



RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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TUESDAY, 15 APRIL 2008

The Legislative Assembly met at 9.30 am.

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

Mr Speaker acknowledged the traditional owners of the land upon which this parliament is assembled and the custodians of the sacred lands of our state.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Photographs in Chamber

Mr SPEAKER: I advise members that I have given approval for a photographer from the *Courier-Mail* to take photographs in the chamber this morning in accordance with the guidelines of the House which allow head and shoulder photographs to be taken.

ASSENT TO BILLS

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

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

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

Date of Assent: 13 March 2008

"A Bill for An Act to establish the Family Responsibilities Commission, and for related matters"

This Bill is hereby transmitted to the Legislative Assembly, to be numbered and forwarded to the proper Officer for enrolment, in the manner required by law.

Yours sincerely

Governor

13 March 2008

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

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

Date of Assent: 17 March 2008

"A Bill for An Act to amend the Valuation of Land Act 1944 and the Valuation of Land Regulation 2003"

"A Bill for An Act to provide for the fluoridation of public potable water supplies, and for related purposes"

"A Bill for An Act to amend the Gas Supply Act 2003 in relation to the provision of community services"

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

Yours sincerely

Governor

17 March 2008

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 13 March 2008, from Her Excellency the Governor to Mr Speaker advising of assent to bills on 13 March 2008.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 17 March 2008, from Her Excellency the Governor to Mr Speaker advising of assent to bills on 17 March 2008.

SPEAKER'S RULING

Privilege, Alleged Misleading of the House by Premier

Mr SPEAKER: Some time ago the Deputy Leader of the Opposition wrote to me regarding a paper tabled by the Premier when responding to a question without notice during question time on 13 November 2007. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition queried the accuracy of the description of the document given by the Premier at the time the document was tabled, stating that the Premier stated that she was tabling the report whereas the Premier tabled only a portion of the report.

It is the case that the Premier, at the time of tabling, described the document as the report when in fact it was only portions of the full report that was tabled. Prima facie the Premier's statement that she was tabling the report is incorrect but there is little or no evidence that could lead to a conclusion that the statement was deliberately misleading. Its subsequent misdescription in the parliamentary record is not the responsibility of the Premier but of table officers who apparently did not realise at the time that it was not the full report tabled. I intend to take no further action in respect of this matter.

PETITIONS

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

Moreton Bay, No-Fishing Zones

Mr Weightman, from 1,920 petitioners, requesting the House to adopt the Moreton Bay Access Alliance's proposal for the no-fishing zones and to require the EPA to negotiate with local industry groups to develop zoning acceptable for all parties.

Mary MacKillop Catholic Primary School, Pedestrian Crossing

Mr Weightman, from 686 petitioners, requesting the House to provide a safe crossing at the Southern-end of Hardy Road, opposite the Mary MacKillop Catholic Primary School, Birkdale.

Traveston Dam

Mr Gibson, from 28 petitioners, requesting the House to abandon plans for the Traveston Dam and consider alternative solutions.

Sentencing for Assault

Mr Hayward, from 95 petitioners, requesting the House to amend the Criminal Code to the provision of mandatory minimum sentences for assault.

Sentencing for Assault

Mrs Sullivan, from 485 petitioners, requesting the House to amend the Criminal Code to the provision of mandatory minimum sentences for assault.

Energy Usage

Mrs Smith, from 131 petitioners, requesting the House to institute an Energywise scheme to educate and encourage the public to reduce their energy usage.

Pannikin Island, Fishing and Crabbing

Mr English, from 76 petitioners, requesting the House to encourage the EPA to ensure the waters in and around Pannikin Island remain open to both recreational fishers and commercial crabbers.

Moreton Bay Marine Park Zoning Plan

Mr English, from 1,513 petitioners, requesting the House to grant exemptions to the Bay Islands Transit System ferry service, ambulance services and any other public transport, from the proposed speed reductions in the draft Moreton Bay Marine Park Zoning Plan.

Gold Coast, Bridge Jumping

Mrs Stuckey, from 140 petitioners, requesting the House to provide laws or provisions to combat the jumping from Gold Coast Bridges into its waterways, particularly boating channels.

The Clerk presented the following e-petitions, sponsored by the honourable members indicated—

Gap-Ashgrove-Bardon, School Bus Service

Mr Fraser, from 300 petitioners, requesting the House to extend the direct school bus services for the Gap/Ashgrove/Bardon areas to Spring Hill and the City.

Horse Levy Legislation

Mr Lingard, from 259 petitioners, requesting the House to stop the proposed federal horse levy bill.

Birkdale, Pedestrian Crossing

Mr Weightman, from 129 petitioners, requesting the House to provide a safe crossing on Hardy and Birdwood Roads Birkdale.

Moreton Bay, No-Fishing Zones

Mr Weightman, from 46 petitioners, requesting the House to adopt the Moreton Bay Access Alliance's proposal for the no-fishing zones and to require the EPA to negotiate with local industry groups to develop zoning acceptable for all parties.

Koala Coast

Mr Weightman, from 592 petitioners, requesting the House to ensure the Koala habitat in the Koala Coast be fully protected.

Water Fluoridation Bill

Mrs Cunningham, from 3,763 petitioners, requesting the House to hold a referendum on mandatory fluoridation prior to the debate on the bill.

Carrara Waterways, Pollution

Mr Langbroek, from 24 petitioners, requesting the House to investigate the cause of the pollutant in the Carrara waterways and take whatever action is necessary.

Gold Coast, Bridge Jumping

Mrs Stuckey, from 8 petitioners, requesting the House to provide laws or provisions to combat the jumping from Gold Coast Bridges into its waterways, particularly boating channels.

Boyd Street, Interchange

Mrs Stuckey, from 6 petitioners, requesting the House to negotiate with the New South Wales Government to secure funds for the construction of an interchange at Boyd Street into Old Piggabeen Road, Tugan.

Daylight Saving

Mr Stevens, from 3,289 petitioners, requesting the House to call an immediate referendum to trial daylight savings in Queensland.

Renewable Energy Sources

Mrs Reilly, from 771 petitioners, requesting the House to build greater amounts of renewable energy sources in government buildings.

Wildlife Protection

Mrs Reilly, from 610 petitioners, requesting the House to fence roads, wildlife areas and plant trees in open spaces to protect wildlife.

Dogs, Fenced Exercise Areas

Mrs Reilly, from 411 petitioners, requesting the House to construct more fenced dog exercise areas.

Airconditioning of Schools

Mrs Reilly, from 1,248 petitioners, requesting the House to install air-conditioning in schools.

Mudgeeraba, Aquatic Centre

Mrs Reilly, from 118 petitioners, requesting the House to construct an aquatic centre at Mudgeeraba.

Petitions received.

TABLED PAPERS**PAPERS TABLED DURING THE RECESS**

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

14 March 2008—

- Response from the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology (Mr Schwarten) to a paper petition (994-08) presented by Mr Dickson from 325 petitioners regarding the Department of Housing's development of a site at the corner of Sunbird Chase and Nicklin Way, Parrearra
- Response from the Minister for Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation (Mr McNamara) to an e-petition (976-07) sponsored by Mr McNamara from 551 petitioners requesting the Queensland Parliament to intervene in the Japanese whale harvest

25 March 2008—

- Response from the Minister for Emergency Services (Mr Roberts) to a paper petition (997-08) presented by Mr Pearce from 819 petitioners regarding the provision of a full-time ambulance service at Gracemere
- Environmental Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008—Erratum to Explanatory Notes
- Response from the Minister for Emergency Services (Mr Roberts) to an e-petition (878-07) sponsored by Mr Moorhead from 61 petitioners regarding emergency service access to Bethania residents when Bethania railway crossing is blocked

28 March 2008—

- Response from the Minister for Emergency Services (Mr Roberts) to an e-petition (977-07) sponsored by Mr Malone from 1694 petitioners regarding Queensland Ambulance Service rostering arrangements

3 April 2008—

- Letter, dated 1 April 2008, from the Acting Premier (Mr Lucas) to the Clerk of the Parliament enclosing a copy of a letter from the Commonwealth Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Treaties listing proposed international treaty actions tabled in both houses of the Federal Parliament on 12 March 2008 and the National Interest Analyses for the proposed treaty actions listed
- Response from the Treasurer (Mr Fraser) to two e-petitions (979-07 sponsored by Mr Choi from 16 petitioners and 932-07 sponsored by Dr Flegg from 946 petitioners) regarding proposed extended trading hours for provision of liquor at Legs & Kegs in Capalaba, and underage drinking, respectively

7 April 2008—

- Response from the Minister for Transport, Trade, Employment and Industrial Relations (Mr Mickel) to two paper petitions (989-08 from 595 petitioners and 990-08 from 546 petitioners) presented by Mr Wellington regarding the Eudlo railway station and the Eudlo to Palmwoods rail line upgrade, respectively
- Response from the Minister for Transport, Trade, Employment and Industrial Relations (Mr Mickel) to a paper petition (995-08) presented by Mr Langbroek from 67 petitioners regarding the western route for the Gold Coast Rapid Transit System
- Response from the Minister for Transport, Trade, Employment and Industrial Relations (Mr Mickel) to twenty-one paper petitions (948-07 to 968-07) presented by Mr Nicholls from 489 petitioners in total regarding the introduction of the TransLink smart card electronic ticketing system

8 April 2008—

- Response from the Minister for Natural Resources and Water and Minister Assisting the Premier in North Queensland (Mr Wallace) to a paper petition (1015-08) presented by Mr Knuth from 214 petitioners requesting an amnesty to allow Bowen Basin leasehold landowners to convert to freehold
- Overseas travel report—Report on an overseas visit by the Treasurer (Mr Fraser) to Tokyo, Beijing, Hong Kong and Singapore from 3 to 8 March 2008—Report on the Queensland Treasury Corporation Overseas Investor Relations Program

9 April 2008—

- Response from the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Premier in Western Queensland (Mr Shine) to a paper petition (1008-08) presented by Mrs Sullivan from 224 petitioners regarding short-term cash loans

10 April 2008—

- Island Co-ordinating Council—Annual Report 2006-07
- Island Co-ordinating Council—Annual Report 2006-07—Late tabling statement

11 April 2008—

- Report by the Environmental Protection Agency entitled 'State of the Environment Queensland 2007' [CD]
- Key findings: State of the Environment Queensland 2007, including CD version of the report entitled 'State of the Environment Queensland 2007'
- Document entitled 'The Queensland Government response to the State of the Environment Queensland 2007'

14 April 2008—

- Response from the Deputy Premier and Minister for Infrastructure and Planning (Mr Lucas) to two paper petitions (912-07 and 922-07) presented by Mr Foley from 526 and 203 petitioners respectively regarding the proposed Traveston Dam
- Response from the Minister for Health (Mr Robertson) to an e-petition (849-07) sponsored by Mr Hobbs from 748 petitioners regarding the Flying Obstetric and Gynaecology service based in Roma

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by the Clerk—

Housing Act 2003—

- Housing Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2008, No. 52

Police Service Administration Act 1990—

- Police Service Administration Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2008, No. 53

Government Owned Corporations Amendment Act 2007—

- Government Owned Corporations Amendment (Postponement) Regulation 2008, No. 54

Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982—

- Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2008, No. 55

Government Owned Corporations Act 1993, Transport Infrastructure Act 1994—

- Government Owned Corporations Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2008, No. 56

Health Act 1937—

- Health (Drugs and Poisons) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2008, No. 57

Tow Truck Act 1973, Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995—

- Transport Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2008, No. 58

Geothermal Exploration Act 2004, Mineral Resources Act 1989, Petroleum Act 1923, Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004—

- Mines and Energy Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2008, No. 59

Security Providers Amendment Act 2007—

- Security Providers Amendment (Postponement) Regulation 2008, No. 60

Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991—

- Criminal Practice Amendment Rule (No. 1) 2008, No. 61

Judicial Remuneration Act 2007—

- Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 62

River Improvement Trust Act 1940—

- River Improvement Trust Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2008, No. 63

Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990—

- Fire and Rescue Service Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2008, No. 64

Nature Conservation Act 1992—

- Nature Conservation (Protected Plants Harvest Period) Notice 2008, No. 65

Local Government Act 1993—

- Local Government Reform Implementation (Transferring Areas) Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2008, No. 66

Motor Accident Insurance Act 1994—

- Motor Accident Insurance Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2008, No. 67

Health and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2007—

- Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 68

Health Services Act 1991—

- Health Services Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2008, No. 69

Mineral Resources Act 1989—

- Mineral Resources Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2008, No. 70

Fair Trading Act 1989—

- Fair Trading Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2008, No. 71

Community Services Act 2007—

- Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 72

Community Services Act 2007—

- Community Services Regulation 2008, No. 73

Environmental Protection Act 1994, Integrated Planning Act 1997, Queensland Heritage Act 1992, Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995—

- Queensland Heritage and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2008, No. 74

Queensland Heritage and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2007—

- Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 75

Lotteries Act 1997—

- Lotteries Amendment Rule (No. 1) 2008, No. 76

Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008—

- Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 77

Urban Land Development Authority Act 2007—

- Urban Land Development Authority Regulation 2008, No. 78

Residential Tenancies Act 1994—

- Residential Tenancies Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2008, No. 79

Financial Administration and Audit and Another Act Amendment Act 2008—

- Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 80

Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists Registration Act 2001, Drug Court Act 2000, Education (Overseas Students) Act 1996, Environmental Protection Act 1994, Integrated Planning Act 1997, Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982, Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 2000—

- Vocational Education, Training and Employment and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2008, No. 81

Fisheries Amendment Act 2006—

- Proclamation commencing remaining provisions No. 82

Fisheries Act 1994, Integrated Planning Act 1997, Marine Parks Act 2004, Nature Conservation Act 1992, State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999, Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act 1995—

- Fisheries Regulation 2008, No. 83 and Regulatory Impact Statement and Explanatory Notes for No. 83

Fisheries Act 1994—

- Fisheries Management Plans Amendment Management Plan (No. 1) 2008, No. 84 and Explanatory Notes for No. 84

Crime and Misconduct Act 2001—

- Crime and Misconduct Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2008, No. 85

Fair Trading Act 1989—

- Fair Trading Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2008, No. 86

Public Trustee Act 1978—

- Public Trustee Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2008, No. 87

Water and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2007

- Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 88

Forestry Act 1959, Nature Conservation Act 1992—

- Forestry and Nature Conservation Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2008, No. 89

Casino Control Act 1982—

- Casino Gaming Amendment Rule (No. 1) 2008, No. 90

Building Act 1975—

- Building Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2008, No. 91

This trade mission confirmed the rapidly escalating demand for resources in those Asian markets. At a personal level, this has renewed my determination as Premier to invest in export infrastructure at sufficient levels to stay ahead of that demand. It has equally renewed my determination to maintain a sense of urgency about the need to act to arrest climate change. The extraordinary growth in those countries is delivering massive improvements in the quality of life for millions of people and Queensland is an integral part of that growth; indeed, our resources are fuelling it. Therefore, working together to make that growth both safe and clean is a challenge that we accept. I am pleased to note the commitment of senior and influential people in both industry and government in all of those countries to building partnerships on this issue.

Hospital Infrastructure

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier) (9.42 am): My government is in the business of building, and we are building the infrastructure that Queenslanders require today and for tomorrow. It is critical that we get the infrastructure, the hospitals, the schools, the roads and the water grid in place and that we get it right so that Queensland can continue to thrive and prosper for our children and our grandchildren. Upon becoming Premier just seven months ago, I said that we need to be better prepared for the challenges ahead of us, we need to see over the horizon and we need to anticipate and solve problems. I also said that growing Queensland's regions is the key to our economic strength and to managing population growth and that my government would renew its efforts to grow our regions.

In that spirit, today I am very pleased to announce that we will deliver new and improved health and hospital services for the people of north, north-west and far-north Queensland. Since becoming Premier, on many occasions I have visited those communities and have done on-site inspections of the Mackay and Cairns hospitals, and I have given undertakings to the respective communities to find a way to deliver what they clearly need, which is new hospital infrastructure. Today I honour those promises and my government will deliver.

As members here know, Queensland already has an extensive infrastructure program. It is the largest in the country. We are spending \$1.6 million every hour of every day of every week as we build the Queensland of tomorrow. Identifying new needs requires serious and careful thinking about appropriate sources of funds for those new needs. To put in place the hospital infrastructure needed in regional communities, we need to find resources above and beyond our existing Capital Works Program. This requires governments to make hard decisions about priorities, to do the hard yards managing a large asset base and to resolve where the public interest best lies.

My government has done the hard yards and the hard work on these projects and by the end of this year we will sell both the Cairns and Mackay airports along with the Port of Brisbane Corporation's shareholding in the Brisbane Airport Corporation. With the funds of this major sale, we will expand and redevelop the Cairns Base Hospital and we will buy a site for a future Cairns hospital. We will build a new Mackay Base Hospital on its current site and we will redevelop the Mount Isa Hospital.

It is vital that we redirect the airport sales funds directly into these geographically important hospitals. Mackay, Cairns and Mount Isa continue to face increased demand with their continually growing populations. Market interest in the Cairns and Mackay airports and the 12 per cent share in the Brisbane airport is anticipated to be very high, and I am confident that the sale will deliver the funds needed for the new health infrastructure. The Treasurer will be responsible for this sale, which will also involve a review of the government owned corporations ports sector, but today I can confirm that there will continue to be a publicly owned seaport authority in Cairns and a publicly owned seaport authority in Mackay.

Queensland Health projections indicate an urgent expansion is required at these major health hubs within the northern health service. Preliminary estimates suggest that total capital for the Cairns, Mackay and Mount Isa hospitals will be in the order of more than \$900 million. Every cent of the regional airport sales will be reinvested in infrastructure in those regions, including Cairns and Mackay.

I am confident in the decision to make this sale. Governments should be in the business of building and owning assets to serve Queenslanders' primary needs, that is health, safety and education, not owning airports. Government investment in regional airports has been an important part of developing those regional economies, but the days when governments needed to own and operate airports to ensure that they operated successfully and viably are simply over. With this sale the Queensland government will effectively move out of the airport business altogether. With this decision we continue to modernise our economy, with the private sector doing what it does best and governments doing what their responsibilities demand. The private sector in this country has proved more than capable, both here in Queensland and around the country, of operating and growing successful airports. The privately owned Gold Coast international and domestic airport grew by 4.7 per cent last year, while Brisbane airport grew by nine per cent. I am confident that we will see similar growth in the airports of Mackay and Cairns.

For my government the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders will always be a top priority. Good hospitals and good health care are core responsibilities of government and should come a long way ahead of other activities that can be done successfully by other operators. Today's decision puts the health of north Queenslanders first. Today's announcement is a decisive move to build regional Queensland. It is vital if we are to continue to provide the best level of health care for Queenslanders in all areas of the state. This decision will keep my government's \$10 billion Health Action Plan operating beyond its current time line, with new initiatives previously unannounced. We are putting our money where our mouth is to achieve what Queenslanders need. We are getting ahead of the challenge of growth and we are being better prepared for our future.

Sale of Airports

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Health) (9.48 am): Providing modern, first-class infrastructure to meet the soaring demand for public health services in Queensland is a priority of the Bligh government. Not only are we building three new tertiary hospitals in the south-east corner as part of our statewide \$5.1 billion Capital Works Program but we have also been busy with significant planning for many of our regional centres, particularly in north Queensland. Plans to build a new hospital for Mackay and significantly redevelop hospitals in Cairns and Mount Isa have just been announced by the Premier. Those communities are fast outgrowing their infrastructure and require expanded and improved facilities to deal with a growing and ageing population and soaring levels of chronic disease.

Our master plan for Mackay outlines sensible solutions that will see the hospital rebuilt in two stages over four to five years and at an approximate cost of some \$405 million. The new three-storey Mackay hospital will provide more operating theatres, a dedicated coronary care unit and a larger intensive care unit. It will also include increased mental health services, new staff accommodation, a larger dialysis unit, and new emergency and outpatient departments.

In Cairns we will fund a major expansion and redevelopment, delivering a new clinical wing with more surgical beds, additional cardiac care facilities and a day surgery unit. It will also deliver enhanced aged-care and rehabilitation facilities and radiation oncology services. A new cancer care unit will be established in consultation with the local cancer group. In addition, the main section of the hospital will be refurbished for improved facilities but it will also provide for future expansion, consisting of four vacant floors. A new integrated mental health unit with additional beds will also be delivered, and we will fast-track the acquisition of a large parcel of land on the south side of Cairns that will provide for future health service needs in the far-north.

In Mount Isa we are committing \$65.2 million for a major hospital upgrade consisting of an expanded emergency department and a new building housing outpatients and primary and community health services. This will be delivered over four years to replace Mount Isa Hospital's ageing infrastructure. The project will also include better training facilities for medical and nursing students at James Cook University's Mount Isa Centre for Rural and Remote Health which will help attract medical and nursing graduates to the region. We are building tomorrow's Queensland today, and these three major north Queensland hospital projects are testament to our resolve and determination to improving health services in our regions.

Torres Strait, Safety of Public Servants

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Health) (9.51 am): Health services on most islands in the Torres Strait have returned to normal following a breakthrough agreement between Queensland Health and nurses earlier this month. The commissioning of two new health facilities with staff accommodation has been fast-tracked and will open in the near future on both Warraber and Erub (Darnley) islands. Maintenance work is also nearing completion on Mabuiag Island. Until this work is complete, nurses will visit these islands during the day. All other islands in the region with a resident nurse position have their nurses back on deck resuming full services, with the exception of Coconut Island, whose nurse is currently on leave.

Questions around reports and assessments that have been carried out in recent years into the security and maintenance of Torres Strait facilities have been treated very seriously. The matter of the 2006 risk assessment report has been referred to the CMC and the Queensland Health Ethical Standards Unit for investigation. This investigation is continuing. Following meetings between the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission, Queensland Health and the Queensland Nurses Union, a detailed work plan has been agreed upon and presented to the QIRC deputy president. On the basis of this work plan, nurses agreed to return to the outer islands progressively from 4 April. All parties will meet again by the end of this month to measure progress. This work plan covers a number of areas beyond maintenance and security such as transport, communication and general consultation.

Priority security and maintenance repairs have been completed on each island. I have personally visited the region twice since the last sitting to inspect work on a number of islands, including Mabuiag. Work is occurring to identify local emergency response arrangements for each island. Different solutions are required for different settings according to such variables as mobile phone coverage. Q-Build and

Queensland Health are determining the most appropriate options. A community escort proposal is being investigated on each island. This will identify individuals in each community able to escort nurses and health workers on call-out after hours. In the interim, two workers will attend every call-out visit.

Prior to this incident negotiations had been occurring with Q-Build to provide maintenance to the outer islands. This arrangement has been fast-tracked and health centre staff can now directly notify Q-Build of any security maintenance requirements. Q-Build is overseeing the outstanding maintenance work, and future regular maintenance will be carried out by Q-Build.

Mr Schwarten: The mighty Q-Build.

Mr ROBERTSON: I thank the minister for public works and housing for his assistance in that regard. Arrangements are being made to deliver aggressive behaviour management training to any Torres Strait staff member who has not yet participated. We have already completed an intensive work program in the Torres Strait which the Queensland Nurses Union has acknowledged. The job is not done yet, but we will continue to work flat out until every issue is adequately and appropriately addressed.

Sale of Airports

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Treasurer) (9.53 am): This government operates under a legislative obligation—an obligation imposed upon ourselves—to build the state's net worth and fully fund our services on a sustainable basis. We do not borrow to pay the day-to-day bills or use sale proceeds to fund recurrent expenditure, unlike the opposition when last in government and when the Leader of the Opposition sat at the cabinet table. We are responsible managers of the state's finances. We are not ideological slaves but willing always to consider the composition of our balance sheet to ensure that the assets of the Queensland taxpayer are the assets that are appropriate at any one point in time.

Today's announcement is about continuing our commitment to make the forward-thinking decisions to provide for the needs of growing communities. It is about making the tough calls that strong governments make. It is about facing up to the needs of a modern Queensland and making choices, not sitting still. Governments around the world are not in the business of running airports. We have seen the success of airports that have benefited from private investment. We will no longer be in the business of running airports. As the Premier has outlined, we will be in the business of building new hospitals and health facilities for regional Queenslanders.

The trade sale of the Cairns and Mackay airports, along with our remaining minority shareholding in the Brisbane Airport Corporation, will be conducted before the end of this year. The proceeds will fund major health upgrades in Cairns, Mackay and Mount Isa. The sale proceeds of the Mackay airport will contribute to the cost of a new \$400 million hospital for the city that is front and centre in Queensland's coal boom. The shareholding in Brisbane Airport will fund a \$65 million hospital redevelopment in Mount Isa, also a key player in the long-term future of the resource industry. As the Minister for Health has set out, the future face of health facilities in Cairns will be provided with the proceeds from the sale of the Cairns airport, with any surplus being deposited into the Future Growth Fund.

Collectively, these assets have a book value of approximately \$800 million. We expect that the private sector will pay well above that value to secure the chance to invest in Queensland's future prospects. The Brisbane Airport shareholding is subject to pre-emptive rights by the other shareholders and we expect strong interest amongst those other shareholders to secure a great outcome for taxpayers. A commercial advisory team including a probity auditor will soon be appointed to assist with the transaction for the Cairns and Mackay airports. We will retain the ownership of the land on which Cairns and Mackay airports operate, with the transaction proposed to involve a long-term lease. Furthermore, all permanent employees will be afforded the current terms and conditions of current enterprise bargaining agreements for the next two years. This will not preclude the negotiation of new agreements as long as employees are no worse off. There will now commence a review of Queensland ports corporation's structures to ensure they are best placed for the future with, as the Premier indicated, a seaport continuing to be based in Cairns and a seaport authority continuing to be based in Mackay.

We believe we are best placed to take advantage of prevailing conditions on global markets. As credit markets freeze, there remains large mandates across the globe looking for sound, solid infrastructure investments. The story of Queensland is well known and we believe will attract a premium of interest in the long-term investment in these two key airport facilities. As a major international tourist airport and aviation hub, Cairns airport is ready to take the next step into a truly 21st century airport. Mackay's role in servicing the Bowen Basin and other resource areas provides it with strong growth potential, ready to attract future investment.

This is about the future. With today's decision, we are making the choices that governments are elected to make—decisive choices about the role we see for government. In tough times you need to make the hard decisions, decisions for the future. The future for governments is not in running airports. The future for cities like Cairns, Mackay and Mount Isa is in new, enhanced and better hospitals.

Sale of Airports

Hon. D BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Regional Development and Industry) (9.57 am): I surely do not need to remind anyone here that Cairns is one of Queensland's and Australia's premier tourism destinations. Cairns and tropical north Queensland is a region that proudly boasts tourism as its No. 1 industry. But, like all regions throughout Australia, we are competing in an increasingly competitive domestic and international tourism market. With the dramatic increase in global air travel—forecast to continue growing at eight per cent per annum—it is essential that Cairns is taking its place in the modern aviation environment.

