing arrangements those employees undertake training that is appropriate for their duties.

Finally, in relation to issues raised by other members during the debate, I would remark upon the contribution of the member for Ipswich, who I think quite eloquently pointed out some of the essential facts about the history of gaming in this state and, more pointedly, pointed to some of the issues that arise in some of the positions now advocated by people from the same stripe of politics. I might come back to the general point about shifting opinions later on and the ability for people to hold one position while, in fact, undertaking tasks that are directly disproportionate or opposite to it.

Many members of the House mentioned the Gambling Community Benefit Fund—the GCBF—which, as members of this House, we all know. I flag that I am currently considering and proposing to accept a recommendation from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund committee, which is the community representative group that makes allocations from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund. At present, the fund closes on 31 March, 30 June, 30 September and 31 December. All of us know that too well, because there is always a flurry of letters of request at those times of the year. One of the real issues is that it is pretty hard to deal with those requests at 31 December, 30 June is the end of the financial year and otherwise the dates generally align with school holidays, and those dates can be very difficult for community groups. The Gambling Community Benefit Fund has put a proposal to me to amend the dates of closure to 31 August, 30 November, the end of February—28 or 29 February, obviously—and 31 May. I think that proposal has a lot of merit. I am proposing to implement that change. That would mean that the next closing date after 31 March would not be 30 June but 31 August. So there would be only three allocations this year, but the amount of money that we would allocate over those three allocations would be exactly the same as if there were four allocations. I think that idea has merit and we are proposing to put that forward for adoption.

I will make some remarks about gambling in general. There were a lot of remarks made, particularly by members opposite, about the nature of gambling, the nature of problem gambling and the nature of gaming machine revenue. For the sake of the record and for the benefit of this debate, I would like to put forward some facts. Firstly, let me say that, as to the somewhat muddle-headed argument about the nature and the amount of money that goes back to the community from gambling, every cent of gaming taxation revenue that we collect—in fact, every cent of all taxation revenue that we collect—goes back into the community. It goes back in a number of ways. Some of the gambling taxation revenue goes back through the Gambling Community Benefit Fund and through other ways. There is the health services levy as well. But every last red cent of gambling revenue goes back into building schools, hospitals and roads. There is no false read here, there is no false way of being able to say that the gambling revenue that comes from place 'X' does not go back into place 'X'. It might go back through Gambling Community Benefit Fund allocations, but it also pays for the schools, it pays for the hospitals—

Mr Messenger interjected.

Mr FRASER: It pays for the coppers who roam the streets of Bundaberg to make sure that the streets of Bundaberg are kept as safe as they can be.

Let me make some remarks about the number of poker machines. At the end of 2001 in Queensland, there were 0.014 poker machines per head of population. At the end of 2002, that figure was 0.014. At the end of 2003, it was 0.014. At the end of 2004, it was 0.014. At the end of 2005, it was 0.014. At the end of 2006, it was 0.014. At the end of 2007, it was 0.014. There is no accelerating

density of poker machines out there in the community, despite the argument that was attempted to be prosecuted by the member for Moggill in the second reading debate. That figure is not per man, woman and child; that figure is per Queenslander over the age of 18.

The problem with the argument being advanced by the opposition on this front is that, I am afraid, the facts do not support it. Queenslanders spend less than the national average on poker machines. In fact, Queenslanders spend less than people in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. Expenditure on poker machines accounts for 1.66 per cent of household income—a very low proportion by anyone's measure.

However, the real test is this: how many problem gamblers are there out in the community? In 2001, 0.83 per cent of people were problem gamblers. In 2003-04, that percentage was 0.55 per cent. So the percentage of problem gamblers has fallen to 0.55 per cent—below the level in New South Wales, below the level in Victoria, below the level in Tasmania and below the level in the Northern Territory. When we look at the facts of the matter we see that there is no accelerating density of poker machines in the community and, more to the point, 99.5 per cent of people gamble responsibly. To me, that does not seem to build a case to advocate the policy position that was being put forward—I think, as far as I could tell—by the opposition in the second reading debate.

In relation to taxation revenue, from the latest Australian gambling statistics that are available for comparison, Queensland tax per capita for gambling is $264. I ask members to compare that figure with that of Victoria at $345, of South Australia at $334, and of the Northern Territory at $295. Queensland's figure is roughly commensurate with the tax per capita in New South Wales, which is the state that has far and away the highest density of poker machines.

In relation to taxation, let me make these remarks. In 2005-06, the Queensland government collected $551 million from poker machine revenue. In 2006-07, that figure was $520 million. I will say those figures again: $551 million in 2005-06 and $520 million in 2006-07. At budget time for 2007-08, the figure was $548 million, which I note is below the figure for 2005-06. So in that regard I make the very clear point that that revenue represents less than two per cent of the Queensland budget.

No-one is ever going to suggest reasonably that $550 million in round terms is not a significant amount of money. Of course it is. But the case being made, or attempting to be made, by the Leader of the Liberal Party—sorry, the shadow Treasurer, because we all know the reason the Leader of the Liberal Party cannot be the shadow Treasurer—is not borne out by a more truthful and complete exposition of the circumstances and the facts that underlie it.

Why did that figure fall in the last financial year? It fell because of our implementation of smoking bans. The government undertook to do that because it was the right thing to do by the community. That is the point I have made in relation to smoking and it is the point I have made in addition to our proposals about reducing the operating hours for clubs and pubs. We believe that the provision for early opening hours is now out of step with the original rationale and community standards. Whether it be in relation to smoking or early opening hours, if the state believes that either community standards or community wellbeing would benefit from a change we are prepared to factor that into our budget calculations and absorb any loss of revenue. That is the point I made last year and it is the point I made on the weekend.

At the same time, I say very clearly that because 99.5 per cent of people gamble responsibly there is no case to be made to abolish 100 per cent of poker machines. If we did that, the government would need to raise $550 million to pay for the schools, hospitals and other services that that money is currently spent on. There is no magic pudding when it comes to government budgeting, despite that being the essential starting point of the philosophy of members opposite.

There is no proposal to raise the level of gaming taxation or any other rates despite the attempt by the shadow Treasurer to start that rumour rather than report to the House that he heard that rumour. I say to him that, as I reported earlier, we believe that gambling revenue is recovering and will soon be at levels similar to those of the past.

Before making some other remarks I wish to refer to the contribution of the member for Nanango.

Dr Flegg: Not the member for Mansfield?

Mr FRASER: The member for Mansfield has long held a clear view about what he believes is an appropriate level of gambling within the community.

The member for Nanango made reference to an article on the front page of today's *Australian* newspaper, and it continues inside, about the gambling conglomerate Tattersalls. For the benefit of the House, I table that article.

Tabled paper: Copy of an article from The Australian, dated 13 February 2008, titled Screw problem gamblers: Tatts.

The member for Noosa in particular suggested that it was his side of politics that had right and might on its side when it came to advocacy about gaming interests. The member for Ipswich quite skilfully filleted that debate and left it sitting on the table. The fact is that when the coalition was last in government, it went hell for leather trying to free up the number of gaming and poker machines in both pubs and clubs. They proposed allowing 300 machines in pubs and 45 machines in hotels, which would

have led to an extra 16,000 poker machines across Queensland. Let us fast forward to the present when, from the luxury of opposition, they have had a moment of enlightenment and now take a radically different view. Unfortunately, as we heard earlier, actions speak louder than words.

In that regard, it is important for me to advise the House that when it comes to the position being advocated by the member for Moggill on this matter, essentially I discount his views. I devalue them and, in fact, I find them dissembling and verging on offensive. The reason is this: members of this House will recall yesterday's address to this parliament by the member for Moggill. He is a member of the Liberal Party, which is the author of WorkChoices, so members will recall him voicing his concerns for people from a lower socioeconomic background. However, the fact is that, while the member for Moggill says that the prevalence in the community of gaming and poker machines and gambling generally is a problem that must be addressed, if we check the register of members' pecuniary interests we find that the member for Moggill is a shareholder in Tattersalls and Coles Myer. Therefore, I find the contribution in this House by the member for Moggill dissembling, dishonest, disingenuous and unbecoming for a shadow Treasurer.

Dr FLEGG: I rise to a point of order. I find the minister's comments offensive. They are incorrect and inaccurate. I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The minister will withdraw.

Mr FRASER: I withdraw, but at the same time I table an excerpt from the latest pecuniary interests register. Under 'Flegg, Bruce (Moggill)', and the seventh subheading of 'Investments or beneficial interests of any trust listed in (6) above', it lists a whole series of companies including Tattersalls and Coles Myer. I defy the member for Moggill—

Tabled paper: Extract from the Twentieth Report on the Register of Members' Interests, as at 3 August 2007, pages 11-12.

Dr FLEGG: I rise to a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, both members! Member for Moggill?

Dr FLEGG: The minister's comments are offensive. They are incorrect. He is not holding the latest Register of Members' Interests because I have the latest register of members' interests showing that I hold no shares in Tattersalls and no shares in Coles Myer, and that in fact I disposed of them because of my concerns about gambling matters.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Dr FLEGG: I ask that he withdraw those comments.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Moggill, resume your seat. You will not push me around. If you find those words offensive, the appropriate way to deal with that is to rise to your feet and ask that they be withdrawn, or you can rise tomorrow morning on a personal explanation and explain that. This is not the place or the time to debate the issue. Please show me respect when I call for order in future. You have stated that you find those words offensive. I direct the minister to withdraw.

Mr FRASER: I happily withdraw. I was quoting from the 20th report of the Register of Members' Interests, last tabled in this House on 3 August 2007. If the member for Moggill has disposed of those shares, I can only welcome that and accept what he says at face value. However, I make the point that it is interesting that while pretending to have a concern he was happy to put the filthy lucre in his back pocket. The fact is that even beyond those particular shareholdings this shadow Treasurer would be hopelessly compromised should he ever sit in that seat. He would be impossibly conflicted. He has no proposal to put to the people of Queensland on how he would manage extensive shareholdings that cross a range of industries while dealing with state finances on a daily basis.

Those who aspire to high public office in this state have a responsibility to demonstrate to the community and the parliament their ability to manage such conflicts of interest. I defy anyone to explain how the shareholdings listed in the members' interests register under the name of the member for Moggill could ever provide him with an ability to fairly, without conflict and without raising the perception of conflict, discharge the office of Treasurer. I invite him to take the advice of the Integrity Commissioner—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Treasurer, I believe that you are moving away from the exact nature of the legislation. I would like you to come back to the legislation, please.

Mr FRASER: Absolutely, Mr Deputy Speaker. Given the way that the debate has been conducted over the past two days, I thought it was important that members of the House have that information before them. It is very clear that there is a task before the member for Moggill.

I thank all members for their contributions to this bill, which was originally put before the House by the former Treasurer and now Premier. It makes a number of important and agreed-upon reforms to the framework for the conduct of gambling in this state. This afternoon I say very clearly to the House that I believe that there are real questions about the way in which opposition members have conducted this debate and they should stand ready to answer those questions.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 10, as read, agreed to.

Clause 11—

Dr FLEGG (3.59 pm): One could not possibly have sat in this House yesterday and today and not be impressed by the number of members—and members on both sides—who, in their speeches on this bill, described people they knew and circumstances they were aware of that related to problem gambling. The response of the Treasurer to those concerns was nothing short of bitterly disappointing, because those offerings were given in the debate on this bill, the Treasurer's bill, in good faith from people who are genuinely concerned about the issues surrounding problem gambling. Yet in his reply the Treasurer sank to dirty political attack and got himself down in the gutter. Instead of dealing with a serious issue that members on both sides of this House raised, he simply degenerated into personal attack because he had nothing better to say and because, quite frankly, he does not give a damn about problem gambling in this state.

The member for Mansfield's contribution did nothing but trivialise the issue. There were good contributions to this debate, and the one that the Treasurer decided to endorse—

Mr REEVES: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take offence at the words of the member for Moggill and ask for them to be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr English): Order! The member for Moggill will withdraw.

Dr FLEGG: I withdraw. In relation to other contributions, we heard from both the Treasurer and the member for Ipswich the same old thing—the blame game. We have had Labor governments in Queensland now for 20 years, all bar a minority government for less than three years. Instead of making some sort of contribution to the serious comments from both sides of this House, they tried to make out that somehow or other it is something that a short-lived government over a decade ago did. The figures provided by the member for Ipswich about problem gambling show that this government has doubled the number of poker machines in this state.

Mr Mickel: Why did you go to the Clubs Queensland awards night last year?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Minister.

Dr FLEGG: The minister's own figures on problem gambling show that there are 20,000 people in this state with a gambling problem.

Mr Mickel interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Minister, please.

Dr FLEGG: I hear the minister in here, ready for debate on the next bill, and he does not care about it, either.

Mr Mickel: I am not a hypocrite like you and go to the training awards nights.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Minister!

Mr Mickel: I go because I support clubs.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Minister, I warn you under standing order 253. I call the member for Moggill. I remind you that I have given you some leeway. You have now spent three minutes not talking about clause 11, which applies to the definition of a 'problem gambler'. Please move back to the clause.

Dr FLEGG: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. In the discussion of the definition of a 'problem gambler' we have heard from members and from the community some very good suggestions—some suggestions, quite frankly, I would like to have heard the Treasurer comment on, but he did not. One of them came from his own federal leader, Kevin Rudd, who takes this a lot more seriously than do his Queensland counterparts—and that is to have a look at the issue of ATMs within gaming areas. Another what I think was a very original suggestion came from the member for Lockyer—and that is to have a look at whether the frequent flyer programs and rewards programs can be used to identify problem gamblers.

The issue of advertising was raised by I think the member for Gladstone. We have taken a hard line in this state—rightly and, as far as I know, with bipartisan support—on things like cigarette advertising and some of the worst excesses of alcohol advertising. The member for Gladstone raised the issue of advertising and targeting potentially vulnerable people who would fit this definition of 'problem gambler'. There is a whole range of areas that this government could look at if it were serious. Perhaps the minister would also like to add some comments about the hours at which gaming is available. All in all, there were a lot of serious, well-meaning and heartfelt contributions from members on both sides of the House, and they deserved a hell of a lot better treatment than they got from this minister, who does not give a damn.

Mr FRASER: At the start of my remarks I made a whole series of comments about the constructive comments made by members from both sides of the chamber. I would invite the member for Moggill to review those remarks. I addressed the particular issue that the member for Lockyer raised about education material and advised him of some research. I did mean to, in those original remarks, also talk about the other issue that the member for Lockyer raised in relation to loyalty card schemes and to advise that there is a current trial underway to utilise cashless gaming to collect data that might be able to form the basis of that into the future. I had intended to make those remarks at the start when I was addressing the other element of the member for Lockyer's submission.

In relation to comments about what Senator-elect Xenophon was commenting upon and then the Prime Minister was asked about on Sunday—and I know that the member for Moggill was a keen observer of my remarks reported in the *Courier-Mail* on Monday—the basis of those remarks was about the issue of where ATMs are located. In fact, I wrote to my federal counterpart, Treasurer Wayne Swan, yesterday. One of the issues that successive Queensland state governments and successive Queensland treasurers have found themselves confronted with in this regard is the following: in Queensland, in approving a gaming licence and approving the layout we approve where the ATM is located. It cannot be inside on the gaming floor and it cannot be in the middle of the poker machines. We have tried to advance this issue before—and I am hopeful this will now be the subject of much more productive discussions. Leaving aside the member for Moggill's gratuitous insight that this issue was not something that was before us, I am providing him with all the facts about it.

Over the past decade there has been a federal government that did not want to talk about anything to do with the banks. The federal government did not want to respond to the notion that it had a role to play in regulating the banks about limits at ATMs per account holder per day at gambling establishments—at pubs, clubs and casinos. I wrote in that regard to the federal Treasurer yesterday after this issue was in the public domain on Sunday and after my comments were reported on this front on Monday. In that regard, I do not accept at all the view put forward by the member for Moggill.

I do put forward the view that I think was referenced by at least one other member during the debate—that Queensland's responsible gambling initiatives and responsible gaming initiatives are in fact many times held up as the benchmark around Australia. In that regard, we have had a long and proud history. I do not intend in any way to see that mantle being removed. I believe that the work Queensland has been at the forefront of over many years is vitally important. In setting out the facts, as I did in the first part of my reply to this debate, I made the case about the level of problem gambling and about the fact that there is not an increasing density in poker machines, because an attempt had been made on the other side to make a case based on mistruths and half-truths, and it is appropriate that whenever we conduct a debate in these circumstances it is conducted with integrity and on the basis of facts.

Clause 11, as read, agreed to.

Clause 12, as read, agreed to.

Clause 13—

Dr FLEGG (4.08 pm): I think this area particularly in relation to third-party operators of art unions is one that the general community knows very little about. It is one that raises some concerns. I welcome the clause, and I have already indicated we support the clause. As one of the previous speakers said, we also recognise the importance of art unions to a lot of groups in our communities. I am sure that, in common with many other members—and some commented in their contributions—I buy the odd art union ticket, and I think most people here do. And when we buy art union tickets we look at who we are supporting because I think most of us realise we are not going to win it, but we would like to support causes that we think are worthy.

Many of the companies are quite well known here in Queensland. I know there are art unions run by the RSL and the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Queensland, and the Endeavour Foundation runs a very prominent art union. The Treasurer may be aware of the Victorian art union run by the Kids at Sea which collapsed in a heap when the operator was found to have been ripping it off. I think the operator subsequently went to prison.

While we are dealing with this clause, the Treasurer might comment on the regulatory control and integrity in Queensland which will ensure that such a thing cannot happen here. More particularly, with third-party operators running art unions and obviously part of the proceeds going to a respected charity, I think there is a broader concern in Queensland about how much of the proceeds ends up with the charity and how much is absorbed by the operator as profit, administrative expenses or whatever.

Mr FRASER: The member for Moggill is correct in highlighting this particular aspect of the bill as one that is worthy of comment. The fact is that many charities and many entities have been seeking to engage outside services to assist them to conduct art unions. The issue that confronts many not-for-profit groups and volunteer groups in particular is the lack of people around to do the work on a voluntary basis. Over time, we have seen a number of entities provide varying degrees of assistance to them. One company called Insight can generally do most of the work associated with conducting an art union.

Rather than allowing that situation to prevail and flourish without a regulatory environment attaching to it, this bill proposes through this clause and more broadly a regulatory arrangement which governs those arrangements. As the clause is set out, it requires that the actual agreement that is to be signed between the third-party operator and the art union be provided to the chief executive officer of the Treasury, as the administering department. Any amendments to that are also required to be provided before they take effect.

In that regard, those documents are able to then be used as part of any proposal to unlicense a third-party operator so they cannot participate as a third-party operator. So rather than these people being one step or one contract or an arm's length removed from the process, this is about ensuring that there is transparency in the arrangements and that the arrangements are considered appropriate. If any concern was raised with the government and with me in particular in regard to any of those agreements, we would take steps to make sure that an inappropriate agreement is not in place. If necessary, we would provide guidelines or further enhancements to a regime when those agreements are made transparent and provided beyond the two parties to the agreement.

Dr FLEGG: Thanks for that. I will just take it a bit further. We are all used to what we used to see on TV—and I do not know whether we still see it—where the Treasury officials sat there while the lotto was drawn. I think it is probably old and out of date now; I do not get to watch much TV. I will let the minister get some advice on that.

What level of oversight does the government have—particularly with that Kids at Sea art union in mind—to make sure that something is not rigged here when they are drawn? Is there any guidance in the documents the Treasurer referred to that are lodged with Treasury by the third-party operators about the profit-sharing agreements? What degree of the proceeds go to the third-party operators and what is actually received by the charity?

Mr FRASER: I just checked with the officials before providing this information to the House. In fact, it is still the case that an official does go to the lottery draw. These days they do not actually get a mention in the television broadcast or make it on to the screen, but they are required to be there, you may rest assured.

Secondly, in relation to the agreement, the legislation as it is proposed does not provide a percentage rate or a ratio at this stage. What I was pointing to in my earlier remarks is that, if upon reviewing an agreement and before the agreement is executed we considered that there was an inappropriate siphoning of funds to the third party beyond a reasonable cost and reasonable margin, we would not endorse that agreement. That is a licensing arrangement for a third-party operator that we would not seek to sustain.

If it were the case in the future that further regulation of a specific matter in relation to a ratio was required, that is something we would consider at the time. But our initial rationale for not including it is the difficulty that always attaches with inserting a figure or a mechanism. We are proposing instead to treat each agreement on foot. If in any of those agreements a question is raised about an inappropriate diversion of funds other than what is reasonable in the circumstances, we would not endorse that agreement.

Finally, we do not specifically and have never witnessed the draw of an art union, if you like. There are complaints from time to time. If there is a complaint, an investigation is able to be conducted and penalties applied. Officials from the Queensland Office of Gaming Regulation have specific abilities to acquire information about that. Should issues ever be raised, then that forms the basis of investigation.

Dr FLEGG: Are the documents that the Treasurer referred to—the third-party operator agreements and so forth—publicly available, or would they be able to be obtained under FOI?

Mr FRASER: There is no specific provision provided in the bill as it stands governing freedom of information, so the point is that there is no exclusion of it. Because it is silent, that means the freedom of information regime as it stands applies to it. There are obviously commercial-in-confidence provisions underneath the general freedom of information arrangement. What we envisage is that asking for those documents to be provided to the regulating authority provides for the check and measure to ensure that there is nothing untoward within them.

Clause 13, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 14 to 26, as read, agreed to.

Clause 27 (Amendment of s 50 (Delegations))—

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Treasurer) (4.17 pm): I move the following amendment—

1 Clause 27 (Amendment of s 50 (Delegations))

At page 21, lines 21 to 23—

omit, insert—

'(1A) The Minister may delegate the following to the chief executive—

(a) the Minister's power under section 24(1) to appoint a commissioner to act as chairperson of the commission;

(b) the Minister's power under section 322(6) to cause amounts to be paid out of the gambling community benefit fund for the benefit of the community.'.'.

This is an amendment which provides for the ability to delegate the authorisation of payments from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund. This is an ability that exists with the three other casino funds and it has never existed in relation to the Gambling Community Benefit Fund. It means that if for some reason the Treasurer is not available the Under Treasurer or his delegate could be the signatory to the disbursement. As it happens, it is effectively the Gambling Community Benefit Fund members who decide these applications in any case.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 27, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 28 to 79, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Treasurer) (4.19 pm): I move—

That the bill, as amended, be now read a third time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Long Title

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Treasurer) (4.19 pm): I move the following amendment—

That the long title of the Bill be amended by omitting the words 'Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure' and inserting the word 'Treasurer'.

Amendment agreed to.

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

Motion agreed to.

GENE TECHNOLOGY AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 13 November 2007 (see p. 4146), on motion of Ms Boyle—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (4.20 pm): The Gene Technology Amendment Bill 2007 is a document 36 pages in length consisting of 47 clauses which aims to protect the health and safety of people and to protect the environment by identifying risks posed as a result of gene technology and managing those risks through regulating certain dealings with genetically modified organisms. The Queensland coalition supports this bill because after readings, briefings and consultation we believe it will achieve its stated aims.

I accept the provision that the Gene Technology Amendment Bill 2007 will improve the Gene Technology Act 2001 without changing the overall legislative framework of the regulatory scheme and that these amendments to the Gene Technology Act 2001 are necessary to ensure it is in line with changes to the Commonwealth's gene technology legislation, which was amended due to recent statutory reviews of the operation of the Commonwealth legislation and the Intergovernmental Gene Technology Agreement 2001 and the review of the operation of Queensland's legislation.

These alterations include the introduction of emergency powers, improving the mechanisms for providing advice to the Gene Technology Regulator, streamlining the process for the initial consideration of licences, reducing the regulatory burden for low-risk dealings, and it splits the class of licence for international release into two licences including intentional release contained and commercial release. It provides clarification on the circumstances in which licence variations can be made, clarifies the circumstances under which the regulator can direct a person to comply with the act and provides the regulator with the power to issue a licence to persons who find themselves unintentionally dealing with limited GMO for the purpose of disposing of that GMO.