One of the strategic advantages any tourism destination can have is its strong aviation infrastructure. Over the past year all of the state's major regional and metropolitan airports experienced significant capacity growth. The privately owned airports of the south-east continue to attract the highest number of airlines and passengers. Both Brisbane Airport Corporation and Queensland Airports Ltd are privately run and have successfully supported the state's \$18 billion tourism industry through their commitment to excellence. The Gold Coast airport has recently undergone a significant upgrade and is now home to international low-cost carrier AirAsia X. Virgin Blue, Jetstar and Qantas have also recently increased the frequency and numbers of their services to that region.

The decision today to privatise the Cairns International Airport will be a major boost for the Cairns tourism industry. A privatised Cairns airport will be free to pursue the business objectives required to grow passengers, flight numbers and new destinations. Cairns has suffered a competitive disadvantage compared to leaner, meaner, more flexible private airports in Australia and around the world—but no longer. Privatisation of airports has a proven track record in this state. Despite Queensland having more major domestic and international airports than any other state or territory, we continue to grow.

One of Australia's leading authorities on aviation and tourism, the TTF, recently released a report into the impact of airport privatisation and this clearly concludes that airport privatisation in Australia and Queensland has been successful. So what this is about—tough as the decision may be for some in Cairns—is more jobs, more tourists, more business and, most important of all, more money for the health infrastructure that is essential to the future of Cairns and the region.

Atherton Fire Station, Cancer Cluster

Hon. N ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.00 am): In December last year the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service advised Queensland Health of five cases of cancer amongst Atherton firefighters. These included three cases of brain cancer, one of colon cancer and one of prostate cancer. At our request, Queensland Health completed an epidemiological investigation, and I made a commitment to the firefighters and their families that they would be briefed first on the investigation's findings before they were made public. On Saturday night I visited Atherton Fire Station with the deputy fire commissioner, officials from the United Firefighters Union and Queensland Health to deliver that briefing. I table the Queensland Health report.

Tabled paper: Report, dated April 2008, by Queensland Health, titled 'Queensland Health investigation into concerns regarding cases of cancer in firefighters working at Atherton Fire Station'.

The Queensland Health study found that the incidence of brain cancer amongst Atherton firefighters does fit the definition of a cancer cluster. However, the study also found that there were no identified hazards at the station that were linked to causing brain cancer. Despite this finding, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service has initiated additional environmental testing at the station and this is expected to commence in the next week or so.

The study makes nine recommendations which the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service accepts and will act upon. One key recommendation is for the fire service to consider conducting further studies into the incidence of brain cancer amongst firefighters. This study will be a comprehensive analysis designed to provide information which could identify whether any other stations have similar cancer rates to Atherton. It will not involve, as reported, individual testing of firefighters. QFRS will crosscheck its staff records with the Cancer Registry held by Queensland Health. The Retired Firefighters Association, with its database of former firefighters, has already been approached to support this research. I also acknowledge the ongoing cooperation that this study has received from the United Firefighters Union.

The study also recommends a broader study into the incidence of cancer amongst firefighters generally. I will be writing to the relevant ministers in other state governments asking for their support of this study and advising of Queensland's desire to lead this investigation based on a proposal before the Australasian Fire Authorities Council by Monash University.

I want to place on the record my appreciation and thanks to the Atherton firefighters and their families for their patience and cooperation during this very difficult time in their lives. Our sympathy and concern go out to those directly affected by these cancer cases. I, and the government, am committed to ensuring a thorough investigation and ensuring that firefighters and their families are given every bit of support we can provide.

Queensland Police Service, Technology

Hon. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Sport) (10.03 am): The Queensland Police Service is embracing technology to make life increasingly difficult for criminals. Our scenes-of-crime officers are at the forefront of this push. This government has supported these officers with \$1.4 million in funding to convert from film to digital photography. We have provided another \$1.14 million to supply laptop computers to each scenes-of-crime vehicle. These laptops are called Toughbooks and they enable police at a crime scene to wirelessly connect to databases.

Police tell me that this has made a huge difference to forensic work. Officers have converted to electronic case files, dramatically reducing time spent on paperwork. They use the laptops to instantly transfer still pictures and video of a crime scene. This is particularly useful in remote locations. Officers are able to send images to experts who are long distances away and receive advice while they are still at the crime scene. It also means that investigators can view stills and video without having to enter a scene and potentially cause contamination.

Without doubt the biggest advantage of the Toughbook laptops is that fingerprints, shoe prints and other identifying marks are able to be immediately sent for searching against databases. Prior to this technology it took up to two weeks for offenders to be identified through fingerprints left at a scene. Now it is possible to identify offenders in minutes, not weeks. For instance, late last year a vehicle allegedly used in a Gold Coast armed robbery was found in Kingston a few hours later. Fingerprints found in the vehicle were electronically transferred for searching against the national fingerprint database. In just 30 minutes the identity of the offender was relayed to investigators and he was in custody less than an hour later.

In February this year it took just 45 minutes to identify a suspect in a burglary at a Margate pharmacy. It was a similar story this month at a Chermside jewellery theft, with officers still at the scene when a suspect was identified. Armed with this new technology, our scenes-of-crime officers are helping to identify suspects in remarkable time, leading to faster arrests.

Redcliffe State High School, Oxley Avenue Overpass

Hon. RJ WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Education and Training and Minister for the Arts) (10.05 am): Hundreds of thousands of students return to school today after their term 1 school holidays. At Redcliffe State High School students will be using a new pedestrian overpass from today which links the school's two campuses across Oxley Avenue. Students will now be able to cross this busy road at Oxley Avenue safely using the pedestrian overpass. The overpass provides a direct link between the two parts of the Redcliffe State High campus, with ramps and entry points safely contained within school grounds.

From now on students and staff will no longer have to cross the road at the traffic light crossing at Oxley Avenue. Members will be aware of the tragic loss of Redcliffe State High School student Caitlin Hanrick, who was killed after being struck by a car in late 2006, prompting construction of the overpass. Of course, nothing can ever make up for Caitlin's death and her family's loss, but this overpass will guard against any tragic accident like this happening again.

The overpass is the result of extensive consultation between the Department of Main Roads, my department and the Redcliffe State High School community. We have worked closely with the school to ensure that we have developed a solution that suits student and staff needs and most of all offers a safer passage between the school's two campuses. Main Roads and Education Queensland have strived to minimise any disruption to the school and local community during construction, and I would like to thank the school community for its patience and support throughout the construction period.

I would also like to thank the main roads minister, Warren Pitt, and the member for Redcliffe, Lillian van Litsenburg, who have worked tirelessly to bring this project to fruition. The overpass and ramps are now open for use by students. Some further minor construction of stairways and landscaping will be completed throughout this term and be ready by the start of next term. While crossing monitors and interim safety works on Oxley Avenue have served the school well over the last year during this planning and construction phase, I am pleased that the overpass is now open for use and I look forward to seeing the project completed in the next few months.

Urban Congestion

Hon. FW PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads and Local Government) (10.07 am): In Brisbane alone, urban congestion is predicted to grow and to cost the community \$3 billion annually by 2020. Managing this challenge is a major priority for the state government. High levels of congestion affect the lives of many Queenslanders by slowing down the wheels of commerce, reducing the amount of time people can spend with their family and friends, and increasing vehicle emissions. This is a serious challenge that we need to manage as we continue to experience unprecedented growth.

In response, Main Roads is undertaking a broad range of initiatives in partnership with other agencies to tackle congestion across the entire urban road network. Firstly, the Queensland government has increased road funding to a record \$3.05 billion this year alone which equates to \$60 million a week. But extra road capacity is only part of the solution to urban congestion. We are also providing additional traffic response units and breakdown towing services in south-east Queensland to ensure that, when crashes and vehicle breakdowns occur, they are cleared as quickly as possible.

In partnership with Brisbane City Council, we will commence a pilot of the STREAMS traffic management system this month. It will involve the trial of a single technological approach to managing traffic signals and the benefits that are available to motorists through improved reliability of travel.

This initiative follows on from the successful establishment of the joint Brisbane Metropolitan Transport Management Centre, between the state and Brisbane City Council, at the beginning of 2007. In the first 12 months of operation the centre coordinated the responses to more than 33,500 incidents across the Brisbane road network. An independent assessment has estimated that this coordinated approach alone has reduced congestion costs by as much as \$27 million a year through faster response and clearance of incidents.

Real-time traffic condition information is also provided to the public through the 131940 telephone hotline and web site service. The number of phone calls to the 131940 traffic hotline has increased by 250 per cent to 25,000 a month and the number of hits on the 131940 web site has increased by 70 per cent to some 100,000 visits a month. This government is serious about making a concerted effort to tackle congestion in the south-east.

Water Supply

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for Infrastructure and Planning) (10.10 am): The state government is getting on with the job of securing south-east Queensland's water supplies for today and for the future. Not only is work on the water grid past the halfway mark and progressing well; we are planning for the twin challenges of the future—population growth and climate change.

Last month the Queensland Water Commission released a draft south-east Queensland water strategy. It is a plan for a future where people should never again face level 6 water restrictions once our current worst drought on record breaks. Six possible desalination plant sites have been identified in the strategy for further evaluation. By mid-2009 these potential sites will be given further rankings. I want to make it clear, however, that the projects being built as part of the current water grid mean that none of these sites should be needed for at least 20 years, except as part of a severe drought response.

Unlike the opposition, the state government currently has plans to build only one desalination plant in south-east Queensland—the current plant under construction at Tugun. However, the opposition wants to scrap the proposed Traveston Dam and build another desalination plant today.

On ABC Radio on 26 March the member for Maroochydore accused the government of scaring people by naming six sites being investigated for potential future desalination plants. So I thought I would have a look at what the member for Maroochydore had said about the issue and whether she was being open and up-front with the people of south-east Queensland herself. In a 26 March media release she said—

A desalination plant north of Brisbane would cost about \$1.6 billion and could supply 200 ML/day within 24 to 30 months.

In another media release on 27 March, the member for Maroochydore said that a desalination plant 'should be located nearest to the greatest population growth, which falls between the Sunshine Coast and Brisbane.' On 28 March on ABC Coast FM she said that there were alternative sites closer to Brisbane for a desalination plant. But it turns out that approach was not new. A 7 January media release by the member for Maroochydore stated—

The Government should bite the bullet and do the responsible thing by scrapping Traveston Dam and building a permanent desalination plant north of Brisbane.

Six weeks ago the Leader of Opposition said that the member for Maroochydore would release the opposition's water policy soon. But it looks like the member for Kawana is gunning for the deputy's role in the mythical united conservative party because he has already provided much more detail than the member for Maroochydore. In a Sunshine Coast *Daily* article on 27 March, the member for Kawana said—

A desalination plant at Bribie Island run by green energy is clearly the way to go.

The member for Kawana is the Basil Fawly of the opposition—'Don't mention the war. I mentioned it once but I think I got away with it.' The member for Maroochydore is walking around with a compass and a GPS saying that we should build a desalination plant somewhere—maybe up there, maybe over here, maybe around the corner; who knows? I have got a message for the member for Maroochydore: the member for Kawana knows where it is going, according to the opposition.

The state government is being open and honest about its plans for investigation into sites that may be needed for desalination plants in 20 years. The opposition should do the same. It is time the opposition came clean with residents north of Brisbane about where it wants to build a desalination plant now.

The proposed Traveston Crossing Dam would supply 70,000 megalitres of water a year. That is 50 per cent more water than the Tugun desalination plant. Under the opposition's plan, if we scrap Traveston we would need to build at least one plant right now. But, to cater for future growth as the strategy indicates, we would still have to build another one by 2028. The opposition has a two desalination plants policy. That is its policy.

Mr Gibson interjected.

Mr LUCAS: We have to have two. Under the Queensland Water Commission plan, barring severe continued drought, south-east Queensland would not need another desalination plant—

Mr Gibson interjected.

Mr LUCAS: The member for Gympie is such a good lawyer that he has proceedings in the High Court before it has even gone to the federal government. That is what a good lawyer he is.

Under the Queensland Water Commission plan, barring severe continued drought, south-east Queensland would not need another desalination plant until at least 2028. But the opposition wants a desalination plant to replace Traveston in 2008 and another one by 2028. The member for Maroochydore has been tripped up by her Sunshine Coast colleagues. It is time the opposition came clean about exactly where it thinks a desalination plant should be built now to replace the water that would be supplied by the Traveston Crossing Dam.

Coal, Port and Rail Infrastructure

Hon. RJ MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (Minister for Transport, Trade, Employment and Industrial Relations) (10.14 am): The Queensland government is supporting the resources boom with major investment in rail and port facilities. On 8 April a new daily outloading record was established at Dalrymple Bay Coal Terminal of 208,362 tonnes. Coal exports through this terminal are expected to increase from 45 million tonnes per annum to in excess of 60 million tonnes per annum by the end of the year.

The \$5.4 billion major coal transport infrastructure investment program implemented in 2005 has to date delivered a 52 million tonnes per annum increase in port capacity, a 26 million tonnes per annum increase in rail track capacity and a 23 million tonnes per annum increase in rolling stock capacity. The capital cost of completed and fully operational expansions is around \$2 billion, part of the broader \$15 billion coal infrastructure program of action and development of a 20-year coal infrastructure strategic plan to be finalised by midyear.

Recent major upgrades include: the Hay Point services coal terminal \$300 million upgrade from 34 to 44 million tonnes per annum; the Dalrymple Bay Coal Terminal short gain \$33 million upgrade from 54 to 60 million tonnes per annum; the \$532 million Dalrymple Bay Coal Terminal phase 1 expansion from 60 million tonnes per annum to 68 million tonnes per annum, and a further 17 million tonnes per annum expansion to 85 million tonnes per annum capacity is also underway at Dalrymple Bay Coal Terminal with completion scheduled by the end of 2008 or early 2009 costing \$679 million; the Gladstone export terminal's \$774 million upgrade from 45 to 75 million tonnes per annum; the Abbot Point Coal Terminal \$116 million expansion from 15 to 21 million tonnes per annum; the Goonyella rail infrastructure upgrades totalling \$132 million; the Blackwater rail infrastructure upgrades with 47 kilometres of track duplications and the third loop at RG Tanna Coal Terminal totalling \$443 million; the Moura coal crossing loop extensions costing \$35 million; and the delivery of 34 diesels which includes 10 new 4100 class and 24 upgraded 2250 class, 28 electrics including 15 3600 class overhauls, two 3500 class overhauls and 11 3700 class upgrades, and delivery of 838 coal wagons with an extra 32 new wagons expected to be delivered this month.

Electricity Industry

Hon. GJ WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy) (10.17 am): The Bligh government does not turn its back on the battlers. That is why we are spending another record amount in subsidies to Ergon Energy to help households in regional Queensland meet the cost of their electricity bills. Last year the average household received \$738 in subsidies from our government totalling about \$467 million. Without the subsidy, households would pay a lot more for their electricity.

We continue to protect households and small businesses with a maximum price cap on electricity. Last year when the Queensland Competition Authority increased the maximum price cap for electricity by 11 per cent, we raised the rebate for pensioners and seniors to match it. We also established a \$3 million assistance scheme to help people in financial hardship.

When the Queensland Competition Authority flagged a seven per cent rise this year, we sent a strong submission urging it to go back and do its sums again. We told the authority that any change in the maximum price cap should be genuine and should only reflect the true cost of supplying electricity. I sent the authority a second strong submission last week along similar lines. Why? Because we are on the side of the consumer and we will continue to look after the interests of everyday Queenslanders. We established an independent Energy Ombudsman so that consumers have someone to turn to. His office is a one-stop shop that looks after the rights of consumers. We also called in all of the electricity retailers, read them the riot act and told them to lift their game. Show-cause notices have now been issued to three of those retailers.

My director-general, as the regulator, has powers under the act and I will back him to the hilt in exercising those powers. At my request, he has directed all of the electricity retailers to appoint independent auditors, at their own cost, to go through their billing systems with a fine-tooth comb.

The Bligh government does not turn its back on the battlers. We have hardship schemes and pensioner rebates in place and we subsidise the cost of electricity for households in regional Queensland because we want people, no matter where they live, to have access to affordable electricity.

Public Works and Housing

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology) (10.19 am): While those members opposite are spinning their wheels on new political parties, this government is busy getting on with the job of building Queensland. This focus is apparent when we consider the impressive amount of work undertaken by departments and agencies in my ministerial portfolio in the first quarter of this year. Between January and March the Department of Housing spent just under \$50 million on purchasing close to 170 units of accommodation and 10 development sites across Queensland. It also spent more than \$34 million completing the construction of 67 new units of accommodation and starting construction on a further 73 units. In fact, the Department of Housing is, on average, spending \$3.38 million every working day helping Queenslanders—\$3.38 million every single day, a record in the history of this state. In the past three months the department has assisted some 1,900 new households into social housing—1,900 households in the past three months; a very impressive statistic. Since January the Department of Public Works has completed Skilled Park and the prep school program both on time and on budget while continuing to work on the more than \$7 billion worth of projects—yes, \$7 billion worth of projects—it is managing across the state.

Q-Build, the state government's construction and maintenance organisation, completed more than \$57 million worth of work in the past three months to March in areas ranging from Mount Gravatt to Mount Isa. Q-Build also invoiced \$18.5 million worth of responsive and planned maintenance in DOGIT communities across the state. More than \$7 million of this work is going on in those communities right now. Between January and March the Queensland Building Services Authority processed 3,000 new licence applications for builders—that is 3,000 new builders in Queensland—and issued 20,000 insurance policies valued at a little more than \$2.4 billion. That shows members what the building industry is doing in Queensland. Staff at the BSA have also answered 64,000 calls to its customer contact centre and finalised 1,400 disputes. As a demonstration of the strong demand for rental accommodation, more than 62,000 new bonds were lodged with the Residential Tenancies Authority in the first quarter of 2008. Residential Tenancies Authority staff also answered 94,000 calls at its call centre and undertook 197 investigations into possible breaches of the Residential Tenancies Act over the past three months.

It is one thing to talk—and we have heard plenty from the opposition—but it is another thing to act. The Bligh government is committed to securing Queensland's future and will continue to work hard at achieving that goal.

State of the Environment Report

Hon. Al McNAMARA (Hervey Bay—ALP) (Minister for Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation) (10.22 am): The third *State of the environment Queensland* report provides a comprehensive measure of the state's progress towards sustainability. Water security, climate change, cleaner energy, waste management and meeting the needs of a rapidly growing population are now dominant issues of community concern and public policy debate. Through the establishment of the Office of Climate Change in 2007, this government is tackling the challenges posed by climate change, unlike those opposite who remain a motley collection of climate change deniers and whatever-it-takes opportunists. Building resilience, by reducing pressures and protecting and rehabilitating the condition of the state's land and marine environments, is an important component of my department's strategy towards achieving sustainability.

The report shows that Queensland's air quality is generally very good due to better quality fuel and emissions standards for motor vehicles, the effective management of industrial emissions and a more strategic approach to controlled burning. We have also seen improvements in water quality as a result of the adoption of better land management practices and tighter controls on discharges into our waterways. A continuation of the Great Artesian Basin Sustainability Initiative is safeguarding this valuable asset, with water savings of 130,000 megalitres a year. The reduction of broadscale clearing of native vegetation under the Vegetation Management Act has delivered significant greenhouse savings, improved biodiversity, water quality and soil stability and reduced salinity. There has also been a greater adoption by Queenslanders of ecoefficiency initiatives, more recycling of waste and a rise in the use of public transport.

Initiatives introduced by the government to meet the challenge of climate change and to build resilience into the environment are outlined in a companion government response document to the state of the environment report. While the report openly identifies areas where we need to improve, one thing is for sure: Queensland's environment would only be going backwards under those opposite. Our environment is under increasing pressure from a rapidly growing population that is consuming more land, more energy and more water, generating more waste and impacting on the natural systems that support life. This report highlights a wide range of initiatives from agencies across government that are meeting the sustainability challenge and shows that the future of Queensland's environment is in good hands.

CHILD PROTECTION (OFFENDER PROHIBITION ORDER) BILL

COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AND CHILD GUARDIAN AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Cognate Debate

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.24 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That in accordance with standing order 129 the Child Protection (Offender Prohibition Order) Bill and the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian and Another Act Amendment Bill be treated as cognate bills for their remaining stages, with one question being put with regard to the second reading, consideration of the bills in detail together, and one question being put for the third readings and long titles.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Torres Strait, Safety of Public Servants; Crime and Misconduct Commission Investigation

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.25 am): Last week I received a letter from the Crime and Misconduct Commission. Members would vividly recall that on 13 March I tabled the original report into the safety of Queensland Health staff in the Torres Strait that showed serious inconsistencies with a report tabled by the minister one day earlier. Subsequent to this the minister—

Mr ROBERTSON: I rise to a point of order. The member is misleading the House. He did not table the original document. That is untrue and I ask him to withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Subsequent to this the minister referred both reports to the CMC—and maybe indeed some more, as we hear this morning. Ironically, the CMC has now written to me because it is not receiving full cooperation from Queensland Health—shades of Bundaberg Base Hospital. The CMC has asked if I could help identify the author—

Mr ROBERTSON: I rise to a point of order. The member is misleading the House. That is untrue and I ask him to withdraw. The CMC is receiving full cooperation by Queensland Health. The Leader of the Opposition should table the letter. He should not check. Table the letter! Table it right now!

Mr Springborg: I will be.

Mr SPEAKER: I make the point to the Minister for Health that this is not a debate; it is a personal explanation.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I rise to a point of order. I move that the Leader of the Opposition table the document to which he is referring—

Mr Copeland: If you give him time he will.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I know this is the first session. We have a motion from the Leader of the House that the Leader of the Opposition table the documents. I believe that that will be done without the need for the motion. I now call the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr SPRINGBORG: The CMC has asked if I could help identify the author of the report because Queensland Health has only provided the CMC with 'interim advice'. I table—and this has been overtaken in the last minute or so—the response from my office to the CMC and also the letter.

Tabled paper: Copy of letter, dated 8 April 2008, from Mr Stephen Lambrides, Acting Chairperson, Crime and Misconduct Commission, to the Leader of the Opposition, relating to concerns about Queensland Health and the Torres Strait Islands Risk Assessment Report.

Tabled paper: Copy of letter, dated 15 April 2008, from Mr Paul Turner, Chief of Staff, Office of the Leader of the Opposition, to Mr Stephen Lambrides, Acting Chairperson, Crime and Misconduct Commission, relating to concerns about Queensland Health and the Torres Strait Islands Risk Assessment Report.

I raise the following points. The minister needs to ensure that Queensland Health cooperates with the CMC and gives the CMC all copies of the report, including the original and all information about the authors and the subsequent report editors. Finally, having said that, I have real concerns about the handling of this issue given that the CMC has asked me to help identify the author of the report notwithstanding the fact that the author's name appears on the report not once but 43 times.

SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Report

Mrs SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (10.29 am): I table the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's *Alert Digest No. 4 of 2008*.

Tabled paper: Alert Digest No. 4 of 2008.

LEGAL, CONSTITUTIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report

Mrs REILLY (Mudgeeraba—ALP) (10.29 am): I lay upon the table of the House a report of the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee entitled *The Accessibility of Administrative Justice; Report No. 64, April 2008*. The committee has resolved to table this report, which concludes the committee's inquiry into the accessibility of administrative justice mechanisms in Queensland.

Tabled paper: Report No. 64—The Accessibility of Administrative Justice, April 2008.

In this report the committee has made a small number of high-level recommendations aimed at increasing the accessibility of administrative justice in Queensland. I am confident that government service delivery and the administration of legislation can be and will be more effective and transparent to consumers. Implementation of the recommendations should reduce the incidence of disputes with government and ensure that any disputes arising are resolved more quickly, informally and at a reduced cost to the consumer, thereby improving administrative justice in Queensland.

Of note, the report recommends the extension of both the Freedom of Information Act and the Judicial Review Act to private bodies performing functions or activities of a public nature and which are funded, wholly or in part, from public moneys. In addition, it also recommends the creation of a general administrative tribunal to exercise original jurisdiction and to review, on the merits, administrative decisions with a minimum of formality.

These recommendations will inform two significant reviews into specific areas of administrative justice recently announced by the Attorney-General, the Hon. Kerry Shine; namely, the independent review into the Freedom of Information Act 1992, chaired by Dr David Solomon AM, and the implementation of an amalgamated civil and administrative tribunal in Queensland, based on the advice of an independent expert panel, chaired by Justice Glen Williams AO, QC.

I would like to thank the members of the committee for their hard work and commitment, as well as the members of the committee of the 51st Parliament for commencing the inquiry. Importantly, I would also like to thank all those people and organisations who made submissions as well as the committee secretariat staff involved in finalising the report. I commend the report to the House.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Indigenous Communities, Safety of Public Servants

Mr SPRINGBORG (10.31 am): My first question without notice is to the Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Women. I ask: is the minister aware whether staff from the Department of Child Safety are suffering from a lack of safe and appropriate accommodation in Cape York similar to that which has already been exposed for teachers and nurses? If so, when did she become aware of these concerns?

Mrs KEECH: I thank the honourable member for the question and his interest in child safety, particularly in our Indigenous communities. One of the biggest challenges we as a government have is providing services to our Indigenous communities. When it comes to child protection, these issues are of particular importance to the government and to me. When issues of concern with respect to potential child abuse or child harm are raised with either the department or the police, the Department of Child Safety acts immediately. When it comes to incidents on the cape or on Torres Strait islands, our major child safety service centre is based in Cairns at the Cape York and Torres Strait Islands Child Safety Service Centre.

The honourable Leader of the Opposition refers to accommodation in Cape York. I inform him that the circumstances with respect to Queensland Health and the Department of Child Safety are different. Department of Child Safety staff do not actually reside in the remote areas of Cape York or on Torres Strait islands because of safety issues. When the Department of Child Safety does have to go into communities and remove children or investigate issues of child abuse, they are highly emotional times for both the family and the community. We have had concerns in the past. They are very challenging times for Department of Child Safety staff and can be quite dangerous with regard to their safety. The staff of my department are my greatest assets and under no circumstances would I put them in any danger.

I can inform the House that there is currently an ongoing audit of safety procedures in Cape York child safety service centres. In particular, I can confirm that recently I held a meeting in Townsville to consider this very issue. We had a briefing from a workplace health and safety officer who is a former police officer.

When staff go out into the communities they have undertaken extensive safety training. They may also carry duress alarms which are connected to satellite phones. Where there have been incidents, we have ensured that the staff can be protected by the use of duress alarms through satellite phones. As I said, we are working very hard indeed to ensure that our staff are safe.

Indigenous Communities, Safety of Public Servants

Mr SPRINGBORG: My second question without notice is also to the Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Women. I now refer to the minister's answer to question on notice No. 217, asked by the member for Cook. In her response about the progress of child safety hub rollouts in the Torres Strait the minister referred to 'the lack of safe and appropriate accommodation on site' in relation to Child Safety staff. I again ask the minister: will she inform the House specifically of when she became aware of these unsafe conditions? What further steps has she taken to make those conditions safe?

Mrs KEECH: The response to the question on notice refers to the fact, as I have just mentioned, that it is not safe—

A government member: You weren't listening the first time.

Mrs KEECH: The member opposite should have listened the first time. Unlike other government agencies, whether they be Queensland Health, Education Queensland or the Queensland police, it is not appropriate in remote or rural communities per se for Department of Child Safety staff to actually live in the communities. That is the one reason. When officers are provided with information and evidence that children are subject to harm, whether that be physical, emotional or sexual harm, or are at risk of harm, they have a statutory duty to act immediately to investigate the issue, and in some instances that means removing the child. In asking the question the member shows that he has no understanding whatsoever of the implementation of measures to ensure the safety of children, particularly those in Cape York and the gulf communities. He has been very poorly let down by his shadow minister for child safety.

I can confirm that we are rolling out our service hubs in Cape York, Cooktown, Weipa and Thursday Island. If the member had read the response to the question on notice he would have noticed that we are very close to having full staff numbers in those areas. I do say to the Department of Child Safety staff who work from Cairns in those service centres that it is extremely challenging work. It is very challenging to be working with the communities to ensure that parents cease their gambling, that parents cease their overconsumption of alcohol and that parents do the right thing in looking after their children. However, the Department of Child Safety will not hesitate to put the safety of children first. The

safety of my staff is also a top priority. That is why Child Safety staff do not live in communities, because it is not safe for them. The member opposite should read the response. As I said, the member has been very poorly let down by his shadow child safety minister. He has no understanding of and no care for the safety of Child Safety staff.

Sale of Airports

Ms JARRATT: My question is to the Premier. In the seven months since she has been Premier of this state, health has been a priority for her government—especially, I am pleased to say, in regional Queensland. I ask: what does today's announcement actually mean for delivery on the government's health commitments and especially in regional Queensland?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the member for Whitsunday for her question and for her interest in the Mackay Hospital which services the constituents that she represents in this House. I thank her, the member for Mackay and the member for Mount Isa, along with the members in the Cairns region, for the conversations they have had with me over the last few months about the needs of the hospitals in their respective areas. All of the local members have consistently raised with me the need for better services—rightly so—and I am very pleased we are in a position to deliver them.

As I outlined earlier, what we need to do as a government is continually review our own asset portfolio, our own areas of investment, and make the decisions that businesses make, make the decisions that families make, about what it is we think are our priorities, what is the business we should be in and what is the business we should move out of. As I outlined earlier, in my view it is time for the state government of Queensland to move out of the business of running airports. That is very similar to the view held by the former federal coalition government which gradually, over a period of time, moved out of ownership of the Brisbane International Airport, and similarly the airports of Melbourne, Perth, Coolangatta, Adelaide, Canberra and Sydney. These major airports—Brisbane, Melbourne and Perth—actually moved out of public ownership in 1977—more than a decade ago. It would be fair to say that anybody who has travelled regularly through any of those airports—including the Brisbane airport—would know that they have gone from strength to strength with increased private sector investment and have grown, as have regional airports that have moved into that sort of ownership such as Townsville airport.

Why do we need to own airports? I do not know of a single reason anymore. I do think there were valid reasons once but I think those reasons have now lapsed. What we do need to do is build our regions. The regions of Queensland are the backbone of our economy. For companies that are growing and expanding their industries in places like central Queensland, the Bowen Basin, the Cairns region, what is it that attracts families and workers there? It is adequate and good quality services. It is hospitals and schools and roads that attract workers and keep them in regional parts of our state. That is why I unashamedly make the hospitals of these regions our priority. That is why this government unashamedly says that it is time to move out of airports and put every single dollar out of them into the hospitals of places like Cairns, Mackay and Mount Isa. We will continue to put health first, whether it be in regional Queensland, south-east Queensland or remote parts of this state. This makes good sense economically and good sense for the services of Queensland.

Mr SPEAKER: I welcome to the public gallery today teachers and students from Our Lady of the Rosary School at Kenmore in the electorate of Moggill, which is represented in this House by Dr Bruce Flegg.

Indigenous Communities, Safety of Public Servants

Mr McARDLE: My question is to the Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Women. The minister has admitted that she knew that staff in her department in Cape York can experience safety issues when working in remote areas. Will the minister inform the House if she has referred any unsafe work issues to the Office of Workplace Health and Safety and, if so, what did it find?

Mrs KEECH: I welcome the opposition's interest in the Department of Child Safety and the very good work it does in protecting the children of Queensland. The theme of the questions shows the complete and utter ignorance of the very essence of the work that my department does. Regardless of whether the front-line staff, the child safety officers, are working in Brisbane, Aspley, Aurukun or the Torres Strait, they face very similar issues—that is, every day they have very, very difficult jobs investigating and assessing difficult issues with respect to the most horrendous sexual, physical and emotional abuse of children.

As I have indicated, when it comes to providing services to our Indigenous communities, such as the cape and the gulf, there are particular issues such as geography, lack of broader services, in particular prevention and intervention services, and also the challenges of getting into the communities and working with them. The work is very challenging and dangerous. I have mentioned in this House before that not only are my staff regularly verbally abused; they are also assaulted, spat on, stabbed, have guns held at them and there have been attempts to drive them off the road.

Mr SPEAKER: I say to the members of the opposition who are smiling and laughing that this is not a laughing matter; this is a serious matter. Would you please have some respect and show some respect to the minister.

Mrs KEECH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is for that reason in particular that when my staff travel into remote areas, whether that is Indigenous communities or rural communities, they have very definite safety plans. For example, they log in with the local police when they are going into a community and log out when they are leaving. Also, at some sites staff carry duress alarms with satellite tracking capacity which, when activated, alert police of immediate risk situations.

Mr Horan: Have you reported to Workplace Health and Safety?

Mrs KEECH: In response to the member's question, I have no knowledge of any reporting to Workplace Health and Safety, and I am absolutely convinced that the safety plans that we have in place for our staff are strong. But I want to make them stronger. That is why right now the department is reviewing and enhancing the safety plans that we do have for our staff to ensure that the very good work that they do in protecting our children continues, whether they are children in remote communities of Queensland or elsewhere.

Renewable Energy

Mrs REILLY: My question without notice is to the Premier. Can the Premier please advise the House of the importance of renewable energy in the battle against climate change and its place in a cleaner, greener Queensland?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for her question and her ongoing interest in this issue. I once heard Al Gore say, I think very wisely, that in relation to climate change there is no silver bullet but there is an awful lot of silver buckshot. Renewable energy is part of a multipronged approach by any responsible government to change our energy mix over time and reduce our demand on high-emitting energy sources.

I am pleased to advise the House that this afternoon I will be meeting with Ira Magaziner, who is the CEO of the Clinton Foundation Climate Change Initiative. This foundation is at the forefront of the fight against global warming, and by working with organisations such as this one we are able to harness global expert knowledge in initiatives such as renewable energy, carbon capture and sustainable development.

Our government has already made significant inroads in the renewable energy fight. We have a \$50 million Renewable Energy Fund and a \$50 million Smart Energy Savings Fund to encourage business to invest in energy-saving initiatives. We also have the \$15 million Geothermal Centre of Excellence at the University of Queensland, the Solar Cities trial in Townsville, the Solar Homes Program and the Solar Bonus Scheme to stimulate growth in Queensland's solar industry.

Our government is putting policy into action and planning for the future. By comparison, it is now more than 50 days since the opposition leader promised Queenslanders a renewable energy policy but there are still no details, still no concrete funding. He is mouthing the rhetoric, and little wonder. He knows how badly he and his party are positioned on the issue of the environment and he is desperately trying to reposition himself on this issue. But he has no chance while he is being undermined by his own colleagues. His shadow energy minister, the member for Callide, has been out there scaremongering, telling people that renewable energy targets will lead to skyrocketing energy prices, implying that we should abandon these targets. The Leader of the Opposition cannot even get his own team on side for this. It is little wonder he cannot deliver an energy policy, he cannot deliver a renewable energy program, he cannot deliver a merged conservative party and he certainly cannot deliver anything resembling the truth in this House.

I urge every member of this parliament to read the document tabled this morning by the Leader of the Opposition from the CMC. There is absolutely nothing in this document that says that Queensland Health is not cooperating with the investigation. It says that the CMC has been unable to establish the author of the report that the Leader of the Opposition tabled at the last sitting and asks the Leader of the Opposition to assist the CMC. It is now up to the Leader of the Opposition to assist. It is up to him to tell the truth. Where did he get it? Who doctored it for the National Party?

Division of Workplace Health and Safety, Investigations

Mr NICHOLLS: My question is to the Minister for Transport, Trade, Employment and Industrial Relations. Given the government's often stated commitment to workplace health and safety, can the minister say on how many occasions in the last year the Division of Workplace Health and Safety investigated, prosecuted or issued an enforceable undertaking to another Queensland government department?

Mr MICKEL: The exact numbers are not available to me but these things occur independently of me, and the opposition knows that or should know it. The fact is when a serious breach occurs, the Division of Workplace Health and Safety undertakes an investigation into that breach. At the end of that investigation it then determines whether the matter should proceed to a prosecution. That is the beginning and the end of the matter. All of this is an independent process—independent of me as a minister. The findings are independent of me. In the most recent case, with a bit of incorrect reporting from the media I might say, the Leader of the Opposition inferred that I would be investigating another minister. It is complete and utter nonsense. As minister I investigate no-one. There is an independent arm of government—in this case, the workplace health and safety division—that undertakes those investigations.

If the opposition is alleging that somehow I as minister should intrude myself in that process, it should know that there are real dangers inherent in that because investigations are not just made of government. In fact, as we saw the other day at the airport, workplace health and safety officers also investigate matters involving private firms. As I have said in the House before, one of the main causes of injury is farming injuries. Do members of the National Party really want me as a minister to start investigating on my own breaches by people who may well be their branch members or their relatives? We hear silence! Of course they do not, and nor should I. Indeed, I would never seek to do it. That is why it occurs independently of government. That is why the recommendations to me are independent of government.

The media has alleged that the Minister for Health is an employer. I have scanned the ads of the department of health to see if a person seeking a career in health applies to the honourable gentleman who sits beside me. I cannot find any instance at all where one has to write to the Minister for Health when seeking a job with the department of health. In other words, there is no investigation of the Minister for Health as alleged by the Leader of the Opposition or the media. I repeat: it is an independent process. It is independent of me.

Mount Isa, Lead Levels

Ms NOLAN: My question is to the Minister for Health. I refer to recent media reporting on blood lead testing in Mount Isa, and I ask: can the minister update the House on the status of this testing and what Queensland Health has done to address this critical public health issue in Mount Isa?

Mr ROBERTSON: I thank the member for the question. This is an issue that Queensland Health is taking very seriously and one which it is working on closely with the Mount Isa community and particularly the member for Mount Isa. In mid-2006 Queensland Health began testing the lead levels of Mount Isa children, and this required a sample of some 400 children. Despite an intense local campaign involving a number of public events and advertising, it took until December 2007 for this sample size to be achieved. The data is currently being analysed and Queensland Health advises that it expects the report to be completed by mid-May. It will then be presented to the Mount Isa community.

Initial findings have shown 45 children, or around 10 per cent of the sample, with elevated lead levels. Without prejudicing any legal cases that may be occurring at this point in time, no-one living in Mount Isa can ignore the fact that their community is built on top of a major lead deposit. Xstrata, the Mount Isa community and the member for Mount Isa, Queensland Health and the EPA are tackling a range of issues head-on. Queensland Health has been actively case managing the 45 children identified. This includes providing advice, tailored strategies and support to parents, referrals to paediatric specialists for a few children with the highest levels, ongoing care for children until their lead levels are below 10 micrograms per decilitre and detailed environmental audits that are being conducted with the EPA.

Queensland Health also continues to educate the wider community about living safely with lead in Mount Isa. Its lead-safe campaign has reached every corner of the community and outlines the importance of a few simple, effective ways of living with lead in the soil. These include reminders about the importance of wet mopping rather than sweeping, regularly washing hands and limiting direct contact with bare earth. A diet high in iron, zinc and calcium is also recommended as this limits the absorption of lead in the body. We take the health of Mount Isa families very seriously and will continue to take action where necessary.

I wish to use the time that is available to me to respond to a personal explanation that the Leader of the Opposition made earlier this morning, because it is quite an extraordinary explanation. In response to the CMC's letter asking him to produce information to assist its investigation, he suggests that the report that the opposition tabled during the last sitting of parliament was authored by the person that he mentions in his letter to the CMC, Russell Grigg. I say to Mr Springborg that, as I have previously released publicly, the authors of that report deny that that report is their report. Someone else has done that report, not the original authors. Someone else has done that report. Dare I suggest it could well be a doctored report. The only way that we are going to get to the bottom of this is if Mr Springborg cooperates with the CMC. This is now about leadership and integrity. Son, you have to have a bit of ticker. The Leader of the Opposition needs to come clean for the CMC.

Time expired.

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.56 am): I move—
That the minister be further heard.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Mr ROBERTSON: Last sitting week a document was tabled in this House by the Leader of the Opposition alleging—

Mr Elmes interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: Just be a bit quiet, son. The Leader of the Opposition tabled a document alleging that the report that I tabled was doctored. The authors of that report have denied that the report tabled by Mr Springborg was their report. The question now arises: who is the author of that report? Quite frankly, over the last month or so the media has taken some interest in this matter. It is about time that this issue is cleared up, and that will happen only if Mr Springborg cooperates with the independent investigators, the CMC. That is the only way that we will get to the bottom of who doctored which report. If Mr Springborg does not cooperate with the CMC, what does that say about him? What does that say about the narcissist of Queensland politics? What does it say about his integrity? What is he hiding in his desperate attempt to hold this government accountable? The only way to find out—and here is a challenge that the media needs to pick up—is if he makes that information available to the CMC, full stop!

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I welcome a further group of teachers and students from Our Lady of the Rosary School in Kenmore in the electorate of Moggill, which is represented in this House by Dr Bruce Flegg.

Torres Strait Islands, Safety of Public Servants

Miss SIMPSON: My question is to the Minister for Education and Training and Minister for the Arts. I table a three-page document provided to the opposition by a Queensland teacher who was attacked on Dauan Island in the Torres Strait on 28 April 2006.

Tabled paper: Copy email, dated 4 April 2008, to Mirani electorate office (name of author deleted) and attachment relating to an assault on the author.

This teacher tells of how she was assaulted at home at 11 pm by a man who tried to force himself on her and who only left when she started screaming and pushing him out the door. The teacher writes that she was 'never given any briefing before moving to the island on the risks' and that during her stay on the island she received 'absolutely no support from Education Queensland'. How does the minister justify his claims that teachers considering strike action over non-secure staff accommodation in remote areas are 'exploiting' the health crisis and 'piggybacking' on the plight of nurses?

Mr WELFORD: I thank the honourable member for her question. I am not familiar with the details of the specific case that she draws attention to, but I can say that the assumption of her question that the Teachers Union is threatening action over insecure accommodation is incorrect. The Teachers Union is raising issues in relation to maintenance of houses not only in the Torres Strait but also across Queensland and it has a legitimate right to do that on behalf of its members to ensure that proper maintenance is undertaken on teacher housing across the state. As I have said in this House previously, I and our government are very committed to ensuring that our teacher housing is kept up to scratch, and where there are incidents drawn to our attention of housing that is not secure then we will have that addressed immediately.

In relation to the induction and orientation of teachers going to work in remote locations such as the Torres Strait, as I say, while I am not familiar with the specific circumstances of that individual teacher's case, I can confirm that in November and December last year extensive two-day induction training was provided for all teachers going to the Torres Strait to make them aware of the cultural and other safety factors that they needed to be alert to in working in that region.

In addition, in relation to maintenance generally, since that issue has been raised, I can confirm that my department arranged through the Department of Public Works for a maintenance audit to be undertaken in January this year. Furthermore, as I indicated in parliament when we last sat, officers of my department travelled with officials from the Queensland Teachers Union throughout the Torres Strait to follow up that maintenance audit to identify what had been done or not done and what further work was required. In particular, they looked at what air-conditioners were functioning or not functioning and what the causes of any malfunction might have been.

All of those issues, I can assure members of the House, are currently being addressed. I have given an undertaking to Mr Ryan and Mr Battams from the Queensland Teachers Union that we will do everything in our power to ensure that teachers in the Torres Strait or anywhere else in Indigenous or other remote communities have housing not only that is secure but also the maintenance on which is undertaken at a proper level. Wherever a person in any of these communities indicates that they feel unsafe, they have an automatic entitlement to be transferred from these communities, and that policy remains on foot.

Sale of Airports

Mr O'BRIEN: My question without notice is to the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer please explain how the decision to sell the government's airport holdings, including the Cairns airport, fits within the commitment to strong financial management under the legislative Charter of Social and Fiscal Responsibility?

Mr FRASER: I thank the member for Cook for his question about this. It is a question about the future of health facilities in Cairns, Mackay and Mount Isa directly. The answer to the member for Cook's question is that this is directly in line with our commitment to continue, as we are obligated upon ourselves, to build the net worth of the state. It is directly in line with our commitment to always provide a sustainable basis for future service expansion. It is directly in line with our commitment as a government, as the Premier has said, to always look critically and over the horizon at the challenges presently facing us.

Our government, as announced today, will move out of the business of owning and operating airports, as other governments around the world have been doing for some time. This is an action taken by this government about the future of health facilities in Cairns, Mackay and Mount Isa. We certainly believe that within the decision to exit from owning the airports in Cairns and Mackay and from the remaining shareholding in the Brisbane Airport Corporation we will realise a substantial dividend to the taxpayers of Queensland, who in the end not only are the owners of those assets at present but also will be the owners of the new hospitals that we will build on site.

The real question here goes very quickly to what the opposition will do on this front. Will it in fact have the wherewithal to back a strong and decisive decision taken in the best interests of the future of those communities or will we see quickly a retreat to the magic pudding argument which we always see from the opposition when it comes to decisions about the budget? It always retreats to the notion that you can do everything at once without making funding commitments for anything. The real question quickly becomes here: what will the opposition do on this front? We know that in the past the National Party and Liberal Party at the federal level have made a lot of decisions about airport sales. Will the opposition here sitting in this chamber make a decision today about what it believes is the appropriate and most responsible decision for a government to make?

If opposition members are able to look up from the trading floor, where they are presently discussing their own merger, demerger, restructuring and rebranding—if they can look up beyond the trading floor as they try to create their own new party, their own new division; perhaps a bit of asset stripping from the National Party to the new 'Pineapple Party' or whatever the case might be—they will see that the wood really very much is landing on the desk in front of them as they have to explain to the people of Queensland whether Mackay should have a new hospital, whether Cairns should have redeveloped new facilities and whether Mount Isa should be redeveloped.

This government has shown the wherewithal to make the tough calls, to make the tough decisions, to always look at the long-term best interests of the future of Queensland. We will continue to make those decisions in a responsible manner and we will make them in a way that protects the interests of the current employees at those facilities. As I said in my remarks earlier today, and I need to emphasise, the current enterprise bargaining arrangements will be rolled over and protections afforded for two years, and the ability for employees to benefit from the new arrangements—

Time expired.

Cairns Hospital, Mental Health Services

Ms LEE LONG: My question is to the Minister for Health. Complaints about mental health services at the Cairns Base Hospital continue. They include staff failures to communicate, medicate or perform tests; patients' belongings removed; dark and mosquito infested rooms; mental health patients in orthopaedic wards left unattended; meals and buzzers left out of reach; no communication between hospitals and discharged patients not being informed; electrical faults not fixed; patients forced to use toothbrushes to switch power on; more suicides; funds spent on middle management rather than where it is needed the most; and excuses—no staff, no time and not our fault. This is the minister's mental health unit at the Cairns Base Hospital. Will the minister address this appalling situation immediately?

Mr ROBERTSON: The answer is yes, because the announcement today about the major build at Cairns Base Hospital includes an expanded and refurbished mental health unit. So that is instant action. The member asked the question and we will respond.

Mr Mickel: And we've even got the money.

Mr ROBERTSON: Absolutely. So what we will see in Cairns is a major expansion of facilities and services on the site of the existing Cairns Base Hospital. What it will mean in the immediate term is the relocation of the existing car park across the road. The old car park will be demolished and a new block D will be built. Around the same time, the mental health unit, which is currently located at the other end of the Cairns Base Hospital site, will be refurbished and expanded. So a lot of the issues that the member has brought to my attention today will in fact be attended to not just as part of the expansion of

the Cairns Base Hospital, worth some \$450 million, but also as a result of a significant increase in this year's budget and in future years for mental health services right throughout the state. So I hope that answers satisfactorily the question asked by the member for Tablelands.

I want to return to the issue I raised earlier today about the responsibility of the Leader of the Opposition. What we have heard a lot about over the last month or so—

Mr LANGBROEK: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I seek a ruling on standing order 118(b) in relation to this answer, which is now clearly nothing to do with the original question.

Mr ROBERTSON: Mr Speaker, I can understand why the shadow health spokesperson—

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, I have a point of order in front me, if you do not mind. In terms of standing order 118(b) with regard to relevance, we have had a personal explanation. That personal explanation made by the Leader of the Opposition today was allowed by me but was very thin in terms of a personal explanation. I call the Minister for Health. There is no point of order.

Mr ROBERTSON: I will just make this point. If the No. 1 issue is the safety of our nurses working in the Torres Strait then the Leader of the Opposition has an absolute obligation to cooperate with the CMC and provide the independent investigators with the information they seek. He should not squib on it, because the Leader of the Opposition's integrity is at stake here. Unless he provides the information to the CMC then not only should the CMC and this parliament hold him accountable but also the media should hold him accountable. All he has to do after question time is pick up the phone and say to the CMC, 'I will fully cooperate and provide you with the information as to who gave me a copy of the report' that he tabled in this parliament. It is as simple as that.

Trinity Beach State School

Mr WETTENHALL: My question is directed to the Minister for Education and Training and Minister for the Arts. Last week the minister visited Trinity Beach State School in my electorate to inspect the school's facilities and met with members of the Parents and Citizens Association. Members of the school community have travelled to Brisbane today to show their concerns about the maintenance at the school. Can the minister tell the House what his department is doing to address their concerns?

Mr WELFORD: I thank the honourable member for his question and for his very keen interest in this issue. He has been assiduous in his efforts to work with the Trinity Beach State School community to ensure that maintenance issues were addressed at that school—and indeed he was doing that last year.

I would like to acknowledge those members of the Trinity Beach State School community who have travelled to Brisbane today to raise their concerns for our government's attention. That is what democracy is about. We welcome them to parliament and hope they enjoy their visit. I would like to assure them that the government is listening to their concerns. As they know, I travelled to the school last week and met with members of the P&C community as well as the member for Barron River, who, as I say, has visited the school several times to meet parents and to listen to their concerns. Officers from my department—from the regional office and the central office—have also visited the school to see firsthand the school's facilities. My parliamentary secretary, the member for Aspley, Bonny Barry, has also visited the school.

At the meeting that I attended at the school last week, I was pleased to reach agreement with the school community that my department will work with them to develop a plan to ensure that essential maintenance is addressed and opportunities for new facilities are explored. Work currently being undertaken at the school—initiated last year through cooperation between the P&C and the member for Barron River but delayed over the Christmas holidays—includes reroofing approximately 20 metres of covered walkways, repairs to fence palings, playground equipment and guttering, and the removal of some asbestos sheeting at a cost of about \$47,000. In addition, I recently approved \$40,000 to be injected into the school for a range of works including the sealing of flooring in the amenities block—which is now complete—and painting, and the commissioning of an engineer's report into water ponding around the modular buildings.

At the Trinity Beach State School we have invested more than \$750,000 in the last three years. This has delivered prep facilities, the installation of a security system, air conditioning and electrical upgrades, an extension to the library, upgrades to the tuckshop, targeted maintenance to reseal the driveway, repairs to the covered play area and repairs to roofing and drainage. It is also planned to replace floor coverings and a roof in two teaching blocks, and to paint several teaching blocks in the next financial year.

I think it is fair to say that the local member has done everything in his power to make sure this matter is drawn to the attention of my department and, more recently, to me. I acknowledge that there is maintenance required at this school. That maintenance was in fact planned last year and is now in train. If further maintenance is required as a result of the work that is now being completed, then I will work with the member for Barron River and the school community to ensure that it is put in the plan.

Cyclone Larry, Repair of State Schools

Mr CRIPPS: My question without notice is to the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology. Will the minister confirm that an ombudsman's investigation is currently being undertaken into the use of substandard equipment in the repair of north Queensland schools following Cyclone Larry? Will the minister also guarantee that Q-Build has honoured its promise to schools damaged by Cyclone Larry that they would receive an engineering certificate for the work completed?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I am aware that there is a conspiracy out there to put it about that obligations have not been met by a whole range of government agencies. I am a bit taken aback by that because the on-the-ground information there—and I have been into your electorate, Mr Speaker, a number of times, and I know a lot of people there also; my wife comes from that area—does not verify that and puts the lie to the sorts of conspiratorialist theories that seem to abound. I also know from talking to Minister Pitt that the job being done by Q-Build and that was done during that terrible disaster was first class. I was quite amazed to see a complaint made about that, and the ombudsman will do what the ombudsman does. That is why he is there.

There is one great story that comes back to my mind about Q-Build. A Q-Build bloke who had his house blown to pieces left his family and went out to secure the school. These are the sorts of people that the opposition is taking a cheap shot at today. Q-Build is never very far away from its targets. We know that. If the member was really fair dinkum about this, he would not have aired the business of Q-Build in the parliament. He would have had the decency to come and talk to me about it. Quite frankly, I really think it is a kick in the guts to those people who went up there from all over Queensland and honoured their obligations as employees of Q-Build. They worked hard and risked their lives only to have a tawdry inference drawn about them here today. Shame on him.

Planning and Infrastructure

Ms MALE: My question without notice is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Infrastructure and Planning. Could the Deputy Premier please inform the House how important it is to make sure that future growth in Queensland defines planning that we are undertaking today?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for the question. She is very much interested in the future of our state—not only our state but also her region. We are doing the planning in the Queensland Bligh government for future growth. The FNQ2025 plan will be released within the next month or so. This is the first statutory plan outside south-east Queensland. We are also undertaking a review of the south-east Queensland plan and a review of the urban footprint.

That is not the only planning for the future that is underway in Queensland at the moment—not by far. The Leader of the Opposition is busy desperately planning who he will blame when his proposed merger with the Liberal Party falls apart. The Leader of the Opposition has put his leadership on the line over a merger between the National and the Liberal parties. If we look at the past, he has consistently blamed Liberal Party and federal counterparts—Joh used to call them southern socialists—for the failure of this to happen.

The blame game happened in 2004. He indicated, 'The Liberal hierarchy is terrified of a grassroots revolution and they are trying to stop the debate.' In 2005 in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* they put it like this: 'Look, there are egos in the Liberal Party. A lot of people are driven by factional desire, by people driven by the desire to dominate the other factions. I don't hold any malice towards them. I just don't believe their way is the way to deliver government.'