I note that the gene technology explanatory notes state there has been extensive consultation with the industry and the community during the Commonwealth's amendment legislation process and that the Queensland government has conducted further consultation within the community to gauge suitable alterations to the Queensland Gene Technology Act 2001. Unfortunately, two of our biggest farming organisations—that is, Growcom and AgForce—were not consulted on the bill. While Growcom is not significantly affected by this bill due to its producers not using GMOs, it is nonetheless an interested observer and strongly believes that the producers and consumers should have a choice on whether to grow or consume GMOs and there should be a thorough regulatory regime in place for GMOs. I think these are fair comments which have merit. In fact, when you consider the question of who is an interested observer when it comes to gene technology, if you eat food then you qualify as an interested observer. Some of us are therefore probably a little more interested than others.

The bill has relevance to technology which affects all life on earth. In researching this bill and trying to understand what DNA and genes are, I was reminded of just how much of a wonder and a miracle life is. Acclaimed author Bill Bryson describes DNA as being the most extraordinary molecule on earth. It exists for one reason: to create more DNA. In Bryson's wonderful book *A Short History of Nearly Everything* he outlines a number of interesting facts on DNA.

Mr Hinchliffe: Summer reading?

Mr MESSENGER: A little bit. Two metres of DNA is squeezed into every cell in our body. Each two metres of DNA contains 3.2 billion letters of genetic coding. If each DNA strand in your body were woven into a single fine strand, there is enough to stretch from the earth to the moon twice. That is 20 million kilometres of DNA. DNA in itself is not alive. It is amongst the most non-reactive chemically inert molecules. This is the reason that it can be recovered from patches of long dried blood and all those other areas where the CSI people venture.

This exciting technology in science, like so many other technologies in science, has the potential to do so much good and it must also be acknowledged that it has the potential to increase risks to human health. That is why we are standing here talking about legislation which is designed to manage those risks. We would not be standing here but for the work of many dedicated individuals in previous times. If, for example, in 1869 Mr Johan Miescher, a Swiss scientist, had not carried out his experiments we would not be in this chamber talking about legislation which will identify and manage the risks posed by GMOs.

In speaking to this legislation I think it is proper to acknowledge the hard work and the intellectual brilliance of the men and women who literally gave their lives because of their dedication to their scientific research. One woman whose name does not perhaps receive the publicity she deserves when the subject of DNA is discussed is Rosalind Franklin, who was part of a famous team of scientists in the 1950s—Wilkins, Franklin Crick and Watson—who discovered the double helix structure of DNA. Rosalind died from ovarian cancer at the age of 37, and it was determined that she died because of the X-rays that she was exposed to while researching DNA. I think it is ironic that she damaged her DNA and contracted cancer while studying a part of science which discovered the existence of DNA and who many say will provide hopefully the cure for cancer. Of course within this relatively new science there is a lot of uncertainty about risks to human, animal and environmental health. This fact was brought home to me on page 493 of Bryson's book, where he writes—

Even now there is a great deal about DNA that we scarcely understand, not least why so much of it does not actually seem to do anything. 97 per cent of your DNA consists of nothing but long stretches of meaningless garble, junk or non-coding DNA as biochemists prefer to put it. Only here and there along each strand do you find a section which controls and organises a vital function. These are the curious and long elusive genes.

Mr Hinchliffe: Is Bill Bryson going to get royalties out of this speech?

Mr MESSENGER: Well, he should. When you reflect on Bryson's observations regarding the lack of understanding human kind has about DNA in dealing with policy and legislation, in order to be responsible we must always adopt what I believe is a good policy, and that is the precautionary principle. We as legislators must always err on the side of caution. This precautionary principle is reinforced by a book written by Jeffrey M Smith called *Genetic Roulette*. It is a book endorsed by many respected authorities and people starting with a lady whom I respect very much, Rosemary Stanton, a nutritionist. I will quote from Rosemary's letter. She wrote—

Please find enclosed a copy of Genetic Roulette—The Documented Health Risks of Genetically Engineered Foods, by International bestselling author Jeffrey M. Smith. I believe this book is well worth reading and highly relevant to the current debate on the state moratoria on genetically modified (GM) food crops.

Other endorsements are from Dr Jane Goodall DBE, founder of the Jane Goodall Institute and the UN Messenger of Peace. She said—

Jeffrey Smith raises serious questions concerning the production of genetically modified foods. Based on meticulous research, *Genetic Roulette* offers a chilling reminder that the effects of GM foods on human health are largely untested. If you care about your health and that of your children buy this book, become aware of the potential problems and take action.

This book is a wealth of information. It talks about farmers reporting that pigs and cows become sterile from GM corn. It says that 12 cows in Germany died mysteriously when fed Bt corn. GM crops may accumulate environmental toxins or concentrate toxins in the milk and meat of GM fed animals.

Mr Mickel interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wendt): Order! Minister, if you wish to interject please return to your seat.

Mr MESSENGER: I am looking forward to contributions on this subject from the members who are interjecting. I think they may have accessed their genes from the very shallow end of the genetic pool.

When I was the shadow environment minister we took to the last election a policy of establishing a ministerial scientific forum based on a similar principle to that of the Parliamentary Library. Members of parliament could go to an esteemed body and authoritative body—the library, for example—to have research projects done. I would like to see a ministerial scientific forum set up in Queensland. We do have the Chief Scientist.

The point I am making is that this is leading-edge science, it is cutting-edge science, and it is evolving and changing all the time. We need the best, most up-to-date scientific advice we can get. It needs to be from a Queensland scientific viewpoint. We have different ecosystems, different crops and different environments from other parts of Australia and indeed the world. I would like the minister to consider that.

The more we look into gene technology the more it becomes clear that the GM food argument is highly controversial. Many groups throughout the world are opposed to GM technology and GM food. There are other groups such as AgForce and the National Farmers Federation that are genuinely supportive of this technology. To see just how split Australians are on the GM food argument we have only to look at a survey conducted by Rural Press late last year to which 720 farmers responded. Of those 720 farmers more than 52 per cent opposed the introduction of GM crops, 28 per cent were supportive and 24.4 per cent were undecided.

GM food is a very new concept for us and we are unsure whether it is safe in the long term—30 or 40 years, generations to come—for human consumption. There is no evidence either way. That is one of the main reasons the community is so divided in its position. Supporters of gene technology, such as the NFF, say that Australia is at risk of being left behind as others adopt more advanced agricultural techniques. The NFF believes that the outcomes of gene technology can contribute to meeting Australia's future challenges in economic growth, health and environmental sustainability. In addition, AgForce has stated that it will help increase water use efficiency and has the potential to provide direct nutritional and consumer benefits.

However, organic farming groups are against GM foods and argue that contamination will occur as seeds spread through the wind and on harvesters and when crops are transported. They say there could be possible long-term effects from consuming GM material. They therefore suggest that there should be more thorough testing of the benefits of GM foods.

I turn to the current genetically modified food situation in Australia. Which crops have been genetically modified? It is a question that I am sure many members will be asked by their constituents. According to the South Australian government's web site, in theory it is possible to genetically modify all types of plants. In practice there are technical problems with inserting DNA into some plants and some plants do not regenerate well under laboratory conditions.

There are currently GM varieties of 13 different plants available worldwide which are commercially grown and used in the production of food and animal feeds. These include: canola, corn, papaya, soybean, tomato, chicory, flax or linseed, potato, squash, cotton, melon or cantaloupe, rice and sugarbeet. Currently only six of the 13 plants mentioned have GM varieties approved for use in food for human consumption in Australia by Food Standards Australia New Zealand. None of those crops, with the exception of cotton, are commercially grown in Australia.

According to Queensland Parliamentary Library research, currently GM food is not grown commercially in Queensland. In fact, genetically modified food, according to those in South Australia, is not grown commercially throughout Australia. Cotton is the only commercial GM crop grown safely in Queensland and it has been grown throughout Australia since 1996. Over 90 per cent of the cotton grown in Australia is genetically modified. These genetically modified, insect-resistant varieties offer immense benefits in reducing pesticides by up to 85 per cent per season. Canola is another crop that was grown commercially in South Australia up until a few years ago.

In 1994 a moratorium was placed on states and territories with the exception of Queensland and the Northern Territory. The moratorium was lifted by Victoria and New South Wales in November 2007 in order to increase agricultural production and reduce the costs. Victorian Premier John Brumby has claimed that this would have a positive environmental impact by slashing pesticide applications, improving risk management systems and reducing tillage practices. However, Western Australia and Tasmania want to remain GM free. The South Australian government is still debating whether or not to lift its ban.

The Western Australian and Tasmanian governments have warned that the lifting of the moratorium could lead to large-scale contamination risks to export markets and harm the price premium currently paid to Australian canola farmers. WA agricultural and food minister Kim Chance argued in the *Australian Financial Review* on 28 November 2007 that we are heavily reliant on our export markets and lifting the GM moratorium would jeopardise this trade relationship. The moratorium is reflective of overwhelming public opinion and consumer sentiment around the world.

In addition, it was reported in the *Age* on 28 November 2007 that anti-GM activists also weighed into the argument, speaking out against the Victorian government's decision to lift the moratorium stating that consumers face a growing assortment of foods made from genetically modified material without always knowing that they are buying it. This is in line with Growcom's train of thought, which I mentioned earlier. I think it is a very important point that we should take into consideration. To me, this is the heart of the argument. It comes down to the fact that I believe that consumers should have the right to know and choose what they are buying and feeding their families. I believe that there should be strict labelling regulations. Labelling is not dealt with in this legislation. It is relevant to the debate. I think there should be strict labelling regulations introduced whether the food be sold in supermarkets, cafes or restaurants.

Clearly, it is important that GMO experimentation is closely monitored. According to the NFF in a statement in September 2007, the Australian practices involving genetically modified organisms in laboratory experiments are rigorously regulated and apparently the regulatory system is recognised as one of the most stringent in the world. This is what those in the National Party believe. We believe that the state government and primary industries should jointly monitor genetically modified organism products to ensure that these organisms do not adversely affect the marketing of Australian products, indeed Queensland products.

The Queensland Parliamentary Library researchers have put together a very brief list of some recent Queensland research. There has been genetic engineering of pineapples at the Maroochy research station. This is the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries major subtropical fruit and nut research and extension centre. Genetic engineering of pineapples is being applied to produce higher yielding, disease resistant and improved quality plants for the industry.

With regard to the papaya ringspot disease, resistant cultivars provide the best long-term solution to the papaya ringspot. Two programs aimed at developing resistant cultivars are underway in our state. One program is based on conventional breeding techniques using interspecific hybridisation with the resistant Carica species. The second approach being jointly undertaken by the Queensland University of Technology and DPIF is to develop resistant cultivars using genetic engineering techniques. Plants from this program are currently being tested for virus resistance. Genetically modified bananas will be trialled in north Queensland this year as part of research into boosting the fruit's vitamin A and iron levels. The Cavendish variety to be planted by Queensland University of Technology researchers is not intended for the Australian market but for East African growers.

The project molecular bioscience technology group managed out of the Biosciences Precinct at the University of Queensland conducts research and development in biotechnology. Current projects include using genetic technologies in developing disease-resistant and improved varieties of tropical/subtropical, vegetable, deciduous and ornamental crops. Projects are funded by the Meat and Livestock Association, Horticulture Australia Ltd, the Australian Research Council and the CRC for Tropical Plant Protection.

The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee has examined the Gene Technology Amendment Bill 2007 and has asked the question: does the legislation have sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals? The committee has singled out two clauses—clauses 5 and 7. The *Alert Digest* states—

Clause 5 would insert a new subsection into section 33(1) of the Act. The new subsection would provide an additional element to an existing offence in section 33(1). As amended, section 33(1) would provide that a person commits an offence of strict liability if he or she deals with a GMO knowing that it is a GMO and the dealing is not stated in an emergency dealing determination. The maximum penalty for the offence under section 33(1) is 73 penalty units ($5475), or 293 penalty units ($21,975) for an aggravated offence.

It continues—

Clause 7 would insert a new offence provision in the Act to create another strict liability offence for breaching the conditions of an emergency dealing determination. In order to have committed an offence under new section 35B, a person must have knowledge of the conditions to which the emergency dealing determination is subject, but need not know that he or she is breaching that condition. The maximum penalty for the offence is 73 penalty units ($5475), or 293 penalty units ($21,975) for an aggravated offence.

The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee notes—

Under the amended section 33(1) and clause 7, a person could be guilty of an offence for unintentional conduct or actions. The committee notes that it is a principle of the law that intention is an essential component of every offence unless some reason can be found for holding that it is not necessary.

I seek a point of clarification from the minister during the consideration in detail stage on that finding. The committee concludes—

The committee draws the offences of strict liability in clauses 5 and 7 to the attention of Parliament.

The committee also makes comment on the bill generally and the explanatory notes, saying—

> The committee generally expresses concern about national schemes of legislation. It has identified elements of such schemes as undermining the institution of Parliament. However, the committee notes that the proposed amendments contained in the bill result from a statutory independent review.

Once again, the committee refers that question to the parliament.

In closing, I want to quickly mention the potential for good that genetically modified crops can have, especially in my part of the world. In the sugar industry it is the great hope that a genetically modified crop will assist in the production of ethanol. It is a very exciting part of science to read about. It will be more exciting once the science is applied properly and safely to the crops on the ground and, ultimately, to the benefit of Queenslanders and our producers. However, I want to restate that, in dealing with policy and legislation, in order to be responsible we must all adopt that precautionary principle. We as legislators must always err on the side of caution. The National Party believes that the state government and primary industry should jointly monitor genetically modified organism products to ensure that these do not adversely affect the marketing of Queensland and Australian products. I support the bill.

Mr STEVENS (Robina—Lib) (4.45 pm): I rise to speak on the Gene Technology Amendment Bill 2007. At the outset I say that I support this bill, as do my coalition colleagues. The bill is very important as it reflects Commonwealth gene technology legislation that has had recent statutory reviews, along with Queensland legislation. There has also been a review of the Gene Technology Agreement 2001. The Gene Technology Agreement is an intergovernmental agreement which sets out the understanding between Commonwealth, state and territory governments regarding the establishment of a nationally consistent regulatory system for gene technology.

The recommendations of the review were agreed to by the Gene Technology Ministerial Council, an intergovernmental body comprising state, territory and Australian government ministers and set up under the Gene Technology Agreement 2001. The independent review of the Queensland legislation concluded the following: the differences between the Commonwealth and state acts are not material, there is no evidence to suggest that the Queensland act should be different from the Commonwealth act, and changes to the Commonwealth act as recommended by the Commonwealth review should be adopted by Queensland. And that is what we are here today to do.

The Gene Technology Amendment Bill 2007 seeks to amend the Gene Technology Act 2001 by improving the operational side of the delivery of the legislation without changing the key policy intent of the legislative framework. The changes will include the following: introducing emergency powers for the minister to be able to expedite the approval of dealing with a GMO in an emergency, for example the recent use of equine influenza vaccine; improving the mechanism for providing advice to the Gene Technology Regulator and the Gene Technology Ministerial Council on ethics and community consultations; streamlining the process for the initial consideration of licences; reducing the regulatory burden for low-risk dealings; providing clarification on the circumstances in which licence variations can be made; clarifying the circumstances under which the regulator can direct a person to comply with the act; and providing the regulator with the power to issue a licence to persons who find themselves inadvertently dealing with an unlicensed GMO for the purpose of disposing of the organism.

Gene technology refers to a whole range of techniques for genetic analysis that depend on the direct manipulation of DNA, which, as we know, is the material substance of heredity. Gene technology consists of tools and techniques that scientists can use to study, identify or modify the genes of living organisms. Over 20 years ago it was discovered that genes and parts of genes could be extracted from deoxyribonucleic acid—DNA, and a term which I have not said since high school—using protein scissors to turn it up or down and insert it back into a living organism. This is the basis of genetic modification. It allows the sequences of genes to be determined.

The use of gene technology can be found in biomedicine, agriculture, food production and processing. The debate within the community about gene technology focuses on the use of genetically modified organisms in food. The major concerns are their safety for human consumption and their potential impact on our environment.

The area of biomedicine, which we define as the application of the principles and techniques of the natural sciences, especially biology, to investigate and solve problems in clinical medicine, is where gene technology is of great value. It is also of great value in general health and in combating diseases, where gene technology can help with rapid diagnosis.

Furthermore, through the endeavour of combating diseases, gene technologists have made progress towards understanding two of the world's biggest killers, the malaria parasite and the human immunodeficiency virus that causes AIDS. That can only be a positive achievement considering that in 2004, 39.4 million people throughout the world were living with HIV/AIDS. More than 64.9 million people have been infected with HIV since the pandemic began and AIDS is the leading cause of death in sub-Saharan Africa and the fourth leading cause of death globally.

In agriculture, one brilliant example of the benefits of gene technology is the genetically modified or transgenic cotton, which the member for Burnett referred to in his contribution. Many farmers in the US and Australia now grow transgenic cotton. Transgenic cotton is developed to be insect resistant, thereby reducing the need to spread large amounts of insecticide over crops. Obviously, that leads to a reduction in the cost burden involved in producing the cotton crop. Therefore, that places this type of cotton on the market at either a reduced price or with the capability of achieving a greater profit margin for the producer. As the member for Burnett correctly said, the cane industry is desperately looking for the same cost saving in moving towards GMO assisting the growth of sugar cane.

I would like to make mention of just a couple of the reservations that I have in regard to gene technology. The member for Burnett made reference to canola. I know in the southern states there has been quite a deal of debate about the use of GMOs in the production of canola. I know that the Canadian farmers made a special presentation out here when the matter was debated in southern parliaments. They said that once the canola GMO is introduced, there is no turning back; it spreads outside the borders for which it was initially intended. We will have to deal with those issues in the future as this gene technology spreads throughout different crops in our great agricultural system.

Gene technology still raises a lot of unanswered questions that will be answered only over a long period. It is easy to go head first into looking at its multiple benefits, such as increased sustainability and medical advancements, but at the back of my mind I have some niggling concerns about this new gene technology in terms of the accelerated growth rates and the impact that those growth rates will have on our own food consumption now and into the future and the change that gene technology will perhaps have on our environment. There are downsides to all new technology. In the fullness of time, when downsides or side issues are identified, genetically modified food may well create a new market for non-genetically modified foods, which could be the only foods that consumers will want to purchase and consume. I draw an analogy to the increasing market for organically grown food.

Another area of concern I have is that when one organism is changed, how will this change affect the environment and the sensitive balance of nature? This will sound as though it is out of left field, but I refer to the introduction back in 1935 of the cane toad as a form of agricultural pest control to combat the cane beetle. The same things that are being said now about GMO technology were espoused back then when the toad was introduced to combat the beetle—that there were no downsides—yet many years later we see that there is a major downside to the cane toad in terms of its effect on our native fauna. To this point there is no answer to getting rid of the cane toad, other than by using a five iron. The cane toad became a national pest because its toxic skin killed many native predators when it was ingested. It also has many negative effects on farmers because pets and animals eat the creatures. So our environment is all the poorer for this scientific interference in the balance of nature.

In conclusion, I would like to reinforce that on the evidence that we have today—and we make decisions about these matters on the evidence that we have today—

Mr Lawlor interjected.

Mr STEVENS: I am sure genetic modification in the future may well help the member for Southport in terms of his interjections.

We must remember that the benefits of gene technology greatly outweigh the few reservations and concerns that I and other members of the public have raised and have debated since its development. Safety and being able to assess the risk and control are the keys to the further development of gene technology. This bill addresses the risks, and appropriate policy has been implemented. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (4.55 pm): The objective of Queensland's gene technology legislation is to protect the health and safety of people and to protect the environment by identifying the risks posed by or as a result of gene technology and by managing those risks through regulating certain dealings with genetically modified organisms. The Queensland Gene Technology Amendment Bill 2007 has been drafted to reflect the changes to the Commonwealth gene technology legislation as a result of recent statutory reviews of the operation of the Commonwealth's legislation and the review of the operation of Queensland's legislation. These amendments are necessary to maintain national consistency in legislation governing gene technology throughout the Commonwealth.

This bill proposes a number of legislative changes, including among other things introducing emergency powers which give the minister the ability to expedite the approval of a dealing with a GMO in an emergency, providing clarification on the circumstances in which licence variations can be made, clarifying the circumstances under which the regulator can direct a person to comply with the act and providing the regulator with the power to issue a licence to persons who find themselves inadvertently dealing with an unlicensed GMO for the purposes of disposing of that organism.

Today I would like to discuss the implications of the legislation with respect to two major industries in my electorate that have an interest in the possibilities that gene technology offers to increase profitability, viability and sustainability. I would like to raise those matters in the context of how research and extension efforts are the key to the success of gene technology research and, as a result, the ongoing competitiveness of those industries and the communities that depend on them.

As I have said before in this place, one of the major industries in my electorate of Hinchinbrook is the banana industry. At least 65 per cent of Australia's bananas are grown in my electorate. It is a major employer in my electorate and a very valuable industry in the Queensland economy providing, as it does, a high-quality, clean and green product for Queensland consumers. It is a very popular fruit and is recognised as a staple food in the majority of Queensland's shopping trolleys.

In Australia, scientists are using gene technology research to enhance resistance in bananas to a range of exotic diseases, including the bunchy top virus, a devastating disease that causes serious production losses; black sigatoka, an exotic fungal disease that now occurs in most banana growing areas globally and remains a major threat to Australia's banana industry; and Panama disease, a serious fungal disease that is generally spread by soil, water or banana plants and which eventually kills the banana plant.

Indeed, as was mentioned by the shadow minister, the member for Burnett, the leading research institution pursuing gene technology projects concerning bananas is none other than the building next door to the Queensland parliament, the Queensland University of Technology. The Queensland University of Technology has applied to the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator for a licence to undertake research with genetically modified bananas containing a gene that expresses a protein that provides a visual indication of where the successful transformation of plant tissue has occurred. Other lines under this application contain a gene that is expected to provide protection from certain pathogenic micro-organisms. The Queensland University of Technology has also applied for a licence to undertake research with genetically modified bananas containing genes from a number of sources that are expected to increase the concentration of provitamin A, vitamin E and iron in the flesh of the fruit.

Recently the banana industry carried out a ballot of growers to establish a compulsory levy to fund banana promotion, research and development and, importantly as far as today's debate is concerned, plant health related activities. The vote was a strong result in favour of the levy with 60 per cent of individual growers, representing 88 per cent of production, being in favour of the national levy. The levy is vitally important to the banana industry's future and the result enables the industry to put forward this recommendation to establish the levy to the federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, from whom the industry is currently awaiting a decision.

Amongst other things the national levy is expected to enable a strong focus on research and development, including a resumption of industry funded banana research, a rebuilding of banana scientific expertise, exotic banana pest and disease surveillance, enhanced banana disease diagnostic capability and the continuation of the QBAN tissue culture nursery accreditation scheme. In recent times investment in banana specific research has been very limited. When the national levy is in place, the banana industry will be able to move forward with plans to properly fund industry research activities.

In May last year during debate on the Primary Industries Acts Amendment and Repeal Bill, I argued that while policy and legislation in respect to biosecurity as it relates to the banana industry is now handled largely by the Commonwealth, recognition that the banana industry is important to Queensland means that the Queensland government ought to continue to make a strong contribution to the ongoing efforts to develop and strengthen the banana industry.

Compared to other banana production areas around the world, at present Queensland is relatively pest and disease free. Australian quarantine restrictions on imported bananas are currently in place to reduce the risk of exotic pest and disease incursions. The banana industry faces comparatively high biosecurity risks compared to other Queensland plant industries because the commercial production of bananas in Queensland is dominated by a single variety, the Cavendish variety, which has a limited resistance to many of the major pests and diseases that affect banana production.

On top of this, some serious pests and diseases affecting the banana industry would be difficult to eradicate if an incursion occurred. There are a limited number of chemical controls available to implement large-scale control programs for a particular pest or disease and this makes plant health based research, including gene technology research efforts to enhance pest and disease resistance in banana plants, of significant importance to the banana industry.