In 2006 the Leader of the Opposition said that federal coalition colleagues had selfishly rejected merger plans. 'We keep getting thwarted by federal realities ...' Then in 2007 on 27 November in the *Hobart Mercury*, 'The Liberals could not exist on their own in Queensland but he would not renew his push for a merger without a fresh commitment from the Liberals.' On 10 March he said in the *Australian*, 'The argument is over in the National Party, it's now up to the Liberals.'

Actions speak much louder than words in this place. We all know from the actions of the National Party what the game is about. For example, on becoming Leader of the Opposition Mr Springborg could have decided that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition would be a Liberal. But he did not give that position to the member for Caloundra; he gave it to his mate the member for Maroochydore, to whom he was indebted for support reasons. The National Party is not about joining with the Liberal Party, and people like George Brandis know that only too well. The member for Caloundra is like a silly person with Typhoid Mary visiting him. He will get swept aside. Twenty years ago federally the National Party vote was 11.5 per cent. It was 5.49 per cent last year.

Whenever they run against the Liberals head to head, such as in the Groom by-election federally, the Nationals lose the seat. At a state level, at the last election the Liberal Party outpolled the Nationals 20.1 per cent to 17.8 per cent. It is a little bit like what happened in Victorian England. When a British peer is bankrupt, the family is bankrupt. What do they want to do? They want to marry rich new money. The only problem is that the rich new money normally gets a title in Britain. But one does not even get a title when marrying rich new money with the bankrupt old hereditary peer system that is the National Party.

Trinity Beach State School

Mr COPELAND: My question is to the Premier. Earlier the minister for education outlined to the House work he says has been done at Trinity Beach State School to address maintenance and facilities problems at that school. Parents and students have travelled from Cairns to parliament today out of desperation to meet the Premier and have their problems addressed as they say the actions of the minister for education are cosmetic only. Students have given me a number of photos of their school which I table for the information of the House.

Tabled paper: Various photographs taken at Trinity Beach State School.

They also asked me to ask on their behalf, 'Dear Ms Anna, why is our school so bad and why won't anyone fix it?' Why has the situation at Trinity Beach State School been allowed to get so bad and why will the government not fix it?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. I am pleased to join the minister for education in welcoming members of the Trinity Beach State School community here today. I was advised with very short notice that this group would like to meet with me. I am trying to make arrangements in my diary for that to happen. If it is possible I will do it. It does mean asking other people who have longstanding meetings with me to be willing to change their times.

Mr Copeland: You've known for weeks.

Ms BLIGH: I think I have made my position on that point clear. As the minister for education has just outlined, in what I think was a very comprehensive answer, there has been extensive work undertaken at this school over recent years. That does not mean—as it does not mean in any other school in Queensland in either the public or the private system—that there is not more good work that could and should be done.

Our government has put more money into the maintenance and rebuilding of our schools than at any other time in the history of Queensland's education system. This government will continue to work with school communities and with P&Cs—like the one from Trinity Beach—to ensure that whenever we have available funds to put into our schools we put them in and we work with those school communities to determine what is of highest priority.

As a former minister for education who oversaw massive increases in capital works spending right across the state—new schools and new developments in places that had been neglected for years and years, decades—

Ms Spence interjected.

Ms BLIGH: There are people, like my colleague from Mount Gravatt, who was elected in 1989, who remember exactly what the schools of Queensland were like under the regime that those opposite operated. If the member for Southern Downs were honest he would acknowledge that it was me as education minister who saw new resources put into his schools that he could not get out of the former minister for education who was a Liberal in his government.

What our government has done is roll out new schools at an unprecedented rate. We have rolled out new and replacement facilities at a rate never seen in the history of this state. We have put a whole new year of schooling and all the facilities associated with it into every state primary school and funded the private sector to do it. We have had constant upgrade and maintenance increases to meet the demand.

But I do not for one minute say that everything that needs to be done has been done. That is why in each and every budget we provide schools with maintenance and upgrade money, and when we have additional resources—as we have done in successive budgets—we increase the capital funding for the education department so that it can work with schools, such as Trinity Beach State School, to improve their facilities.

I applaud the P&C at Trinity Beach for the constructive work that it is doing with the minister and the local member, Steve Wettenhall. It is those sorts of productive, positive relationships that produce results.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I would like to welcome a further group of teachers and students from Our Lady of the Rosary School in Kenmore in the electorate of Moggill, which is represented in this House by Dr Bruce Flegg. I call the member for Keppel.

OPEL Broadband Contract

Mr HOOLIHAN: My question is to the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology. Concerns have been expressed to me about the recent decision of the federal government to cancel the OPEL broadband contract, which promised to boost internet services in the bush and regional areas. Could the minister inform the House of the reasons the federal government took this action?

Mr SCHWARTEN: The honourable member raised this issue when I was at a function in his electorate last week.

Mr Rickuss: Chris Cummins prepared this answer, did he?

Mr SCHWARTEN: At least he will be better than Cameron Thompson was. As we all know, the reality is that the OPEL deal announced by the previous federal government was a \$958 million dud. It was a political exercise. It is going nowhere and did nothing—a bit like the National Party.

The great announcement by Stephen Conroy that \$4.7 billion will be spent to get broadband into 98 per cent of houses in Queensland is a great leap forward and typical of Labor governments that care about people regardless of where they live. Of course, it was opposed by Warren Truss but we would expect that.

There is a bit of a shining light—that is, not all those in the National Party opposed it. In the *Australian* it says that a coalition MP has broken ranks. It is none other than Mr Bruce Scott, a former cabinet minister. He thought Stephen Conroy did the right thing. I agree with Bruce. I think Queensland will be better served by a much more energetic minister in Conroy. Neither Nairn nor Coonan, the previous ministers, had one clue about how to run this untried technology. It is pleasing to see that Conroy has grabbed this with both hands. I look forward to meeting with him in the next couple of weeks.

It is not surprising when we talk about duds that we are talking about the National Party. When we talk about division, not even the National Party can agree on a particular position. John Howard was in town last night and I was amazed that he is still talking about the Liberals. That must have really put a burr under the saddle of the Leader of the Opposition.

The Leader of the Opposition was the other day asked what he would call the new party. I thought he might call it the 'Legless Emu Party' because it is not going to walk anywhere and it is not going to fly. I heard the Treasurer refer to it this morning as the 'Pineapple Party'. That might fly, because they would give the rough end of that to the Liberal Party. There is no doubt about that. Let me tell members that the Liberals were not too fussed with the member for Darling Downs when last week he said that he would run over the top of the Liberals. The Liberals I know in my area saw that for what it was—a very nasty bit of work by the Nationals in an attempt to get a brand name for themselves that works.

There are a lot of party names kicking around. People are talking about magician parties and bad-taste parties. We could certainly apply bad taste, because it is going to leave a bad taste in the mouths of Liberal Party members. The 'Hawaiian Party', the 'Semidressed Party' and the 'Semi-exposed Party' are others. That probably has a bit going for it.

We on this side of parliament would really like to know what those opposite intend to do in terms of getting a party together that people want to go to and people want to frock up for. The reality is that I am not finding anybody who will do that. They want to join the Labor Party.

Mount Isa, Lead Levels

Mr LANGBROEK: My question without notice is to the honourable Minister for Health. Despite testing in 2006 showing that children in Mount Isa had dangerously high levels of lead in their systems, earlier in question time the minister advised the House that he did not take any immediate risk mitigation and waited for over 12 months, until 400 tests were completed. I ask: why did the minister take more than 12 months to act? What is he doing to stop any further contamination? Will he commit to extending the testing to determine the risk of danger to the children of Mount Isa?

Mr ROBERTSON: I had hoped that the member would have actually listened to my comprehensive answer to a question asked by the member for Ipswich with regard to what had been done by Queensland Health in terms of the investigation in Mount Isa. What I thought he would have understood, given his background, is that the reason it took so long to gather the requisite number of children for testing is that, in terms of doing epidemiological assessments such as this, we actually need a statistically relevant group. We need a group of children of sufficient size—

Mrs Stuckey: That's a nonsense.

Mr ROBERTSON: You have got me there. I keep forgetting I am in the presence of genius. Silly me! We need a statistically relevant group to ensure that what we are testing for is, in fact, relevant.

That is the advice that came from the experts in the Population Health Branch in my department—that the number they needed to test was 400 and that the issue was getting 400 children to come forward to be tested. That is why Queensland Health conducted a number of campaigns to encourage the mums and dads of Mount Isa to bring their kids along to be tested. They went to the schools. They offered a range of programs. They offered a range of incentives to get that statistically relevant number right so that the testing they could do had integrity. That is the No. 1 reason it took that length of time.

I received regular updates on the progress of gathering that number of 400 children all the way through. I encouraged the staff in Mount Isa to do what they could to try to quicken that process. But the simple fact was that the mums and dads of Mount Isa did not come forward in sufficient numbers as quickly as we would have liked to allow that testing to occur that would have given us an accurate indication of what was happening to children in Mount Isa. That is the sole reason it took so long.

Mr SPEAKER: That concludes question time.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Queensland Health; Government Debt; Trinity Beach State School

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 am): This morning in this place we saw the greatest ever demonstration of grassy knoll politics that we could ever hope for from the Minister for Health, who stood up giving his conspiracy theories one after the other. The truth was flushed out finally. We have a minister who was salivating at the prospect of flushing out another whistleblower, because we know what happened in the case of Wendy Erglis, we know what happened in the case of Toni Hoffman and we know what happened in the case of those very diligent departmental employees who were sitting next to former health minister Gordon Nuttall when they were asked questions about Bundaberg Base Hospital. None of those people who were sitting next to Mr Nuttall have their jobs anymore, because the government got even with them.

Look at what the government did to Wendy Erglis. It absolutely destroyed that very brave woman as she tried to blow the whistle on the conduct of this government. Look at the response of this government when Toni Hoffman, that very brave nurse, first blew the whistle on the concerns about the conduct of Dr Patel at Bundaberg Base Hospital. We all remember what happened when that very brave nurse, Toni Hoffman, tried to blow the whistle on concerns that she and other staff had about the conduct of Dr Patel at the Bundaberg Base Hospital. She was intimidated. The government attempted to silence her. She was threatened with her own employment. This is what this government does. Not only that, senior departmental officials and the previous health minister went to Bundaberg and actively threatened and tried to deter those very brave staff from going public on those issues. Those people did not want to go public, but they had to go public because of the sheer fact that this government continued to ignore their concerns about the safety and welfare of patients at Bundaberg Base Hospital.

This morning we saw yet another demonstration of that in this parliament when the minister stood up and sought to flush out the whistleblower. I was listening when the minister said that we have to come out and say who that person is. I can tell members that if that happens we know what the future career of that person is going to be within the department. They would be finished. Anyone who comes out on these issues is finished. We have a whistleblower protection scheme in Queensland that means absolutely nothing to this government. In actual fact, it is like waving a red rag at a bull, because this government goes after those people.

This morning in this place I made the point that I am very concerned about the lack of cooperation from this department with regard to the CMC's investigation. That document, which I tabled in this place, is the document as it came into my office. It refers on no fewer than 43 occasions to the person who is, or who purports to be, the author of that document. In the past we have seen this minister stand up in this place and outside and say, 'It may have been an earlier draft.' How many drafts of this document exist? Any person who takes an objective view of that document will see its similarity to the other document and the way in which it has been tampered with in order to reduce concerns about employee workplace health and safety on a range of islands in the Torres Strait.

Let us go back to what that document said: there was almost a certainty of a serious personal incident happening on Mabuiag Island. Did it happen? Yes, it did. What did the government's doctored document actually say? That it was a possibility. The risk matrix basically said that it could happen maybe once. It says it is almost certain and probable to happen. So I will leave it to members to decide which document on the balance of probabilities most accurately reflected the safety and welfare concerns that employees had working not only on Mabuiag Island but also on other islands in the Torres Strait.

This government has to stop its vendetta against whistleblowers. As we said in our letter to the CMC, if the department does not properly cooperate with the CMC then we will be contacting those people who made contact with us to see if they are comfortable, notwithstanding the threats that may be made to them from this government, to come forward and provide that information to the CMC.

Whilst I am speaking about this saga, I refer to the conduct of the 'letterbox' minister—the human letterbox, the member for Logan, the person who says that he is the processor for these workplace health and safety concerns that have been raised in relation to his colleagues. What more ultimate and definite display of Caesar judging Caesar could we have? During the last parliamentary sitting I wrote to the Director of Public Prosecutions saying that she should consider whether charges should be laid against individuals for breaches of the Workplace Health and Safety Act, which is administered by Workplace Health and Safety. The Director of Public Prosecutions wrote back to me and said, 'It is not my responsibility, refer it to Workplace Health and Safety,' which we then did. The Premier said to do the same thing. In the DPP's letter to us she said, 'Contact this individual.' When my staff rang to speak to that individual, we found that it was a phone number to the minister's office. So we rang the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and asked for the appropriate phone number. When my office contacted the person, on the right number in this case, he had absolute conniptions and said that he did not want to have anything to do with it and referred us to the director-general. Then the director-general, off his own bat, referred us to the minister as the appropriate letterbox to which we should be referring these matters. So I will let the members of this place decide who is judging whom with regard to this matter.

At the end of the day, we know quite clearly in Queensland that there are different standards for workplace health and safety. There are those that apply to the private workplace, where there are no 'get out of jail free' cards, and those that apply to government ministers and government departments, where people go on such a roundabout that nothing is ever resolved.

I now want to touch on what we saw this morning from the Treasurer and the Premier. We saw an absolute panic when it comes to the burgeoning debt situation of Queensland which is costing Queenslanders \$10 million per day in interest alone with no principal repayment plan. The other day we even had the Treasurer admit that the government will struggle to contain the \$55 billion in debt that it is racking up. So we are going to get more debt. What we saw this morning was an absolute panic response to this government's burgeoning debt burden, which is costing Queensland taxpayers up to \$10 million a day in interest alone.

In the past governments have been able to build infrastructure, particularly social structure such as schools and hospitals, from their reserves off their budget general revenue without having to sell assets in order to do that. What has changed? A Labor government is what has changed in Queensland. We are seeing more hallmark Labor government management in this state. We should be returning to days past where governments built things based on prudent spending, the prudent accrual of capital in this state and the provision of cash along the way. I cannot believe that we are doing this at a time when this state is absolutely burgeoning from our resources, our stamp duty, our payroll tax and our land tax boom.

Let me touch now on the issue of the Trinity Beach State School, which is a very sad saga insofar as this government's dealing with it is concerned. In recent months these parents and students have been desperately trying to have their concerns heard by this government. Notwithstanding the fact that their concerns with regard to maintenance and safety at that school are quite serious, they have fallen on the deaf ears of this government. It has been the pressure from those parents, from those students and also from the *Cairns Post* and local media that has finally forced this government to react in some way, but not in an appropriate way, to ensure the health and safety of those students.

LEAVE TO MOVE MOTION

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.41 am): Therefore, I seek leave to move a motion without notice to release all correspondence and reports in relation to safety and maintenance at Trinity Beach State School.

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

AYES, 29—Copeland, Cripps, Cunningham, Dempsey, Elmes, Flegg, Foley, Gibson, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, Lee Long, Lingard, McArdle, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Nicholls, Pratt, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Rickuss, Dickson

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

Resolved in the negative.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Nurse Practitioners

Ms BARRY (Aspley—ALP) (11.46 am): There are many challenges facing Queensland's health system in the next 10 to 20 years. These include meeting the needs of a growing and ageing population in the context of declining workforce participation rates, responding to the rapid advances in health care, managing growing chronic and complex care, meeting the expectations of informed consumers with

regard to health services, and meeting the increasing cost of health care. Queensland Health set about implementing new strategies that focused on responding to the health needs of the community while fully utilising the skills and knowledge of experienced staff. Part of this change, and one that I believe is incredibly exciting, is the nurse practitioner role.

What is a nurse practitioner? A nurse practitioner is a registered nurse educated to function autonomously and collaboratively in an advanced and extended clinical role. The nurse practitioner role includes assessment and management of clients using nursing knowledge and skills and includes such things as conducting advanced health assessments and examinations, requesting various diagnostic investigations, interpreting results of investigations, and examinations and assessments. Nurse practitioners can also prescribe medications and treatment plans, admit and discharge patients, and directly refer patients to other healthcare professionals.

The implementation of a nurse practitioner role in Queensland followed the trial of the role in four sites during 2003. In February 2004 the Queensland government made an election commitment to change the relevant legislation to allow for full implementation of the role in Queensland. Further to this, this government offered paid scholarships to nurses wishing to undertake the challenging role of becoming qualified to be a nurse practitioner. I have followed a number of these nurses' journeys closely and wanted to share the experience of one with honourable members here today.

Karen undertook her basic nursing training at the Royal Brisbane Hospital between 1977 and 1980. In fact, she did it with me and we even went to school together. She worked in renal medicine from 1980 to the end of 2007. During that time she undertook a postgraduate renal certificate, a bachelor of nursing, a graduate diploma in renal nursing, followed by a graduate certificate in management in 2002. In 2005 she began discussions with the department director and nursing line management regarding the nurse practitioner role development in the department. She commenced her Masters of Nursing Science—Nurse Practitioner in February of 2006. She won a Queensland Health nurse practitioner scholarship in 2007.

The nephrology nurse practitioner role undertaken by Karen was modelled to care for patients on renal replacement therapies and is aimed at easing patient access, timeliness of care and freeing consultant time for new patient referrals and acute care. The nurse practitioner in this model would manage stable chronic patients on peritoneal dialysis and haemodialysis, collaborating with the multidisciplinary healthcare team.

Her nurse practitioner study was undertaken part-time and in 2007 she undertook extensive study on healthcare services and how a nurse practitioner can help and improve those patients' care. She worked predominantly in peritoneal dialysis but also refreshed her haemodialysis skills. The year 2007 also brought an internship at the Queensland University of Technology including the assessments and knowledge of skills that were required to meet the competencies set out by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council for nurse practitioners.

Karen's internship has been like riding a roller-coaster, and this is a common experience in the literature. The internship requires repeated exposure, critique and reflection. Her support team handled this very seriously but at times it damaged the confidence of even the most experienced nurse such as Karen. It is slow and difficult at times and it is essential that they have a supportive team at all times. During the internship she managed 10 patients across haemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis, looking primarily at dialysis access, adequacy, fluid and blood pressure management, and the prevention of complications.

It has been an arduous journey that has not been without difficulties, with sometimes professional boundaries being blurred and tension being created between doctors and nurses, but Karen made it through. On 29 January she was awarded her qualification and awaits endorsement by the Queensland Nursing Council. Karen, like many nurses, is also a mum of a family of young people and supports a husband in small business.

I put on the record congratulations to Karen and those nurses undertaking the role of nurse practitioner. They are amazing and will make a real difference to our healthcare system. I also congratulate the minister for his support of this important nursing role and make special mention of those amazing nurse leaders who support nurses like Karen: directors of nursing Veronica Casey at the PA and Lesley Fleming at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital and chief nursing officers past and present Jillian Jeffery and Pauline Ross, without whom this role of nurse practitioner would be just a good idea waiting to happen.

Antismoking Campaign

Ms STRUTHERS (Algeria—ALP) (11.52 am): I am proud to report again to this House that Queensland has one of the toughest antismoking regimes in the world and we are getting very encouraging results. Independent research following the 1 January 2005 smoke-free changes showed that 76 per cent of people wholeheartedly support the new laws and 33 per cent of smokers were thinking about quitting or had decreased the number of cigarettes they smoked—29 per cent because of the new laws.

Following the changes from 1 July 2006, 22 per cent of smokers had attempted to quit because of the new laws—that is about 123,000 Queenslanders—two per cent of smokers, that is 14,000 people, said they had successfully quit because of the new laws and 27 per cent of ex-smokers said the new laws had helped them remain nonsmokers. Most importantly, according to the research funded by Queensland Health and the Queensland Cancer Fund, the majority of Queensland school students no longer consider it cool to smoke. The survey found that fewer Queensland teenagers are smoking and, even better, the number of students trying a cigarette is at an all-time low.

Members in this House would have their own stories of smoking. I was smoking in year 6 and got caught out. Thank goodness I did. My mother made me draw back on a cigar. I was not even drawing back on cigarettes. I was a very sick young girl and did not become a smoker. I was smoking choko vines and all sorts of things at that age.

The state government's efforts to discourage smoking amongst young people are working. A key finding of the most recent survey was that 11 per cent of male and 12 per cent of female students aged 12 to 17 years said they had smoked in the week prior to the survey. That is three per cent lower than the 2002 survey and nearly half the 1995 rate of 20 per cent. It was also the lowest percentage since polling began in 1984.

On average, 3,400 Queenslanders die every year from smoking related illnesses. The tragedy is that, in the main, most of these deaths are preventable. Increasing rates of lung cancer in women are of particular concern, with deaths from this disease having risen by 75 per cent between 1982 and 2004. We all know of the extreme suffering that can result from chronic diseases such as heart and lung diseases. Many of the people inflicted with these diseases have been hardcore smokers for many, many years. The total social cost of tobacco use in Australia was estimated to be over \$21 billion.

I am also proud that the Minister for Health and Premier are backing the quit-smoking message for young women through backing of the amazing Queensland Firebirds netball team. Go the Firebirds! In a three-year partnership deal with Queensland Health, we will see the Firebirds promote the value of good health and nonsmoking to young women around the state. The Premier is now the No. 1 ticket holder for the Firebirds. Peta Stephens as captain and all the team, including supercoach Vicki Wilson, are wonderful role models—fit, superb athletes with healthy, fun lifestyles.

On 6 April the Governor, Her Excellency Quentin Bryce, and I cheered the mighty Firebirds on to come from behind to a two-goal victory against Perth. I take this opportunity to also commend Her Excellency Quentin Bryce on her appointment as Governor-General designate. What a wonderful achievement this is for her, her family and all Queenslanders, in particular Queensland women and girls.

Queensland Health, as a major sponsor of the Firebirds, currently receives the following exposure: naming rights of the country carnival, naming rights of the schools tour programs featuring Firebirds players and the campaign message Feeling Good. There are many other benefits of this partnership, and I commend the Minister for Health for making sure this occurred. There are over 87 netball associations across the state with more than 37,000 members in Queensland. This gives Queensland Health great exposure to young women in all parts of Queensland with the very important message to feel good and do not smoke.

I encourage members of this House to get along to the home games of the Firebirds at the Brisbane convention centre. The next game is on Monday, 21 April starting at around 6 pm. It is netball like you have never seen it before. Go the Firebirds for 2008!

Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—Lib) (11.56 am): We have had a lot of debates in this House about the need to protect people in our communities from people who would do them harm. None of these would be more important to the next victim of a dangerous sex offender released back into the community than a debate about a review of the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act. The Queensland coalition stands with the victims of child abuse and other victims of sexual abuse in condemning the Queensland government for allowing the release of dangerous sex offenders with the reluctant admission that it knows these predators will more likely than not reoffend.

Criminal law exists for the protection of society. It is simply wrong for this government to surrender the full entitlement of all Queenslanders to live free from the scourge of physical, sexual and psychological abuse. Queensland children have a right to live without fear of sexual abuse, and this government has a fundamental duty to protect them from these outrages.

The Department of Public Prosecutions's annual report shows that there were 586 victims of child sex offenders in Queensland in 2006-07. More alarmingly, world expert in behavioural medicine Professor Gene Abel conducted a series of studies into child molesters which was both terrifying and instructive. In one study, 232 child molesters admitted attempting more than 55,000 incidents of molestation on a total of 17,000 victims. This is an average victim rate of between 73 and 240 children per child molester. Putting this in perspective, Professor Abel claims that only three per cent of these monsters are caught.

The list of Queensland's dangerous sex offender prisoners is a collection of the most depraved criminals who time and time again do the most vile and perverted acts against children. This is despite previous criminal sanctions and a list of corrective orders that have at least partially been met. For example, in the last three weeks we have heard of six dangerous sexual predators who have allegedly breached their supervision orders and another released from prison under supervision. Most alarmingly, however, we have heard of at least one alleged incident where there was such a significant breach of an order that there is now another alleged victim. This is a matter now before the courts and one I cannot speak further on. There is, however, an unfortunate parallel to lessons learnt in the High Court's determination in *Veen v The Queen, Nos 1 and 2*.

In 1975 Robert Charles Veen was found guilty of manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility in stabbing and killing a man despite four years earlier being convicted of malicious wounding with a knife. The New South Wales Supreme Court imposed a sentence of life imprisonment because he posed a risk to the community. This sentence was subsequently appealed. Veen was released in January 1983. Within 10 months he killed again. Again the Crown accepted a plea of guilty to manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility and sentenced him to life imprisonment because of the danger to society that he was likely to kill again if released. This decision was upheld by the High Court in *Veen v The Queen (No. 2)*.

Most members of this House are old enough to remember that it was the Hawke-Keating government that introduced legislation in the 1990s that allowed the mandatory detention of asylum seekers. It is not difficult to argue that a serial sexual predator poses a much more obvious risk of harm to our neighbourhoods and children than someone seeking a new country to call home. In seeking the continued detention of a person who is a threat to the community, the issue is about the degree of risk the prisoner will pose to the community on his or her release, and there is little empirical evidence that existing rehabilitation approaches for dangerous sex offenders will produce the required standards and safeguards our communities require against serial sexual predators.

All Queenslanders have a right to live free from the scourge of physical, sexual and psychological abuse. In trying to defend its flawed management of dangerous sexual predators, the Labor government has engaged in an utterly shameless blame game that has brought into account the Supreme Court of Queensland as its latest political scapegoat. Not surprisingly, Chief Justice Paul de Jersey has defended the role of the courts. This government has been all over the shop but now appears to accept the need for an urgent review of the act. I intend to move to end the Labor government's newest blame game. I put it on notice that, if the Bligh government does not release the review of the act it promised the people of Queensland five months ago and introduce into parliament by this time next month legislation that will give greater protections to Queensland children and Queensland communities from serious sexual predators, I will move to do so.

Cairns Hospital

Mr WETTENHALL (Barron River—ALP) (12.01 pm): This morning the Premier announced that the Cairns Hospital will be expanded and redeveloped and that the government will buy a site for a future new hospital. Without doubt this is one of the most important decisions the Bligh government has made for the people of Cairns and far-north Queensland. Outside of the south-east, Cairns is the most rapidly growing area in Queensland. This population growth puts pressure on all government services and infrastructure, but nowhere has the pressure of growth in Cairns been more obvious than at our base hospital.