Members will recall that an outbreak of black sigatoka occurred several years ago in the heart of Queensland's banana growing region, the Tully Valley. An enormous surveillance and control effort was undertaken and, for the first time ever, the black sigatoka outbreak was eradicated while production continued. The significant risks and potentially high costs of an emergency pest or disease incursion warrant ongoing research and development on pest and disease resistance.

Today I would like to repeat my appeal to the Minister for Primary Industries that, in the absence of the grant of aid funding previously paid by the Queensland government on a dollar-for-dollar basis with industry to the Banana Industry Protection Board which was disbanded last year, the Queensland government should identify some other mechanism to support the banana industry. I suggest that, following the success of the national ballot to establish a banana industry levy, the Queensland government should consider an annual contribution to the banana industry fund to be held by Horticulture Australia Limited.

Sugar is one of Australia's largest export industries. It is a billion dollar industry employing tens of thousands of Queenslanders. Queensland is a leading producer and exporter of sugar. Annual production is more than five million tonnes. While that represents a relatively small percentage of the world's production, 85 per cent of Australia's total production is exported and that represents a much larger percentage of total global trade in sugar.

The Queensland sugar industry has developed a reputation as a technologically advanced, efficient and low-cost sugar producer. It is a world leader in sugar technology in areas ranging from plant breeding and farming practices to milling operations. The Queensland sugar industry places great value on research and innovation, including genetically engineered plants. Genetic engineering research will likely play a vital role in maintaining international competitiveness by improving disease resistance, productivity and crop yield, and this issue was also touched on by the member for Burnett.

As honourable members would be aware, the world sugar market is heavily corrupted by the United States and the European Union. As such, the Queensland sugar industry needs to be able to pursue all opportunities for improved profitability that research may allow. One of the reasons the Queensland sugar industry has been able to survive is that, historically, it has had a very strong investment and success in its research and extension institutions. Biotechnology research is included in these research efforts. Australian researchers were the first in the world to genetically transform sugar cane and regrow viable plants. The Australian sugar industry has undertaken research on cane plants that have a number of genetic modifications, although no commercial plantings have been made. As I understand it, there is no genetically modified cane being produced commercially.

The modern science of molecular biology has extended our capacity to breed and select varieties and cultivars with desirable traits. Sugar cane is a genetically complex plant. Modern commercial varieties of sugar cane are complex hybrids. Whilst significant progress has been made in sugar cane breeding, this genetic complexity has meant that the gains made from research have been hard fought.

Specific projects have been pursued by the BSES using gene technology in an attempt to enhance pest and disease resistance in sugar cane varieties against leaf scald which is a bacterial problem, Fiji leaf gall which is a virus and sugar cane mosaic virus. Projects have incorporated genes for resistance to cane grubs, although as I mentioned earlier these genetically modified varieties have not yet been grown commercially.

Molecular biology has the potential to increase sugar content in a range of cane varieties. Sugar cane is largely replanted from materials sourced from existing crops. New varieties are developed by BSES on behalf of the industry and are made available free of charge to those paying the voluntary levy, which supports BSES research and extension efforts, and on a commercial basis to those who choose not to pay the voluntary levy. Most of the cost of developing new sugar cane varieties by BSES is paid for by industry through voluntary levies. New varieties, whether conventionally bred or the result of genetic modification, will not be used unless the cost involved is less than the benefit gained. It is in the interests of the Queensland sugar industry as a whole and the communities where the local economy is underpinned by the sugar industry that the provision of technology as a result of focused research efforts to improve the sugar cane varieties available is made.

Historically, the Queensland sugar industry has been able to avoid a situation where research efforts became uncompetitive due to the cooperation between its research organisations, including the BSES, the Sugar Research Institute and local cane and pest productivity boards. More recently, a large amount of funding has been channelled through the Sugar Research and Development Corporation which considers overall research industry priorities.

The BSES is the Queensland sugar industry's principal research body in the area of developing new cane varieties using gene technology. I do not think it can be denied that the BSES has experienced some difficulties and great challenges since legislation passed through the Queensland parliament in August 2003 transferring the assets of the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations over to BSES Limited, a limited liability company.

In March last year during debate in this place on the Plant Protection Amendment Bill I encouraged the Minister for Primary Industries to recognise the significant need for a much better funded BSES, especially for plant breeding programs in light of the serious predicament now facing the Queensland sugar industry in the form of sugarcane smut. I argued that it was in the best interests of Queensland and the Queensland government to increase its funding to the BSES to that end. I repeat that request today as the issue remains an important one for my electorate and the Queensland sugar industry at large.

Sugarcane smut was first found in Australia in 1998 in the Ord River in Western Australia. Sugarcane smut was first found in Queensland on a farm near Childers in early June 2006 by a cane productivity officer from the local productivity services group. The Queensland sugar industry is now necessarily pursuing an industry management and economic recovery strategy as opposed to a quarantine or eradication strategy.

Sugarcane smut is a serious disease affecting sugar cane which can significantly reduce crop yields. It is highly infectious and could be spread by wind or carried on clothing and machinery. Across Queensland sugar industry organisations are working to develop and implement local recovery plans to respond to the existing outbreak of smut or planning for a potential future outbreak in their region. Surveillance efforts to identify the spread of disease in areas where an infestation is yet to manifest itself are ongoing and being coordinated by the BSES—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I have given the member a lot of latitude. This bill does deal specifically with genetically modified organisms and the legislative regime around that. Please come back to the bill.

Mr CRIPPS: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker. As sugarcane smut is now deemed to be an established disease, developing resistant cane varieties is now considered to be the principal tool to be used to combat the effects of the disease on industry returns. A number of smut-resistant sugar cane varieties are now being developed. The industry was largely unprepared to react to sugarcane smut insofar as there were no smut-resistant varieties in the field in Queensland, despite, as I mentioned earlier, the disease being identified in the Ord River district in Western Australia in 1998.

State government funding for these types of research organisations, in particular the BSES, has been hovering between $3 million and $4 million annually for some time. In 2007-08, the BSES will receive $4 million—$1 million of which is specifically related to addressing the sugarcane smut incursion. The remaining $3 million, down from $3.8 million in 2006-07, will be used for agreed research priorities. In effect, this means that the real increase in support for the BSES in the year when the demand for its capacity to pursue research priorities is at its most serious will be all of $200,000.

One wonders how committed the government is to trying to ensure that the Queensland sugar industry—as I mentioned earlier, it is a $1 billion industry as far as exports are concerned, employing tens of thousands of Queenslanders in regional and rural areas of the state—is as prepared as possible for such pest and plant disease outbreaks. So I sincerely hope that there will be a change in the attitude of the government to properly funding plant breeding programs in recognition of the enormous contribution the industry makes to the economy and to our communities in regional and rural areas. With those comments on the record, I am pleased to support the bill.

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (5.12 pm): It is a pleasure to rise to speak on the Gene Technology Amendment Bill 2007. I feel a close connection with this bill, given that I had the opportunity as parliamentary secretary to the minister for state development to represent the state on the Gene Technology Ministerial Council.

There is little doubt that gene technology holds great potential for Australia and provides new opportunities to solve problems. A genetically modified organism can be designed to uniquely deal with a human health emergency or an environmental emergency. For example, a genetically modified vaccine could be used to address Australia's preparedness to deal with highly contagious diseases, such as a variant of bird flu that could become easily transmitted to the human population. From an environmental perspective, a genetically modified micro-organism or plant could be used to clean up a contaminated environment—a process known as bioremediation.

To take advantage of such opportunities, the Gene Technology Amendment Bill 2007 introduces emergency powers. These new powers, which commenced on 1 July 2007 as part of the Commonwealth's Gene Technology Act, give the Commonwealth minister the power to expedite an approval of a dealing with a genetically modified organism in an emergency. The introduction of the emergency powers will bring Queensland's legislation in line with that of the Commonwealth's. Responses to emergency situations need to be informed, consistent and comprehensive. The primary concern in relation to genetically modified organisms is that, once released into the environment, they may be difficult to recall.

Safeguards to ensure the appropriate use of the emergency powers are incorporated into the Gene Technology Amendment Bill 2007 and include the following: emergency powers will only be used if there exists an actual or imminent threat to the health and safety of people or to the environment; in making any decision to enforce an emergency dealing determination, the Commonwealth minister must first consult with the states and territories; and the Commonwealth minister must also receive advice from the Chief Medical Officer, the Chief Veterinarian or the Chief Plant Protection Officer and the Gene Technology Regulator that there is an actual or imminent threat and that the proposed use of the genetically modified organism will address both the threat and any risks to human health and the environment. The Queensland government believes that the emergency provisions will allow cooperative, effective and rapid response in an emergency whilst ensuring the health and safety of people and the environment is maintained.

The strength of these provisions can be demonstrated by an emergency dealing determination, which took effect from 20 September 2007, to authorise the use of a genetically modified vaccine to control an outbreak of equine influenza in Australia for the first time. This dealing has proven to be remarkably successful. According to the Australian Chief Veterinary Officer in his report to the Gene

Technology Standing Committee in January 2008, the vaccine has contributed to the infected area shrinking rapidly after its introduction. The number of infected properties was reduced to only approximately 10 per cent of infected properties during the peak of the outbreak.

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority has thoroughly investigated the 29 instances of 'adverse effects' resulting from the vaccination program. All reports were found to be negligible, with no reports of any impact on humans or on off-target animals or plants. The Office of the Gene Technology Regulator undertook monitoring and inspection activities involving the deployment of the vaccine within the states and territories. A high level of compliance was reported in areas including import procedures, record keeping, staff training and waste disposal.

The same genetically modified vaccine that is being administered to control the equine influenza outbreak in Australia has been used successfully in the United States and in Europe. Without the recent changes to the Commonwealth government's gene technology legislation, which are mirrored in the present bill, the vaccine would have taken up to 255 days to be released for use in Australia. Such a delay would have increased the threat to the environment from an animal disease.

The introduction of emergency provisions to the act is also beneficial because it will improve consistency between regulatory schemes. Other relevant product regulators for vaccines, such as the Therapeutic Goods Administration and the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority, already possess the ability to expedite approvals in an emergency. This amendment will provide similar opportunities in relation to genetically modified organisms.

I am pleased that the amendments that are being made to the Queensland Gene Technology Act here today received unanimous support at the federal level. As the former Howard government minister said in 2007, these amendments are an excellent example of federal and state governments working together to improve safety and the regulation of the use of gene technologies in Australia.

This is indeed a very important area. Genetics are what I regularly call the keys to the kingdom. These areas of science will open up many fields in the future in terms of helping human beings to live healthier and longer and improving our quality of life. Work with many other species—crops, animals, et cetera—will also help to feed nations, to solve all sorts of environmental problems that face us and to address some of the most significant issues that will face mankind in this century.

We are doing our bit in Australia and I think we have an open and rational approach to this. It is very easy for this issue to become an emotional one. We have to keep a balanced and open mind, and we are doing that very well from a Queensland perspective. We are embracing gene technology, as we have heard in the debate so far. Modified cotton crops are already in place in Queensland, and we can see the benefits of these in terms of the lower use of pesticides and other chemicals that can affect the environment.

I implore all of those people in the relevant industries and in academic and research pursuits to continue the highly responsible and balanced approach that has been adopted to date in gene technology to further the aims of our society. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (5.21 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Gene Technology Amendment Bill 2007. I congratulate the member for Greenslopes for giving a very comprehensive contribution to this debate before the House today.

In 2006 an independent review of the Queensland act recommended that the state's legislation and the Commonwealth's Gene Technology Act should not differ and that the changes to the Commonwealth act as recommended by a statutory review in 2005 should be adopted by Queensland. Both state and Commonwealth legislation is needed to achieve a nationally consistent scheme that provides full regulatory coverage for gene technology, since constitutional powers do not allow the Commonwealth's gene technology legislation to reach all research groups in Australia. Under the intergovernmental Gene Technology Agreement 2001, all states and territories have committed to maintaining corresponding legislation.

The amendments proposed in the Gene Technology Amendment Bill 2007 are by and large designed to improve the regulation of gene technology in Australia. The amendments will not affect the operations of Queensland's gene technology legislation, nor will they change the act's underlying policy intent or the overall legislative framework. The proposed amendments are the culmination of a long public consultation process and an independent statutory review process. Through the national review, in which Queensland participated, the changes proposed in this bill have the support of the intergovernmental Gene Technology Ministerial Council.

One of the amendments of the Gene Technology Amendment Bill 2007 is the introduction of emergency powers to give the Commonwealth minister the ability to expedite the approval of a dealing with a genetically modified organism in an emergency. This was stated at length by the member for Hinchinbrook and also reinforced by the member for Greenslopes. However, it has also been noted by both members that the states and the territories must be consulted prior to making any decisions in this regard.

I now want to turn to the specific amendments other than the emergency powers. The bill will recognise a Gene Technology Ethics and Community Consultative Committee that commenced on 1 January 2008 under the Commonwealth's Gene Technology Act 2000. This is contained in clause 33 of the bill and replaces section 107. This new committee combines the previous Gene Technology Ethics Committee and the Gene Technology Community Consultative Committee into one body. The new committee will provide advice to the Gene Technology Regulator and the Gene Technology Ministerial Council on ethics and community consultations. As the explanatory notes state, the combined committee will also be—

... providing advice on risk communication and community consultation in relation to intentional release licence applications.

The Senate Community Affairs Committee's report into the Commonwealth's gene technology legislation found that most stakeholders commented favourably on the proposed amalgamation of the ethics committee and the consultative committee into one central body. The bill also ratifies amendments to the process for assessing applications for licences dealing with genetically modified organisms. These are two sets of amendments in this section of the bill but I do not wish to expand on those here today.

In conclusion, it has been pleasing to see the recent use of the emergency powers to address the equine influenza outbreak. It shows that the safeguards that have been put in place are sufficiently robust to ensure that these powers will be used expeditiously. In closing, I think the minister made this point clearly in her second reading speech, when she said—

... the recent outbreak of equine influenza for the first time in Australia is being controlled through not only the containment of horses but also by the use of a genetically modified vaccine. This vaccine is routinely used in Europe and the United States and without the recent changes to the Commonwealth Government's gene technology legislation the vaccine would have taken up to 255 days to be released for use in Australia.

We can only imagine what would have happened if that had been the case. She further said—

This power will only be used if there exists an actual or imminent threat to the health and safety of people or to the environment.

I commend the bill to the House.

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (5.25 pm): I rise to contribute to this debate on the Gene Technology Amendment Bill 2007. This debate rates alongside human cloning as one of the most technically complex and rapidly changing areas we are asked to consider. The object of this bill is to protect the health and safety of people and the environment by identifying risks posed by or as a result of gene technology. It is also aimed at managing those risks by regulation.

I point out that much of the focus of this bill and the act which it is amending is in the area of genetically modified crops and livestock. It is also Queensland's mechanism for meeting its requirements for nationally consistent legislation in this area. As such, the amendments contained in today's bill are being proposed in light of changes to the parent Commonwealth legislation. Among these are changes that will expedite the approval of dealing with a genetically modified organism in an emergency. There are also proposals for better ways to advise the Gene Technology Regulator in regard to ethics and community consultations, giving power to the regulator to deal with those who inadvertently have to deal with a GMO.

My concerns with GMOs are in regard to the risks if genetically modified organisms do escape into the wider environment. Major agricultural corporations have genetically modified common crops so that the seed they sell farmers will germinate for one crop but that crop is infertile—that is, its seed is unusable for any future plantings. Should a crop like that escape and infest the wider environment, there is a clear risk that this planet could with time see one or more major food crops vanish. It sounds like Buck Rogers stuff, but that is exactly what we are dealing with here.

The regulatory controls already in place are reported to have worked well and they may well continue to do so. The difficulty is the potential for massive disruption should they ever be breached. In fact, among the amendments today are those in clause 8 which are aimed at people who had no intention of having anything to do with any GMO but who are forced to deal with them because they have escaped onto their property. The example given in the explanatory notes is where a GMO is in place in a licensed, restricted area but some of it is transported to another unlicensed place via transport or handling equipment—that is, if a truck, harvester or tractor moves from a GMO location to a non-GMO location and has some seeds or material on it.

So in a legislative sense we are preparing for GMO controls to be breached yet insisting that the regulatory controls are sufficient to protect us. At the same time, however, it must be recognised that GMOs can at times serve a positive purpose. The vaccine used to manage the recent horse flu outbreak was a GMO and in fact is cited as an example of why the relevant minister should be able to expedite approvals in such cases.

GMOs are also something that attract some very passionate advocates, and I was pleased to see that the stated objective of these amendments is to improve the mechanisms for providing advice on ethics and community consultation to the Gene Technology Regulator and the Gene Technology Ministerial Council. However, I was concerned to see that clause 13(2) of this bill provides for the

regulator to not have to seek advice from anyone in regard to risk assessment and risk management plans in certain circumstances. Worst still, those circumstances relate to field trials—that is, outside the safety of a laboratory and in the real world where, as this bill recognises in clause 8, it is entirely possible for GMOs to spread. This is not streamlining the consultation process; it is cutting it off at the knees.

These amendments are of considerable interest and concern to my constituents in my electorate, as it is in an area which has large agricultural and horticultural industries to consider. Some time ago a public meeting was called in relation to the genetic modification of crops. There was a very large attendance, showing the great concern in the community about these issues. The majority of those at the meeting were against the introduction of GMOs in any way, shape or form and voted to keep the tablelands clean of genetically modified crops. In that light, I will not be supporting the bill.

Debate, on motion of Ms Lee Long, adjourned.

MOTION

Deeral, Mr E and Bonner, Mr N

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (5.30 pm): I move—

That this parliament recognises the enormous contribution of Queensland's only ever Indigenous parliamentarians: Eric Deeral and Neville Bonner.

Australia has had a very interesting history when it comes to our treatment of Indigenous people. For many Indigenous people it has been a very long, harsh and arduous journey as they have sought to get just recognition not only with services but also with their basic human rights. I suppose if you were an alien in space and you were looking down you would find it very hard to believe that here in a modern democratic country it was only 40 years ago that Australians decided to give their original custodians the right to vote. I suppose we should take a moment to reflect upon that and the significance of that.

I am very proud of the fact that it was a coalition government in the late 1960s, under Harold Holt, as I understand, which decided not only to abolish the White Australia Policy, which had been a blight on this nation for so many years, but also to make sure that Indigenous Australians received just recognition and equality as citizens of this country. I am also very pleased that our fellow Australians decided at that time, by a margin of more than nine out of 10, to give our fellow Australians of Indigenous descent the right to vote. Things moved extremely quickly after that in our parliaments.

I want to now talk about the two men who are the subject of the motion tonight: Eric Deeral and Neville Bonner—two very humble men, men of great significance, men who made a major contribution in this state and, in the case of Eric, continues to make a great contribution in his own community. Just four years after Australians decided to do the right thing and grant Indigenous Australians full recognition, full citizenry and the right to vote, Neville Bonner was elected to be a senator for the Liberal Party representing Queensland. That was quite a monumental step. As I understand it, Neville Bonner was the first Indigenous Australian parliamentarian and certainly the first one to make it into our federal parliament.

Neville Bonner's history of parliamentary service is a very interesting one. He was a person of extraordinary capability. He was a man of marvellous values. He was a person who grew up in very austere circumstances with a mother who loved him very dearly. His father had departed back to England I think even before Neville was born. But he was supported very much by his extended family.

If we look at his circumstances we see that this was a man who had only three years of formal education. As I understand it, he did not start that formal education until he was 14 years of age, and it was only after some urging that he was actually accepted because, of course, at that time education was segregated. Notwithstanding that fact, Neville Bonner would have to be considered one of the most in-touch, articulate people you would ever come across in terms of not only his relationship with his people and his relationship with his country but also his capacity to enunciate the spoken word and the written word. In his maiden speech Neville Bonner broached the subject of skin colour. He stated—

In my experienced opinion, all persons who desire to be so classified, regardless of hue of skin, and who have flowing in their veins any portion, however small, of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island blood, are Indigenous people ... It does not necessarily follow that the degree of one's emotional scars matches the darkness of personal pigmentation or that the lightness of one's skin necessarily indicates a lessening of knowledge of and belief in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island culture and tradition.

In his maiden speech Neville Bonner spoke at length about the issue of communal moral rights and the importance of economic development for Indigenous people, which are ongoing issues. Neville Bonner went on to have a very distinguished career in the federal Senate. Many people consider that he made a significant difference for not only his people but also the people of this state and the people of this nation. For that, Neville Bonner will always be very kindly and properly remembered in this place.

Eric Deeral was similarly a person who grew up in very simple circumstances. He is a person with an enormous value system and an enormous connection with who he is as one of the original Australians. He also understands absolutely the importance of being a Queenslander and an Australian and being one united. In his maiden speech Eric said—

... there are a number of things I want to make clear. The first is that my forebears were both Aborigines and Islanders ... but I am first and foremost an Australian from Queensland.

That is significant. That was 1974. Here is a man—the first Indigenous person to be elected to the Queensland parliament and the only Indigenous person ever to have been elected to the Queensland parliament—who stood in this place 34 years ago and said that. He went on in his maiden speech to state—

Queensland has been described as a racist state ...

I was disappointed this morning to hear the 'racist' tag thrown around. It can be very injudiciously used. I will say that again—

Queensland has been described as a racist state ... Every opportunity has been taken to criticise the government and the people of Queensland by many in the south who should know better. I think the remarks that have been made are based on the shame that they have at the fact that Queensland is the only state that has provided Aboriginal representation in both Federal and State Parliaments. For the moment I demand that these people cease making further comments until they have dealt with their own difficulties.

He further stated—

I am sick of Aboriginal and Islander peoples ... turned into beggars and mendicants by hand-outs and a lot of nonsense which we are assured that if we work hard and are good children we will soon be like all other people. I am sick of this because I resent that attitude, I resent the policies, and finally I resent the paternalism that is implied.

Further in his maiden speech he stated—

I know and you know there are differences. There are differences in language, culture and the simple differences that are implied by distance and surroundings. These are not the monopoly of Aborigines and Islanders ... I am not impressed by differences but rather by similarities. Men and women want to raise children and they want to create security for them; they want to work together for this end. They want so many things in common that I oppose and resent theory differences and the friction and intolerance they breed.

What very prophetic, profound, statesmanlike and extremely relevant words in 1974. They are still as profound and as salient today in 2008.

I am very privileged as the leader of the Nationals in the parliament today to say that we were able to bring into this parliament some 34 years ago a Queenslander of Aboriginal and Islander descent. I think we really do need to reflect on our performance since then collectively as a parliament. In the time that has ensued we have not been able to bring another person like Eric into this place. We have certainly endorsed candidates from Indigenous backgrounds and we will continue to do that. We certainly hope that we will have many more of them elected to parliament in the future.

It is interesting that this happened at a time when we did not even talk about the sorts of things we talk about today. It was considered matter of fact that these people were a part of our community and had the same rights to step in. Today we talk about quotas. Today we talk about special seats in parliament and getting people into parliament. We did not need to do it then. Why do we need to talk about it today? Even Eric, in a *Stateline* interview only four years ago, said that, frankly, he did not support that sort of approach to bringing people into parliament; they should simply get here on their own merits. It behoves us all to learn from our record, learn from what we have done in the past and do all we can to make sure that people like Eric Deeral and Neville Bonner can again sit in the parliaments of Queensland and Australia.

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier) (5.40 pm): It gives me great pleasure to second the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition this evening. I would be happy to do it on any Wednesday night. The state of Queensland has led the nation in having Indigenous people represented at the highest levels of government. I would like to congratulate the National and Liberal parties for attracting to parliamentary life men of the quality and intelligence of Eric Deeral and Neville Bonner. Both, as the opposition leader outlined, are men who came from very humble beginnings.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation. Can I ask members at the back of the chamber to respect that this is an important debate. I call the Premier.

Ms BLIGH: Both men came from humble beginnings. Eric was born at the Hope Vale mission and Neville was born at the mouth of the Tweed River. Both men left school early.

With the 1967 referendum only just behind them, Eric and Neville both seized opportunities to be pioneers in politics. In the 1974 state election Eric Deeral stood for the National Party in the vast northern electorate of Cook, winning against six other candidates. Neville Bonner was selected by the Liberal Party to fill a casual Senate vacancy in 1971 and was popularly elected, to his credit, on two subsequent occasions.

Both men represented all their constituents but both recognised the special role they played in being the first Aboriginal member of either parliament. In fact, Neville Bonner said that he felt an overwhelming responsibility in being the first Aboriginal voice in our national parliament.

Eric Deeral recognised the challenges for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people but worked, as he said, for the greater good of all Queenslanders. In his maiden speech he pointed out that he was very well equipped to represent the Cook electorate as his family had 20,000 years of history in the area.

Neville Bonner was the first Aboriginal person to introduce legislation in the Australian parliament. He encouraged people to—

> ... get into the system, work through the system and make the changes. If you say a law is a bad law, you don't break it, you try to change the law.

I think that is a sentiment that all of us in this House would agree with today. Both men continued to make strong contributions to the community after they left parliament. That is equally a credit to them.

The achievements of these two great Australians should rightly be recognised as the result of their own individual efforts and ambitions and hard work. But credit should also go to the Queensland National and Liberal parties for what were, at the time, very historic achievements. I think it is difficult in 2008 to take ourselves back 30 years but I do not think it is that difficult to imagine that things could very easily have been very different for both of these men if different circumstances had prevailed in both of those parties. So I do think credit should go to those achievements.

I am sure, and I am pleased to hear the Leader of the Opposition acknowledge, that we are all struck by the fact that more than 30 years on Eric Deeral remains the only Indigenous person ever to have been elected to our parliament. While his preselection is a credit, as I said, to the National Party and an inspiration to all other political parties, we all have an obligation on a day like today to recognise that we all could be doing better and have a long way to go.

I remind members of the very good work that was done by the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee a number of years ago. I expect that some of that will be raised by other members. That committee looked very thoughtfully, I think, at how the parliament and how our democratic system could be doing more to encourage and nurture and support people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds to participate in parliamentary democracy.

The reality—and Queensland is a notable exception to this with the high number of Independents we have in our parliament—for most people who end up as members of parliament is that they come into this House through a political party. If we are ever to see the number of Aboriginal people in here as members of parliament increase then political parties, each and every one of us, have to be doing more to recruit, retain and support our Aboriginal people into our parties and through the preselection processes.

I am pleased to note that the Queensland branch of the Australian Labor Party has an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander member network. We have a great number of members right across the state—in a number of branches here in Brisbane and in regional towns and cities—who are members of the Labor Party and who are playing an active role in branches. I certainly commit myself this evening as Premier and leader of the parliamentary wing of the Australian Labor Party, Queensland branch, to do everything in my power to nurture those branch members into representational politics.

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—Lib) (5.45 pm): Neville Bonner was a great man not just because he came from humble beginnings and reached the pinnacles of life in politics in this country but because he had a conviction to change those things that he saw were wrong. As he said—and as the Premier stated—

> You've got to get into the system, work through the system and make the changes. If you say a law is a bad law, you don't break it, you try to change the law.

Neville Bonner lived those words and believed in them. He was born on 28 March 1922 and died on 5 February 1999. His mother was an Aboriginal and his father an Englishman whom he never met. His education was, at best, scant and in his own words—

> We were never allowed to attend a normal state school ... but my grandmother talked the head teacher into allowing me to go and I attended there from 14 to 15 years of age. I actually reached third grade in that short period of time and that's the only normal education I've had.

He was indeed a remarkable man when we consider that from those humble beginnings he became one of the most powerful men in this country and a leader of his own Indigenous people.

The lack of education did not prevent Neville Bonner from living his dream—a dream that took him to the Senate in the Commonwealth parliament. In 1967, when his people were given the right to vote, Neville Bonner was inspired to join the Liberal Party. I can state now that the Liberal Party is very proud to have had Neville Bonner as a member and proud of the work that he did.

In June 1971 he filled a Senate vacancy created by Dame Annabelle Rankin's resignation. He was delighted at that prospect and he said—

> For the first time in the history of this country there was an Aboriginal voice in the Parliament and that gave me an enormous feeling of overwhelming responsibility. I made people aware, the law makers in this country, I made them aware of Indigenous people.

Indeed, Bonner never stopped working for the welfare of Indigenous people. When we read his maiden speech we cannot but be struck by the strength of his resolve to educate mainstream Australia about his concerns. One may say he was driven to correct the wrongs of the past and help all Indigenous peoples but a lesser man may have been satisfied with achieving the status of being the first Aboriginal person to achieve high political office. In Bonner's case his achievements did not stop there. It only made him wish to achieve more.

In 1974 he became the Senate Deputy Chairman of Committees and served on a number of parliamentary committees including the social welfare, Aboriginal affairs, federal affairs and health and welfare committees. In September 1976 he gave the final report of the Senate Select Committee on Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders on the environmental conditions of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. Of the 86 recommendations contained in that report 82 were accepted. He was the first backbencher to introduce a government bill. In 1979 he was chosen as Australian of the Year.

He left the Senate in 1983, but that did not stop Neville Bonner from pursuing his goals on a personal level, for Indigenous people or for his country. His commitment, drive and devotion until his death is remembered until this today. He was on the board of directors of the ABC from 1983 through to 1991, and from 1992 to 1996 he was a member of the Griffith University Council and chairman of the university's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee.

His love for his people and their concerns never left his soul. He was patron to many organisations, including the Coloured Youth Soul Centre and Amnesty International. Neville Bonner committed his beliefs and his passion to words by writing three books: *Black Power in Australia*; *Equal World—Equal Share;* and *For the Love of Children*.

In 1983 he was awarded the title of Officer of the Order of Australia. In July 1998 Premier Beattie asked him to address the opening of the 49th state parliament. In his first speech to federal parliament in September of 1971 he made this comment—

First and foremost I participate here as an Australian citizen. Through the valour of its fighting men in two world wars and by the vigour and skill of its leaders Australia has earned an honoured place in the world. As an Australian, I am concerned for the future of my country, for the welfare of its people and for the quality of life that they enjoy.

Neville Bonner was indeed a great Australian. He was a great member of the Liberal Party.

Hon. LH NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Seniors and Youth) (5.50 pm): On this historic day, as minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships, I rise to speak in favour of this motion. It was a truly a special moment for me this morning to be present in the gallery of our national parliament when the Prime Minister apologised to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians for the injustices visited upon them in the past. As a mother, I can only imagine the gut-wrenching pain of having your child taken from you. To have this occur as a result of unfounded concerns based solely on race and skin colour must have been devastating. One can only admire the great courage, dignity and strength that all persons affected by the stolen generation practices have shown.

It is within this context today that I rise to speak in favour of recognising the parliamentary records of two prominent Indigenous Queenslanders. Mr Eric Deeral's record as the member for Cook in this parliament from 1974-1977 is a long record of achievement in the community. A model plan of action for political parties to involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the party processes was the key theme of the *Hands on Parliament* report of the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee of this parliament in 2003.

Regrettably, in my view, despite his invaluable contribution, Mr Deeral remains the only Indigenous Queenslander elected to this parliament. In fact, there are many capable Indigenous Queenslanders up to the tasks that parliamentary duties demand, people who have excelled in all fields of human endeavour: in academic life, in the judiciary, the sporting field, in business, the arts and social sciences, mayors of the Indigenous councils, including two female mayors, Delena Oui-Foster from Palm Island and Susan Sewter from Mornington Island. From this wealth of talent, it should be the case that more Indigenous Queenslanders should have made their way into this place since Eric Deeral. Regrettably, it has not eventuated. Primary responsibility for this situation must be sheeted home to all political parties. It is a record that does not reflect well on any of us.

I support this motion in respect of Mr Deeral but place on the record my sincere hope that his legacy will change in the near future, that is, it is my hope that we will speak soon of Mr Deeral as being the first Indigenous Queenslander to be elected to this parliament, as opposed to his being the only Indigenous Queenslander.

I have long admired the late Neville Bonner as being an Indigenous Australian who truly was a product of the school of hard knocks. Neville Bonner, atypical of many Indigenous Australians of his era, had few of the comforts and opportunities we take as a given in this day and age. Born under a palm tree on Ukerebagh Island in the mouth of the Tweed River, Mr Bonner would often recount that this occurred because his mother was not allowed to go to hospital to give birth.

In his youth, Mr Bonner grew up in the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales. When Bonner was only seven he had to help his stepfather and grandfather earn money by clearing the bush. He recounted that his job was to crawl underneath the lantana bushes and with a little tomahawk cut the lantana off at the root. Following the tragic death of his mother, and his father having left for England before his birth, Neville Bonner was soon sent to live with his grandparents. The influence of his grandmother was enormous. Unfortunately, at that time Indigenous Australians had to attend segregated schools. As there were none in the Northern Rivers district, Mr Bonner was educated only up to third grade standard at Beaudesert.

His gentle demeanour, eloquence and passion made him a formidable speaker in the national parliament. He was an articulate and confident debater. As an advocate he was feared in debate by those who had many of the educational opportunities that were denied him. It should come as no surprise then that Neville Bonner's working life was mainly on the land—as a fruit picker, on banana plantations, as a ringer and the like. In 1965 he became a member of the board of directors of the One People of Australia League, OPAL, which helped Aborigines with welfare, housing and education.

A catalyst for Mr Bonner entering Australian politics came with the 1967 referendum giving Indigenous Australians the vote and the right to be counted in the census. He decided it was time to enter politics and joined the Liberal Party. He was for a time vice chairman of the eastern suburbs branch of the party in the Oxley area. In 1970 Mr Bonner made history by becoming the first Aborigine to contest a Senate election. He was No. 3 on the joint Liberal-Country Party ticket but was not elected. In June 1971 he was picked by the Liberals to fill a Senate vacancy. In August 1971 Neville Bonner was sworn in as Australia's first Aboriginal senator.

Throughout his political career Senator Bonner fought strongly against racial discrimination. Early in his career Bonner was not in favour of any law against racial discrimination but later, after he became a senator and had travelled around Queensland, he changed his mind and said that such a law was necessary, believing it should cover migrant groups as well as Aborigines.

In 1979 he was Australian of the Year. His outspokenness on Aboriginal issues both won and lost him many supporters. He crossed the floor to vote with the Labor opposition on Aboriginal issues. Regrettably, it was this and his criticism of the Liberal Party's Queensland state branch which cost him his parliamentary career. In an interview later in his life he recounted—

But I believe that my stand on Aboriginal affairs was the thing that finally brought me down, and it was the reason why the Liberal Party dropped me to an unwinnable position on their ticket. And I think that the 1983 election proved me right and the Liberal Party wrong because if you recall, the vote I'd lost by .05 per cent of a quota in my own right.

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—Lib) (5.56 pm): I am delighted to be able to rise to speak in this debate, in particular in relation to Neville Bonner, a man I greatly admired. I do not want to make this contribution sound like a condolence speech, but on a day like this, where we have as a nation acknowledged the hurt of past policy failure and our treatment of Indigenous people, there is no better person to talk about than Neville Bonner.

I recall Neville Bonner personally. I remember him at Liberal Party conventions as a senator. An Aboriginal with a big shock of grey hair moving through a Liberal Party state convention in the early eighties was something you do not forget. He was often heading for the door, usually to have a smoke. He was a warm, welcoming, genuine type of person. In later years I met him at Ipswich and he maintained that activity even though at the time his health was failing.

He was a groundbreaking person in the state of Queensland. Politically he was a conservative. He was a monarchist. He was criticised by the Left. He was criticised by Aboriginal politicians. He was also a proud Aboriginal who never lost touch with his own people and as such drew criticism from the other side of politics as well. Above all, I think he would accept that he was a mainstream Australian. He did not complain. He had plenty to complain about and plenty of disadvantage, but he did not complain. In fact, he took the attitude that one should not complain one should get in and try to fix it. Boy, we could use some more of that attitude today.

He objected to racism but he never used it to his own ends. When he supported an anti-discrimination bill he insisted on telling people that that bill should include all migrants and all other racial groups, not just Aboriginals. He was a man very much like Jim Killen; the same rugged outback background, the same eloquence and the same independence of thought.

After he left politics he went on to make continuing marks. He was a person who had no father. He had no housing when he was born. He was refused education because of the racist policies of the day that did not allow Aboriginals to have one year of formal education. He was the victim of racism at different times, but he believed in getting on and making something of it. I think he is one of the great Queenslanders and he was certainly recognised as such when he was made Australian of the Year.

I do not think that today anyone would mind me saying a few words about the removal of people from their families. I imagine that I am probably the only person in this House who has cared for Aboriginal children as they die, and I have done so on more than one occasion. I worked in communities where I saw many Aboriginal people die because of the impact of alcohol in that community. I have also had the privilege of being in Aboriginal communities where the culture was much stronger and the Aboriginal members of that community did much better because of the control of alcohol.

I attended this morning's function and I listened to the speeches. I would certainly like to endorse the words spoken by our federal leader, Brendan Nelson. There is a difference between removing someone because they are Aboriginal—because of race—and removing them because they had been abused. Neville Bonner stands out, and I am sure that Neville Bonner would endorse that sentiment. He would never accept the racism of removing someone simply because of their race, but he would be very quick to join in protecting people who were abused and disadvantage. Neville, I would be there with you. Neville showed what someone from arguably as disadvantaged a background as one could get in this country could go on to do and he never had a chip on his shoulder about it; he just went about his life.

As a doctor, I cared for one of the young British children who, during the war, was taken away and told that his parents were dead. He never got recognition, but he taught me a lesson and he changed some of my attitudes, because I saw the impact that that knowledge had on him.

Ms STRUTHERS (Algester—ALP) (6.01 pm): I was very proud to meet Mr Eric Deeral in 2003 when members of LCARC launched the *Hands on Parliament* report. As chair of that committee, it was a great moment for me to meet Mr Eric Deeral and to see how humble and dignified he was. I am sure that he would be very proud of the national apology that we witnessed today.

Today, we all ought to stand proud that our Prime Minister, on behalf of all of us, has apologised for the laws and policies of successive governments that have inflicted great suffering on the first people of our great nation. On a nation-building day, when the spirit of reconciliation is alive and well, when Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are yearning for political cooperation to remedy past injustice against Indigenous people, it was very disappointing and sad to see Mr Springborg, as Leader of the Opposition, be most undignified, divisive and defensive. Today, the Leader of the Opposition did a really good job of rounding up his conservative colleagues, herding them into a paddock and cutting them off from the rest of the nation.

Today is a day to pay tribute to Indigenous people around this nation for accepting this national apology in a spirit of goodwill and reconciliation. It is their day. It is not a day for a political football. It is not a day for defensiveness. For accepting a new beginning and knowing that it is accompanied by a determined commitment to positive action—action that begins now—we certainly need to pay tribute to Indigenous people throughout the country, because they have certainly accepted that new beginning.

It is action that Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has stated will be grounded in proper constitutional recognition of our first people, and so many Indigenous people have been calling for the constitutional recognition that had been denied to them for so long. It is action that will improve the economic status, health and cultural recognition of Indigenous people. It is sad to see that today the Leader of the Opposition drove the opposition members back into the past and put them out to pasture.

I guess we should not have expected more from this man, because as recently as 1 February this year he said—

I don't think this 'sorry motion' does anything ... I think it is sinister politics.

That is what he said. So he is a hypocrite to come in here today and pretend to be somewhat of a leader. Nine years ago the Leader of the Opposition made the following comment—

This motion is not about sorry. Instead this motion is about division.

Things have not changed much for him. Today, the Prime Minister, the federal opposition leader, our Premier and thousands of Indigenous people have all held their heads high with great pride and dignity. It is time for greater political representation of Indigenous people in state and federal parliaments and local government chambers around Australia. In fact, this is well overdue.

I took great pride in my role as chair of LCARC. Its inquiry into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in parliament in 2003 made a number of recommendations to increase their participation in the parliament. During that process, members of LCARC—and it was a bipartisan parliamentary committee—travelled around the state and heard from many Indigenous people. Again, it was disturbing to hear them say, 'That's your parliament. That's not our parliament. That feels foreign to us. We don't know how it works. We don't know what these political parties are all about.' It was sad to see that so many people—even community leaders—did not understand mainstream politics. So the committee recommended that there be a lot of educative and support work to improve people's understanding of these issues.

The committee also included a strong call to all political parties to actively recruit and preselect Indigenous people to local, state and federally elected roles. For many years the ALP has had an Indigenous reference group working actively on this task. To date it has been more successful in local government representation. Again, it is a problem that we have not made the big league in terms of state and federal representation in Queensland, but it is certainly not the case that we are short of people. We have good Indigenous people waiting in the wings and at the right opportunity we will certainly see them coming forward.

At the moment we have great Indigenous representatives in the New South Wales parliament in Linda Burney and Marion Scrymgour in the Northern Territory parliament, both of whom I have met. They are great Indigenous leaders and there are more who are doing a great job to support not only Indigenous issues but also mainstream issues of interest to all Australians.

All parties need to lift their game. Eric Deeral served one term only and that was a long time ago. True representation and reconciliation will be achieved when more Indigenous people take their rightful place in the Queensland parliament. I want to be standing here to see that moment. I know that there are a number of people working actively to make that happen.

I pay tribute to Mr Deeral, to Neville Bonner and to others who have served their communities so well in representative local government roles. We want to see them in our state parliament. We want to support them in that role and we would certainly be proud to have them as colleagues in this place.

Hon. KR LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (6.06 pm): I am delighted to rise to speak about both Eric Deeral and Neville Bonner. Ironically, Eric Deeral was my local member when I lived at Cape York in 1975-76. Eric was a true gentleman and was highly respected. When I visited Hope Vale in later years it was obvious that he was still involved in local politics and once again he showed the courtesy for which he was admired. Eric has been involved in World Heritage, local justice issues, elder visitor programs and the Cooktown Museum and has promoted Indigenous people to be involved in politics.

At lunchtime today I spoke with Bob Scott, the man who beat Eric Deeral in 1977. Bob told me that his car broke down at the Palmer River one day. Eric Deeral offered to drive him to Cairns, and did so. The irony was that Bob then won the seat at the next election in 1977. But as Bob said today, Eric is a true gentleman. There is no doubt that Eric should be admired for what he has done for the Aboriginal community.

When I became minister for Aboriginal affairs in 1996-97, the famous Ipswich misbehaviour case against several Aboriginal youths occurred. The man who was able to resolve that incident was Neville Bonner. I was so impressed that I asked Neville to return to politics and manage the Aboriginal affairs section. I had the pleasure of travelling extensively with him in the cape. Around many bonfires late at night I heard many stories from this amazing man. They were very late affairs and there were many songs sung. He was a magnificent storyteller. His famous retort to the demands of many people was, 'Are you saying you want this, or are you telling me you need this?' He said this to Aboriginal people who might have wanted continual grants. Neville was very adamant that he wanted to represent all of Queensland in his senatorial duties. I am very proud that he was given a chance to return to the political arena.

Even though Neville knew he would die from the effects of cigarettes, he characteristically continued smoking. It was a similar determination that he put into his duties. It was great that the new family services building was named after this great man.

Mr O'BRIEN (Cook—ALP) (6.09 pm): Today is a great day for Australia. Today will go down in the history of this nation as one to remember. It is the day when we turned the corner. We have acknowledged the wrongs of the past and resolved to do something about them and move on. Today is a day that should unite us. I have never been prouder than I am today to be a member of the Australian Labor Party. What the Labor Prime Minister did today took guts, understanding and empathy. He delivered the apology with a deep sincerity that would move everyone but the stone-hearted. Today the Prime Minister has shown that he is prepared to reach out to Indigenous Australians.

The motion before this House is a good one. It recognises the contribution of one of my predecessors in this place, Eric Deeral, and the late Neville Bonner. I have met Eric Deeral on several occasions in and around Cooktown. He certainly is a lovely and kind gentleman who is still making a contribution to his community. He still talks to school kids about his time in parliament. Even though he is getting on in years, he participates regularly in community events in Cooktown and Hope Vale. Certainly his achievement of being the first and only Indigenous person elected to this parliament should be celebrated. The National Party can take some pride in the fact that he was one of theirs.

Tonight I am desperately trying not to be mealy-mouthed, because we have heard a fair bit of that today and I do not think it is the day for it. However, there has been an attempt to rewrite history, especially by the National Party. What the Nationals have conveniently forgotten to mention is that they ran two endorsed candidates in Cook in 1974, Eric Deeral and Terence Mahoney, a police officer from Dimbulah. Nothing will convince me that the National Party strategy at the time was not to use Eric's preferences to push their preferred candidate across the line. Fortunately, the powerbrokers at National Party headquarters considerably underestimated Eric, and Mr Mahoney's preferences ended up electing Eric. The truth is that if the National Party had supported Eric in his role he would have been re-elected in 1977, when Bob Scott took over the seat for the Labor Party. It is a seat which we have held with overwhelming support from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people ever since.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr O'BRIEN: And got done by Eric Deeral because Terence Mahoney's preferences pushed Eric Deeral over the line. If the member listens and follows along, he will be right.

From all reports, Eric conducted himself with great aplomb during his time in this chamber. He committed himself to being a representative of not just Indigenous people but all people in his electorate. He strived to improve the rudimentary services and infrastructure that existed in the electorate at that time and which remains the legacy of 32 years of National Party government in this state.

It should be noted that, like many public servants at the time, Eric's ability to represent his constituents was considerably hampered by the then director of native affairs, Patrick James Killoren. Killoren, whom I describe as Queensland's last protector, would have been responsible for the removal of many children from their mothers. He long coveted the National Party's nomination in Cook. He had the power to assist Eric Deeral to add to his contribution in this place, but he never had the inclination to do so. It is interesting that Killoren's one attempt at winning the seat for the National Party in 1986 was unsuccessful.

Unfortunately, I never met Neville Bonner. I only ever saw him on television. On TV he always looked dignified and reasonable, and he spoke with an energy that was compelling and difficult to refute.

I do not want to play wedge politics today. I think the National Party is trying to do that. I would be happy to go through the history of this state and our relationship with Indigenous people and compare the records of both sides. No doubt both sides would have much they could be proud of and much they would rather forget. That is not for today. Today is about turning the corner. It is about answering the challenge of the Prime Minister to find common ground on Indigenous issues and work together to find a way forward. As he said, it is not going to be easy, but this is a very important issue.

I think the issue has been mishandled by this parliament today to the detriment of the people whom I represent. I think what happened in the Commonwealth parliament today is something those members should be very proud of. This is a day that they will remember for a long time. What has happened in this parliament today is something that should be quickly forgotten.

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.13 pm): This should be a celebration. This motion acknowledges two great men who really bridged the gap between two very different worlds. These two great Indigenous Queenslanders were the first in their fields. Eric Deeral was the first Indigenous member of this Queensland parliament and Neville Bonner was the first Indigenous member of the federal parliament.

I am disappointed by the previous speaker. The current member for Cook has tried to undermine the significance of Eric Deeral's contribution to this place and, in fact, his election in the first place by insinuating that there was something inappropriate in having two National Party candidates in the field. In fact, that was quite a common practice. For the information of the member of Cook, it was also quite a common practice with white preselected candidates. In fact, when in another state my own grandfather ran as a preselected candidate for the then Country Party, he ran against another preselected Country Party member. He did not get elected, but I doubt that he blamed prejudice for that.

Mr Horan: Lockyer.

Miss SIMPSON: I understand that the same applied in more recent times with candidates for the seat of Lockyer. Therefore, let us put paid to the poisonous contribution of the member for Cook, which did not recognise the very significant election of this great man to the Queensland parliament as a representative of the National Party.