The Cairns Base Hospital is the main public referral hospital for 250,000 people, and by 2021 that will have grown to nearly 300,000. It is not just an increase in population that is putting pressure on the hospital. The characteristics of the population of the far north and the rising incidence of chronic conditions are major factors driving increased demand for hospital based care. In comparison to state averages, the region includes a much higher proportion of children aged up to 14, a much higher proportion of people aged over 70 years and a high Indigenous population facing additional health issues relating to early childhood development, substance abuse, chronic disease and remoteness. An increase in chronic disease is particularly prevalent in an ageing population and amongst disadvantaged persons, particularly Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. As a result of these factors, admissions to the Cairns Base Hospital are projected to grow at twice the rate of the population. The proportion of people affected by chronic and complex conditions such as cardiovascular disease, stroke, renal failure and diabetes is projected to rise. Significant increases in admissions for oncology, endocrinology and ophthalmology are occurring and indicate future trends. Presentations to the emergency department at the hospital have increased by 23 per cent in the five years between 2001 and 2006.

In 2006, 35 per cent of those presentations were admitted to the hospital. Very high bed occupancy rates at the Cairns Base Hospital result in major pressure on in-patient services. New referrals for surgery are being made at 50 a month and waiting lists for surgery are always a concern. All of these factors point to the need to develop new models of care that will reduce reliance on in-patient services, but the conclusion cannot be escaped that Cairns will need a new hospital in the future. In the

meantime, the Cairns Base Hospital needs additional services and beds well before a new hospital on a greenfield site could open its doors. Expanded new services including additional beds are going to be needed in the future for subacute aged care and rehabilitation, mental health and high dependency renal patients requiring overnight care.

However, perhaps of most importance to the people of the far north is the need for an integrated cancer care unit. It is important that whenever possible people fighting cancer can receive treatment close to the people they love. Current and future demand from the catchment area of the Cairns Base Hospital supports the establishment of radiation oncology services in Cairns, and today's announcement paves the way for those vital services to be provided in Cairns. The people of Cairns have supported this through the Committee for an Oncology Unit at Cairns Hospital, or COUCH as it is known. COUCH has raised funds and lobbied hard to bring this service to Cairns. I acknowledge its work and thank each and every person who has supported the campaign. Discussions will now continue with COUCH and the Commonwealth, which has also committed \$8.5 million to this project, to settle the details of where and when the services can begin.

I fully support the government's decision to privatise Cairns airport to fund a new hospital for Cairns. There is no compelling reason for the government to retain ownership of the airport when the proceeds of its sale can fund vital health infrastructure that is needed sooner rather than later. I am very pleased that a new era is about to begin for the delivery of health services in far-north Queensland and I thank the Premier, the Treasurer and the Minister for Health for recognising the need to make the necessary decisions to make it happen today.

Woorabinda

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (12.05 pm): Earlier this year the shadow Attorney-General and I visited two Indigenous communities, Aurukun on Cape York and Woorabinda west of Rockhampton. In order to gain a better grasp of the specific issues and challenges faced in these communities we met with a large number of people who are dedicated to improving conditions where they live, including mayors, CEOs, health workers, police, teachers, child-care and community justice groups, artists and non-government providers. In Woorabinda one senses an orderly township with houses relatively well kept, unlike Aurukun which is more dishevelled with broken down homes. However, at night alcohol-fuelled violence and vandalism are commonplace. Substance abuse is also a growing problem with supplies of yarrdi or cannabis readily available, provided you have money.

This government's alcohol management plans in these communities have failed. For years it has turned a blind eye to the disturbing situation unfolding in remote communities and refused to acknowledge the extent of the disharmony caused by substance and child abuse. Promising a detoxification and rehabilitation centre in Woorabinda is too little too late. Only through a spate of media reports of shocking cases of child rape and neglect, bringing the scope of the problem to the attention of the wider community, is anything being done. We have witnessed a blame game, with the Premier saying in December that the Aurukun pack-rape of a 10-year-old girl two years ago may have been an unusual one-off case. That is indicative of her government's reluctance to face up to its failures and, more importantly, its responsibilities. More and more children are presenting with complex behaviour problems that are not being identified due to a lack of services, which leads to inappropriate actions and ultimately recent sickening reports of children raping children.

What disgusted me most was the news that girls barely into their teens are having contraceptive implants such as an Implanon pellet, which is a four-centimetre long plastic pellet infused with progesterone, inserted into the skin in their upper arms. Implanon can be difficult to implant and it is recommended that procedural doctors perform this local surgery. It is estimated that some 25 per cent are not correctly inserted, 25 per cent fall out and many are hard to remove as they have embedded into the skin.

This practice raises a raft of questions that must be answered. How can this government allow this to happen to young girls in rural and remote communities? Who gives consent for the procedure? Can DoCS make this decision without parental agreement or does a Queensland Health worker make the decision? On what grounds is the decision made to implant one of these pellets and to what aged children does it apply? What are the screening processes for sexually transmitted diseases and how regularly are they done? Is there any sex education for boys, or girls for that matter? It is all too easy to give girls a contraceptive implant, but what is the government doing to stop boys? Where are the deterrents and punishments?

I challenge the ministers for health and child safety to disclose how many girls have been given these implants, which last up to five years, and the advice that they are given about sexual behaviour and diseases. If there are no procedural GPs, does a nurse without any recommended qualifications administer the procedure? Do people who live in Woorabinda receive inferior treatment by underqualified health workers, treatment that would attract penalties in urban Queensland? I was told by concerned residents that they spoke to DoCS last year about girls as young as 12 receiving implants. Staff said that the matter should be investigated, but nothing has happened. Is it any wonder that some townfolk despair and no longer report abuse, even when it is as harmful and unlawful as this?

At a nearby high school two years ago, three or four year 8 girls rolled up their sleeves to show off their contraceptive implants. Kids had bruises on their arms and told a staff member that they were from the implants being inserted. Young girls are being let down by their own community. The departments of health and child safety are failing them too. This is the sorry state, not the Smart State, where kids will not disclose to police due to two emotions—both very powerful ways for perpetrators to keep their victims silent—fear and shame. Due to the sensitive nature of this issue and of course privacy, I cannot disclose names, but I have to date made a report to police.

The coalition is determined to reverse this situation, and Dr Lara Wieland agrees in an article published in the AMA's *Q Doctor*. She says that there 'needs to be a solution to this problem before we lose an entire generation to the dysfunction of their parents'. This doctor has lived and worked in Cape York communities for eight years and stressed that people living in those communities need to understand that the shame is not in having the problems but in hiding them. She said—

There needs to be intensive education, health, nutritional, and social intervention for the youngest children and their parents. Give parents a chance to learn how to be parents before they damage their children the same way they have been damaged.

If we don't act urgently, it will be too late for this generation, who will be incapable of functioning in anything other than the surreal world of a dysfunctional community.

Time expired.

National Preventative Health Strategy

Ms DARLING (Sandgate—ALP) (12.10 pm): I congratulate federal health minister, Nicola Roxon, on her announcement that a special task force will develop a national preventative health strategy by June 2009. The top three priority areas of tobacco, alcohol and obesity were identified in a report commissioned by the minister which showed the enormous social and economic cost of alcohol, tobacco and illicit drug use.

Queensland's Health Action Plan, smoking laws and the planned tightening of liquor licensing laws will all contribute to better health and quality of life. It is distressing, though, that Queensland adult males still have the highest rates of smoking and obesity in the nation and 21 per cent of Queensland children aged five to 17 years are overweight or obese.

Nicola Roxon's focus on prevention recognises the importance, as she says, of 'not just fixing hospitals ... but fixing some of the things that mean people end up in hospital'. I know the health minister, Stephen Robertson, supports this focus on prevention. The Queensland government per capita expenditure on health has increased by around 60 per cent over the last decade, but general expenditure is estimated to continue to grow by another 23 per cent by the end of this decade.

The key to reducing the incidence of preventable illness and disease is education and access to information for consumers. We need to change the apathetic view that modern medicine can fix any ill. Instead, we must take responsibility for our own health and take action to reduce the risks of disease. The 2005-2015 Strategy for Chronic Disease, with an initial investment of \$155 million over four years, is another Queensland government strategy that focuses on prevention, not just cures. Type 2 diabetes, for example, can be prevented by healthy lifestyle choices such as good diet and regular exercise and the Strategy for Chronic Disease attempts to make these healthy choices the easy choices.

The Queensland government has introduced practical programs to boost information and advice, such as the 13HEALTH hotline, the Eat Well Be Active campaign, Go for 2&5 fruit and vegetable campaign and the Smart Choices—Healthy Food and Drinks Supply Strategy for Queensland Schools and TravelSmart initiatives. To stay healthy in our modern lives people need to take time and plan. My family and I joined the sport minister, Judy Spence, to launch the Find your 30 campaign to help Queenslanders get active. The campaign is a part of the Bligh government's \$8.4 million Eat Well Be Active initiative, which aims to improve the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders. At the launch we were challenged to think of ways to include 30 minutes of exercise each day into our normal activities.

We also need to take the time to choose and prepare healthier foods. The government has committed \$30 million to tackle the rising obesity rates, but I am concerned about the hidden traps faced by consumers trying to buy healthy foods for the family. Ingredients have changed over the years and so it is essential that food labelling meets consumers' needs. When I was a kid, a can of baked beans was one of the healthiest choices for families on a tight budget—full of navy beans and tomatoes. Now, many modern foods are full of unnecessary fat, salt, sugar and additives designed to appeal to the tastebuds or increase the shelf life of a product. As a general rule of thumb, food is less healthy each time you treat or process it but consumers are often unaware of the journey their food has taken.

There is also rising recognition of food allergies in the community which has led to a rise in consumption of organic and special dietary foods. I urge the Commonwealth government to work not only with state consumer affairs ministers but also with state health ministers to clarify and simplify labelling in Australia. In January this year, the Minister for Health and the member for Logan announced a \$26.4 million health hub for Hillcrest, which will provide a one-stop shop for health services to help tackle chronic disease and provide preventative healthcare models. I believe that this holistic model of

care is the way of the future. The services will include aged care and rehabilitation, children's health, adult mental health, drug and alcohol counselling, dental clinics and chronic disease prevention and management. I look forward to the rollout of more health hubs across Queensland.

I support the evolution of the Eventide Home at Brighton into a 'healthy ageing' hub which will one day offer not just residential care but rehabilitation services and transitional and community care. I would like to encourage Queensland Health and general practitioners to continue to think outside the square. Some very popular GPs are offering a range of services for the patients including psychology, physiotherapy and natural therapies. Studies have shown the link between our unhealthy lifestyles and an increasing rate of depression and mental illness, and an holistic treatment approach is essential.

The strong market for vitamins and herbal supplements indicates that people are looking for non-pharmaceutical solutions to illness where appropriate. There is definitely a place for prescription medication and modern medical practices have saved many lives and will continue to do so. But I believe that part of the solution to reduce the burden on our health system is to accept that many consumers approve of natural therapies and therefore we must test and verify the efficacy of alternative therapies. Again, it is essential that the federal government works with state health ministers to protect consumers.

Time expired.

Cairns Hospital, Mental Health Services

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (12.16 pm): Despite inquiries, reviews, promises and so on over many years by Queensland Health, the mental health unit at the Cairns Base Hospital continues to operate in appalling conditions according to many patients and their relatives. I have been told that it is a place where if you do not have a mental problem before you go there you certainly will afterwards. It is best described in a letter I recently received from a constituent in which she says, and I quote in part—

I am not sure where to start this letter as I have so much to say but not sure how to express it ... so here goes.

I am the daughter of a patient of Mental Health in Atherton. Recently my mum ... who is Bi-Polar had a manic episode and was admitted as an involuntary patient of the Cairns Base Hospital.

These are my observations on my daily visits to see her whilst she was a patient there.

1. When being admitted I handed the doctor a copy of my mother's medication so that he would ensure her Medical needs were taken care of as well as her mental state. She was on a med called Thyroxine which she must have every day on a regular basis. This was not given to her for three days until I made enquiries.

The excuse staff too busy and overlooked it.

2. Mum was complaining of bladder pain and a urine test was done and when I asked for the results there was no record of the test being done. This was told to me by one of the nurses. I stood there the day before and watched the nurse put the name on the label.

The excuse no test was done.

3. Communication with treating doctors. Access to my mums treating doctor was virtually impossible. When I needed him I left several messages and calls were never returned even though I expressed that it was urgent. He never did talk to me again re her situation. Out of sight out of mind.

The excuse too busy, meetings, clinics, patients. Understaffed. My mum was his patient too.

4. My mum was upset when she returned from a two hour pass to find all of her personal belongings were gone. They told us when we arrived back with her that they were moving her as they needed her bed for someone else.

Excuse. None her right to privacy was violated.

5. Overflowing patients transferred to the orthopedic ward the not so serious cases. I beg to differ. I could see apart from one young girl that these patients went down hill after their move. My mum was one of those.

Excuse short of beds.

6. Patients left unattended in the orthopedic ward with no mental stimulation of any kind. The room was dark and they had absolutely nothing to occupy their time from the moment they got out of bed until bed time. The highlight of their day was when meals arrived. They tried singing to cheer themselves up but were told to keep quiet which being a medical ward was fair enough. Some patients had no visitors and pleaded with me to do something for them. To get them taken down to the Psychiatric day room to play pool or cards or sit out in the fresh air. Something other than driving each other into a more unstable mental state. I found it very hard when visiting my mum to cope just for a couple of hours at a time.

Excuse. Short staffed, too much paperwork to walk them down the stairs.

7. I observed an elderly lady who had the use of a walking frame left to struggle out of bed to her meal which was placed out of her reach. Her buzzer was always kept out of her reach as she was a pest complaining to staff that she was hungry all of the time. I am aware that some medications can cause a patient to have a healthy appetite but she was continually calling out all day. It was enough to drive a sane person around the bend.

Excuse. She's putting it on. Not enough staff to care for her.

8. Communication between the Cairns Base Hospital Mental Health Unit and Atherton Mental Health appears to be non-existent. One was blaming the other for lack of communication.

Excuse. It's not our fault.

9. My mother was released to me on a three day pass to be followed up with an appointment in Atherton Mental Health and possible discharge. After numerous calls to her Doctor in Cairns, I was told by a RN that she was no longer their patient and that she had been discharged. I was not informed that she had been discharged and I feel that she should not have been discharged until she was stable or at least communication had been made with me her primary care giver to see how she was progressing.

Excuse. None, just plain bad manners.

10. Rooms full of mosquitoes in the Mental health unit. Mum was eaten alive the first night. I took her some Rid in to use. What about dengue?

Excuse. It's the tropics.

11. Patients using the laundry had to stick a toothbrush in the power on switch of the clothes dryer so that they could dry their clothes. Highly dangerous. What happened to patient safety?

Excuse. Maintenance had been advised but after 2 weeks nothing had been done.

She went on to state—

There are many people in Cairns Base Mental Health Unit who don't have someone to speak up for them so for all of them I am speaking up.

She heard that not long ago the Cairns Base Hospital mental health unit was one of the best in the state and that patients being readmitted were very few. She says—

Could be they all committed suicide. I would like to know the suicide rates for people discharged.

...

Our Mental Health Department in both Cairns and The Tablelands are a disgrace. More funding is needed and better management put in place, someone who actually gives a damn. Put the care back in nursing. Too many chiefs and not enough Indians.

Local Government Reform

Ms GRACE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (12.21 pm): The local government elections on 15 March represented an important milestone for the Queensland government's reforms which were announced in the middle of last year. It is now important to take a look back at some of the achievements over that time, particularly those achievements associated with ensuring that the industrial relations measures put in place were successful in protecting the entitlements of staff involved in the local government reforms.

On 27 July 2007 the independent Local Government Reform Commission provided recommendations to the Queensland government on the name, class, boundary and electoral arrangements for the new local government areas in Queensland. All local governments were reviewed by the reform commission except the Brisbane City Council. The Queensland government accepted the independent commission's boundary recommendations which reduced the number of councils in Queensland from 157 to 73 on the 15th of March elections. However, it was always mindful of the challenges that this represented not only to the councils and to the residents in the area but also to the staff that would be affected by amalgamating many varying agreements into the newly formed local councils.

In recognition of this, a number of supporting mechanisms were put in place by the state government to ensure that staff member entitlements were protected and that workers were not disadvantaged due to council amalgamations. This was not an easy job and required much expertise to ensure that the industrial framework in place throughout the transition period protected staff benefits and entitlements.

I am pleased to advise that through the mechanisms put in place by the state government a smooth transition of all staff into the new amalgamated councils has occurred without any loss in terms and conditions. This was achieved by a number of committees and legislative mechanisms put in place to facilitate these reforms in consultation with various stakeholders in local government. The lead forum for the statewide issues is the State Transition Committee, which included members from various government departments and also included representatives from unions, the LGAQ, the LGMA and the Aboriginal Local Government Association of Queensland.

This committee approved the Workforce Transition Code of Practice, which provided some certainty and protections for employees. The underlying principles of the code included no forced redundancies for three years; maximise employment security for local government staff; maximise the retention of local government staff; contracts of employment will be honoured; maximise support to staff throughout this transition process; no overall loss of employment across the local government sector; no overall reduction in working conditions; no overall disadvantage to workers; and no forced relocations for 12 months. All apply in conjunction with existing industrial agreements including the rights of workers to access their union in the workplace.

Further protection for employees was provided through the Local Government and Industrial Relations Amendment Bill 2008. This legislation will insulate Queensland local government workers from the Liberal Party's WorkChoices legislation until it is fully torn up over the coming months. Whilst the framework for the reforms was provided by the state, local councils were given the task of preparing for the specifics of the amalgamation based on local issues and considerations. Each new council was required to set up a local transition committee to oversee the period until 15 March. These committees consisted of elected representatives from each amalgamating council and the relevant unions representing the combined workforces.

Unlike those on the other side of the House, who cannot accept a union's legitimate role to represent its members, this government acknowledged that IR for the amalgamating councils was a complex issue that required industrial relations expertise and a consistent approach throughout the process in order to deliver the required outcome for employers and employees. All those involved on the LTCs provided good guidance and knowledge, especially workers' unions on these committees that also provided IR expertise and the necessary consistency over several councils which produced a smooth transition for workers.

The LTCs were required to prepare a transition action plan based on key deliverables and recommendations. All LTCs submitted their TAP to the state and all were approved prior to the changeover day. This crucial achievement will provide clear direction for the new councils. The other important outcome of the LTCs was the fostering of relationships between each of the amalgamating councils and the union representing the workforce. While not all were happy with the initial reform announcements, most got on with the job to ensure success for the new council and protection of staff entitlements. As I said, this was not an easy job and I congratulate those involved on achieving a good outcome for workers and, therefore, for the new amalgamating councils.

Trinity Beach State School

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (12.26 pm): In recent times the school community of the Trinity Beach State School has gone to extraordinary lengths to highlight the problems with maintenance of facilities at their school. We saw that culminate in a group of parents and students travelling from Cairns to parliament today to highlight the issues that they have been fighting to address with their local member and with the state government.

This is a school that was built in the 1970s and at the time it was foreseen, I am told, as a temporary school but it has since been reclassified. It is in an area that is suffering from rapid growth and it is a school that has had a chronic lack of both maintenance and adequate facilities. The last time there was any significant funding put into the school, I am told, was back in 1996. I have met with the parents and the students from the school this morning, and they are under no illusions that the attempts by the state government and the education minister to paper over the problems that exist at Trinity Beach State School are indeed just that. They are just papering over the problems with some cosmetic changes.

They gave me a series of photos of some of the facilities at the school—which I tabled earlier for everyone's attention—and they also gave me a Q-Build audit of the school. That audit runs to three pages of items of maintenance that need to be addressed at that school that have been highlighted by Q-Build. How much is that worth? The grand total is \$385,360. That is how much the Q-Build audit has picked up that is needed to be done at the Trinity Beach State School, not just the \$40,000 that the education minister was justifying this morning in trying to take some heat out of this issue, particularly for the local member.

I have a number of emails that have been sent to the minister for education and the Premier, Anna Bligh. The school community up there is under no illusions whatsoever about the problems and what needs to be done. The Premier said that she would try to squeeze a meeting in because she was given very short notice. These parents have been emailing for weeks and weeks, at least since the beginning or the middle of March, requesting time for a meeting with the Premier. Yet the Premier said that it had only just been brought to her attention.

The really sad thing is that it is not just Trinity Beach State School that needs addressing. There are schools right around Queensland that have the same maintenance problems and the same issues with the same urgency to have them addressed. There is no doubt that maintenance is one of the main issues when I go to visit schools. We have seen more and more cost shifting from the government to P&Cs. P&Cs are now raising money to do fundamental maintenance that should be delivered by this state government.

When the minister announced last year that a billion dollars would be going into the Tomorrow's Schools program I wholeheartedly welcomed the announcement. I thought that was a great initiative. It was something we needed to do because the issue has been outstanding for so long. As time has gone on we have seen that the Tomorrow's Schools program is actually more about rationalising schools and closing schools because this government simply cannot maintain the number of schools we have. It has not been able to fund the maintenance and support of those schools.

I have met with representatives from Hemmant State School in the electorate of the Deputy Premier. In their cluster, the Wynnum bayside cluster, they have been given no option other than to close the school. All three options given to them by Education Queensland involved the Hemmant State School closing. That school community does not want their school to close. They say that it is a fantastic school for their students. They have chosen it specifically because of its strengths. It is a small school. The parents of the students attending that school have deliberately chosen it.

What we have seen over the last 12 months is a fantastic program that should have been about maintaining schools right across Queensland become about the closure of some of these schools. I think it will be a very sad day when we lose our diversity of schools. If we are only going to have very large schools then that is a backward step because schools are about more than just size and the standard of education at them.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr English): Order! That concludes the matters of public interest debate.

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. TS MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries) (12.31 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Rural and Regional Adjustment Act 1994, the Sugar Industry Act 1999, the Land Act 1994 and the Land Title Act 1994 for particular purposes. 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. TS MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries) (12.31 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Primary Industries and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2008 will amend the Rural and Regional Adjustment Act 1994, principally to broaden the potential for QRAA's operations, and will amend the Sugar Industry Act 1999, the Land Act 1994 and the Land Title Act 1994 to dissolve the Office of the Sugar Industry Commissioner and to provide an alternative approach for the future administration of sugar access rights.

The amendments to the Rural and Regional Adjustment Act 1994 concern the operations of QRAA, a statutory authority established in 1994. QRAA's original brief was to deliver financial assistance on behalf of the Queensland government to foster the development of Queensland's rural sector. Its secondary role was to deliver assistance to small business and other elements of the state's economy in periods when they are experiencing temporary difficulty—for example, in times of drought or natural disaster.

Following a legislative review of this act in 2003, this charter was expanded to include the regional sector but the metropolitan area was outside the scope of QRAA's operations. The legislative review also recommended that the act be amended to further empower QRAA to administer government assistance schemes for other jurisdictions within Australian borders.

While there are not likely to be many opportunities for QRAA to administer schemes for the benefit of rural and regional producers in other jurisdictions, such opportunities do arise on occasions and QRAA should be in a position to provide this service. Administration of assistance schemes for other jurisdictions would be on a full cost pricing basis and would strengthen QRAA's skills base and potentially reduce overheads.

Additionally, the Queensland government may also wish to utilise the expertise and systems of QRAA to deliver targeted assistance to businesses and not-for-profit organisations in Queensland, irrespective of their size and connection with the rural or regional sector. This requires the scope of the act to be wider than the current focus on rural and regional producers and those experiencing temporary difficulty. Amendments are included to enable this to occur.

The impact of these amendments on the delivery of QRAA's core business is expected to be minimal. QRAA's primary focus will continue to be Queensland's rural and regional producers. However, QRAA will have the potential to deliver a wider range of government assistance measures.

There are other amendments of a more procedural nature, which relate to chief executives' powers of delegation and the composition of a board quorum. The chief executives of Queensland Treasury and the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries are ex officio directors of QRAA. The amendments will remove any doubt as to the ability of these chief executives to delegate this role as a director to a senior executive officer, who need not be from the same department as the chief executive. The delegate will, however, be required to have suitable skills and experience. The proposed amendments will also clarify that the government directors will be counted towards a quorum of the QRAA board, making a quorum much easier to form and thus allowing for the more efficient conduct of board meetings.

The bill also amends the Sugar Industry Act 1999, the Land Act 1994 and the Land Title Act 1994. The government has previously announced its intention to phase out the Office of the Sugar Industry Commissioner due to reduced responsibilities following industry deregulation. As part of this process an industry-government access rights working group was convened to investigate alternatives for the future administration of sugar cane access rights, the major remaining responsibility of the commissioner. The working group examined a range of options including the removal of special purpose legislation and the adoption of normal commercial practice for the acquisition of lands required for the harvest and delivery of cane to a mill.

The working group found that the Office of the Sugar Industry Commissioner was not sustainable and recommended that it should not continue after 30 June 2008, and that ongoing legislation was justified to preserve existing and provide for future grants of access rights. The commissioner has, in recent years, been working toward the dissolution of the office.

Ongoing legislation was found to be warranted based mainly on the significant contribution to state freight infrastructure of the cane railway system, the need to maintain harvest efficiency and industry competitiveness and the ability to ensure that safeguards continue to be provided to the property rights of individuals. These safeguards provide process rights to the affected landholder including notice, hearings, determination of compensation and appeals. In the interests of time, I seek leave to have the remainder of my second reading speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The proposed legislation will continue the ability for access rights to be granted by consent between the parties and will transfer the Commissioner's existing role regarding non consent access rights applications to the Land Court.

Existing access rights are to be recorded on the relevant land titles as administrative advices, and future access rights will be recorded appropriately on the relevant land title.

Amendments to the Land Act 1994 and the Land Title Act 1994 will enable registration of future cane railway access rights as easements on affected titles. A time period will need to be specified for future permits to pass.

These measures will essentially continue the currently existing system for the granting of access rights in a cost effective manner. Land registration practices will be more in line with Government land registration practices, and the office of the Sugar Industry Commissioner will be able to be dissolved in an orderly manner.

The existing transitional process regarding cane supply contract dispute resolution in Chapter 9 of the Sugar Industry Act 1999, which currently expires on 30 June 2010, is to be removed.

This process has not been used by industry since it was inserted in 2004. Parties to a dispute are able to use, and have been using, commercial processes for such disputes.

Amendments in the Bill will also deal with a number of procedural issues including spent and expiring provisions.

I would like to place on record the Government's appreciation to the Sugar Industry Commissioner, Ms Rowena McNally, who, through a demanding period of sugar industry reform, has provided a very high standard service in discharging the responsibilities of the office.

She has done so in an independent manner and always sought to properly balance the expectations of Government and industry as well as the requirements of the community.

Mr Speaker, this legislation will make a very positive contribution to the conduct of Queensland's primary industries and, as such, deserves the support of all members in this House.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr McArdle, adjourned.