Eric Deeral really is a man of great dignity, and those who have had the privilege to meet him will acknowledge that. He came from an era when there was a lot less access to education, and he will acknowledge that himself. There was less access to opportunity. Today in this place we have acknowledged that there is much to be done to assist the Indigenous people of this state to overcome the injustices and the disadvantages of the past. There are still many issues that we are concerned about, particularly with regard to extremely high levels of infant mortality. However, let us concentrate on Eric Deeral's contribution to Queensland. I found a *Stateline* interview with Eric Deeral very informative. Interviewer Kim Landers asked him what it was that made him decide to run for parliament in 1974. Eric said—

To be truthful, I did not decide to run for Parliament. It was decided by my Elders, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders at a meeting at Palm Island in '64.

Kim Landers asked, 'So why did they choose you?'. Eric replied—

They saw a special something in me probably that I was capable of being a Member for Cook. I just obeyed my Elders and I said well if the Elders want me to stand, I will stand and with that I then accepted when the National Party or the Coalition Party decided that I should run as a candidate for the electorate of Cook in 1974.

That is a very interesting interview.

As the member for Algester mentioned, a number of issues relating to the lack of Indigenous representation since 1974 were addressed in the report of the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee, *Hands on Parliament*. I was the deputy chair of that committee and we presented a

very important report to the parliament. I acknowledge that the current Speaker has sought to endorse some of those recommendations, including the appointment of an Indigenous liaison officer to the parliament. I think that is a positive step. However, I believe that we need to see more Indigenous representatives elected at all levels of government in Australia—local, state and federal. The local government level should never be looked down on as being somehow unimportant, because those representatives are at the coalface when it comes to representing people.

Mr Horan: Now they have to resign their position if they want to stand for office.

Miss SIMPSON: Yes. Unfortunately they now have to resign their position if they want to stand for state parliament. I believe that is a barrier to future Indigenous representatives coming into this state parliament. I notice laughter from Labor members opposite, and that is disappointing. We need to look at ways in which we can actually assist people who work at the grassroots in the vast areas of Queensland. I particularly acknowledge that there are groups that are under-represented in this parliament, and certainly that barrier at the local government level will make it harder for them in the future.

To Eric Deeral and the late Neville Bonner we owe a great debt. I do hope that many more such leaders will follow them into this place and that the barriers that have been put in the way of future candidates will be removed.

Hon. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Sport) (6.18 pm): I am very pleased to speak in support of this motion that acknowledges the contribution of Eric Deeral and Neville Bonner on this very significant day. One of the many functions I have been to today was a delightful one at Government House this afternoon. The Governor hosted the Queensland Girls Secondary Schools Sports Association for their 100 years celebration of schoolgirl sports. So there were a lot of young women—schoolgirls there this afternoon and many of them independently came up to me and asked me about the apology that happened in federal parliament. They were delighted by it, and I think that is a sentiment that most Australians are sharing today. I was also delighted to see that the Governor had the Aboriginal flag flying on top of Government House. I think she might be the first Governor to have done that, but she thought the day was very significant so she was flying the flag for all of us today.

I had the privilege of being the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander minister in this government for six years. During that time I had the great pleasure to get to know Neville Bonner. On the election of the Beattie government, one of the initiatives that we introduced was that at the opening of parliament on 29 July 1998 we invited Neville Bonner to give a traditional welcome. That was the first time we had ever invited an Indigenous person to do the traditional welcome at the opening of a Queensland parliament. Of course, that tradition has carried on and is part of our history now. I am sure all governments in the future will continue that tradition, as that tradition has now been copied by other states and the federal parliament. I believe we were the first to do that.

Just prior to the opening of parliament Neville said, 'Call me Uncle Neville.' He was very nervous about doing this speech, understandably. I said to him—I think he must have been about 70 at the time—'I'm surprised you are so nervous, Uncle Neville, because you have done a lot of speeches. You're a great man.' He said, 'No, I still always get nervous when I do a speech.' So we both had a glass of wine and we felt a lot better, and he went in and of course did a wonderful opening of the parliament. Soon after that he passed away; he had cancer.

When my colleague the minister for public works and housing, Robert Schwarten, asked me, because I was the minister for women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy at the time, to submit a suggestion for the name of a new government building that he had just completed, I had only one name and it was Neville Bonner. History is recorded tonight—that is how that building got that name.

Mr Schwarten: In William Street.

Ms SPENCE: In William Street. And Minister Schwarten commissioned that wonderful bust of Uncle Neville that adorns that building, so I think that was a great tribute to him.

While we are recording history, I join with the Premier in saying that the National Party and Liberal Party do have to be acknowledged for their great effort in getting those two men into parliament. We do have to acknowledge that the Liberal Party did disendorse Neville Bonner, and Neville Bonner then ran unsuccessfully as an Independent for the Senate. Having said that, once he had done that I think he adopted a very bipartisan position in public life and he was very happy to work with all sides of parliament.

I think it does us no credit that we have not had more Indigenous people in this parliament. When I was the minister I established the Aboriginal reference group in the Labor Party which is very successful today. We have a great number of Indigenous people in our political party, and I hope to see one of them in parliament one day. I was very pleased last year to get one of my branch members who was an Indigenous man, Robbie Williams, appointed to fill a vacancy in the Brisbane City Council. Robbie had tremendous promise. Unfortunately he died unexpectedly of a heart attack six weeks after

he took his position in council. That was certainly a tragedy, because one day he would have become a wonderful member of parliament. His wife, Trish Williams, an Indigenous lady, is running for the Labor Party for the Brisbane City Council seat of Wishart. We wish her all the best in that endeavour.

None of us can take credit for the fact that we do not have greater Indigenous representation in this House, but we can make amends. Each political party and each one of us individually can go and seek out good Indigenous people and encourage them to run for this place. I think that motions like this one tonight will help us all focus on that effort.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 6.24 pm to 7.30 pm.

CRIMINAL CODE (ASSAULT CAUSING DEATH) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 14 November 2007 (see p. 4313), on motion of Mr McArdle—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (7.30 pm): I rise in support of the Criminal Code (Assault Causing Death) Amendment Bill 2007 which was introduced by my colleague the honourable member for Caloundra and shadow Attorney. This bill aims to amend the Queensland Criminal Code by removing the archaic accident defence clause which has been used by people to literally get away with murder. As the representative of an electorate that has suffered more than its fair share of brutal attacks on residents and visitors, I believe that something must be done urgently to deter this from happening.

The need to bring about change in this area has been exemplified in several cases across Queensland, but I wish to draw the House's attention to two particular cases involving the deaths of Nigel Lee and David Stevens in 2005. The deaths of these two young men were both the result of violent assaults causing death. Amazingly, the perpetrators of these barbaric acts avoided any punishment by utilising the accident defence.

David Stevens was brutally assaulted in the Brunswick Street Mall in December 2005 by Jonathon Little. Stevens was punched once in the face and knocked to the ground. According to witness statements, the attacker then lined up the victim's head 'like it was a football' and kicked him between his head and neck. Little fled the scene, though he was arrested a short time later. Not so lucky was Mr Stevens, however, who died the following day. Remarkably, when the case was brought to trial, Jonathon Little was found not guilty of both murder and manslaughter. Little's defence—that the death was an accident—was enough to secure a not-guilty verdict. Apparently, despite punching and then deliberately kicking the victim while he was lying on the ground, the accused was not able to foresee that his actions could be fatal. For the good of the greater community, and more specifically for the sake of the victim's family, this loophole must be closed immediately.

Another case that highlights the need for legislative change is that of Nigel Lee, a 31-year-old man who was violently assaulted in a taxi queue near Caxton Street in 2005. In similar circumstances, the assailant was acquitted of charges after again using the accident defence.

It is simply unacceptable that these brutal actions are allowed to occur and result in such paltry punishment. I do acknowledge that the Attorney-General, the honourable member for Toowoomba North, has commissioned a discussion paper on the issue and that some progress has been made. Unfortunately, however, as I am sure the Attorney knows, this matter really cannot wait and the consultative process in place is simply taking too long.

Our justice system needs the support of this parliament, and I cite the opinion of the honourable Justice Fryberg that the current maximum two-year penalty for this type of crime is absurdly low. I agree. Additionally, I wish to note the comments of Chief Justice Paul de Jersey, who has recently suggested that the maximum penalty for crimes of this nature should be life imprisonment. I endorse the Chief Justice's comments and strongly urge the House to support them by passing this bill.

Sadly, all too often the crimes that involve the accident defence are fuelled by alcohol or drugs or a mixture of the two. This held true in both the Stevens and Lee cases as well as in countless other murders and bashings throughout the state. Perhaps even worse is the fact that we will see more and more of this type of behaviour unless we adopt more stringent measures to tackle it. Namely, we need a tougher approach to the responsible service of alcohol and a greater investment in mobile CCTV cameras, which not only are valuable in collecting data to assist in the investigation of crimes but also prove to be a substantial deterrent. Urgent attention to improve public transport systems and an increase in police resourcing are also required.

Further evidence supporting this bill can be found in the countless near-miss cases that are seen on almost a daily basis in media reports. These are only beaten by sickening cases of child abuse in recent times. Cases in my own electorate of Currumbin have sickened residents and me. Several violent incidents have occurred involving attacks on people in public places, with reports on these heinous crimes indicating that offenders range in age between 11 and 17. Assaults have even been caught on CCTV footage showing one victim having their head stomped and being beaten while they lay unconscious on the footpath. In this one particular case, it has been reported that the only reason the bashing stopped was that the perpetrator believed their victim was dead.

These types of cases, in which the assailant's intent is sickeningly brutal, deserve a strong response from our judicial system and an even stronger message that not only is this behaviour unacceptable but also attackers will face the full force of the law with tougher sentencing if the violence they have exacted results in death.

Another important point to draw from this case is the need for powerful deterrents. As assaults in Queensland become more vicious, this parliament needs to stand up and confront the problem head-on, so to speak. We have a responsibility to Queenslanders to ensure that we set sentencing guidelines so that offenders get the punishment they deserve. This bill will deliver stronger sentencing powers for the most heinous of assaults, paving the way for a tougher approach to the escalating senseless barbarity that is on display across Queensland.

Above all else, however, we need to instill a stronger sense of personal responsibility. The accident defence permits avoidance of personal responsibility. We need to support this private member's bill to restore at least some sense of personal accountability. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—Lib) (7.36 pm), in reply: The Criminal Code (Assault Causing Death) Amendment Bill concerns the Criminal Code. The Criminal Code is a document that has been in existence for well over 100 years. It is a document that echoes the times in which it was produced. In my opinion, it fails to do that now. It is over 100 years old, and laws need to change so they reflect the modern mores of a modern society. Laws need to reflect the changes in our modern society and keep pace with the standards that are required.

At the outset, I need to say that this issue is driven not by politics but by the people of this state. In particular, one young woman whose passion for helping the victims of crime must not go unmentioned and must be acknowledged. That woman is Jonty Bush. Jonty Bush is a woman in her mid-20s—a woman who is passionate about helping the victims of homicide. She operates the Queensland Homicide Victims Support Group. Her strength and courage have given hope to many people across this state as they deal with the devastating consequences of a loved one being murdered.

I have met Jonty on three or four separate occasions. For a young woman, she has a very wise head on her shoulders. She is a young woman who is committed to assisting all those who come in contact with her. It was her devotion to the tag 'one punch can kill' that motivated this government to ensure that, firstly, the bill before the House was introduced by me and, secondly, the Attorney-General undertook a review of this particular defence.

We need to applaud people such as Jonty because she has the courage of her convictions at a very young age. I offer her all the hope for a very bright and successful future. In fact, the government has now adopted her 'one punch can kill' mantra as part of the process so that no other family member has to go through the trauma associated with the accident defence which has happened recently in Queensland.

The people of Queensland were sick and appalled to see offender after offender walking out of court despite their direct hand in the death of another—some even admitting to kicking and inflicting harm on a person who died as a result. The accident defence was never meant to be used in the way that it has been recently, and it sickens me to think that it is now being used so easily to deflect guilt. As I said, it was the work of Jonty and the Queensland Homicide Victims Support Group that drove the One Punch Can Kill campaign—one that those members opposite dragged their heels on before finally supporting the call and getting behind it.

Mr Weightman: That's rubbish.

Mr McARDLE: That is not rubbish. That is absolutely correct. She coined the phrase 'one punch can kill', and the member knows that is correct because the government paid for the right to utilise the phrase. The member should learn his facts. She coined the phrase and did a Friday night vigil outside the spot that a young man died—

Mr Weightman: You should get your facts right.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr English): Order! Member for Cleveland and member for Caloundra, please direct your comments through the chair and not to individual members and do not start a quarrel in this chamber.

Mr McARDLE: It seems that the government is trying to sell it—that is, the tag—as its own. But this debate and the attention it has drawn is because victims' families have been suffering over the hurt of being dealt a second blow by a legal loophole that has seen no justice.

As I have mentioned in my second reading speech, this bill aims to amend the Queensland Criminal Code by introducing an offence that removes the archaic defence of accident that has been used by people to get away with murder that is the result of a violent assault. Two particular cases in 2007 saw men who played a direct role in the death of another walk out of court with no punishment despite one admitting to kicking the victim in the head. The rise in violence is evident under this government, with figures indicating that personal violence is much more prevalent than it was 10 years ago, and is above and beyond population growth. Clearly there are numerous factors contributing to the rise in alcohol fuelled violence, but one of the main factors is the erosion of personal responsibility and this stems from 10 years of a government willing to make excuses for offenders and ignoring the rights and roles of victims of crime.

The second part of this bill looks to increase the penalty for being an accessory after the fact. This amendment has come about after recommendations from the Queensland judiciary which has made rulings that the penalty for this offence is too lenient.

I want to now turn to the government's reasoning for not supporting this bill. Petty is one word that comes to mind, particularly when you consider the amendment to section 544 of the Criminal Code. Firstly, the Attorney-General states that accidental death adds nothing to the existing range of offences as an alternative to murder or manslaughter. This is not true. What this bill does is provide an alternative offence for a person who may have been charged with murder or with manslaughter but who alleges that it was an accident when they admit to assaulting or are proven to have assaulted the victim. This bill is about restoring community expectations of the justice system and ensuring that the people of Queensland understand that one punch can kill. For the Attorney to suggest that the bill will have an unlimited or unintended effect of limiting a defendant's access to other defences shows that the Attorney has not taken the time to read the bill. This bill does not limit a defendant's right to other defences, and it is a nonsense to suggest otherwise.

Mr Shine interjected.

Mr McARDLE: But accurate—absolutely accurate. Thirdly, we have the most insulting reason to every victim, and that is in any real sense the government saying, 'We just won't approve it because we did not introduce it. Therefore, we will not be supporting it.' This is the same reason that the Attorney gives for not supporting the second amendment. That is a childish and dangerous reason to not approve legislation that is, in essence, profound and effectual. We would have had liquor restrictions to minors before schoolies if this government had supported the member for Surfers Paradise's bill instead of opposing a reasonable bill whereby people who supply alcohol to minors and do not take responsibility for their actions could be held liable as a consequence thereof.

This issue of the amendment of the Criminal Code is beyond politics and deserves a timely response. This government has shown that it can take years to make a decision about anything at the cost of good ideas and proposed laws. Why shouldn't the person who is an accessory after the fact be treated on the same level as the actual offender? Let us consider the comments by the honourable Chief Justice, who states—

> Manslaughter, possibly along with attempted murder, would be the most serious principal offence to which this section could apply. The legislature should give consideration to amending section 544 to accord sentencing judges a wider discretion when dealing with cases of this gravity. As this case illustrates, the two-year maximum penalty is absurdly low. There would be a strong argument, in my view, for giving a sentencing judge the discretion to sentence an accessory in a case like this up to the maximum prescribed for manslaughter itself, that is, life imprisonment.

As Justice Fryberg commented when referring to the Chief Justice's comments—

> His Honour was speaking, of course, when referring to an accessory after the fact. I respectfully agree with His Honour's sentiments which were stated on 7 June 2005. It is now some 21 months since those statements, which is abundant time for the parliament to have amended the law in accordance with His Honour's expression had it wished to do so. The only inference that I can now draw is that the parliament does not share the sentiments propounded by His Honour and with which I agree.

Incredibly, more time has now passed and the terms of section 544 have still not been amended by this government. It has still taken no action to consider the penalty that should be imposed in regard to a person who is an accessory after the fact. It is very clear that section 544 is woefully inadequate and the best the government can do is say, 'We're looking at it.' The Chief Justice of this state has clearly expounded a view that it should be amended at least in certain circumstances. The opposition has said, 'Yes, that is right, it should be amended.' The government cannot see its way clear to merely changing the legislation to reflect modern society's mores and standards.

Clearly the government wants to show bias to some offenders willing to do everything to help a principal offender. Once again, we have a fast-talking, slow-moving offender-friendly Labor government that is willing to play childish politics with important, timely issues. The victims of crime in this state will be feeling very let down as a consequence of the government's inaction to recognise the necessity to move quickly in relation to a bill that deals with a Criminal Code that is 100 years old.

Let us talk about the facts in these circumstances. We had two young men who were cut down in the prime of life and the offenders were able to utilise the accident defence to suit their own means. That should not happen in a state such as Queensland. A life is sacred. A life is a sacred thing and should be honoured by every person in this chamber. What this bill does is simply this: it does not allow a person to use this defence in circumstances where a person dies where one punch can kill. It imposes an obligation on that person to be liable for their actions. It is as simple and as straightforward as that. Everybody in this House in their heart knows that that is a correct principle.

But what is more tragic is that an accessory after the fact for murder will still walk away with no more than two years imprisonment, whereas the person who commits the principal offence is subject to life imprisonment. It is an absolute travesty of justice that this House tonight will vote down a bill that actually gives back to the people of this state the right to walk free on its streets, the right to convict people who take a person's life whether as the principal offender or as an accessory after the fact. If this bill is voted down tonight, every Labor member should hang their head in shame because they are upholding the rights of the offender and not the rights of the victim.

As I have said, Jonty Bush stood up in this state and made it quite clear that she is not going to tolerate or allow this government to walk all over the people and the victims of Queensland. She has done a courageous thing. She is a woman in her mid 20s. When people meet her they sense the dynamism, electricity, power and force. She will not stop until the things she believes in are attended to properly and effectively.

This bill puts in train the end result of what she is trying to do. She is a woman dedicated to victims of crime. This government cannot hold its head high and make the same statement. This government does not care for the victims of crime. It pedals for the principal offenders. It pedals for the criminals. It is soft on crime. This is dangerous for this state. I urge Labor members to vote for this bill. It is the right thing to do for the people of this state. I commend the bill to the House.

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

AYES, 27—Copeland, Cripps, Cunningham, Dempsey, Elmes, Flegg, Foley, Gibson, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, Lee Long, McArdle, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Nicholls, Pratt, Seeney, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Rickuss, Dickson

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

Resolved in the negative.

SUMMARY OFFENCES (GATECRASHING) AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 5 September 2007 (see p. 3038), on motion of Mr Messenger—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Hon. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Sport) (7.57 pm): The government will be opposing the Summary Offences (Gatecrashing) and Another Act Amendment Bill. In his second reading speech Mr Messenger MP stated that 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 residents. In fact, the offence of trespass is a new offence included in the Summary Offence Act in 2005 by me.

That is an indication of how muddle-headed the member for Burnett is about legislation generally and about this particular issue. I want to read the advice that the police have given me about this bill. Currently, powers are provided to police in the PPRA to arrest a person for an offence under the Summary Offences Act of trespassing in a dwelling or in the yard of a dwelling. Additionally, the PPRA provides adequate powers to give move-on directions—something that I gave them—to persons unlawfully congregated outside premises at which a private party is being held and to deal with breaches or apprehended breaches of the peace. The Summary Offences Act also creates the offence of public nuisance for which a person creating a disturbance in a public place outside a private party may be arrested.

This bill does little other than to replicate existing legislation in a form that in fact reduces the effectiveness of that legislation. For example, the offence of gatecrashing first requires that a person be asked to produce evidence of their right to be at the party, be advised that he or she is a trespasser, and then refuse when asked to leave or leave and then return to the private party before an offence can be established.

Conversely, the existing provision of trespass in section 11 of the Summary Offences Act simply requires that a person unlawfully enter or remain in the yard of a dwelling for an offence to be committed. There is no requirement for a request to be made for a person to leave. Moreover, the prerequisites, as previously outlined, to a gatecrashing offence and thus the prerequisites for the removal of a trespasser from a private party seem to contradict the power to remove a trespasser under section 277 of the Criminal Code.

The Criminal Code requires no more than a person wrongly enters or remains on land before the person in possession of that land and his or her assistant can remove the trespasser. It is recommended that the new offence of gatecrashing and the associated police powers be opposed because they add nothing to the existing range of offences and powers available to police to deal with gatecrashers and instead tend to complicate and conflict with existing legislation.

There members have it. That is my advice from the Queensland Police Service. This does not add anything to their existing powers. In fact, it detracts from their existing powers. It is going to make it tougher to evict gatecrashers from a private or public place if this legislation gets up.

I think it is sad that the opposition cannot put together a better piece of legislation and do not do more homework before they bring this kind of rubbish into this chamber. We will be opposing it.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (8.01 pm): The Summary Offences (Gatecrashing) and Another Act Amendment Bill was introduced to parliament by our previous shadow minister. Our current shadow minister will be giving the summary tonight. This is a very timely private member's bill because of this new and developing social scourge that we are seeing of gatecrashing, the problems that it has brought to many towns and cities all across Australia and the need to provide police with a very clear and concise offence that they can act upon.

The Police Powers and Responsibilities Act has been developed over a number of years, since about 1996 or 1997 when Russell Cooper brought in the first PPRA. A lot of work was done by Russell Cooper to bring in an act that was quite groundbreaking at the time. It gave police move-on powers, but they also had certain responsibilities that they had to undertake. I remember that he put a lot of work into ensuring not only that the police had the powers to do these things that would assist them and the public greatly, but also that it was done in a fair way so that those powers were not abused.

Subsequent to that we have seen four or five amendments to the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act. Each time it has been strengthened a little more. We have supported it all the way along because we strongly believed in giving the police the ability to move people on. Originally the power was limited very much to moving people on from outside schools—I think it was something like within 50 metres of a school—moving on people who were loitering and hanging around an ATM, and moving on people in areas that were designated by local government gazette. It might have been the mall in their town or a nightclub area. Once that was registered then the police were able to move people on from there.

Despite these ever-increasing police powers and responsibilities, there are occasions on which they have been seen to not be able to act. I have spoken in this parliament before about a very serious gatecrashing event that happened in Toowoomba about two years ago, in a suburb called Kearneys Springs, that escalated right through the whole street. The average person, who does not know and understand all of the issues surrounding the law, charges and all the rest of it, rings up the police when there is a problem like this. If there is a party at the end of the street and people are up and down the street, there are fights going on, palings are being pulled off fences, people are going into people's yards and abusing residents, there is drinking, stubbies and bottles are being thrown, ordinary young people who go out to try to stop it and calm it down are getting belted and so on, the average person rings up the police and thinks the police will come and shift them. That is what the average person thinks. On this particular occasion the police said, 'Unless we can find someone who can lay the charges there is nothing that we can do.' I believe that their interpretation was wrong at the time—that under the general provisions or common law they had the right to move these people on under the police powers and responsibilities at the time.

Since then the police minister has brought in additional amendments to the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act, and tonight she mentioned some of those that are supposed to be available. This bill has been brought into the parliament in a very genuine way, and I think it is wrong to cynically castigate the previous shadow minister for having the hardworking ethic to introduce a bill to address what he saw as a need.

There is something that very specifically happens in our society and communities now called gatecrashing. It used to be a minor thing. Now in our society, with mobile phones, SMS and vastly improved communications, these things happen in the twinkle of an eye. They do happen. You only have to get some blokes come round to pick up their girlfriends and there is a bit of an altercation for them to SMS their mates, who come around in cars. It is a new social phenomenon.

Police have to have a very clear interpretation and something they can say to people such as, 'We believe that you are a gatecrasher and you have to go.' In her contribution the minister talked about how the police have to get evidence of whether people have an invite for the party or not. That would not be hard. They would just have to ask the parents, the person whose birthday it is or the host of the end-of-school-year party whether a particular person was invited. The minister then went on to say that there is a trespassing law within the PPRA. How do you prove that someone is trespassing? You virtually have to do the same thing anyway. They could say, 'I have an invite to this party,' and then the police have to try to prove trespass. They would have to go through the same process the minister outlined to prove that they were a bona fide invitee to the party.