NATIONAL GAS (QUEENSLAND) BILL

First Reading

Hon. GJ WILSON (Ferry Grove—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy) (12.37 pm): I present a bill for an act to establish a framework to enable third parties to gain access to certain natural gas pipeline services, to repeal the Gas Pipelines Access (Queensland) Act 1998, and to make particular amendments to acts as set out in parts 6 and 7. 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. GJ WILSON (Ferry Grove—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy) (12.37 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

This bill is a relatively short piece of legislation, which in essence attaches and applies the national gas law and the national gas rules. The bill continues the national approach to gas regulation that was first developed in the Gas Pipelines Access (Queensland) Act 1998 and the Gas Code. The

national gas law will be enacted by the South Australian parliament as the lead legislator and then applied in all other jurisdictions through application legislation. The bill is Queensland's application legislation.

The national gas law, along with the rules made under the law, has been developed through an intensive national cooperative process which involved extensive stakeholder consultation. In addition to applying the national gas law and rules, this bill contains savings and transitional provisions that are necessary and specific to Queensland. The national gas law applied through this bill will replace the gas pipelines access law which has been operating in Queensland since 1998, and the Gas Pipelines Access (Queensland) Act 1998 and the Gas Code will be repealed.

This bill will achieve a number of worthwhile objectives. It will maintain a system for ensuring access on reasonable terms to pipelines with monopoly power, while at the same time reducing, as far as is feasible, the costs of regulation and ensuring that the access provisions do not discourage much-needed new investment in gas pipelines. The national gas law will strengthen energy market governance arrangements and improve the climate for investment in the state's energy sector.

Market access to Queensland's vast natural gas reserves will benefit from streamlined and improved economic regulation of gas pipelines, which will lower the cost and complexity of regulation facing investors, enhance regulatory certainty and lower barriers to competition. This bill seeks to build upon the current gas pipeline access regime in Queensland. The current regime, embodied in the Gas Pipelines Access (Queensland) Act 1998 and the Gas Code, provides for access to the services of gas transmission and distribution pipelines with monopoly power on fair and reasonable terms.

The bill seeks to strengthen this existing regime by implementing the recommendations of, firstly, the Productivity Commission in its 2004 review of the gas access regime and, subsequently, the expert panel engaged by the Ministerial Council on Energy on the review of revenue and network pricing across the energy market.

Mr Speaker, given the time, I seek leave to have the remainder of my second reading speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The recommendations of these two bodies were to improve incentives for investment in gas transmission and distribution pipelines while at the same time ensuring the rights of parties seeking access to pipelines are protected. They also recommended the streamlining of regulatory governance arrangements for gas pipelines, and further clarifying the objectives of the Gas Access Regime.

The Bill implements a common framework for regulation of gas transmission and distribution network revenue and pricing, adopting pricing principles and a 'fit-for-purpose' decision making framework. As recommended by the Productivity Commission, it provides an option for 'light' regulation of pipelines, which has the capacity to reduce the costs of regulation for pipelines and regulators, while still providing access seekers with a framework for negotiating access to pipelines.

Under these provisions, all Queensland pipelines will be able to apply to the regulator for light regulation of their transportation services. Where a pipeline is subject to light-handed regulation, the price of access will not be set by the regulator, but will be monitored and the pipeline will be required to state the price and terms and conditions of service in a limited access arrangement.

The Bill also continues the incentives for greenfields pipelines introduced into the Gas Pipelines Access Law in 2006. The 2006 amendments introduced the option for a proposed pipeline to seek a binding 'no coverage determination' which would remove the pipeline from access regulation and tariff determinations for 15 years.

The amendments also introduced a 'pricing regulation holiday' option for new international pipelines, where they are not subject to any upfront assessment as to whether they meet the coverage criteria. The pricing regulation holiday gives the investors certainty at the planning stage, as a coverage determination typically taking around 12 months has the potential to deter investment. These amendments have been replicated in the National Gas Law.

The interests of energy consumers have been enshrined in the new National Gas Law. The objective of the Law makes specific reference to the long term interests of customers of natural gas with respect to price, quality, safety reliability and security of supply. Under this Bill, gas pipeline access regulation will come under the jurisdiction of the Australian Energy Regulator as the national economic regulator and enforcement body.

At present, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission regulates gas transmission pipelines in Queensland, while the Queensland Competition Authority regulates distribution networks. As a result of this Bill, the Australian Energy Regulator will assume responsibility for regulation of all gas distribution networks and transmission pipelines from commencement of the Act. This should provide for a more nationally consistent approach to the regulation of pipelines.

The Bill will introduce specific revenue and pricing principles to guide the Australian Energy Regulator in determining the tariffs that apply for access to regulated gas pipelines or distribution systems. In addition, under the new governance arrangements, the Australian Energy Market Commission will have the power to make changes to the National Gas Rules, on application by interested parties, and to conduct enquiries into gas-related matters as directed by the Ministerial Council on Energy.

These reforms are designed to ensure consistency between electricity and gas transmission and distribution, with the changes modelled on changes made to national electricity legislation in 2005 and 2007.

The Bill also includes new provisions establishing a Natural Gas Services Bulletin Board. The Bulletin Board will facilitate trade in natural gas and markets for natural gas services through the provision of system and market information which will be readily available to all interested parties via an electronic website. The Bulletin Board will display production, transmission and demand information, and provide facilities for voluntary trading in gas.

The Bulletin Board is being designed to assist in the management of a gas emergency. The Bulletin Board is a recommendation of the Gas Market Leaders Group, an industry body established by the Ministerial Council on Energy to provide advice on development of the gas market.

This Bill provides for a limited merits review by the Australian Competition Tribunal of the Australian Energy Regulator's economic regulatory decisions in certain circumstances. A range of affected parties, including service providers, users and users' associations, will be able to seek review of certain decisions made by the various decision makers under the National Gas Law. Queensland's current review body, the Gas Appeals Tribunal, will no longer be required with the transfer of this role to the Australian Competition Tribunal.

Mr Speaker, this Bill includes specific savings and transitional provisions for the Queensland Gas Regime. The Bill allows regulations to be made specifying transitional arrangements for three transmission pipelines: the South West Queensland Pipeline, the Carpentaria Gas Pipeline, and the Queensland Gas Pipeline.

These pipelines, under development prior to the enactment of the Gas Pipelines Access Act 1998, had tariffs agreed by the Queensland energy minister at the time, prior to the commencement of the Regime. This was done to give a level of certainty for these pipelines in a period of regulatory reform. These pipelines are all covered or regulated pipelines, except in relation to tariffs. In the absence of special transitional provisions in the Bill, the pricing principles in the National Gas Law and Rules might displace the pre-existing agreements, which have been vital in fostering the development of the Queensland natural gas market.

In summary, the Bill will clarify the operation of gas pipeline access regulation through a new objectives clause and pricing principles, and streamline regulatory governance arrangements. It will also provide for the creation of an electronic Bulletin Board with information on the operation of the gas market and a platform for trading.

Mr Speaker, this government is again delivering on key energy commitments through this Bill, which will apply the National Gas Law in Queensland.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr McArdle, adjourned.

MINERAL RESOURCES (PEAK DOWNS MINE) AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. GJ WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy) (12.40 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Mineral Resources Act 1989 to make provision about particular mining tenements. 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. GJ WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy) (12.40 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the Mineral Resources (Peak Downs Mine) Amendment Bill 2008 is to address a historic anomaly dating back to the 1980s involving a longstanding mining tenure dispute between the Central Queensland Coal Associates—the CQC Associates—and BHP Mitsubishi Alliance Coal Operations Pty Ltd, better known as BMA, and Cherwell Creek Coal Pty Ltd and, most importantly, to secure the current and future operations of the Peak Downs coalmine. The Peak Downs coalmine is owned by the CQC Associates and managed by BMA. There are two issues to be resolved. Firstly, Cherwell Creek's four current tenure applications under the Mineral Resources Act 1989 need to be finalised and, secondly, BMA's tenure for its current and future infrastructure needs to be resolved. These are exceptional circumstances. It is a historic anomaly and we are going to fix it with fairness.

Cherwell Creek was granted Exploration Permit for Coal 545 in 1994 over an area of approximately 90 square kilometres in the Emerald mining district. The source of dispute between BMA and Cherwell Creek is that a significant part of Exploration Permit for Coal 545 overlaps Special Lease 12/42239. Cherwell Creek has also more recently applied for Mineral Development Licence 366, which similarly overlaps the special lease.

The Central Queensland Coal Associates Agreement was entered into between the state and the CQC Associates on 1 January 1969. That agreement was authorised, and given the force of law, by the Central Queensland Coal Associates Agreement Act 1968. The Central Queensland Coal Associates Agreement provided for the compulsory acquisition of land and the granting of special leases to the CQC Associates for, among other things, infrastructure purposes for coalmining where the CQC Associates were unable to acquire land. Special Lease 12/42239 was subsequently granted under the then Land Act in 1979 for 'industrial (coalmining) purposes'.

The Peak Downs mine is located on Mining Lease 1775. Mining Lease 1775 was granted in 1984 under the Central Queensland Coal Associates Agreement Act 1968 rather than the general mining legislation in place at the time. The special lease is partly within and partly outside Mining Lease 1775. That part of the special lease which is outside Mining Lease 1775 on its western boundary is the location for infrastructure critical to the Peak Downs mine. It is understood that this mining infrastructure includes spoil piles, environmental and tailings dams, haul roads and ramps, mechanical workshops,

warehouses, power reticulation structures and a large coal reject stockpile. It is this area which is overlapped by Exploration Permit for Coal 545 and the application for Mineral Development Licence 366.

The current dispute between Cherwell Creek and BMA has arisen because of this historical split between the mining tenure for the mining operations on the one hand and on the other hand the land tenure for the infrastructure for the Peak Downs mine, all of which predates the tenure regime under the Mineral Resources Act 1989. Mining operations and infrastructure are now both accommodated under mining leases granted under the Mineral Resources Act 1989. It is therefore unlikely that a dispute of this nature would ever occur in relation to tenure granted solely under the Mineral Resources Act 1989.

When the Mineral Resources Act 1989 was enacted, it included transitional provisions that expressly covered mining leases granted under the Central Queensland Coal Associates Agreement Act 1968. Special leases granted under the then Land Act pursuant to the authority for that within the Central Queensland Coal Associates Agreement were similarly transitioned over when the Land Act 1994 was enacted. Unfortunately, these special leases were never protected to ensure that tenure could not be granted under the Mineral Resources Act 1989 over or under them.

We now do not know whether this was deliberate or an oversight. What we do know, however, is that this lack of protection for the special leases has certainly proved to be a costly mistake in the current situation, as it has resulted in uncertainty and lengthy delays for one of Queensland's biggest and most valuable coalmines.

The Peak Downs coalmine is a premium coking coal mine, producing nine million tonnes of coal per annum. The total coal reserve size is 1,915 million tonnes. The value of its exports last financial year was \$1.28 billion and its coal royalty payments were \$86.8 million. As at June 2007, the mine had a workforce of 1,085 employees and contractors.

Mr Deputy Speaker, may I crave your indulgence to seek leave for the incorporation of the remainder of my second reading speech in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The continuing viable operation of the Peak Downs Mine is of considerable benefit to the local economy and to the State. It is therefore not acceptable for its current operations to be hampered by the tenure dispute with Cherwell Creek.

BMA is proposing a major expansion of the Peak Downs Mine and the surrounding area. It is investigating the feasibility of developing and constructing a new Greenfield mine in the northern part of Mining Lease 1775, to be known as the Caval Ridge Mine.

The Caval Ridge Mine could result in over 1200 construction-based jobs and 550 operational jobs and the construction of over \$1 billion worth of infrastructure.

It might also result in up to a further 12 million tonnes of coal production per annum. To put this into context, 12 million tonnes per annum is more than the current capacity of the Peak Downs Mine (which is nine million) and more than the combined annual production capabilities of the Millennium, Poitrel and Isaac Plains Mines.

Commencement of production at the Caval Ridge Mine is proposed by the first quarter of the 2012 financial year. My Department has advised that if production is to commence by 2012, the feasibility studies need to commence as soon as possible.

The Government accepts that the land currently held by Cherwell Creek under Exploration Permit for Coal 545 and its application for Mineral Development License 364 is the optimal location for the infrastructure needed for the Caval Ridge Mine.

If BMA is unable to locate its expansion infrastructure off the mining lease and in this particular area, most of which I understand it owns freehold, the infrastructure would need to be placed within Mining Lease 1775. This would be problematic firstly because operating costs would generally be significantly higher because of the geophysical features of the land.

Secondly, it would require the placement of infrastructure on top of reserves of premium hard coking coal. BMA has suggested that approximately 52.5 million tonnes of coking coal would be sterilised by this, which could have a revenue value of approximately \$2.2 billion and a royalty value to the State of approximately \$146 million.

Thirdly, while BMA might be able to avoid sterilising some coal by progressively relocating its infrastructure, this would further increase operating costs and lastly, the placement of infrastructure on the eastern boundary would move the infrastructure closer to the Moranbah Township, which might require significant steps to be taken (and higher costs incurred) to reduce the noise, dust, vibration and visual impact on the local community and township.

Both Cherwell Creek and BMA have shown a propensity to litigate this dispute. There has been extensive litigation between BMA and Cherwell Creek in the Mining Warden's Court and, more recently, in the Supreme Court. For example, two of my predecessor's decisions about the renewal of EPC545 have already been the subject of judicial review proceedings in the Supreme Court.

One of the judicial review proceedings was brought by Cherwell Creek. This led to the decision being revoked by the Minister and a fresh decision made. A review of that fresh decision was then sought by BMA. BMA's proceedings are still pending, but on hold.

It is likely that both BMA and Cherwell Creek will litigate if any future decisions go against them.

In an attempt to resolve the dispute, the Department of Mines and Energy facilitated a mediation between the parties between February and September 2007. The mediation was unsuccessful. There appears to be no prospect of BMA and Cherwell Creek resolving their dispute on a commercial basis and it is for this reason that the Government has had to step in and make these decisions in the public interest.

Since the mediation, Cherwell Creek's outstanding applications and all submissions received from both parties in relation to those submissions have been reviewed by a small multi-disciplinary team within the Department of Mines and Energy, comprising an experienced geologist, a coal mining engineer and a former senior mining registrar.

On the basis of that review, my Department has recommended to me that all of Cherwell Creek's applications be rejected for the following reasons.

Cherwell Creek has had 13½ years to prove up and develop any coal resource within the area of its exploration permit, but has been unable to do so.

In the past 13½ years, Cherwell Creek has only drilled in the reporting years 1994, 2004, 2005 and possibly 2007. While my Department is aware that Cherwell Creek proposed to drill in 2007, it has not yet had to report back to the Department and it is not known whether it did drill in 2007.

As far as the Department is currently aware, Cherwell Creek has only drilled in the area subject to the application for Mineral Development License 364. This means that Cherwell Creek applied for Mineral Development License 366 over an area it had never drilled.

In the absence of any sizeable, economically viable coal resource, the most appropriate and economic use of the land subject to the application for Mineral Development License 366 is for the Peak Downs Mine's current infrastructure.

Cherwell Creek has defined only a relatively small coal resource in the area subject to its application for Mineral Development License 364 which is at a very preliminary stage of assessment and which it is considered might only be marginally viable.

In the absence of any sizeable, economically viable coal resource, the most appropriate and economic use of the land subject to the application for Mineral Development License 364 is for infrastructure to support the Caval Ridge Mine.

I have accepted my Department's recommendations to reject all four of Cherwell Creek's current outstanding applications.

However, while I could decide Cherwell Creek's applications administratively, it is almost certain that judicial review proceedings would be brought by one or both parties against each of the four decisions I would have to make. This would lead to further delay and uncertainty and BMA's current and future mining tenure problems could not be resolved. As this is simply not satisfactory, a legislative solution is required.

My Department has also recommended that if Cherwell Creek's two mineral development licenses are rejected, the land currently covered by those applications be made available to BMA to apply for a mining lease over any of that area within a prescribed period. This would ensure the best and most productive use of this land for the benefit of Queensland.

The Government has decided to go even further and legislate that all of Special Lease 12/42239 which is outside a mining tenure or which is not the subject of an application for a mining tenure be made available to BMA to apply for a mining lease within a prescribed period. No party's pre-existing rights under the Mineral Resources Act 1989 will be affected by this proposed legislation, other than Cherwell Creek's.

This will enable BMA to secure that land for its infrastructure. This is arguably what was always intended when the Special Lease was granted back in the 1970s.

As BMA does not hold the prerequisite tenure to apply for mining leases under the Mineral Resources Act 1989 for any of this land, a legislative solution is required.

The continued successful operation of the Peak Downs Mine and the development of the proposed Caval Ridge Mine present a very substantial economic opportunity for the State. The tenure dispute with Cherwell Creek has now reached a critical point and resolution of this matter is crucial to both the current operations and the expansion plans for the Peak Downs Mine, which is the better and more valuable resource for the State.

Resolution of the dispute will have significant flow-on benefits for the State, through the payment of royalties, rents and rail freight and in relation to employment.

Because the potential consequences for BMA, the local community and the State are so significant, it is imperative that the Government act now to legislatively resolve the dispute and to secure appropriate mining tenure for BMA.

This action has not been taken lightly by the Queensland Government. This case should not be seen by anyone as creating a precedent for large mining companies to approach the Queensland Government for legislative solutions to resolve mining tenure disputes with explorers.

The circumstances of this case are highly unusual. DME is unaware of any similar situation having arisen before. However, DME is reviewing all mining leases granted under Special Agreement Acts, rather than general mining legislation, to identify where a similar issue could possibly arise in the future.

Cherwell Creek will lose no appeal rights as a result of this proposed legislation, as it never had the right to appeal any decision that I made about its applications.

The proposed legislation will however deny Cherwell Creek the right to challenge the decisions made about its four outstanding applications through judicial review proceedings on procedural grounds. Judicial review is not a merit-based process.

The proposed legislation will not affect any compensation rights of Cherwell Creek because, in the absence of misfeasance in public office or a breach of a duty of care or a statutory duty, I have been advised that Cherwell Creek has no right to compensation for the rejection of any of its applications by me.

The Government is fully committed to encouraging exploration in Queensland. Therefore, while it has accepted my Department's recommendations to reject all of Cherwell Creek's tenure applications in the best interests of Queensland, it has also decided to take an even-handed approach and to grant Cherwell Creek the right to apply to the Land Court for compensation.

Any compensation payable will be paid by the holders of Mining Lease 1775 for Cherwell Creek's loss of opportunity to commercialise the coal resource in the area currently subject to the application for MDL364.

The Government is therefore legislating to protect Cherwell Creek's interests as far as possible. If Cherwell Creek can prove it would have been able to commercialise the coal resources, it will be entitled to compensation. If it can't prove it would have been able to commercialise the coal resources, it won't be entitled to compensation. You can't get fairer than that.

As honourable members would be aware, my Department is currently undertaking an extensive review of the Mineral Resources Act 1989.

As part of that review, the Department will be considering whether the new mining legislation should include special provisions to enable the Minister, or perhaps the Governor in Council, to make decisions in the public interest when exceptional circumstances have arisen, as occurred in this case, due to the complexities of mining legislation or historical circumstances. Any such power would obviously need to be fairly tightly constrained so that it couldn't be abused, but the intention would be to enable the Government to more quickly resolve such problems for the benefit of Queensland.

Mr Speaker, I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Dr Flegg, adjourned.

JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Message from Governor

Hon. KG SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Premier in Western Queensland) (12.47 pm): I present a message from Her Excellency the Governor.

The Deputy Speaker read the following message—

MESSAGE

JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2008

Constitution of Queensland 2001, section 68

I, QUENTIN BRYCE, Governor, recommend to the Legislative Assembly a Bill intituled

A Bill for an Act to amend the Classification of Computer Games and Images Act 1995, the Classification of Films Act 1991, the Classification of Publications Act 1991, the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal Act 2003, the Consumer Credit (Queensland) Act 1994 to make changes to the Consumer Credit Code, the Crime and Misconduct Act 2001 and the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000 for particular purposes

Quentin Bryce
GOVERNOR

10 April 2008

Tabled paper: Message, dated 10 April 2008, from Her Excellency the Governor to the Legislative Assembly recommending the introduction of the Justice Legislation Amendment Bill.

First Reading

Hon. KG SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Premier in Western Queensland) (12.47 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Classification of Computer Games and Images Act 1995, the Classification of Films Act 1991, the Classification of Publications Act 1991, the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal Act 2003, the Consumer Credit (Queensland) Act 1994 to make changes to the Consumer Credit Code, the Crime and Misconduct Act 2001 and the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000 for particular purposes. 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. KG SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Premier in Western Queensland) (12.50 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

This bill makes various amendments to a range of departmental acts, with the overall purpose of clarifying and improving the operation of these acts. The three Queensland classification acts are the ones that I will be addressing my remarks to firstly. Queensland is part of a national classification scheme, being a cooperative relationship between the Commonwealth, states and territories. Each state and territory has enacted classification and enforcement legislation to complement the Commonwealth Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995. As a result of changes to this Commonwealth legislation, minor consequential amendments are required to Queensland's Classification of Publications Act 1991, Classification of Films Act 1991 and Classification of Computer Games and Images Act 1995.

The Commonwealth legislation has been changed to—

- facilitate the integration of the previous Office of Film and Literature Classification into the Australian Attorney-General's Department; and
- delineate the administration functions of the Classifications Board from the Classifications Review Board in order to reinforce their independence and redistribute powers between these two bodies.

The changes to the Commonwealth legislation will also streamline the classifications scheme by—

- removing the necessity to reclassify films when certain additional content is added, such as captioning for hearing impaired persons; and
- removing the necessity to make a separate application for classification when previously classified films are re-released on a single DVD.

The three Queensland classification acts will be amended to reflect these administrative and other changes.

The Commonwealth legislation will also be changed to provide a new scheme allowing unclassified films and computer games to be advertised. Presently only films and computer games which have been classified may then be advertised, with a small number of exemptions to this available annually for cinema-release films. Changes were considered necessary to respond to the way in which film and computer games are distributed due to emerging technologies and the increasing threat of piracy. Film and computer games industries can no longer afford to stagger international release dates.

Under changes to the Commonwealth legislation, advertisements for unclassified films and computer games will be allowed, provided the requirements of the Commonwealth's new advertising scheme have been complied with. Although this scheme relies on a self-assessment process, extensive safeguards, including industry guidelines, have been built into it. Queensland's Classification of Films Act 1991 and Classification of Computer Games and Images Act 1995 will be amended to recognise the new advertising scheme. Finally, the three Queensland classification acts will be amended to allow the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal to review decisions made by the Queensland classifications officer under the three acts. The Commercial and Consumer Tribunal has the infrastructure, capacity and expertise to hear the minimal classification reviews expected. This amendment will eliminate the need to establish three separate tribunals for each of the three Queensland classification acts.

I turn now to the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal Act 2003. This bill makes a minor amendment to schedule 2 of the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal Act 2003 to change the definition of 'empowering act'. This amendment will avoid the need to continue to update the act every time a new empowering act gives jurisdiction to the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal. It will not affect the range of acts that currently empower the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal to review decisions.

I move on to the proposed amendments to the Consumer Credit Code. This code commenced in all Australian jurisdictions on 1 November 1996 and has broad application to all consumer credit products. The code is part of a national scheme, operates under the direction of the Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs and utilises a template held by Queensland. Under the Australian Uniform Consumer Credit Laws Agreement 1993, any amendments to the code must be made to the Queensland template legislation. Subject to the bill being passed by this parliament, the credit amendments proposed in the bill will be mirrored by the other participating Australian jurisdictions. Having regard to the constraints of time, I seek leave to have the rest of my speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The amendments in this bill have been recommended by a Post Implementation Review of the Code undertaken by the Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs and by a National Competition Policy review.

The amendments ensure credit arrangements known as 'terms sale of land contracts', 'conditional sale agreements' and 'tiny terms contracts' are clearly brought within the scope of the Code.

A terms sale of land contract involves the sale of land where the purchase price is payable to the vendor in instalments. A conditional sale agreement is similar to a terms sale of land except that this form of agreement involves the sale of goods. Tiny terms contracts are contracts where the cost of credit is incorporated into the cash price and the transaction is represented as a sale of goods by instalment without any credit charges.

It is arguable these types of arrangements are already covered by the Code. There have been a number of court decisions which have confirmed this view, including a decision in the Victorian Supreme Court earlier this year. However, due to the doubts raised in the reviews, the Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs approved amending the Code to ensure that consumers utilising these credit arrangements are protected under the Code.

Proposed amendments to the Crime and Misconduct Act 2001

The bill also amends the Crime and Misconduct Act 2001 to declare that local government is and has always been a unit of public administration under that Act.

The Crime and Misconduct Commission's jurisdiction over local governments has in the past been linked to their status as corporate entities within the meaning of section 20 of the Crime and Misconduct Act 2001.

The Local Government and Industrial Relations Amendment Act 2008 specifically provided that local governments, with the exception of the Brisbane City Council, are not corporations.

This means that the Crime and Misconduct Commission's jurisdiction over local governments became linked to their receipt of state moneys within the meaning of section 20 of the Crime and Misconduct Act 2001.

Although a regulation has recently been made prescribing local government as a unit of public administration pursuant to section 20(1)(H) of the Crime and Misconduct Act 2001, this amendment removes doubt and removes the necessity of ever having to prove that a local government was funded to any extent by state moneys at any point in time.

Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000

The Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000 allows a receiver to be appointed if the Chief Executive believes that a misappropriation may have been committed in relation to a licensee's trust account. The Act also allows the Chief Executive to appoint a special investigator if the Chief Executive considers the trust account has not been kept as required under the Act.

The Claim Fund established under the Act has significant resources; however, the Act previously limited payments from this fund to only meeting the costs of claims. The Act will therefore be amended to extend the uses to which the Claim Fund may be used to cover the interim cost of appointing a receiver or special investigator.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Dr Flegg, adjourned.

DISABILITY SERVICES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

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) (12.55 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Disability Services Act 2006 and the Guardianship and Administration Act 2000 to safeguard the rights of adults with an intellectual or cognitive disability by regulating the use of restrictive practices by particular disability service providers in relation to those adults. 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. 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) (12.55 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

This legislation is a vital component of the Queensland government's commitment to strengthen and safeguard the rights of people with a disability. It implements a key recommendation of the report by the Hon. WJ Carter QC, *Challenging behaviour and disability: a targeted response*. In 2006 the Hon. WJ Carter QC was appointed to investigate options for a legislative and service response to adults with an intellectual or cognitive disability and challenging behaviour. On 22 May 2007 a full copy of the Carter report was released with a whole-of-government response. Government supported in principle all 24 recommendations based on the theme 'fundamental process of reform, renewal and regeneration'.

In response to the report, we have committed \$113 million over four years to implement the new service and legislative model. The development of a new legislative framework will help ensure the use of restrictive practice is regulated and independently approved. The legislation will be complemented by the following key features of the service model—

- a new Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Support, which will lead research and develop specialist knowledge and expertise in positive behaviour support;
- a specialist response service to develop multidisciplinary assessments, positive behaviour support plans and assist disability service providers to comply with the legislation;
- a mental health assessment and outreach team to provide mental health expertise where adults may have dual diagnosis of an intellectual or cognitive disability and a mental illness;
- development and recruitment of specialist staff; and
- construction of purpose-built dwellings to provide positive environments where individualised support can be provided.

The funding will help cover the costs of—

- implementing the legislation;
- additional workload on the Guardianship and Administration Tribunal;
- additional workload for both the Office of the Adult Guardian and the Community Visitor Program;
- new specialist response service teams located across regions;
- new mental health assessment and outreach team; and
- new Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Support.

The bill underpins the new service model and has been based on the key principles of the Carter report. It amends the Disability Services Act 2006 and the Guardianship and Administration Act 2000, creating a legislative framework to safeguard the rights of adults with an intellectual or cognitive disability who have 'challenging behaviour' and where restrictive practices may be required to manage their behaviour. In the course of supporting these adults, restrictive practices may be used from time to time to prevent harm or a risk of harm to the adult or others. The bill aims to balance the rights of the adult with the need to protect their rights and the rights of others to live and work, free of violent and

other potentially damaging behaviour. There are a small proportion of adults with an intellectual or cognitive disability who exhibit challenging behaviour which require some form of intervention. I seek leave to have the rest of my speech incorporate in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

This new bill only applies to adults with an intellectual or cognitive disability and challenging behaviour who are in receipt of DSQ-provided or funded services.

Where support is provided by carers outside the scope of this legislation, for example if a person is being cared for by a family member in their family home, they still receive the full protection of existing criminal and civil law.

The Government must firstly target the government-provided and funded disability services sector which provides support to many of the adults in this particular group.

The term 'challenging behaviour' is not defined in the bill. It is a clinical term to describe behaviour of such intensity, frequency or duration it places the adult or another person at serious risk of harm. It's often characterised by physical violence and/or serious property damage.

'Restrictive practices' are defined in the bill to mean containing or secluding the adult, using chemical, mechanical or physical restraint on the adult, or, restricting access of the adult to objects.

Examples include:

- confining the adult to their room when they're aggressive so they don't hit members of staff and co-tenants;
- administering medication prescribed to prevent the escalation of aggressive behaviour; or
- restricting access to a kitchen pantry to prevent obsessive eating.

The Queensland Government has listened to the views of stakeholders in developing this new legislation.

A total of 58 targeted consultation sessions on an exposure draft of the bill were held across the state.

Up to 800 people took part in the consultations, including families, service providers, advocates, peak bodies, key government agencies, unions, and DSQ staff.

They indicated their support for the key principles and intent of the bill. This included the development of a legislative framework to regulate restrictive practices to:

- safeguard the rights of adults with challenging behaviour;
- require a restrictive practice to be approved, and that it must be the least restrictive practice;
- require any use of restrictive practices to be in the context of positive behaviour support;
- recognise the important role of families and guardians in decision making;
- provide protections to service providers who comply with the strict requirements;
- recognise a culture of change is needed to reduce the use of restrictive practices; and
- acknowledge a culture of change depends on an accessible, responsive and highly skilled service infrastructure.

I now outline some key parts of the bill.

The overall aim of the bill is to drive service improvements and reduce or eliminate the use of restrictive practices in an environment which is underpinned by positive behaviour support.

This in turn aims to reduce the incidence of the 'challenging behaviour' while also improving the quality of life for adults with an intellectual or cognitive disability and challenging behaviour.

Key principles which must be demonstrated before any decision can be made about whether or not to use a restrictive practice include:

- preventing harm (or a serious risk of harm) to the adult or another;
- using the least restrictive option for ensuring the safety of the adult or another in the circumstances;
- considering the human rights principle (including preventing abuse, neglect or exploitation of the adult);
- safeguarding the rights and liberties of the adult with an intellectual or cognitive disability;
- reducing or eliminating the use of restrictive practices; and
- focusing on development of the individual and enhancing their quality of life.

The provisions apply to adults supported to live in their community. There are also provisions on the use of restrictive practices in respite or community access services, and short-term responses such as emergencies where there's an immediate and serious risk of harm.

Under the bill, there must be assessment, planning, consent, review and monitoring in any decision made about a restrictive practice.

Through assessment, behaviours are identified and strategies developed to change them. The assessment must be carried out by an appropriately qualified or experienced person who may include social workers, psychologists, speech and language pathologists, medical practitioners and behaviour analysts, or others with experience in assessment and planning.

A positive behaviour support plan is a core feature of the model. It considers triggers for behaviour, skills deficits and quality of life factors. These are then incorporated into proactive strategies for changing behaviour and reactive strategies for managing behaviour.

The key here is the positive behaviour support plan is designed to reduce and/or eliminate the need for restrictive practices.

Relevant parties, such as the guardian or informal decision-maker for the adult, family members, advocates or key health care providers, are consulted during the assessment and planning process.

The role of the Guardianship and Administrative Tribunal is pivotal. Applications for containment and seclusion must be approved by the Tribunal.

For chemical, mechanical or physical restraint, the consent must be given by a Tribunal-appointed guardian.

To restrict access to objects, consent must be provided by the informal decision maker or, if one exists, a guardian for restrictive practice matters who has been appointed by the Tribunal.

The use of restrictive practices will be independently reviewed at least every 12 months, or earlier if required.

Additionally, the bill requires the legislative scheme as a whole to be reviewed after 1 July 2011.

Transitional provisions are included in the bill to allow time for all stakeholders to prepare for full implementation to meet their new requirements.

The bill continues the significant and progressive deinstitutionalisation reforms and, in doing so, seeks to improve quality of life of vulnerable Queenslanders.

I also advise Queensland Health is considering how restrictive practices should be used in health care settings to safeguard clients and staff.

I look forward to working with people with a disability, their families and carers, advocacy groups and service providers in delivering a better quality of life for some of our most vulnerable citizens.

The introduction of this bill marks the beginning of a positive future for disability services in Queensland.

I strongly commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Dr Flegg, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 12.59 pm to 2.30 pm.

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 2)

APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 2)

Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

Resumed from 16 October 2007 (see p. 3552), on motion of Mr Fraser—

That the bills be now read a second time.

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—Lib) (2.30 pm): These are appropriation bills that occur in the parliament from time to time and as such there is nothing unusual in that. Naturally the opposition will not be opposing appropriation bills. However, it is an opportunity for us to look at some of the issues involved in the state's finances and, in particular, in relation to the sums of money dealt with within this legislation.

The legislation, of course, allows for the appropriation to a range of government departments of amounts that were unforeseen when their original budgets were brought down. It also allows for the transfer of some funds in relation to specific projects. There is some \$1.5 billion involved in the bills. Whilst that amount seems large, it is certainly not that unusual or that out of kilter with supplementary bills for funding that have been brought to the parliament in recent years.

When we look at the totality of the state's finances we see an interesting dichotomy. We see a situation in which state revenue is very strong. Year on year the revenue that feeds the budget's top line is increasing many times the rate of inflation. We have seen particularly large increases in areas such as property tax—notably stamp duty and land tax. We have seen large increases in government fees and big increases in payroll tax. The budget ought to be a very healthy budget. On anybody's measure, when revenue is increasing at many times the rate of inflation one would expect to be doing it pretty easy. It comes, then, as a bit of a shock to Queenslanders to see that, over the forward estimates of the budget, the government will stack tens of billions of dollars of additional debt on top of the prosperous state of revenues.

I saw some comments from the Treasurer in the media during the week indicating that, because of current circumstances within the financial markets and within the government, debt levels could be expected to blow out even further. We have also seen a range of indications from the government in relation to how it intends to deal with the looming cash shortage in a state with a projected \$55 billion in debt, millions of dollars every day in interest, and, according to the latest Standard and Poor's review of the state's finances, a balance sheet that is not in a position to support growth in projects into the future as has happened in the past.

This is a serious situation that the opposition has been warning the government about for some time. We have indicated to the government that its poor management of spending was leading to a situation in which debt was mounting despite increasing revenue and that it would be forced to sell off the state's assets in order to fund matters which, under prudent management, ought to have been able to be funded from government revenue. We have been warning of that for some time.

What we have seen in recent days is the government admitting to the scenario that we have been criticised for warning it against. We saw the government announce just recently that it would proceed to build government schools as public-private partnerships. That is quite an extraordinary admission—that Queensland can no longer afford to build its government schools out of the taxation revenue base of the state. One might not be quite so surprised if we were in an environment in which revenue was contracting, but we are in an environment in which revenue has been rapidly expanding and we still see this admission. We saw this morning—

Mr Fraser: Who do you think is paying for it? How does a school PPP work? Come on, Bruce, tell us.

Dr FLEGG: I think the minister thinks it is question time. Question time has finished, Minister.

Mr Fraser interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): Order! Treasurer! I might take advantage of that break to acknowledge in the gallery the presence of teachers and students of Goomeri State School in the electorate of Callide, represented in this House by Mr Jeff Seeney.

Dr FLEGG: We saw again this morning a further admission that this government has got Queensland into a situation in which we can no longer afford to build the sorts of things that tax revenue has previously enabled us to build in this state. Again we have had to raid the silver cabinet to get some funds to build hospitals.

Mr Fraser interjected.

Dr FLEGG: We support the building of hospitals, but we think the government ought to be honest enough to admit that it is now conceding—

Mr Fraser interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Dr FLEGG: The financial circumstances of this state are such that not only can we no longer afford to build the state's public schools out of our budget; now we cannot afford to build the state's hospitals out of our budget. Once again, as we have seen time and time again, this has occurred without any explanation to the public.

Mr Hinchliffe interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Stafford!

Dr FLEGG: We have seen the government trawl through what it owns to find something to sell off in order to keep its budget afloat. This is a serious situation. It is very legitimate for the opposition to make these points and to ask Queenslanders and the government to consider the circumstances that now apply in relation to this. Privatisation carried out properly can have significant benefits for the economy. We certainly have no fundamental problem with properly considered and economically responsible privatisation. But that is not what we are seeing in this case. What we are seeing is a government that has no money left in its budget, a government that needs to get hold of money fast in order to fund the construction of hospitals because we can no longer afford them. That has meant that we now have a fire sale of airport assets in an environment in which the market for such assets has significantly dried up. It is an environment—

Government members: Ha, ha!

Dr FLEGG: The economic illiterates on the other side must not even read the morning papers if they do not realise what has happened in credit markets, particularly in relation to the markets for annuity income and infrastructure style assets. There has been a highly significant deterioration in those markets. We want Queenslanders to get the best value possible for a privatisation that is being conducted under fire sale conditions. Anybody in the finance industry will know exactly why this government has suddenly had to make this decision. There was no foreshadowing of it.

Interestingly, I did not hear a great deal of explanation—and maybe the minister will take the opportunity to give that explanation in his summation of this debate—about the ongoing budget impacts of this decision. We are selling economic assets that every year should produce a return to the government. That return has gone forever. It will not be in any future budget. In the announcements that were made this morning I did not hear how much that revenue loss to the government will be. I would very much like the government to clarify that point. These sorts of budget issues in terms of appropriations are serious for the future of Queensland and the people of Queensland. Simply conducting them at a political level without really putting in the effort to clarify the true reasons and the true implications for them is selling Queenslanders short.

This morning we heard an admission from the ministers that I thought was very interesting, which was that the airports were not properly run and could have been better run by the private sector and that that has affected tourism, which will now benefit by their sale. I do not necessarily dispute any of those facts, although it has taken the government a very long time to acknowledge them. It is interesting that the government will only make the admission when it desperately needs money for hospitals rather than undergoing the planning that it has had many years to do.

In this bill funding is being transferred for things such as Airport Link and the desalination plant. Obviously in this place we have dealt with and discussed those projects on their merits. As is apparent from the funding needed for the projects, after years of neglecting water infrastructure and Brisbane's decrepit congested road system we are now paying a huge premium to deliver these projects and we are appropriating more money—money that could have built those hospitals and schools—just to catch up. We are doing that at the most unfavourable time for Queenslanders. After the GST was introduced in the early 2000s, there was spare capacity in the state. There was high unemployment and people's skills were going begging. We should have and could have identified the problems and delivered some of these infrastructure projects for a fraction of the cost and to the benefit of people at that time. Now we

are delivering them at a huge premium. We are delivering them after years of inconvenience to water users, road users and the like. We are delivering them in an environment where resources, skills, materials and contractors are extremely constrained.

The bill also contains provisions in relation to the appropriation for parliament. Typically these bills are dealt with in conjunction with the Appropriation Bill. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am sure that you and the Speaker would support me in applauding the great job that is done by so many of the parliamentary staff. I will not list everybody; I will save that for Christmas time. However, I think that as we are looking at the funding of the parliament it is an appropriate time to acknowledge the great work and support that the staff of this parliament give to the Speaker, the members and the ministers in this place. They do it quietly and efficiently, and we should be grateful to them for that.

In closing I repeat that, as is our practice, we will not be opposing the appropriation bills. However, it is time in this state to start to take stock. We have had years of prosperity and we are now facing the fact that we have missed a great opportunity. We forwent a great deal of income because we could not get our act together with coal infrastructure. In this state we have neglected issues and now have to pay premium prices to catch up. We forgot the meaning of the word 'debt'. Tens of billions of dollars have been added to the state's debt. Our forecast debt is now \$55 billion and rising and the state budget is so fragile that general government revenue no longer has the capacity to fund the building of hospitals and schools. For many years those things have been funded out of general government revenue.

This is a serious situation. I do not know of a precedent when a budget has been so strained after such a period of prosperity and rapidly growing revenue. It is almost a unique situation for this state. The government and the people of Queensland need to consider very seriously the strategy and the efficiency with which this government administers the finances of the state. This is a serious warning. As the Treasurer himself has indicated in the media, we will see a situation where investment returns are going to turn negative and the government will have a fiscal deficit. Even the projected \$55 billion of debt is no longer adequate and the government is resorting to raiding the silver chest in order to build hospitals and schools to serve Queenslanders. Alarm bells are ringing. At this point in time we are still factoring in some quite rosy scenarios as far as the real economy goes, but in this state we certainly do not want anything to go wrong because there is little or no capacity left.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (2.48 pm): I will speak to the parts of the appropriation bills that deal with substantial amounts of money. In his second reading speech the minister made the point that the amount is more than in previous years, primarily as a result of the sale of the state's retail energy assets which had to pass through Treasury accounts to the Queensland Future Growth Fund. I wish to speak on a number of issues that deal generally with the state budget, as well as particular issues that deal with the DPIF and my electorate. The shadow Treasurer outlined very well the growing concern that is developing in Queensland about the financial situation of this government at a time when we are probably coming to a hiatus in one of the greatest boom times that the state has seen.

We are now coming to a projected debt level of \$55 billion. If you want to work out the interest, that equates to a daily cost of \$10 million. That \$55 billion debt covers government corporations and the government itself, but it is the debt that the government has to wear and one day has to repay and at the same time has to pay \$10 million every day of the year—seven days a week, 365 days of the year—to meet the cost of borrowing this money. How is this cost reflected in our electorates amongst ordinary people? In trying to handle this debt of \$55 billion we see the sale of assets.

The government sold off its retail gas arm and people in my electorate, particularly the elderly—those who are retired, pensioners—and families who find it difficult to pay their bills, have had a 350 per cent increase in their gas bill. This is a result of the government being broke and having to sell off its gas arm to a private organisation. We have no competition. There is only one gas organisation in a regional city like Toowoomba, so there is no competition. They jack up the bills by charging access fees and all those sorts of things. Even though the pensioners turn off the gas in winter or summer to save money, it does not make much difference to their gas accounts because they have to pay an access fee as well as for the gas itself. So there has been a 350 per cent increase. Most of their gas bills which were around \$18 a quarter went up to around \$60 a quarter.

Let us take electricity as another example. The government gets a dividend which is important to its coffers. Electricity went up 11 per cent less than 12 months ago and it will now go up by approximately another seven per cent within another month or two. So it will have gone up 18 per cent in 12 months. How can anybody afford that sort of increase when on a restricted income and with a family? They are examples of what happens when a government is broke and gets a massive debt with a \$10 million a day interest burden. That is the way that cost is reflected in our electorates. It is reflected in increased taxes and charges—sneaky little things that come in here and there. I well remember I think it was last year in the budget the increase in stamp duty on cars. Someone who bought a \$16,000 car had to pay another \$200. Someone who bought a LandCruiser ute to use in rural Queensland had to pay somewhere in the order of \$1,600 to \$2,000 extra. That is a set of tyres, if you like. So all of these costs are reflected in increased charges, the selling of assets and the public having to pay.

The \$55 billion debt costs this state \$10 million a day. Every day that the Treasurer gets up and puts his feet in his slippers the meter ticks over again for another \$10 million. What is the repayment plan for the \$55 billion?

Government members interjected.

Mr HORAN: I am just trying to talk about a bit of prudence. We all know that you have to work hard to try to find ways of delivering services and so on. But what is the plan to repay the \$55 billion debt—over how many years and how much a year will be repaid? This ballooning debt has come at a time when we have some of the greatest income this government could ever have, not only because of the GST and the growth in this state—the GST is a growth tax and we have had enormous growth in this state—but also because of the resources boom. Instead of getting stronger and stronger we actually have more and more debt. Why is this so? There are a couple of reasons.

One is that we have seen a government try over a number of years, under the previous Premier and now this Premier, who was the former Treasurer, to buy its way out of trouble. When there was a massive problem in the health sector, it brought in a 28 per cent wage rise. As soon as that was done for the nurses, the doctors and everyone else wanted it as well. The government tried to buy its way out of trouble. As an ex-health minister, I would be the first to say that nurses, doctors and health professionals deserve to be well paid. But we had a situation where, not only with that crisis but also with nearly every other crisis that came along, the government threw hundreds of millions if not billions of dollars at it. That is recurring costs every year. Wages increase by four, five or six per cent each and every year, so the burden grows almost exponentially.

But the greatest scandal of all time has been the fact that the massive infrastructure needs of this state have been neglected for years under the Labor government, and suddenly in the last two years it has been absolute panic stations and then we put the fox in charge of the chicken coop. The Treasurer at the time was also the minister for infrastructure—that is, the now Premier. The recycled water pipeline was like the El Dorado goldmine. All the young blokes in Toowoomba wanted to get in on it. That was the place to go to get a good job. It was tender by invoice—do and pay. Every now and again they would say, 'It has cost another \$500 million and another \$500 million.'

We have seen example after example of this government just rushing out in a mad, unplanned panic into the marketplace saying, 'Oh, we have to do this because we have done nothing for the last 10 years or so.' Suddenly it rushed out to do these things at the very worst time that they could have been done—when there were labour shortages because of the mining boom, when there were machinery and equipment shortages because of the mining boom and the construction boom across the state, when it was the hardest possible time to get the sharp pencil out and cut those tenders down and get a price that would have given the taxpayers of Queensland good value for money.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): Order! I remind members that the member for Toowoomba South is on his feet. Would you please cut down on the chatter.

Mr HORAN: Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. They are the two reasons that this debt has built up. We have not had the prudent spending on infrastructure in the earlier years when it could have been done at a vastly reduced cost compared to what it is now costing. There was blind panic and it has been done at the worst possible time, when someone who wants one of these jobs can almost charge what they like. It is like it was with the housing industry a year or so ago: if you wanted plumbing or electrical repairs done to your house, you would have to wait and then the job was going to cost so much to do.

As a result, we have seen a couple of announcements—one today and one just recently—that really give a strong indication that this government, because of its debt levels, has some extreme difficulties and is looking at other ways to fund projects like schools and hospitals. It can no longer fund projects like schools or hospitals, which could always be funded by the government. I have studied public-private partnerships that were undertaken in Great Britain. They told me over there that PPPs are not a good idea for social infrastructure. Social infrastructure, such as schools and hospitals, should be built out of our own funds because it is not like a tollway where we can charge a toll and repay the debt. Social infrastructure projects do not have the advantage of a toll road or a port or a major dam, where you get so much a megalitre for the water. Those PPPs can bring the project forward and provide half or more of the funds through the private part of the partnership.

PPPs can bring a project forward and there are times when governments want to do that, but it should not be done for social infrastructure because social infrastructure does not have the opportunity to repay. Our schools are free. Our hospitals are free. They have been two of the great traditions of our state. What the government is doing is setting them up so that in some nebulous way the government is saying, 'We get it built and then we pay so much a year in arrangements back to the person who has built it.' But whoever has built it has to get a return on their capital. So for the duration that the PPP is in place, they have to get a return. Because it is a long-term project and the money is provided up-front and so forth, there obviously has to be a very substantial return. So the government, instead of having the cash to build the building, has to pay for the building plus the return year after year after year to the person who built it.

In the case of the hospitals, again, there would be no-one in this parliament who would begrudge Mackay and Mount Isa new hospitals or begrudge Cairns further development of its hospital site. But what the government is doing to fund it—

Mr Fraser: You did when you were health minister!

Mr HORAN: When I was health minister there were two PPPs—one at Robina and one at the Gold Coast. And I will get to those two, because I do not think they were a good idea at all. There were about 120 projects that we started—from little nurses quarters out in the country through to big hospitals such as the PA and RBWH. Those projects were funded through the resources of Treasury, but for the projects at Robina, the Gold Coast and Noosa—and I have said it before in this parliament—Treasury wanted us to look at innovative ways of doing them. I will be honest in saying that I would far prefer to do them in a straightforward, simple way where we build them and run them ourselves. We should keep it simple, because I believe that is the best way to do it.

In order to fund these three new projects announced today—and, as I said, no-one begrudges the people of Mount Isa, Mackay and Cairns additional or new hospitals or health facilities—the government, because of its debt situation, is selling off income-earning assets. At the end of the day it does not really mean that you get a free hospital, because the income that you would have got from those assets is no longer coming into the Treasury coffers of this state. In meeting their commitments of \$10 million a day in interest payments or in making any principal repayments—if indeed any repayments are being made off the capital—they have that much less money coming in as income for the state. If the mining boom slows down, if China tightens its belt after the Beijing Olympics, we will see how tight things get in the Treasury coffers of this state. That is when you will need that sort of money flowing in, but that avenue will be gone.

I notice in the bill that the department of primary industries has an appropriation of just on \$40 million. I would ask the minister to explain that in his summing-up. My understanding is that it may well be something to do with EI, or it might be something to do with the sale of assets of the department of primary industries going through the Future Growth Fund. That might be the sale of the Tennyson site or the DPIF research centre or any other sites that have been sold. It is important for the parliament to know what that \$40 million covers.

The DPIF, with the cost of EI, is under a national agreement. There are emergency plant, pest and animal disease arrangements under which governments paid 20 per cent of the cost of eradication of EI and industry paid 80 per cent. At the moment that is completely in limbo because the vast bulk of industry has simply refused to pay 80 per cent because they believe it was the federal government's fault that it came in in the first place through a breakdown of quarantine.

Mr Fraser interjected.

Mr HORAN: The minister has said that it was mainly to do with matters after Cyclone Larry.

Mr Fraser interjected.

Mr HORAN: I thank the minister for that. On the subject of the department of primary industries, I have been concerned for a number of years to see the budget of that department continually cut over some five or six years. Last year the budget on paper was up, but when we look at the transfer of some hundreds of people from DNRW to DPIF to put together the biosecurity unit and we take them out of the equation, we see that the budget was once again a declining budget. It is the one department that has been neglected, even though it is about the third most important industry in the state. One of our very important export industries for the state has had its budget cut time after time.

Today I asked the minister a question on notice regarding my concern about the sell-off of DPIF assets, particularly the Kairi Research Station on the Atherton Tableland and Swans Lagoon Research Station in the Burdekin. I have also called for a guarantee that there will be no sell-off of the agricultural colleges or any part of the agricultural colleges. I am fairly sure that the minister shortly will announce a copy of the policy the coalition took to the last election whereby we proposed that the agricultural colleges—which had failed dismally under Labor's system of putting them under Employment and Training—should come back to DPIF and be properly run with a board for each agricultural college. I certainly hope that the minister copies our policy, takes notice of it and brings that about.

In my own electorate, with this budget covering the issues of education and health, it is very important for the Toowoomba Base Hospital, which is a major inland hospital servicing a vast area of the state, to receive adequate funds and an increase in funds. Again, it becomes difficult for a government that has to find \$10 million a day in interest charges. But in our A&E our people are overworked. I have personally spoken with people who have waited in some cases up to 12 hours to be attended to at the hospital. One young person with steel in his eye went in there, from memory, at about 8.30 at night and at about 2.30 in the morning he went off to the private hospital and got it attended to, at the A&E at St Vincent's. He was only an early-year apprentice and it was very difficult for him to find the \$170-odd he had to pay, but he had been denied the free public service that should be there because of the massive waitlist and because staff are under unbelievable and enormous pressure. We do need extra staff there.

I continually harp about the mental health unit at the Toowoomba Base Hospital and the support that it needs. It has a lot of problems and issues. It has had for many years. In particular, we need adequate numbers of specialists there to provide that service. It is a 53- to 54-bed unit. It is also important in its relationship to the Baillie Henderson Hospital. It is important in its relationship to community mental health. It is also important in terms of the outreach teams that go from there all over south-western Queensland and to the south Burnett providing a very valuable service.

There are, and have been for many years, some real organisational and management problems in that unit. I urge the government to ensure it receives adequate funding. But it also needs specialised attention by the minister and senior people in the health department in order to get that mental health unit to the level that it should be. Good, experienced people come to me and say that they are just sick of the rot. They are sick of all the garbage that goes on. They just want to see it properly managed so they can attend to the patients and staff.

Another cost involvement with the budget and the appropriations we are now looking at is the very essential fire service. Toowoomba has the same number of permanent fires that it had many years ago—decades ago. We have only two fire stations in Toowoomba with permanent staff compared to Rockhampton, which has half the population—

Time expired.

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (3.08 pm): I rise to support the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2007, which provides supplementary moneys for unforeseen expenditure for the 2006-07 financial year. I think appropriation bills will become more and more common because unforeseen expenditure for this government is the bleeding obvious expenditure for those on this side of the House. In reality, this state has lurched from crisis to crisis, so much so that crisis management has become normal.

The Bundaberg health disaster was brought about because of the spectacular underfunding and planning by this government. Each crisis was caused by this government's inability to listen to the public—and also to the opposition—and the government's slavish devotion to political ideology, which costs money and necessitates unforeseen expenditure.

The Treasurer's \$55 billion of debt and \$10 million a day in interest and his inability to manage the state's chequebook is not only threatening the legacy for Queensland's children and grandchildren; it is also contributing to the overall debt level of the Australian economy. It will put pressure on inflation which will then put pressure on interest rates for all Australians.

The departments which have unforeseen expenditure and will be provided with supplementary appropriations include: Education, Training and the Arts; Emergency Services; and Employment and Industrial Relations. The list goes on. The 18 departments require a tad under \$4 billion in additional moneys. That equates to a bit over seven per cent of the \$55 billion of the state government's debt. In many of the 18 departments mentioned in the schedule for supplementary appropriations there are emerging crises because of a failure to plan for growth, the poor management of public moneys, a failure in terms of public accountability and, consequently, a lack of service delivery.