In Toowoomba there are maybe three squad cars and maybe a detective car out on a Saturday night. Police have to prioritise the incidents. If someone is breaking into a property and there is a threat that someone will be injured, the police have to go there. The heaviest freight-carrying road in Australia runs through our city. If there is a semitrailer smash on the range or anywhere in or near the city, the police have to go there. If they are going to rush out to a big party—and on a Saturday night there are probably parties all over the town and they could be called to four or five—they have to clearly know what they have to do. If they get to the party they can quickly say, 'If you don't move on you will be charged with gatecrashing and you are liable for such-and-such a penalty.'

I think this bill represents a simplification. It creates a very specific offence and a very specific interpretation. I think this will assist police to deal with this issue swiftly. Very often these particular events can be nipped in the bud. If police are called to a party where trouble is starting to develop and they have the power to move people on and warn them, those people will then SMS their friends to say, 'Don't turn up here. The police have been here and you'll be moved on or charged with trespass if you come.'

I think this bill provides really practical assistance to the police to deal with a growing and social phenomenon. We need to deal with this issue so that families can enjoy the parties and celebrations that they are entitled to have. Whether it is an 18th birthday party, a finishing school party, a 21st birthday party, a wedding anniversary—whatever it is—people need to be able to hold their parties. We all regard our home as sacrosanct. People in the suburbs should be able to put on a party. They should be able to have 20, 30, 40—or whatever number—of their friends or their kids' friends around and know that they will not get gatecrashed, that they will not get the yard flattened, that they will not get the neighbours annoyed, that they will not have the cars parked along the road scratched, that they will not have palings pulled off the fence, that there will be no violence and that neighbours who come in to try to stop things will not get knocked about and belted. Some very good thought has gone into this bill. I know the previous shadow minister would have talked very carefully to the police about some of the issues that they face and how we can help.

I ask the House to consider this bill carefully for two reasons. The bill provides our police with a very swift, very succinct and a very clear power to deal with something that is increasing, that is becoming more violent and that is becoming larger. It is the result of mass communication via mobile phones and SMS. At the same time this bill will provide families with great confidence that they can hold a party for their family member and that that party can be safe and happy. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (8.11 pm): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to speak to the Summary Offences (Gatecrashing) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2007. I listened to the minister's comments and I hope that this bill goes through to the consideration in detail stage so that we can have a further and more in-depth debate of the clauses.

I refer members to clause 5 of the bill, which gives the definition for 'occupier'. It also gives the definition for 'premises' to include any land, any building or structure, or any aircraft or vehicle. The clause also gives the definition for 'prescribed person' in relation to premises that are being used for a private party. The clause states—

... means—

(a) the occupier of the premises; or

(b) a person responsible for organising the party.

That is certainly an important component. The clause states further—

... or

(c) a person acting on the authority of—

(i) the occupier of the premises; or

(ii) a person responsible for organising the party.

The other important definition in clause 5 is the definition of 'private party'. The bill states that a private party—

... means a party, event or celebration to which admittance is allowed by invitation only, but does not—

and I stress this—

Include a party, event or celebration held—

(a) on premises, other than residential premises, by or on behalf of a company or business; or

(b) in a public place; or

(c) on premises, or a part of premises, to which a licence under the Liquor Act 1992 relates, other than a general purpose permit under that Act.

Over recent times the Sunshine Coast has certainly seen a significant number of serious gatecrashing events where parties have simply got out of hand and the police have been under a lot of stress and pressure and have been unable to cope. More importantly, the community has been totally disgusted with the actions of the people involved.

I believe that the shadow minister, in introducing this bill, has genuinely tried to improve the law in Queensland. I listened to the minister's comments. I think that if we have goodwill and this bill proceeds to the consideration in detail stage we may be able to understand how as a parliament—both the government and the opposition—can improve and strengthen the law in Queensland to ensure that gatecrashing offences are minimised as much as possible.

At this stage I indicate that I intend to support the bill. I believe that it is a genuine attempt to improve the laws in Queensland. I hope the government will support it to the extent of letting it proceed through to the consideration in detail stage so that we can have a further debate about the clauses. I note that there are not many speakers to this bill on the speaking list. It is only a quarter past eight so we certainly have time on our side to proceed to the consideration in detail stage for further debate on the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (8.14 pm): It gives me pleasure to rise to speak to the Summary Offences (Gatecrashing) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2007. I also want to congratulate the former shadow minister, the member for Burnett, for, as the member for Nicklin said, bringing this social issue to the fore in the parliament. I congratulate him on his initiative in bringing this bill before the parliament. It addresses the rising social problem of gatecrashing.

I note that the Police Minister said that we have adequate provisions. But if we do, then they are not being enforced, and I will speak in a moment about some parties that have been held at the Gold Coast that have certainly received a lot of publicity. That begs the question that if the laws are not being enforced, is it as a result of there being inadequate police numbers?

I also find the style of this government interesting. It seems to me that any contrary view, or any view that is not in complete accord with that of the Labor government, seems to be treated with derision. Basically, the police minister, in her comments, derided the former shadow minister. I do not think there is any place for that. I think that if any member on this side raises any question about climate change, that member is called a climate change denier. We hear the curses all the time from the other side. If opposition members have anything but complete unequivocal support for National Sorry Day, they are racists. I think it is an interesting style of governing that we are seeing from a government that has been entrenched in power for a long time. It does not seem to want to consider any views but its own. Members on this side are just called a rabble, and that is a disgrace.

I think the former shadow minister should be applauded for raising an issue that, as the minister for police said, has been around for a long time and that has provisions to deal with it. But clearly, this issue is not being dealt with adequately. I commend the member for Burnett for bringing this bill into the House.

Gatecrashing is not a modern phenomenon. When I was at Sunnybank State High School and at the University of Queensland, gatecrashing was something that was done. You would end up at someone's house after being at the Regatta. You would be at Toowong in someone's backyard, but it was—

Mr Horan: Innocuous.

Mr LANGBROEK: Exactly. I also enjoyed the member's contribution to this debate. You did not get hundreds of people turning up, as we have seen at a number of parties today. You did not get destruction. I suppose there was a bit of mud in the kitchen. The online urban dictionary of slang defines a 'gatecrasher' as a person who rocks up to somebody's party unannounced, often forcing their way in to trash the host's home and/or steal things. Maybe I am just reminiscing about the good old days, but it did not seem that those were the sorts of things that happened, as I recall, in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

For the interest of members, I want to point out that the colloquial term of the day is 'UDI', which is an acronym for unidentified drinking injury, which is apt given that one of the root causes of gatecrashing and other antisocial behaviour among youth is under-age binge drinking. So perhaps if the Bligh government committed itself to a bona fide review of the ancient Liquor Act 1992, which it has been promising for more than 12 months now, we would not see an increasing trend of this sort of antisocial behaviour in Queensland.

But I digress. As I was saying, gatecrashing, or the act of turning up uninvited to a party, is not a new problem. I do not recall whether I have gatecrashed parties, but I am sure someone on the other side probably knows someone who thinks that I did and that may well come up at some stage. But having said that, I am all too aware that it happens. I have heard many horrors stories from parents who have thrown parties for their teenagers and who have ended up picking up smashed bottles and plastering over punched-in walls the following day.

I cast my mind back over the past couple of years to some parties that have been gatecrashed on the Gold Coast. I see the member for Currumbin is here. I am sure she is aware of parties that have been publicised, such as the one at Palm Beach where people had their houses trashed, and recent parties at Main Beach. I remember a major gatecrashing event at Ashmore. A couple of years ago a constituent rang me after his story was well publicised in the *Gold Coast Bulletin.* He literally had a situation that was mentioned by the member for Toowoomba South, and that is hundreds of people congregating in his street. When he rang the police, they told him that they had to come from Southport. As the member for Toowoomba South said, the police are often busily engaged in other activities, especially the police on the Gold Coast. In the case of this party, the police just did not come. This man was petrified. He was barricaded inside his house unable to deal with these hordes of people. Of course, it was then that we got some action from the police minister of the time in trying to manage this situation.

Parents are now having to hire bouncers and register their parties with police, as I have done on a couple of occasions for my daughter who is now nearly 18 years old. People could not believe that we were holding parties for a 16-year-old and a 17-year-old, but we wanted to celebrate those birthdays and we wanted to do it without unintended consequences.

I commend the Police Service and I am happy to commend the police minister for the innovative Party Safe scheme which allowed me to register the party with the police. As the former shadow minister noted in the explanatory notes, the police provide a number of tips and suggestions on hosting a safe party. The registration system also alerted police to the occurrence of the party and allowed them to plan for it as part of their patrols and responses. Thankfully, we did not have any incidents. Lots of parents from the school that my daughter attended were surprised that we were having a party, but they are a good bunch of kids and, thankfully, we did not have any problems.

Whilst most people can handle a few empties lying about and some aesthetic damage to property, we all know that things happen at parties. However, gatecrashing is a real problem when it becomes life threatening or proves fatal. As all members would be aware, over the summer holidays there was Australiawide media coverage of a party that spiralled out of control. A couple of text messages and a public comment on Myspace was all it took for a small gathering to be overtaken by hundreds of drunken, destructive teens.

Can members imagine the feelings of the parents of Corey Worthington, the punk party boy with stupid sunglasses who threw a party that cost taxpayers in excess of $20,000 to bring under control? Unfortunately, in the ensuing days and weeks Corey's antics resulted in a media circus which raised serious concerns about copycat Coreys throwing free-for-all parties in our streets and suburbs. That kind of behaviour should never be condoned. However, instead of being publicly castigated Corey was offered lucrative jobs in the entertainment industry and cashed in on cash-for-comment deals. To be fair, for all the favourable publicity there was plenty that was not so kind to Corey. The fact that he attracted the media's attention at all, which is no mean feat, is indicative of how serious gatecrashing can be.

The member for Burnett mentioned young Matthew Stanley who was tragically killed after receiving a fatal blow at a party. The perpetrators of that crime were gatecrashers. As my coalition colleague said, gatecrashing is not simply an innocent social activity; rather, in most cases it represents an attack on people's rights to the exclusive enjoyment of their property. In this day and age it is not feasible for young people to threaten gatecrashers with the taunt of trespass. Gatecrashers have no respect for the host or their guests, let alone the law.

We need to send a strong message that this kind of antisocial behaviour will not be tolerated in Queensland. This message would complement the government's PR machine, which is pumping out the One Punch Can Kill campaign. However, in order to achieve maximum efficacy we need to give our police the power to crack down on gatecrashers. That is what the bill seeks to achieve.

As my coalition colleagues have indicated, this bill gives police more move-on power to remove gatecrashers and suspected gatecrashers from private parties. It is a relevant law and one that I am only too happy to support. I congratulate the former shadow minister, the member for Burnett, on his initiative. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (8.22 pm): I rise to demonstrate to the House why I do not support the bill. The bill is obviously in response to the out-of-control parties that we have all seen portrayed in the media. However, I do not believe it fully addresses the problems that occur with a lot of those out-of-control parties.

Having been on the Safe Youth Parties Task Force, I have heard firsthand from residents, parents, young people, ambulance officers, teachers, licensed venue managers and police from around the state. Their concerns are for public safety, the health of our community members and especially our young people, and the antisocial behaviour that is becoming more common in public places. The majority were very concerned about the lack of parental responsibility. Those are all legitimate concerns that need to be addressed.

The task force found police data that showed that less than two percent of the total calls for police services related to young people, whether that be at parties or gatherings. The task force found that the main reason parties went out of control was the excessive consumption of alcohol. Gatecrashing was a secondary issue. Police data showed that 82 per cent of parties where police were required to attend did not involve gatecrashing. A survey of young people aged 15 to 24 identified that 18 per cent of parties were gatecrashed. Therefore, any proposal to change the law to address gatecrashing is not based on evidence and will not solve the problems associated with out-of-control parties.

I have said this before in this House and I will say it again tonight: there has always been under-age drinking at parties. Sometimes fights break out at parties. That has happened whether the parties are held at private residences, community halls, hotels or clubs. I believe that the difference in what we see today and what has happened in the past is the vicious and violent behaviour that has resulted in some very tragic incidents.

Often violent behaviour has occurred in response to police attempting to eject party goers. An example of this was the gutless and cowardly assault that was carried out on Senior Constable Grant Sampson from the Loganholme Police Station. He was seriously injured during a vicious attack while attending to his duties at an out-of-control party. That incident goes to the heart of this bill. However, the bill does not address nor is it the answer to the problems associated with out-of-control parties.

The task force found the key issues of out-of-control parties are the supply of alcohol to minors and the lack of parental responsibility. I recently heard a woman on radio speak of her child's party, which I believe was a 16th birthday party—it certainly was not an 18th or 21st party. The hosts invited a number of people to the party. On the night they were very surprised to find many more young people arrive. Her child's friends had invited other people to attend. What really surprised this woman was the number of parents who just dropped their kids off at the gate. They drove up and dropped the kids off without waiting to see if their kids actually went inside, let alone whether they were invited. They did not come to the house to speak to the hosts. To me, that shows a clear lack of parental responsibility. While it is fair to say that parents want to trust and have faith in their kids, surely they also want to know that their kids are safe and be informed of their whereabouts.

The task force also had very interesting discussions around the definition of a gatecrasher. For instance, I just gave an example of people turning up having been asked by legitimate invited guests. In some cases text messages could be sent by a person at the party. Who is to say that the host did not give permission to ask other people? That would be very hard to prove. I have been invited to parties and the host has said, 'Bring some friends; the more the merrier.' Is a gatecrasher someone who turns up at the gate of a party because they know someone at the party whom they want to contact? We object to violent and antisocial behaviour, not the status of guests.

Currently police have legislative powers to respond to what this bill refers to as gatecrashers under the following: the Summary Offences Act 2005, which deals with unlawful entry and public nuisance; the Invasion of Privacy Act 1971, which makes it an offence if any person enters a dwelling house without the consent of the person in lawful occupation; the Criminal Code Act 1899, section 72 of which provides for an offence of affray whereby a person takes part in a fight of such a nature as to alarm the public in any other place to which the public have access; the Liquor Act 1992, which makes it an offence for a person to consume liquor in a public place, including council land and roadways; the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000, which gives move-on powers that were strengthened in response to out-of-control parties, and outlines police arrest and custody powers; and the Juvenile Justice Act 1992 with respect to children committing an offence.

The report by the Safe Youth Parties Task Force has provided practical, educational, social and law enforcement solutions. The recommendations are not about stopping or preventing young people enjoying themselves. They are workable and safe solutions for enjoyable parties and, most of all, they are about community safety. In the past I have called on the Premier, the Minister for Health, the minister for communities and the police minister to implement a campaign that says no to violence. I believe we need a campaign similar to the Say No to Domestic Violence campaign, although I believe that this campaign should be 'Say No to Violence' full stop. The One Punch Can Kill campaign is a start, but I believe we can do more. Members of the hotel and club industry have spoken to me and they tell me that their staff would very much like to see a campaign that sends a very clear message about violence by saying no to aggressive behaviour. They especially would like to see this in relation to responsible drinking.

Mr Moorhead interjected.

Ms STONE: That is a very good point. LIAG is starting a training course that we hope to take into all schools to teach children about responsible drinking. We hope that will send a good message to grade 12s and even younger children. We want to talk to them before they get to an age where they will be going to pubs and clubs.

The minister has outlined the flaws in the bill and she has very clearly demonstrated how this bill weakens the legislation that the police work under. With those words, I cannot support the bill.

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (8.29 pm): I rise to speak on the Summary Offences (Gatecrashing) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2007 brought into this House by then shadow minister for police and corrective services, the honourable member for Burnett. It is the intention of the bill to introduce the new offence of 'gatecrashing' into the Summary Offences Act 2005 and to provide the police force of Queensland with additional powers to deal with this specific offence under the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000. This issue has become particularly pertinent within my electorate recently, as well as on the greater Gold Coast, and I congratulate the former shadow minister for police and corrective services for his stance on the issue.

This bill serves to transform the culture that surrounds gatecrashing. Instead of being something of a social event, the provisions within this bill will afford high penalties as a deterrent and will provide the Queensland police with the ability to remove hooligans from what would otherwise be a non-violent gathering. Maximum penalties of $2,250, or 18 months imprisonment, for the initial trespass and $4,000, or two years imprisonment, for persons behaving in an offensive way whilst trespassing are hefty fines included in this bill. Hopefully they will, to a degree, nip in the bud the problems associated with this culture and curtail this pressing problem. The harsh penalties send a clarion message to the people of the state of Queensland that gatecrashing will not and shall not be tolerated. The provisions within these amendments will provide police and party hosts alike the ability to combat and control unruly and uninvited guests.

This bill provides police with further powers to move on people who loiter and congregate outside private parties and also to give direction to those who are reasonably believed to be behaving in a disorderly or offensive manner. Additionally, police have the supplementary power to ask those who loiter in an area where a breach of order is reasonably believed to be imminent to move along. The bill complements the Queensland police's Party Safe prevention strategy whereby hosts are encouraged to have their private parties registered for police monitoring and potential party holders are provided tips on avoiding gatecrashers and other unsafe party practices. I have to say that since Party Safe has been available I have certainly encouraged people in my electorate to register their parties. I know that our police are. I do urge everyone in the House though to educate the public more that Party Safe is there to be utilised in a positive way.

We only need to look as far as the 500 strong, week-long 'palaver held in Narre Warren, Victoria, by the now infamous 'Corey to see the effects of out-of-control parties attended by gatecrashers and other malcontents. Property damage to the tune of $20,000 and other lewd and lascivious behaviour terrorised the suburb for over a week. We must no longer allow events such as this to occur within our state, and it is by the means of this bill that we shall ensure the deterrence and prevention of such events.

Vandalism and violence at this 'episode' has sparked outrage among the community, and this very dilemma is addressed in this bill. Many residents have applauded the opposition for putting forward strong initiatives to curtail this frightening and damaging activity in order to protect our constituents from hooligans, hoodlums and hangers on. We need to get the message out that it is not okay to invade another person's home. It is not okay to walk in and destroy another person's belongings.

Examples of such gatecrashing in Currumbin and surrounding electorates in recent times include: in July last year the public all but condoned the police firing a single shot at five teenagers on a wild rampage of violence and vandalism during which they crashed a party and assaulted teenagers half their age whilst brandishing baseball bats. The public rallied with the police officers and one newspaper reported that all communications to the paper were in support of the local police with not one siding with the thugs.

Another incident was in November 2006. A 'flash mob' invited via text message gatecrashed a 15-year-old Elanora girl's party causing $50,000 worth of damage whilst her father was away for the weekend in Byron Bay. More than 150 teenagers gatecrashed a Palm Beach party in early 2006, setting alight a vehicle, trashing letter boxes and assaulting police, and when Emergency Services arrived they broke the taps off so they could not even attach the fire hoses. My own children refused to hold 21st parties at home for fear that they too would be gatecrashed and they would have their special night spoiled.

We hear now of secret locations. Those who are invited to parties are not told where the location will be until an hour or two prior such is the fear of gatecrashing in our community. As we have heard from other speakers, the heart-wrenching death of Matthew Stanley in the Redlands area almost two years ago was a tragic and sobering event—one that illuminated the life-threatening dangers of violence associated with gatecrashers of teenage and other parties. These pointless and needless deaths,

violence and vandalism are social problems which must be combated, and through the initiatives of the member for Burnett today we have the opportunity to legislate in support of defeating this social scourge.

How much longer are we all prepared to tolerate and abide this hooliganism? It is through this bill tonight that we must put an end to this outrageous stain on the fabric of our society. These laws were initially introduced by the South Australian Labor government and managed to accrue bipartisan support, so I would suggest that the state of Queensland follow suit.

I have no doubt, however, that this well-intentioned bill will be voted down by government members, and by doing so they will be placing even more pressure, danger and stress on our already stretched police resources on the Gold Coast and elsewhere. People will continue to live in fear, too frightened to speak up, as groups roam the streets looking for a party to crash. I have such residents in my electorate now, and I cannot speak further on this because the case is before the courts. But I do implore members to do what South Australia did and show bipartisan support for this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr DEMPSEY (Bundaberg—NPA) (8.36 pm): I rise to support the Summary Offences (Gatecrashing) and Another Act Amendment Bill before us here this evening. This legislation will duplicate legislation already introduced in South Australia. That legislation that received bipartisan support from all political parties has undoubtedly saved lives, many horrendous injuries and damage to property. This legislation creates a separate offence of 'gatecrashing' and complements the already existing Queensland Police Service Party Safe initiatives.

We need to change the culture of gatecrashing and recognise this unique type of offence that is socially unacceptable. Young people should be able to attend a party knowing that it is safe. Parents should also have the knowledge and comfort that this government—with the mechanisms created by this government—will do everything in its power to keep their children safe. This bill ensures that people who gatecrash private parties are dealt with harshly within the law and sends a clear message to all Queenslanders that gatecrashing will not be tolerated.

Currently police and the community have a number of different laws to deal with this situation, from the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act, the Summary Offences Act, the Liquor Act, the Criminal Code and even civil negligence against the host of a party. Trespass laws give a one-year maximum penalty at the high end of the scale and a small fee at the bottom of the scale. This type of offence is not a practical solution and is reflected in the small number of charges laid against offenders in relation to gatecrashing.

There are a number of legislative ways to deal with loud music including local government by-laws. However, while music is a component of a large party, it is not the only reason police are called to respond. On many occasions the party has got out of control due to the number of people attending, whether they be invited or not, or just the sheer volume of noise being emitted or the behaviour of those attending. All of these legislative approaches together create a matrix of extra work and confusion for police and the general public. We need to simplify the legislation so that it properly reflects community expectations, reduces the time police spend on unnecessary paperwork and reduces the need to overload our court system. Once this legislation is introduced and a collaborative approach to this situation is introduced, the perception that out-of-control behaviour and gatecrashing is cool will be broken.

This new legislation relates directly to gatecrashers at private parties. This legislation gives move-on powers directly related to the party and the police do not have to rely on legislation that was previously created in good faith to deal with other issues that were pertinent at that time.

This is a modern offence and modern legislation is needed to keep abreast of issues in our changing society. The public perception and the reality in our communities in which these parties are causing fear to good citizens requires simple, uncomplicated laws to manage this type of offence. We do not have the resources to match the internet and modern telecommunication methods that assist offenders but we do have the opportunity in this House to put in place laws that will protect our youth and the communities of Queensland.

In the time I have been a member of this House, I have witnessed this government approve legislation in a manner of weeks and short months. I have also seen current legislation amended several times by this government in a bipartisan way for the benefit of this great state. I ask all members to support this legislation before more of our police, citizens and youth are seriously injured. The clock is ticking and it is incumbent on this government to do all it can to protect all Queenslanders.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (8.40 pm), in reply: I thank all members who have contributed to this very important piece of legislation we are debating this evening, the Summary Offences (Gatecrashing) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2007. I inherited the responsibility for the carriage of this legislation with the change in shadow portfolios, and I wish to compliment my colleague the member for Burnett for introducing this legislation. It is a very worthwhile piece of legislation and it has a lot of merit because it protects the communities of Queensland.

There have been a growing number of high-profile incidents of private parties being gatecrashed. Some of these incidents have resulted in tragic circumstances. In our capacity as opposition, the Queensland coalition has received numerous representations from the community concerned at the growing occurrence of gatecrashing and, more alarmingly, of assaults, violence and other harm frequently caused by persons who attend these private parties uninvited. The combination of police frustration and community concern regarding this increasing trend led to the original introduction of this bill, as well as frustration at a government that was slow to react to the issue.

This bill has been introduced in part to send a clear message to persons considering gatecrashing that such intrusive and violent behaviour will no longer be tolerated in Queensland communities. This will be achieved through the implementation of the new offence which will have serious criminal consequences and by giving Queensland's police officers greater powers to deal with gatecrashers. This bill also complements the proactive initiative of the Queensland Police Service. It will see police given more powers and it creates a new offence of gatecrashing to combat the growing problem of violent gangs gatecrashing private parties.