In speaking to this bill I intend to give details and give a voice to some of those problems and funding challenges my constituents and other Queenslanders have brought to my attention. They include health staff freezes, cutbacks in police liaison hours and teacher aide hours and increases in every state government tax and charge. We heard from the member for Toowoomba South about the electricity charge increase. Gas charges have gone up. Registration fees have gone up. Even adoption charges have gone up. Due to the poor management of this government we are seeing delays in simple services like the provision of death and marriage certificates.

Can the government explain—and this is an entirely rhetorical question—why it is that in Queensland we have to wait six weeks to receive a death certificate when other states can do the job in five days? In fact, in the ACT it takes a matter of hours. Do members opposite really know and understand just how much grief it causes people who have suffered the death of a loved one to wait weeks for a death certificate and the paperwork to go through? The estate is frozen and the bank accounts are frozen. They are unable to fix telephone accounts. It is horrendous. Why should we in this state, which is supposedly the Smart State, have to live under those conditions? Once again, it comes back to the budget and the inability of this government to deliver services because of the poor management of that budget.

The member for Hinkler, Mr Paul Neville, and I recently had a meeting with a group of people who are fighting a very important battle to improve the health and save the lives of Indigenous families. I wish to congratulate the Indigenous Wellbeing Centre of Bundaberg on the good work it is doing for the Indigenous people of the Burnett and Bundaberg. During the meeting a number of funding and resourcing challenges confronting the delivery of Indigenous health services were discussed. I will bring some of those challenges to the attention of the House today.

According to the Bundaberg Indigenous Wellbeing Centre's interim report in December 2007, the health of Indigenous people living in the Bundaberg region, which includes many Burnett residents, largely matches the poor health profile of Indigenous people across Australia. Chronic disease, poor

antenatal care, mental illness and a high rate of injuries predominate and are exacerbated by a plethora of poor health behaviours. There is poor nutrition, inactivity, hazardous alcohol intake, illicit drug use and low levels of routine health screening and vaccination.

There is limited access to health services. It is an issue for the entire population of Bundaberg and Burnett. There is a critical shortage of general practitioners. That has a negative flow-on effect because GPs are the gatekeepers to so many other health services. There are also insufficient mental health and drug and alcohol services as well as public allied health and dental services and specialists. There are a range of private allied health professionals working in Bundaberg but they appear to have limited capacity to take on a significant additional workload.

The BIWC commenced delivering services in November 2006. Currently the health linkage and family support streams at the BIWC are operating collaboratively and appear to be effectively increasing access to mainstream services for their Indigenous clients. It is providing a culturally aware service that can address the lack of flexibility inherent in the mainstream health system and meet the needs of the local communities. However, funding arrangements for services such as these will be significantly diminished by 2008.

In speaking to the issue of funding, I urge all governments, both federal and state, to reconsider and guarantee the level of funding that the BIWC currently receives. The BIWC is about to lose a total of \$130,000 in funding for 2008-09 when compared with previous years. Because the government is allowing this funding to decrease, once again the health care of Indigenous families in Bundaberg-Burnett is being compromised. There are common factors at play throughout the whole state. What is happening in Bundaberg-Burnett is the template for what is happening around the state of Queensland.

Because this government refuses to test and screen all prisoners for communicable diseases, Queensland prisons have become a breeding ground for many diseases including HIV, Hepatitis C and other sexually transmitted diseases. This is causing a major problem for the families of prisoners and healthcare workers. Under the Labor Party policy of nontesting, prisoners with communicable diseases and prisoners who contract communicable diseases during their Queensland prison sentence are able to leave prison without ever receiving treatment because Queensland Corrective Services pretends that this is not a problem and is turning a blind eye to it. Consequently, many spouses—

Mr FRASER: I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The budget is a many layered thing, but I question the relevance of using this particular bill as a vehicle for the discussion that the member for Burnett is undertaking at the moment.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Moorhead): Member for Burnett, I assume you are talking about Appropriation Bill (No. 2). You will have to keep your comments relevant to the matters listed in the schedule. If you can refer to the matters listed in the schedule that will be great.

Mr MESSENGER: The matters are defined in the schedule. I am disappointed that the Treasurer and those members opposite do not want to hear about Indigenous health outcomes and ways of improving them. It is because of the Treasurer's inability to manage the funds of this state that Indigenous people are suffering poor health outcomes. This is one of the very real issues facing us right now. With this government it is a case of, 'Don't speak about it. Sit down, it is not relevant.' How can it not be relevant when we are talking about the budget of this state?

At the Bundaberg Hospital, for example, there are two Indigenous healthcare support workers. Why? Because the Bundaberg Hospital has recently had its budget frozen. It has spent over its budget. So now it is not able to get any extra funding from this government. There is a freeze on healthcare workers. This relates and ties directly back to the problems facing Indigenous people.

It is about time the Treasurer grew up and really understood what is happening out there in his constituency. There is a shortage of Indigenous health support workers. The shortage of Indigenous health support workers and the refusal by the Bundaberg Base Hospital to fill the vacant positions has increased the magnitude of this serious public health issue. Without Indigenous healthcare workers administering and delivering programs such as education and screening programs people are becoming sick. No wonder life expectancy rates differ between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. If this is not the forum to discuss these issues, I would not know what would be.

The Bundaberg Aboriginal Corporation for Women assists women throughout the Bundaberg district with health issues by running such services as a hearing and eye clinic and a weight loss clinic as well as having a sexual health worker on board to assist. It refers people on to appropriate services for domestic violence situations or other health situations. The group also encourages socialising by holding craft sessions and also proposes to have a child and family day care playgroup. The BACW does a magnificent job. However, it has not received any funding for this financial year. It survives solely on fundraising such as from holding raffles and selling handcrafted jewellery and sewing. That is just to pay the rent for the hall.

The BACW has big plans for the future and I hope that all members of this House would look to allocate funding to this group and groups like it throughout the state. They wish to expand. However, they need funding for a number of projects. They intend to finish off rooms in the hall for their craft casts

and they would like to turn another room into a child-care centre. They are also working on a community garden/barbecue area whereby various groups in the community can come in and have a little section of the garden where they can grow some vegetables. All of that is geared towards nutrition and learning proper eating habits. Perhaps the government can look at financially assisting these groups as well.

Every day doctors, nurses and other employees working at the Bundaberg Base Hospital perform miracles by saving lives, and they deserve praise on behalf of the community. But it must not be forgotten that those people perform those miracles in terribly underresourced circumstances. I am very concerned that, according to the *Bundaberg News-Mail*, the district manager has confirmed that there will be a staff freeze due to budget blow-outs. We will see more staff freezes and more budget blow-outs. That is what is happening on the ground in our electorates because of the inability of this government to manage its finances properly.

It worries me that the district manager of Bundaberg Base Hospital is being told to put forward the excuse that the patients will not be affected. That is pure Labor spin doctoring at its best and it is a complete falsehood. Already, patients and their families in the Burnett and Bundaberg are being adversely affected by the lack of resources and medical professionals. I look forward to the day when I can listen to the Premier say that the government is going to build a hospital in Bundaberg, just like it is going to redevelop the hospitals in Cairns and Mackay. The government's own figures in its 2020 predictions show that the growth rate of the Wide Bay-Burnett area is 91 per cent. That area has the highest growth rate in this state. The government knows that. So I look forward to hearing the Premier say very shortly that the government will build a \$400 million hospital at Bundaberg and not drip-feed over four years a piddling \$41 million—and the government still has not delivered on that promise, either.

It is up to the government to fix this major health crisis in our district. In reality, the \$41 million will not be enough to solve the healthcare crisis that we are experiencing. Once again, it comes down to a failure to plan. Given the shameful history of the Labor government—the health mismanagement which includes falsehoods, inaction, cover-up and incompetence—it is only proper that the Wide Bay area is guaranteed the best public medical system in Australia. The Wide Bay area has a catchment of about 120,000 people. Currently, the hospital has maybe 130 beds. It is very hard to get figures from the hospital because of the secrecy surrounding the issue. We do not even know the budget of the hospital. We are not allowed to know those figures. We are kept in the dark.

Today I call on the Bundaberg health board to stand up for the patients and to start asking the hard questions of this government instead of being a group of people who sit there mute, nodding their heads and occasionally becoming government apologists. It is time those people stood up and started speaking out about better services for the Bundaberg community.

One department that has not been given extra funding in this bill is the Police Service. My argument today is that it should have been. According to Anne McWhirter, on behalf of the Youth Crisis Housing Group, there has been a reduction in the police liaison officer hours. Anne writes the following—

Our group would like to express concern regarding the reduction of Police Liaison Officers hours.

Once again, we are going to see this situation arise more and more in our communities because of the inability of the members opposite to manage money properly. Anne states further—

They are now only working 9am to 5pm (Day Shifts) and are not able to work any shift work at all. This is of great concern as a great deal of their most vital work occurs after 5 pm and on weekends. Our group consists of concerned community members and organisations who have been meeting for over 6 months to look at the need for youth crisis accommodation in Bundaberg. This meeting was called as a result of concerns raised at the Indigenous Interagency Meeting and the Bundaberg and District Youth Forum.

It has been identified that a number of young people under 16 have been found wandering the streets, when taken home there was often no responsible adults at home. There was no where to take them so they were left wandering the streets increasing the risk of abuse and criminal activities. This issue has been raised on a number of occasions by Youth Workers, Police and Service Providers. The group discussed possible solutions including the provision of a house for short term crisis accommodation. We are currently investigating a number of models to deliver such a service.

I congratulate Anne McWhirter on behalf of the Youth Crisis Housing Group. I ask that the police minister investigate this complaint and make sure that we have enough police liaison officers not only for the Bundaberg and Burnett region but also for the whole of Queensland.

I turn to the issue of Indigenous community liaison officers and support workers. We do not have enough of those. I have been told anecdotally that of the 28 sexual assault services that are available in Queensland, in Brisbane there are two Indigenous workers available. They are worth their weight in gold, as is the Indigenous liaison officer who works for the sexual assault service in Bundaberg. Those people are worth their weight in gold.

Let us not forget the importance of providing additional police resources, such as the establishment of a police beat for the Moore Park community due to the lack of frequent police patrols and poor response times of up to two hours for reported criminal incidents. The police minister also needs to upgrade the Bargara Police Station to a 24-hour station as currently the community relies on the Bundaberg police after hours, which not only raises concerns over delayed response times but also takes police resources away from the Bundaberg community.

As well, I notice in answer to a question on notice that funding for tourism has decreased in a number of areas, especially around Townsville. I believe that the tourism minister's own figures reveal a serious slump in marketing and promotion. It is no wonder the minister is a Cairns girl. The 2006-07 figures are down on the 2004-05 figures. The figures for Townsville are down to \$195,000 in contrast to the funding of \$200,000 the year before. The figure for central Queensland is down to \$255,000 in contrast to the funding of \$314,000 the year before. The tourism minister should explain why spending less and less on marketing and promotion is a good thing for Townsville's hotels and tourism operators. Is that a good way to promote an industry when we are going through a tourism slump? That drop in funding is an issue that relates directly to this bill. The government has not managed money responsibly. It has failed to plan. It does not have the vision. At a time when we should be increasing our spending on promotion, we are decreasing it. Given the amount of money that tourism guarantees and the wealth it creates, I think we should have a minister who fights a little bit harder for the tourism industry.

In closing, as the Appropriation Bill also provides funding for the Office of the Governor, I would like to congratulate the Governor of Queensland, Mrs Quentin Bryce, on her appointment as Governor-General of Australia. She has performed magnificently in her job in Queensland and we know that she will perform magnificently and spectacularly as Governor-General of Australia. The people in my area that I have spoken to have been very impressed with the Governor. In fact, the Governor has visited my area quite frequently and we wish her the best.

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (3.28 pm): It is important to take note of the manner in which unforeseen departmental expenditure requirements are determined. During the course of the year, the government may provide in-principle approval for the provision of additional appropriations to cover emergent cost pressures. Where this additional appropriation is required, section 25 of the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977—the FAA Act—provides that the Governor in Council may authorise the issue of moneys from the consolidated fund for which there was no appropriation or where the existing appropriation allocated to that vote in the annual Appropriation Act is insufficient.

These amounts are charged as unforeseen expenditure to the consolidated fund within four weeks of the end of the financial year. Unforeseen expenditure is calculated after relevant transfers of appropriation allowed under the FAA Act have taken place. These transfers include transfers of appropriation reflecting machinery-of-government changes—section 23A—and transfers of appropriation between headings, such as departmental outputs, equity adjustments and administered items within a department's overall appropriation amount.

The supplementary appropriation sought is based on the consolidated fund financial report 2006-07, which is prepared by the Treasurer and reported upon by the Auditor-General in accordance with section 38A of the FAA Act. The consolidated fund financial report 2006-07 details additional appropriation requirements by departments and provides explanations of those requirements. This report is tabled once the Auditor-General's sign-off has been received.

For the 2006-07 report, this sign-off has been received. A legislative process is then required to formally appropriate supplementary supply for unforeseen expenditure for that financial year. Amounts determined as unforeseen expenditure are incorporated into the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) and Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) for the relevant year.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (3.30 pm): I rise to speak to the appropriation bills and in so doing I want to raise some issues that are applicable to my electorate. We heard this morning about a significant expenditure in health in northern Queensland. I wish to raise some issues in relation to health given the additional appropriation for health in this bill.

We have a growing community and I believe a community that contributes significantly to the financial coffers of the Queensland government and also to the Australian government. In fact, many members of my community raise that issue that we contribute significantly in a financial way to the state and federal financial bottom line and we deserve some consideration in relation to reinvestment in our community.

I believe that mental health is an issue in every electorate. I have had a number of constituents come and speak to me in relation to the need for an investment in mental health services in my electorate in terms of transitional accommodation. We are currently in the process of developing a mental health precinct at the Gladstone Hospital, and I think that is important. It has been delayed a little bit, which was regrettable, but the final result will be a better mental health facility collocated at the hospital. However, many parents of family members who have mental health issues want to see a transitional precinct established that will allow their partners or their sons and daughters to be able to properly assimilate after chronic health support so that they can re-establish themselves in the community.

I will not use any names in this case not because they have said not to but because I respect their privacy. One elderly couple in my electorate has a son who would be in his late thirties or early forties. He has an ongoing mental health problem. They find it difficult to accommodate him at home because his behaviour is relatively violent. However, providing he stays on his medication on a regular basis, his behaviour is manageable. They would like to see accommodation available for him on site in a regulated

manner transitioning to supported or supervised accommodation and then out into community accommodation. I think the basic principles of their request are very sound—to allow for members of the community who have acute needs to transition to supervised and then community based accommodation.

In the last week or so, oncology services to the Gladstone area have been disrupted. Dr Kerry Atkinson has been visiting Gladstone on a regular basis, but because of his workload here in Brisbane he has had to cease the visits to Gladstone. Our oncology patients have been disadvantaged. I have to commend Dr Ian Mottarelly, who is the medical superintendent at the Gladstone Hospital. He is working very hard to find a replacement for Dr Atkinson. However, in the interim, oncology patients are greatly concerned that they have to travel to Rockhampton to receive initial treatment establishment. The proposal is that the senior medical officers in Gladstone will continue with that treatment.

Any one of us in this chamber who has had any contact with cancer patients would know that a significant part of the treatment is confidence in the doctor and the continuing relationship with the doctor who is advising in relation to the chemotherapy. The continuation of treatment was available prior to the cancellation of the service from Brisbane. I seek the support of the Minister for Health and the Treasurer, as a matter of urgency, to re-establish an oncology program for the Gladstone Hospital. It is important for those patients. It is important for new patients to be able to establish ongoing treatment out of Gladstone and an ongoing relationship of trust with the oncologist who will supply that treatment.

We have also had difficulties in relation to obstetric care in that the private obstetrician is fully booked and many of our obstetric patients have to go to Rockhampton even if they demonstrate what I would regard as reasonably minor obstetric complications. Given that we are a growing area—and, as I said at the outset, we are an area that contributes significantly to the financial wealth of this state—it is certainly important that there be a reinvestment in these health services to ensure that proper services are available to our constituents.

There is a significant injection of funds in relation to the Department of Housing. I have spoken in this chamber on many occasions about affordable housing. I can never fault the minister for housing, the Hon. Robert Swarten, in relation to his concern for people in the community who find themselves financially challenged. In our community we have a number of people who find themselves without affordable housing. I would again request that an injection of funds be made available through this appropriation bill to ensure that affordable housing is available to members of our community.

Mr Lawlor: You are going the right way about it!

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: He does actually care for people who are in difficult situations. This morning the Premier and other ministers made announcements in relation to an injection of funds for health in Mackay and Cairns after the sale of significant government infrastructure. After the announcement of the sale of the government's interests in the port of Brisbane I would say that there would be a significant number of people in my electorate concerned about the government's direction in relation to the sale of significant infrastructure. The port of Gladstone is a major employer in my electorate. This morning I placed on notice a question in relation to the government's intentions regarding the sale of the port of Gladstone and I am seeking an assurance from the Premier that that is not something that this government is entertaining.

Mr Fraser: We're not.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: I acknowledge that the Treasurer has said that he is not entertaining the sale of the port. Many people rely on the port for their employment and for their ongoing lifestyle. I am sure they would be concerned that Gladstone was potentially in the Treasurer's focus, so I appreciate that confirmation.

The ability of a community to feel safe is reliant on a very small number of issues: health, safety—and that is particularly relating to police—and education. My electorate has been the very grateful recipient of funding for an improvement to the Gladstone Police Station and to the Tannum Sands Police Station, which is not but should be a 24-hour police station. There are proposals to increase the size of the Calliope station. The township of Calliope is growing exponentially, and there are two or three housing developments occurring concurrently that will significantly increase the population. The proposal, I believe, is to add on to the existing police station, which is a demountable that was brought in and which has been excellent. I am certainly not criticising that.

However, the dynamics of Calliope as a township are such that, rather than just adding on to the current police station, a new police station needs to be built. That can be easily facilitated because beside the current police station site is a vacant block of land that would easily accommodate a new facility, would better facilitate parking and would certainly enhance police safety. The other week I went out there and took some photographs of the land that is available and the existing infrastructure. I will be passing that on to the minister for police. I certainly put that before the government in relation to a wise investment of money not only in the short term but also certainly in the longer term.

Today I raise an issue that has become very clearly focused in the minds of members of the Mount Larcom community. I am sure the Treasurer is apprised of this. In the early nineties, land was acquired from a number of landowners to establish the Aldoga Industrial Estate. The premise of that

acquisition was always that all of the impacts of industrial development would be retained within the site of that industrial development. Initially it was approximately 9,000 hectares. At that time it was a significant landholding. Ten heavy industry footprints were identified for that site, as well as lighter industry support and other ancillary developments.

People who lived at Mount Larcom had already been constrained in their future optimism in terms of development. The township had constrained water supply, sewerage services and other local council services. They were further restrained by the acquisition of land in the seventies by a Chinese investor, who bought land with the prospect of oil shale development north of Mount Larcom. As a result of that investment by the Chinese investor, quite a number of pieces of infrastructure in Mount Larcom were deteriorated or removed as a result of a lack of interest in their retention. When a developer recently expressed interest in establishing a significant urban subdivision, people in Mount Larcom were understandably encouraged. Since that time there have been a number of statements made by people involved in the Gladstone Economic and Industry Development Board and people involved in the Coordinator-General's office which would constrain that development.

I oppose the government's intention to constrain the development. Since the initial acquisition of Aldoga Industrial Estate it has grown in size from about 9,000 hectares to almost 22,000 hectares, which in old money is about 88,000 acres. It was always gained on the basis that impacts from the proposed development would be contained within the industrial development area. I think anyone in this House would accept that 22,000 hectares is a significant area of land. The developers and the people of Mount Larcom have now been told that the government has expressed concern that the development should not proceed.

The Appropriation Bill allocates \$346 million to the department of infrastructure. I believe that the government needs to re-evaluate its position in relation to Mount Larcom, to proposed development which will re-enliven the township of Mount Larcom and to the residents of Mount Larcom who have financial or housing interests in the area. If the government continues to hold the view that it will be able to constrain development in Mount Larcom it will effectively make that land of no value. I do not believe that was the spirit in which the first acquisitions were made and certainly I do not believe it is a spirit the government can maintain, given the amount of holding that it has.

The appropriation bills also talk about regional development. I would like to commend Minister Boyle on her visit to Gladstone and her very open and direct communication with people in the electorate. We have a significant regional development board—Gladstone Area Promotion and Development Ltd—which has invested quite a number of years into proactive development and proactive tourism support for the region. I certainly express concern about any proposal to link Gladstone Area Promotion and Development Ltd intrinsically with Rockhampton, because I believe it has a significantly different ethos in terms of the development of our regions.

The Public Trust Office provides an incredible service to people in our community. Often it is to people in the community who do not have regular contact with legal proceedings and certainly people who need support and guidance in a very positive and accommodating manner. The Public Trust Office in my electorate is looking at redeveloping its building site. As with the Calliope Police Station, I have some documents to submit to the minister in relation to the redevelopment of that site. Some of the building it could use has been subleased and there may have to be, I believe, a revisiting of that sublease. Certainly the office provides an incredible service—a very supportive and accommodating service. I believe that the staff of the Public Trust Office in my electorate work under fairly trying circumstances in terms of the office layout. I would look forward to the Appropriation Bill addressing some of their concerns.

There is a significant allocation to the Department of Main Roads. Main Roads provides a very important service in all of our electorates. I am very thankful for our regional manager, who is a very easy man to deal with. He is very practical and I certainly value the opportunity to work with Terry Hill and his officers. In my electorate, one of the major sticking points is the Kin Kora roundabout. At the moment they have put in lights at the roundabout. Whether it is understood or misunderstood, the majority of the community in my electorate believe that that roundabout needs an overpass rather than lights. I bring that forward for the parliament's consideration.

Much has been said about the Appropriation Bill. In my experience, every parliament, irrespective of whether it is governed by conservative parties or by Labor, has a midyear budget. Criticisms can be levelled at the size of the appropriation and its appropriateness or otherwise. In this state people look for services, and they look to governments to provide services in a practical and a timely way. I support the Appropriation Bill on that basis. However, I do bring to the attention of this parliament the concerns of my community and their perception of a lack of services from this government. I certainly look forward to the government's support for a community that I believe reinvests in and provides a significant income to the government.

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (3.50 pm): Queensland: beautiful one day, for sale the next. Today Premier Bligh announced the government was selling off the silver to pay for social infrastructure. I welcome the newly announced and much-needed

hospitals, but how they are being paid for is rather interesting. After a boom time of revenue from GST, the building and property industries and the mining sector during which this government has never had so much cash, Labor is now selling more income-earning assets. This government has squandered the golden years of opportunity and is now in a panic about its debt levels and its mismanagement of a range of major infrastructure contracts, the cost escalations of which have left industry with its mouth agape.

Earlier this month the Premier was even offering to sell to the Chinese her know-how about building water infrastructure. I thought she was trying to build better overseas relationships, but giving dodgy advice to our export markets and wanting payment for it is a bit rich, even for Labor spin doctors. Ms Bligh is trying to sell overseas a message that no-one at home would buy. China could definitely learn what not to do from the Queensland government—that is, do nothing about water supplies for a booming population until there is a crisis, deny that there is a crisis until all the water starts to run out and then madly build infrastructure at the highest possible cost and inflict harsh water restrictions on the people.

Today's announcement proves that one of the recent rumours in the financial and construction industries was true—that is, projects are going to be funded by asset sales. The other concern from industry was that after a rush of infrastructure spending, which has escalated construction costs in this state, there will be a rollback of other projects and a slowdown of maintenance, particularly in small to medium sized projects. These will not be announced; they will just happen. We already have a list of a number of them. Industry does not want gorge-and-starvation cycles of infrastructure. It needs certainty. It needs properly planned and funded projects with contracts that keep to a more stable program of rollout rather than a stealth rollback with government saying one thing and doing another.

We know that Treasury is worried about the state's AAA rating and the pressure it is under from the escalating state debt. Incredibly expensive, poorly planned and badly scoped infrastructure projects have cost taxpayers billions of dollars more than they should have had to pay. Alliance contracts that are not market tested or tendered, have poor financial controls and include lucrative provisions for contractors to pocket savings from risk or contingencies hide the real cost blow-outs. Some of those contracts, particularly those on the western corridor recycled water pipeline and other parts of the water grid, are an absolute disgrace and are examples of how the government has enacted sloppily managed government contracts. Queenslanders are going to have to pay for that for decades to come.

The majority of those contracts were signed when Premier Bligh held the dual role of Treasurer and infrastructure minister. Premier Bligh is continuing Peter Beattie's legacy of smile and spin and then throw money at the crisis. As a result, today Queenslanders are the unsuspecting owners of \$55 billion worth of state owned debt, having paid too much for what could have been done better, in a more timely way and certainly more cost-effectively. The debt is \$55 billion, or \$10 million a day in interest, with no repayment plan.

We have also seen an escalation in the recurrent spending of government within the Public Service, with 9,000 extra public servants on the public payroll. While we certainly welcome the addition of any new doctors, nurses and teachers, when one examines the figures one sees that those jobs are certainly not highly represented proportionately among the 9,000 public servants. This government seems to be more interested in its mates than in funding a Public Service that can perform front-line services. It is unable to get on with the job because of the government's focus on mismanagement of the public sector and the infrastructure program.

I wish to address some of the infrastructure project cost overruns. At other times the government will fudge around and say, 'Oh, no. We haven't got cost overruns.' Basically it has put in high margins for contingency and risk and has then paid out more on certain contracts. Let us look at what is on the list of projects. The Gold Coast Rapid Transit project is 50 per cent more expensive than originally noted, with a \$301 million projected blow-out. The western corridor recycled water pipeline is one of the stunners in this array of expensive infrastructure that should not have cost as much as it has. It has a \$700 million cost blow-out. Using more fudge and spin, the government says that it is not really a cost blow-out, but it has gone from being a \$1.7 billion project to a \$2.4 billion project. That is lot of bickies. That is a lot of hospital beds. Is it any wonder that the government is now flogging off state assets because of the way it has mismanaged some of its infrastructure projects? The projected budget for the Houghton Highway project has been increased by approximately 152 per cent. That is a blow-out of upwards of \$200 million.

The northern pipeline interconnector is an interesting case. This is the two-stage pipeline to the Sunshine Coast and Traveston Dam. Stage 1 was listed. Stage 2 is a \$400 million project, but the government did not bother to put it in some of the forward estimates. The published documentation shows that it is worth \$400 million, but somehow it forgot about it. I can go on. There is a whole list of dams and roads for which the projected cost blow-outs are astounding, yet there are still areas of great need. Yes, the state is growing but—surprise, surprise!—it has had higher growth rates in the past. What was different is that in the past coalition governments decided to put in place timely infrastructure and people expected that that is what governments did. Then this mob came along and did