Gatecrashing needs to be recognised as an offence as it holds the potential for loss of life and the destruction of private and public property. One only has to think back to the tragic case of Matthew Stanley, who lost his life at a party which had been gatecrashed—and this case has been canvassed here this evening by some of the speakers in this debate—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. We know what happened there; that officer was seriously ill for a long time.

The despicable acts conducted by people who think gatecrashing is fun are intolerable and offensive. Currently, the law as it stands is not able to deal adequately with the serious act of gatecrashing. This is why the coalition introduced this bill.

The Queensland police currently do not have the legislative powers to effectively deal with the act of gatecrashing. Put simply, the police do not have the power to move people on from around private residences. This bill gives police the power to move on people who they reasonably suspect are about to gatecrash a private party.

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

I want to speak to the points raised by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. The committee has tried to say that gatecrashing is covered by existing laws such as breaking and entering. Clearly, the advice provided to the committee to recommend this was misguided and the committee obviously has not grasped the uniqueness that is gatecrashing, nor did it refer to the South Australian Scrutiny of Legislation Committee, which first reviewed this law when it was introduced by a Labor government. We know what they are like. They supported it and the bill was introduced. It is funny how we, a conservative opposition, can introduce a similar bill and we get this reaction from a Labor dominated committee and a parliament which is so blind to good legislation that it cannot support it. I trust the government will support this tonight, even though I did hear the minister's comments, and I will come to them directly.

This government did a similar thing when we introduced bills which would restrict the supply of alcohol to minors and would ban ice pipes. Now the government has either introduced bills itself or intends to introduce them. I say to all members opposite that they will let the people of Queensland down if they do not support this piece of legislation.

I want to canvass a few of the issues that were raised by honourable members in the House this evening. The first was raised by the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Sport. I respect the honourable minister's judgement on most occasions. The former shadow minister said that we are trying to correct a 19th century offence here, but the minister said that the police have additional powers already under the PPRA to give move-on orders to persons who unlawfully congregate outside a private residence. The issue here is a person producing evidence that they are not required to leave when asked to do so.

The fact is that police are strangled somewhat when trying to provide a safe area around a lot of these places. Often they are called to these large parties and there might only be two officers. The member for Toowoomba South said that in Toowoomba there could be 50 or 100 people at a private party and that a couple of officers would certainly be restricted in the way they could move people on, especially if it involved an unruly mob of drunken louts.

The minister said this legislation does not add to any of the existing police powers. I would think that it does strengthen the police powers, and I am somewhat taken aback by the minister's comments. It appears now that a breakdown is apparent and that the police are unable to provide the resources to keep these situations stable and peaceful.

The member for Toowoomba South, who has been an advocate of this for a long while, spoke of the strengthening of police powers to move on people in public and private places. He spoke about some of the issues, especially the issue of Kearneys Springs in Toowoomba. He commented on the event in Toowoomba at Kearneys Springs, where a private party became unruly. Two or three police could not handle a situation such as that.

He also mentioned—and I think this is the crux of his argument—that technology today allows young people with mobile telephones to text their friends and let them know where the party is. That mob will source a party and prey on it, and before people know where they are there could be 40, 50 or 60 uninvited people there who are highly inebriated and out of control. We would then have a situation where that private party becomes a riot or a rabble. Whether it is two or three police—or 10 police sometimes—the damage is done before the police can get there.

I really believe we have to look here, as the member for Toowoomba South said on numerous occasions, at zero tolerance or minimal tolerance. I call on the minister to look very closely at what the member for Toowoomba South said today.

The member for Nicklin made a very good contribution. He spoke about the person responsible for organising a private party or significant event and about admittance being allowed by invitation only under certain circumstances. He said that gatecrashing is happening regularly on the Sunshine Coast. I thank the member for Nicklin for his contribution. He said that this was a genuine attempt to make our private functions safe and enjoyable. That is exactly what we are about with this amendment to the legislation—that is, making private functions safer and making them a better place to be. A lot of people now will not even go to a public function because they are absolutely terrified that violence will erupt.

We saw what happened on Australia Day down the coast. We saw what happened at Noosa at the same time. As some members said tonight, people only alert their friends that a party is on about two hours before the party takes place. This is a sad indictment on the social functions of young people today.

The member for Surfers Paradise made a very worthwhile contribution this evening. Like the two previous speakers—and all of the speakers tonight—they are from urban based seats. The member for Surfers Paradise made mention of a bipartisan approach and putting ideas together to give protection to private citizens. That is precisely what this piece of legislation is all about and what the member for Surfers Paradise was saying. Just because we on this side of the House come up with an idea, it should not be knocked and hoo-haed by the government and pushed aside. If it is a good idea, for God's sake, I believe there should be bipartisanship. We need responsible management by the government in order to provide a safe environment for the people of Queensland.

I think the member for Surfers Paradise has made a very worthwhile contribution in pointing out some of the issues. He mentioned the rising social problems of people gatecrashing private parties and the police resources required to get to these scenes to protect his constituents and those communities. This is a real problem. These sorts of events now happen with youth, and that is the prime reason this bill must be supported. Publicised parties have resulted in houses being trashed and people being in fear of their own safety.

The member for Surfers Paradise also said that we do not want any more Matthew Stanleys in Queensland. This legislation will give people the opportunity to have a private party without worrying that they might be violated or that their parents' homes might be trashed or that their own homes might be trashed by some unruly mob that has no respect for itself let alone other people's property. I commend the member for Surfers Paradise for his contribution. He said, going back to his youth, that when there was a party you would turn up at someone's place and you would even be careful of how you walked through the kitchen; you would do the right thing. But times have changed. I know they have changed, with the drugs and alcohol that our young people are subjected to. I think the member for Burnett has put in place a very good piece of private member's legislation to control some of these issues.

The member for Springwood made a contribution. She spoke of the safety of young people and said that two per cent of police calls were mainly to parties. That is the one point I will take up here. She mentioned the findings of the task force which she no doubt was a part of. She said that she was surprised to see so many young people who were not invited. She mentioned parental responsibility. That is one of the issues that we have been canvassing. That is one of the real issues that this legislation addresses. We want to make certain that parents are held accountable for their children. We want to make certain that when young people do go to private parties they are going to behave responsibly and unruly guests are not invited. That is it in a nutshell.

As I said, the member for Springwood mentioned that two per cent of police calls were for these types of parties, but two per cent of calls can create a workload for police of monumental proportions. The member for Springwood mentioned that it is the violence and antisocial behaviour that we are objecting to. This is the reason this legislation is being debated tonight. We are trying to eliminate violent and antisocial behaviour by giving police the power to move these people on. This will help to stop the

gatecrashing which is violating private parties, causing damage to private property and causing concern to many people in many of our communities right throughout Queensland, especially in the more built-up areas that the greater majority of the members of this House represent.

The member for Currumbin made a very worthwhile contribution, too. Her seat is another one of those built-up areas and is a highly urbanised seat on the Gold Coast. As she said, the bill transforms the culture to remove hooligans from private functions. That is it in a nutshell. It is to remove hooligans from private functions. She spoke of the penalty of two years imprisonment and a $2,800 fine. I think these penalties will certainly impede some of these louts. If they know how severe the law is and we put in place a minimum rather than a maximum penalty, I think that will go a long way towards deterring these people from violating somebody's personal property.

I turn to the issue of the ability to control uninvited guests. The member for Currumbin compliments the Queensland police strategy of monitoring private parties. She spoke of the damage to personal property while parents are away. Unruly youths vandalise emergency service vehicles, which is totally unacceptable. People are going to these functions and Queensland government property is being destroyed by these unruly thugs for their own enjoyment and their own amusement. It is costing the taxpayers of this state millions of dollars to put that property in place. This is the element of society that people must be condoning if they do not support this legislation this evening.

The member for Currumbin made mention of the bipartisan support in the South Australian parliament of a similar piece of legislation. The member for Bundaberg also made mention of the South Australian concept and the bipartisan support. The member for Bundaberg is an ex-police officer. I know that there is another one or maybe two people in this House who are ex-police officers, and they would know full well what the member for Bundaberg was saying here. The government and the mechanisms put in place by the government will enhance and strengthen the police in their daily endeavours to protect our communities. I think those colleagues of ours who are former police officers will understand fully what the member for Bundaberg is saying.

Another issue the member for Bundaberg raised this evening is that of the overloaded court system. I believe this is a real impediment that we face today. The police will soon not want to go to these scenes because of fear for their own safety and knowing they are not going to get a conviction against some of these people in this overloaded court system. As the member for Bundaberg said, the laws need to be uncomplicated to protect the good citizens. That is precisely what we need to do.

The most important feature of this piece of legislation that the opposition has introduced this evening is to give police the powers to move those people on, to protect people who have private parties and to make our streets and our communities right across Queensland—not just in our major cities and towns where the majority of our people are represented but everywhere—a good place to live and communities we can be proud of. We want our young people to go about their business without being violated by the thugs of society. We need to give the police the tools they need to move these people on.

I trust that the members of parliament will support the opposition tonight on this piece of legislation, because it is good legislation. It is well thought through legislation. It is legislation that is going to give purpose to the police. It will give them the power to work in a safer environment. At the same time it will create a safer environment for the citizens of our state.

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

AYES, 27—Copeland, Cripps, Cunningham, Dempsey, Elmes, Flegg, Foley, Gibson, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, Lee Long, McArdle, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Nicholls, Pratt, Seeney, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Rickuss, Dickson

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

Resolved in the negative.

MOTION

Order of Business

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Leader of the House) (9.05 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That general business orders of the day Nos 3 to 7 be postponed.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

GENE TECHNOLOGY AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from p. 188, on motion of Ms Boyle—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (9.05 pm): I look forward to talking to the Gene Technology Amendment Bill. The background to the bill is that it has been drafted to reflect the changes to Commonwealth gene technology legislation as a result of recent statutory reviews and because of what happened with EI. Very quickly, genetically modified canarypox vaccine needed to be brought into Australia. It was by far the better vaccine when compared to the killed vaccine. Things had to happen in a very urgent fashion. Those issues are addressed by some of the amendments made in this bill.

This bill introduces emergency powers which I spoke about. It improves the mechanism for providing advice to the Gene Technology Regulator. The Gene Technology Regulator is a very important system in Australia. It gives very careful consideration to crops or products that people wish to plant or trial. It is a very careful handbrake and check and balance on the system.

This bill streamlines the process for the initial consideration of licences, reduces the regulatory burden for low-risk dealings and splits the class of licence for intentional release into two licences—that is, intentional release contained and commercial release. It provides clarification of the circumstances in which licence variations can be made. It clarifies the circumstances under which the regulator can direct a person to comply with the act. It provides the regulator with the power to issue a licence to persons who find themselves inadvertently dealing with an unlimited GMO for the purpose of disposing of that organism.

Victoria is the only state to implement the legislation. It initially implemented the legislation with a moratorium on canola. Queensland leads Australia in establishing a coexistence framework to create a set of principles with regard to managing the transportation and handling of GMO products with non-GMO products.

Although Growcom and AgForce were not consulted during the preparation of this bill, the AgForce policy on genetically modified organisms, which has been prepared by AgForce Grains, supports continued research into trialling and testing individual agricultural products. It supports the comprehensive and rigorous science based assessment of genetically modified species and products. AgForce Grains supports the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator in ensuring that responsibility for research trials be strictly contained within the legislative guidelines.

AgForce Grains supports grain growers having access to an affordable choice—and I think this is very important—of the latest research technology that is best suited to their production needs. AgForce Grains supports further education and balance in the information given to the general public regarding their uses of gene technology. AgForce Grains supports individual grain growers having the right to maintain their current farming and marketing practices in the event of the release of GMO crop varieties for commercial production. They can continue to do traditional methods of farming if they wish or take up the GMO approved through the gene regulator and the other processes.

There is often a lot of ignorance around GMO products. Because it is new technology urban myths develop, particularly with regard to plant breeding and animal breeding. There has been crossbreeding and improvements in genetics for years. Plant breeding can take years and years. Trying to produce a drought resistant wheat can be a long and laborious process. With genetic modification if they can actually identify a drought tolerant gene that allows wheat to grow with 15 inches of rainfall they could probably circumvent 50 years or more of breeding. I think it is important to understand that.

Sometimes a GMO gets a bit of a bad name in some circles because most of the work is done by big global corporations like Monsanto, DuPont, Syngenta, BASF and Dow. People get concerned that the future food supply of the world could be controlled by big global companies. The research required is hugely expensive. Massive investment is required to do it.

As I said about the AgForce Grains policy, I think it is important that there remains a choice—that is, people can use conventional farming methods or GM. Some of the examples that I will give tonight will show how GM does provide the opportunity to address climate change and address issues in Third World countries which do not have the machinery or technology to do the spraying and other tillage processes that are undertaken in broadacre areas. It provides the opportunity to be able to feed and clothe the world using smaller areas of land and make for more sustainable agricultural production.

I give the example of GM soybeans in America which have only been in production since 1997. When they were initially brought in it did not mean more production. They actually had four per cent less production from the initial GM soybeans, but farmers were using them because these soybeans were genetically modified to be Roundup ready, so that the tillage and keeping the weeds out of the broadacre area were made far more easy and convenient. They could spray the crop because it was resistant to Roundup but the Roundup would kill all the grasses and weeds in between. In Argentina, as

an example, where they grow soybeans on the Pampas, a massive area where there are problems with grasses and weeds, since 1997 there has been an expansion in soybean production from three million hectares to 15 million hectares. There has been a massive increase because of the ease of farming technology.

I raise the issue of Bt, bacillus thuringiensis. Bt crops are now a part of genetic modification. It is a crystalline protein from bacteria, and the moths that eat particular plants, particularly cotton, ingest those sharp crystals and are killed. Around 80 per cent of the cotton that is grown in Australia now is Bt cotton. The cotton growers on the Darling Downs would bring in the crop dusters anywhere between seven and nine times per crop. Now we hardly see a plane flying because of the Bt cotton. Whilst there are exciting scientific developments, people are always cautious. But when we see the benefits that can come from less insecticide, better production and so forth, I think we can see that it really is worth while.

There has been a moratorium in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, but the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator does allow canola and cotton under very strict guidelines so that we see Bt cotton grown in New South Wales and Queensland. Not only do we have GM cotton grown here in Queensland; we also have some GM canola. There are trials occurring in Bundaberg. There is some very exciting and interesting work being done on that at the Queensland University of Technology and the University of Queensland.

It is often said that some countries in Europe will not import genetically modified foods, that there is a ban on them and so forth. It has not caused any real problems for Canada. Canada exports canola to Japan. It simply had to provide the details through the company that had developed the GM canola seed. That was approved in Japan, so Canada is exporting to Japan and Europe. If I get the chance I will talk about some of the results of GM canola production in Canada.

Particularly for countries in the Third World, production of GM corn has literally gone through the roof. That has enabled some of these Third World countries to grow crops that do not require the highly efficient and technical spraying, tillage and other farming practices that have always given us an advantage because of our machinery, equipment and broadacre.

We must have regulation by the OGTR. It costs a lot of money for that regulation. It costs a lot of money to produce the seed. In some cases in Australia—for example, for corn—it may not be worth our while doing that. In places like America, where there is wall-to-wall corn all across Nebraska and all of those states in the centre of America, it certainly has made a very big difference.

In relation to Third World countries, in the Philippines GM corn which required no spraying produced 7½ tonnes per hectare while the normal corn, which required spraying a number of times, particularly for the Asian corn borer, produced 3½ tonnes per hectare. That is a four-tonne per hectare difference and a very limited amount of treatment and spraying. What would you choose if you were the farmer? The choice is probably very easy.

I want to give a couple of compelling reasons to support genetically modified food crops. One is that by using GM crops farmers can reduce pesticide spraying, decrease greenhouse gas emissions and increase yields. Some of the evidence continues to accumulate about how genetically modified food crops are helping to preserve the environment. Dr Clive James, an agricultural scientist and founder of the not-for-profit International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications, states—

Here we have a very versatile technology, which has the power and the capacity to contribute to a more effective, a more benign, a more sustainable agriculture.

For example, insect-resistant Bt crops offer an alternative to, and reduce the use of, agricultural pesticides such as insecticides and fungicides. Since Bt corn and cotton are able to produce their own protection against specifically targeted pests, farmers can reduce the amount of pesticides necessary to control them. Since 1996 farmers have reduced pesticide applications by 172,000 metric tons as a direct result of genetically modified food crops. Dr Roger Beachy states—

What's been amazing to many of us is that we've seen advances that even were beyond our wildest expectations.

This reduction in the use of pesticides has consequently reduced the fuel, water and packaging that are used to manufacture, distribute and apply pesticides. Typical savings include the elimination of diesel fuel that is used in manufacturing, shipping and storing insecticides; the conservation of water used by farmers when applying pesticides; the elimination of tractor and aviation fuel used in applications; and a reduction in the waste generated from the disposable packing and so forth. I think that and some of the other examples show some of the advantages of GM but also, no doubt, some of the costs and the prices of the research and the seeds.

The other example I have spoken about is the adoption of biotech crops. Since 1996 there has been a significant upward curve in terms of the area planted and the primary driver of what has been an economic benefit that farmers have derived from it. There is something like $US28 billion worth of extra income to the farmers who have used the technology. This particular article that I am quoting from, which is written by a fellow called Brookes, who is an agricultural economist and a director of PG Economics in England, states further—

Now that increase in farm income has been spread across all the countries that have used the technology, both in the developed world and in developing countries.

Of the 10.3 million farmers who planted biotech crops in 22 countries in 2006, 90 per cent were small, resource-poor farmers from 11 developing countries including Argentina, Brazil, China, Columbia, Honduras, India, Mexico, Paraguay, the Philippines, South Africa and Uruguay. In those countries the increased income from biotech crops makes a contribution to the economics of the family farms and the alleviation of poverty.

There are also some other exciting advantages of GM. An article in the *Guardian* on 16 November last year refers to a major European Union funded study that showed that genetically modified plants that produce essential omega 3 fish oils could be the only way to ensure that people get enough of those nutrients. Of course, those nutrients are very important in the protection against cardiovascular disease, they slow mental decline in elderly people and they are also essential to the healthy development of the baby's brain in the womb. It is via a natural metabolic pathway that this occurs within the GM process.

I will give the example of the University of Milan where there was a trial plot of GM treated corn. GM corn is not allowed to be planted in Italy. The conventional varieties in this trial produced 11.9 tonnes per hectare while the engineered varieties yielded between 14 and 15.9 tonnes per hectare. Based on the amount of corn that is grown in Italy, a massive amount of income is forgone by that nation because it does not allow the use of GM crops.

Canola has often been in the news and 10 years on from the planting of herbicide resistant canola in Canada, particularly the Roundup Ready varieties, studies commissioned by the Canola Council of Canada show that the growers choose these HR systems mainly because of more effective weed control, increased profit and more flexible rotations. On average, the transgenic systems resulted in three bushels per acre, or a 10 per cent yield advantage over conventional varieties, and fuel savings of 32.2 million litres in one year.

So I think when we talk, as we do, about what we are going to face with climate change—whether that comes upon us very quickly or whether it comes upon us later—essentially we need to use our knowledge and to use it smarter. As time goes by and less land is available, we may need to plant crops on smaller acreages. It might be that more land is needed for biomass for alternative fuels or more land is needed for forestry. This technology enables smaller amounts of land to be used. I gave the example of Argentina. If that example is extrapolated to Brazil, that means that people would not need to cut down so much of the Amazon, which is happening every year. People can get far better returns on the land that is available for crops.

In terms of Australia, which is facing the effects of climate change, I think the production of drought resistant wheat would be outstanding for us. I know that work is being done overseas on a drought resistant lucerne variety that will grow in areas that receive only 15 inches of rainfall. That would mean that, whereas now lucerne cannot be grown any further west than the eastern downs or where there is irrigation, that drought resistant variety could be grown out in the Roma to Charleville area. So this technology has some great advantages for us.

The shadow minister has spoken about the need for caution and the need for labelling. I think that is important. This legislation makes the processes, the systems and the work of the office of the regulator more efficient. It brings two committees into one to create a more efficient process. I think that Australians should have confidence that the introduction of GM in Australia is happening in a very careful and considered way. There is the overseas experience to go by. I think it is important to separate myth from fact and science. Things that are said, such as an elephant's kidney being put into wheat and all of that, do not happen and it cannot happen. We have to get back to the fact that this is advanced breeding being done very carefully by people with good ethics. I think the regulations that we are bringing in through this bill will ensure that we can be at the forefront and not be disadvantaged, that we can address climate change and that we can address our environmental and biodiversity needs. As a result, I think we can very carefully and successfully move into using genetically modified scientific systems.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (9.25 pm): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise to participate in the debate on the Gene Technology Amendment Bill 2007. At the outset, can I say that I am certainly torn on this bill. As I recall, the last time we debated the issue of genetically modified food and gene technology I had just chaired a meeting in the Parliament House precinct with people from around Australia who were concerned about the issue of Roundup Ready canola, the changes that were occurring in Australia and the possible effects they might have on Queensland.

But since that time there has certainly been a change in the community's view of genetically modified food crops. I am very much aware of the leading research that is happening in my electorate in the research station of the department of primary industries which is located on the outskirts of Nambour. Significant new developments are happening there with the development of a new range of pineapples and a whole range of other improvements that are proposed to try to improve the production of food crops in Australia and around the world.

We need to ensure at all times the maximum level of policing or surveillance and that, where gene technology foods are used and trial products are being grown, the full weight of the law is used to ensure that the proper boundaries are set and the proper monitoring is undertaken. A number of members have spoken about the issue of horse flu. I believe that horse flu came to Australia only because of laziness, because of slackness and because governments were not prepared to put in the dollars where they were required to ensure that Australia had proper quarantine systems in place. We have to ensure that our quarantine system receives the maximum dollars to enable it to vet horses and livestock when they visit Australia from overseas.

I have a concern that, as time progresses, laws will be modified, budgets will be tightened and people, being what they are, might take short cuts. I expect one day we will have an outbreak of some of the genetically modified crops into places where at the moment we are saying they will not go and that there is no possibility of them going there. I have concerns, simply because of the way governments operate.

Another concern I have is in relation to the lack of real will and passion from our federal and our state governments to publicise what is in the food that is produced from genetically modified food crops. I can remember I was speaking about this issue and someone said to me, 'Peter, people would be surprised at how much food is made from genetically modified crops. They would be stunned.' What is wrong with telling people that? What is wrong with having on all of our food products labels with big, bold, black letters on them so that everyone knows exactly what they are eating and what they are drinking? If it is the case that all the food is being produced from genetically modified crops, then let us be honest with Queenslanders, let us be honest with Australians and let us be honest with people in New Zealand and say that it is all being produced from genetically modified crops.

I will support the bill, because I have seen significant new developments happening in my electorate from the research station that is located just on the outskirts of Nambour. But I place on the record my genuine concern that we need to ensure at all times that maximum dollars are available and maximum resources are provided by all levels of government to ensure that proper policing and security systems are in place. I use this opportunity to urge the minister to speak to her parliamentary colleagues and emphasise the importance of making sure that when our state ministers and our federal ministers meet at the next ministerial forum they should talk again about the need to publicise what is actually in the food that we consume.

Debate, on motion of Mr Wellington, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. D BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (9.30 pm): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Xavier Special Education Unit

Mrs MENKENS (Burdekin—NPA) (9.30 pm): Xavier Special Education Unit at Whites Hill State College, Coorparoo is an Education Queensland state school for children with motor disorders such as cerebral palsy and developmental delay. It is the only school in Queensland where all programs are based on the principles of conductive education and families have moved from interstate and right across Queensland to bring their children to the school.

Conductive education originated in Hungary and is facilitated by a conductor. Conductors are professional people whose training, experience and methods of working are unique. Conductive education does not profess to be a cure, but greatly improves the child's self-esteem and the quality of life for the whole family. P&C President Jody Florance states that CE fosters a belief in every child's ability to learn, it teaches children to be responsible for their own movements rather than being a passive recipient of therapy, it promotes personality development and it empowers parents to be able to support their child's development.

Most children who come to Xavier have very little control over their bodies. They soon make the progress that had eluded them and families find the hope they had searched for. Xavier's CE programs have been a necessary stepping-stone towards effective integration into mainstream schools for many students, while others have achieved a level of independence beyond expectations.

CE is a way of life. The families that have taken on the challenge to understand and practice it have found they soon become enthusiasts. The staff at Xavier share the same enthusiasm. From humble beginnings in a hospital ward in 1970, Xavier special school has become a crucial part of the education system and has touched the lives of hundreds of grateful families.

Xavier's current lease is due to expire. Education Queensland has advised that it should be moved to Mount Gravatt West State School to become part of the current special school program. The P&C is desperately trying to convince Education Queensland that Xavier's unique education system cannot be incorporated into the current program. Education Queensland has shown a total lack of

understanding of how CE programs work. There is no possible way that this program can be incorporated into another system. It is a holistic education system that must operate totally independently.

The P&C believes that its children and the community deserve a purpose-built facility on the main campus at the Whites Hill college. If this is impossible, they would rather have Xavier closed. This is an important issue and I beg ministers Welford and Nelson-Carr to really listen to and address the needs of these severely disabled children and their families. I have written to the minister. I stress that this is a very serious issue and I ask that it be addressed.

Stroke Prevention

Ms STRUTHERS (Algester—ALP) (9.32 pm): It is claimed that obesity related disease will cause today's younger generation to be the first to have a lesser life expectancy than their parents. Commentators are now speaking about an alarming reality: just as global warming is threatening our economic and social futures, obesity and poor lifestyle pose a major threat to the quality of life all our children will lead. For every $1 spent on the prevention of obesity, $70 is spent on treating the consequences.

Under the leadership of Premier Anna Bligh and health minister Stephen Robertson, Queensland is tackling chronic disease prevention head on. That is why we have one of the toughest antismoking regimes in the world. That is why we have set up the Eat Well, Be Active task force. That is why we have mandated healthy eating programs in school tuckshops and public health facilities. That is why the Minister for Education has made this the 'year of physical activity' in schools. We are tackling chronic disease through the Queensland Health's Chronic Disease Strategy because we know that conditions such as heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, renal disease and some cancers are preventable.

Today I shine the spotlight on stroke and acknowledge the outstanding work of the Queensland Stroke Association, based in my electorate at Acacia Ridge. The volunteers at the stroke association direct a lot of their time and energy to spreading the word that stroke is preventable and that there is life after stroke. The stroke association volunteers resource 30 stroke support groups around the state, they supply around 3,500 free stroke support kits and they talk, both face to face and over the phone, to many people and their families who need support.

After heart disease, stroke is Australia's single greatest killer. Every year 53,000 Australians will suffer new and recurrent strokes; that is one every 10 minutes. Sadly, stroke is the leading cause of adult disability in Australia.

There are many factors that can increase members' chances of having a stroke. Let me outline the bad news. Some of these such as age, gender and a family history of stroke cannot be controlled. However, there are a number of risk factors for stroke that we can all control. All of us can reduce our risk of stroke by keeping our blood pressure low, by quitting smoking, by eating healthily and by being physically active.

I have met with members of the stroke association and I have given them my commitment that I will continue to go into bat for additional funding for their work. They run on the smell of an oily rag. I am very hopeful that the new self-management funding through the Chronic Disease Strategy will be a source of support for the stroke association. I share the view that we need to give chronic disease prevention attention that is on par with that being given to climate change. That attention and action needs to be taken by individuals, governments, private organisations and non-government organisations. We all have a part to play in the prevention of stroke and in the prevention of other chronic diseases.

Emergency Services Personnel and Volunteers

Mr DICKSON (Kawana—Lib) (9.35 pm): I rise to pay tribute to the tireless work done in our community by the emergency services, particularly over the holiday period. I am sure that each year most in this House look forward to enjoying Christmas with our families. It is certainly a special time for me. However, many people spend their Christmas working to help the rest of the community. Many of our police, ambulance and fire officers, doctors and nurses in our hospitals, and those who provide care for the aged and disabled do not have the privilege of being at home on Christmas Day and other significant holidays and celebrations.

In addition to those whose job it is to work at Christmas, I pay tribute to those wonderful volunteers who choose to be available to help others. They include the men and women of the State Emergency Service and the surf lifesaving movement who had a particularly busy holiday season thanks to our wild weather. I also thank those who volunteer for our charities and work so hard to make Christmas a happier time for those in our community who do not have families or who are disadvantaged.

One of the great privileges extended to me last year was to be made patron of the Sunshine Coast branch of surf lifesaving. They provide a wonderful service to our community and our visitors. The Sunshine Coast beaches copped a battering in the storms over the past few weeks and many people had to be rescued. It is hard to imagine where we would be without the volunteers in their familiar red and yellow uniforms. Certainly there would be many more tragic drownings.

In thinking about emergency service workers and volunteers, it is also appropriate to comment on the generosity of our community when disaster and hardship strike. Yesterday the Premier told us that over half a million dollars has been contributed to the Disaster Relief Appeal to assist those affected by our recent floods. While some of that money has come from government and businesses, much of it has been contributed by ordinary Australians who are quick to put their hands in their pockets or extend some form of help to those less fortunate. We are indeed a lucky country.

Federal Parliament

Mrs SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (9.37 pm): Yesterday I and other invited guests, including former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam and his wife Margaret, attended the official opening of the 42nd federal parliament. For the first time in the history of the Australian parliament, the proceedings began with a formal welcome to country. Ms Matilda House-Williams, a Ngambri elder, described the occasion as a significant time for her people. She said that new Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd had shown proper respect to the first people of this land. It was a moving experience and one that I was proud to witness.

From the House of Representatives gallery I and many others watched with immense pride the official swearing in of the new federal Labor government. It was particularly special for me because one of the new members to be sworn in was my husband of 27 years, Jon Sullivan, the federal member for Longman.

Mr Lee: That's not the first time that he's been sworn in.

Mrs SULLIVAN: I have to take that interjection from the member for Indooroopilly, who is a very astute member and has a good memory. Jon served in the Queensland parliament from 1989 to 1998, first as the member for Glass House and then later on—

Mr Wells: Very distinguished

Mrs SULLIVAN: I also take that interjection—as the member for Caboolture. I believe he is one of only 24 members of the Queensland Assembly to make the transition to the federal parliament. Most of the other members served around the time of federation. Only one other former member, Bob Katter, is currently serving with Jon in the federal parliament.

For those interested, on the other hand, there were eight MPs who served in the federal parliament and later served in the Queensland parliament, and one of those is the current member for Murrumba, the Hon. Dean Wells, and I acknowledge him in the chamber here tonight.

The Governor-General, His Excellency Michael Jeffery, in his official address to federal parliament, stated that the new government was committed to a plan to build a modern Australia. Part of this plan is to make reforms to water, health, education, transport infrastructure, child care, the environment—we have already seen the signing of the Kyoto protocol—the Iraq conflict, workplace flexibility and of course WorkChoices but at the same time maintaining a strong budgetary position.

Kevin Rudd indicated his support for an apology to the stolen generation of Aboriginal children who were forcibly removed from their families because of their skin colour, and this morning he said sorry with coalition support. Emphasis was placed on cooperation between federal and state governments and ending the blame game. One such measure is the reinstatement of the Commonwealth dental health funding to states which was axed by the former Liberal government. Kevin Rudd will move to restore $290 million over three years. The Liberals' decision to remove funding has led to long waiting times, so this is welcome news for many Australians. Remember, Queensland was the only state to retain a state government run dental health scheme, so if you live in any other state you have to pay for your dental work.

Debate on the first day in federal parliament went until 2 am—a lengthy introduction to new members. I wish them well and have already started to work together with Jon on several local issues.

Mareeba Hospital

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (9.40 pm): I rise to highlight the desperate efforts being made by dedicated medical and administrative staff to keep Queensland Health facilities operating in my electorate. Mareeba Hospital, in particular, is a prime example of this. On 5 February this year media announcements appeared in which Queensland Health trumpeted annual performance reports that said Mareeba Hospital had met its clinical standards. Yet just one day later a senior Mareeba GP went public spelling out exactly how patients at the Mareeba Hospital were potentially at fatal risk because of

overworked staff and a lack of patient beds. And today a further eight of the town's GPs have publicly backed his stance. The GP said in relation to the Mareeba Hospital—

There is a distinct possibility that someone will at some stage be sent home due to bed shortages who should either be admitted or kept longer.

I have spoken in this place many times before about exactly this kind of thing, including one instance just 12 months ago which led to the death of a young 29-year-old mother of five children aged 10 years and under including a two-month old baby. This mother was sent home from Mareeba Hospital on the Sunday and the following Tuesday and then she died on the Thursday. Yet since then nothing has changed despite assurances, reports and meetings which, as is evident by the latest claims, have all been simply lip-service. This doctor, who has been so widely supported by his colleagues, went on to say—

There is a danger, no matter how good a care is given, internal pressures may put patients at serious, potentially fatal, risk.

These concerns cannot be dismissed. They are shared by at least nine of the town's GPs, many of whom, I understand, actively support the hospital with their time and efforts and are familiar with the 'on-the-wards' reality there.

This is a serious warning, and this government has a duty of care to fix the current problems and other problems which have plagued our public hospital system at least as long as this government has been in power. It appears that the only possible way Mareeba Hospital can be meeting its clinical goals is by staff not going just the extra mile but the extra 100 miles which are needed to make up for the constant failures of Queensland Health.

Large increases in emergency department attendances have taken place in line with our population increases. Since January 2005, monthly attendances at Mareeba Hospital have climbed from 1,568 to more than 2,500. This soaring workload has not been matched by sufficient extra staff. Again, the GP says—

They—

meaning the staff—

are hard working, under resourced and desperate.

It is sad to see such desperation that people are threatening to leave. It is a situation that is close to spiralling out of control.

Mareeba is growing strongly. Indeed, the far north is second only to the south-east in population growth. Yet over past years Mareeba Hospital has seen its bed numbers dwindle from more than 80 to only just over 40, which is unbelievable. This government needs to restore services and expand staff and facilities at hospitals such as Mareeba and Atherton to give Queenslanders back the public hospital system they deserve.

Time expired.

Hale Street Toll Bridge

Mr LEE (Indooroopilly—ALP) (9.44 pm): So far around 2,000 local residents have signed petitions sponsored by me and Ryan Ginard, Labor's candidate for the council ward of Walter Taylor, to show their concern about Campbell Newman's proposed 50-minute daily delays on Coronation Drive during the 30-month construction of his Hale Street toll bridge. The lord mayor and his Liberal councillors have responded to the concerns of these residents by announcing that he and his Liberals will now make sure that the Coronation Drive traffic lights at the Hale Street intersection will stay when the bridge is built.

Despite an earlier commitment to upgrade the Coronation Drive and Hale Street intersection to include a flyover, Campbell Newman's revised bridge plan now excludes this upgrade. So once the bridge is built there will still be traffic lights at this very busy intersection. This decision by the Liberals is a disaster for Brisbane's west. It means that the one long-term benefit for western suburbs residents from the construction of the Hale Street bridge has been taken away, and there will be long-term traffic delays as a result.

So the Liberals expect us to put up with almost three years of construction delays of 50 minutes daily, and once the bridge is built it will then take even longer to get to the city than it did before. The Hale Street bridge will cost around $245 million—that is a lot of money to spend without fixing the Coronation Drive-Hale Street intersection. Western suburbs residents should be asking whether the lord mayor and his Liberals want to build the Hale Street bridge to solve traffic problems or to create them.

This is seriously poor management of this construction project. Campbell Newman has totally bungled this project. This is what happens when Campbell Newman is given compliant local councillors. Liberal councillors Jane Prentice and Peter Matic are not standing up for western suburbs residents. They are letting the western suburbs down badly by supporting Campbell's 50-minute traffic delays for almost three years, and then the Liberal councillors Jane Prentice and Peter Matic are standing idly by as Campbell keeps the traffic lights on Coronation Drive.

If this is how badly the Liberals let down Brisbane's west when they have a majority of local councillors in this area, just imagine how badly Brisbane will be let down if Campbell Newman gets his way and achieves a compliant council. I will continue to stand up for western suburbs residents against Campbell Newman and the Liberals' insanity with their construction plan for the Hale Street toll bridge. I will make sure that I do not take my residents for granted even if the Liberals do. I encourage residents to join my campaign and Ryan Ginard's campaign for sensible traffic management during this construction project. Residents can join the campaign by visiting my web site www.ronanleemp.com.

Year of the Scout

Mr DEMPSEY (Bundaberg—NPA) (9.47 pm): The Scout's promise states—

On my honour
I promise that I will do my best
To do my duty to my God, and
To the Queen of Australia
To help other people, and
To live by the Scout Law

The Scout's promise is something which is made by many thousands of young Queenslanders. It has extra significance in this the Year of the Scout and the centenary of Australian scouting. The scouting movement does a great deal to groom our young people to become outstanding citizens of the future, and special events have been planned throughout our state this year to help celebrate these significant milestones.

As always, Bundaberg district's six scouting groups have been very busy organising activities under their respective leaders of Ian MacIntyre, Shirley Orpin, Neil McCabe, Ken Howes, Mark Wright and Judith Manderson. Special mention must also be made of the work of Bundaberg District Commissioner, Greg Galletly, and honorary commissioner and Scouts Australia life member, Mrs Nina Higgins, and all the other scout leaders involved in educating and caring for the district's 250 eight- to 26-year-olds who are active Joeys, Scouts, Cubs, Venturers or Rovers. Bundaberg Scouts are also in good hands with Father Ian Furby, the Queensland branch chaplain, and Father Richard Tutin, the Bundaberg district chaplain.

The Bundaberg district holds an annual 'special day' on or as close as possible to Baden Powell Day. This day will start with a service at the Christ Church Anglican Church before moving to their Wyper Park camp site on the Burnett River. Wyper Park has been Bundaberg Scouts' home for over 80 years since 1927 and has been the breeding ground for many champions in all walks of life.

A large contingency of Bundaberg Scouts will also participate in the annual 'Kiwi' Woggle Easter Camp, which honours a Wide Bay Scouts past great and will be held in Maryborough under the coordination of Regional Commissioner Carole Howlett. This event is a competition camp against the four other Wide Bay districts and it is all part of the successful development process for young members. Other upcoming activities for Bundaberg Scouts include participating in Clean Up Australia Day, the Bundy in Bloom festival, the Pageant of Lights and nursing home visits for Mother's Day, Father's Day and Christmas.

We must all remember that the aim of scouting is 'to encourage the physical, intellectual, social, spiritual and emotional development of young people so that they can take a constructive place in society as responsible citizens and as members of their local, national and international communities'.

We could also take a leaf out of the book on the principles of scouting as identified by their founder, Lord Baden Powell, which says that—

... Scouts should serve God, act in consideration of the needs of others and develop and use their abilities to the betterment of themselves and their families and the community in which they live.

Teerk Roo Ra National Park and Conservation Park

Mr WEIGHTMAN (Cleveland—ALP) (9.49 pm): I am pleased to inform the House of a significant historical, cultural and environmental event that took place in my electorate on 11 December 2007. The Minister for Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation, the Hon. Andrew McNamara, declared Peel Island as the Teerk Roo Ra National Park and Conservation Park. Teerk Roo Ra is the Quandamooka people's name for Peel Island and has been a part of Quandamooka culture for countless generations.

Peel Island is situated in Moreton Bay eight kilometres east of Cleveland. It is a low-lying island of approximately 519 hectares and is surrounded by mangroves, except for a sandy beach which forms Horseshoe Bay on the southern side. It is also home to an array of plants and animals, including over 74 bird species, eight reptiles, two frogs, three mammals and a subspecies of agile wallaby that is unique to Peel Island and North and South Stradbroke islands. The island has melaleuca swamps and low-open and tall-open forests and is fringed by mangroves, coral reefs and significant seagrass beds and of course the beautiful Horseshoe Bay.

Peel Island was charted by Matthew Flinders in 1899 and named by John Oxley after Sir Robert Peel, a British statesman of the time. Evidence of Indigenous occupation on the island remains today in the form of extensive middens and the remnants of a bora ring. European migration to Australia in the mid-19th century brought contagious diseases such as cholera, typhoid, whooping cough, smallpox, measles and consumption—outbreaks of which could decimate whole Indigenous communities. Quarantine facilities were first established at Dunwich on Stradbroke Island in 1850. The quarantine station was relocated to Peel Island in May 1874 and ran from 1874 to the 1890s.

An inebriates' home operated for seven years from 1910 to 1916 in the old quarantine facilities. The Dunwich lazaret was attached to the Benevolent Asylum and the patients shared the same facilities. The lazaret was moved over to Peel Island, where it opened in 1907 on the north-western corner of the island and operated until 1959.

This site provides one of the few surviving physical records of the attitudes and treatment of problems associated with contagious diseases, like leprosy, from colonial to recent times. People treated at the lazaret included Chinese, Aboriginals, South Sea Islanders and whites of both European and Australian origin. In fact, 2007 was the centenary of the establishment of the lazaret on Peel Island. When the lazaret was opened in 1907, it had 71 patients ranging in age from seven to 92. This is just part of the island's history.

It is the only island in Moreton Bay with this range of attractions, history, cultural, terrestrial and littoral communities and that makes it all the more unique. I thank the minister, the Indigenous elders, the parks and wildlife officers and the Friends of Peel Island Association members who all attended to mark this great day in the history of Teerk Roo Ra.

Contamination from Mount Leyshon Gold Mine

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (9.52 pm): I bring to the attention of the House a recent potential environmental catastrophe involving a toxic cocktail released from the Mount Leyshon Gold Mine site into major creeks, rivers and tributaries near Charters Towers during the heavy rain on 15 January. The Mount Leyshon Gold Mine is owned by Leyshon Resources Ltd and has been inactive since 2001. Newmont Mining Corporation is responsible for all site maintenance and the site has not yet been rehabilitated. This is not a new argument. There have been reports of leakages since 2001, yet the EPA has done little in the way of pressuring the mining company to do a complete rehabilitation of the site to put an end to spillages once and for all.

The contamination came from the overflow of at least five of the mine's stormwater ponds and highly contaminated skats which flowed into nearby creeks, such as the Puddler, the Clarke, the Two Mile, the Seventy Mile and other tributaries and which then went into the Broughton River which flows into the Burdekin.

After the contamination outbreak, Newmont mining warned a small number of landowners in close vicinity of the site to get their livestock out of the creeks and to not drink the yet to be seen contaminated water. What the company failed to do was warn up to 100 families further downstream who rely on this water for all domestic, livestock and agricultural purposes that their water had the potential to be contaminated.

Most alarming is that the company advised the EPA on 16 January, yet the EPA was invisible for up to 20 days after the outbreak. It is unbelievable that families were drinking, bathing and swimming in water for up to 20 days after the EPA knew about the incident but it did nothing. During that period there were reports of children with stomach upsets and bird deaths—with dead plovers, doves, finches and galahs—and still families were never made aware of the contamination spill.

Reports from the EPA that it could not get through because floodwaters had cut access to the area were nonsense because there is a bitumen road right to the mine site. Access was possible within two days. The mining company immediately used a helicopter to assess the contamination spill. With Treasury's resources and the department's ability to access helicopters and four-wheel drives, I cannot see why the EPA found access to be such an insurmountable problem. The potential risk factor to human health should be a matter of urgency. I suggest that, if there had been reports of harm, disturbance or stress to the flying foxes, we would have had an army of EPA heavies swarming the town.

The minister also insulted residents by saying that they should not drink untreated water from flooding streams. I believe the minister has taken the advice of Brisbane bureaucrats and needs to get out of his subterranean existence and venture out into rural Queensland. Rural Queenslanders for generations have used untreated creek, river, rain and bore water and normally do not have access to town water. What they are not accustomed to is using contaminated water.

The EPA procrastination will never provide a true accurate reading of the amount of contamination in the waterways, as by the time EPA officers got out to test the water 20 days later a number of latter storms had flushed the contaminated waterways. The EPA must take a number of follow-up, independent water analysis samples from along the Broughton, including the creeks and

tributaries, to assure affected families that they do not need to fear a devaluation in their properties, that they can continue to use the water for their agricultural products and their livestock and that they will not be drinking or bathing in contaminated water. The EPA must support residents along the waterways and pressure the mining company to do a complete rehabilitation of the site to put an end to spillages once and for all.

Time expired.

Indigenous Parliamentarians

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (9.56 pm): This morning I walked into this place with a strange feeling of both solemnity and joy: solemnity from the momentousness of this occasion and from the depth of sadness the story of the stolen generations forces us to confront, and joy for the fact that today, after all these years, we finally have a Prime Minister with the courage and the maturity to bring all Australians together and to give us hope. I walked in with the sense that today would be an historic day, a day on which one of the great schisms of Australia—the gulf between black and white—could be righted.

I was disappointed not to have the opportunity to speak in the 5.30 debate today—due to the fact that there was so much demand from members to speak—which acknowledged the achievements of both Eric Deeral, the only Indigenous member of this House, and Neville Bonner, the first Aboriginal senator and a proud Ipswich son. It is in response to that debate that I wish to make some comments now.

Neville Bonner, as members have said, changed the face of Australian politics just by being there. He was assisted in that momentous achievement by his gracious wife, Heather, a Christian woman from Ipswich who he met through the One People of Australia League in the campaign that led to the 1967 referendum.

Mr Dempsey: A lovely lady.

Ms NOLAN: I take that interjection from the member for Bundaberg; she was a lovely lady. Heather Bonner's life as a leader in the Ipswich community, a war bride, a mother and a political activist was so momentous that in 2005 following her death I approached her family and initiated a perpetual scholarship in her name which is sponsored by the Ipswich Women's Development Network and which assists an Ipswich woman to study at the local UQ campus. Both of the scholarship recipients so far have had a passionate commitment to assisting Indigenous people through their own work in education.

I am a Labor member of parliament but this scholarship was initiated in Heather Bonner's name because I genuinely believed that her leadership in the community and her exemplary commitment to reconciliation were worthy of being perpetuated. My partisanship should not and did not make me blind to recognising that legacy. It was sad for me today then on this momentous day to see that the coalition parties did not adopt a similarly bigger view. They came in here and grudgingly sought to spoil the day. They described the apology as 'mere words' and sought to use the achievements of Eric Deeral and Neville Bonner—both of whom came 30 years ago—to justify their small-mindedness on this occasion. This small approach is not how it has to be.

With the Heather Bonner scholarship, I believe that the women of Ipswich are proving that reconciliation is far bigger than partisanship. I would like to think that the state opposition would similarly take note of that. The opposition's efforts here today represent a lost opportunity and they will find that it has been a political mistake. They belittled our own ability to change and grow and they belittled the parliament's capacity for good. After such a remarkable start to the day, I am sad to say that the opposition's efforts today quite simply have made me leave this place feeling sad.

Question put—That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 9.59 pm.

ATTENDANCE

Attwood, Barry, Bligh, Bombolas, Boyle, Choi, Copeland, Cripps, Croft, Cunningham, Darling, Dempsey, Dickson, Elmes, English, Fenlon, Finn, Flegg, Foley, Fraser, Gibson, Grace, Gray, Hayward, Hinchliffe, Hobbs, Hoolihan, Hopper, Horan, Jarratt, Johnson, Jones, Keech, Kiernan, Knuth, Langbroek, Lavarch, Lawlor, Lee Long, Lee, Lingard, Lucas, McArdle, McNamara, Male, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Mickel, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nicholls, Nolan, O'Brien, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Pratt, Purcell, Reeves, Reilly, Reynolds, Rickuss, Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, Scott, Seeney, Shine, Simpson, Smith, Spence, Springborg, Stevens, Stone, Struthers, Stuckey, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Weightman, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson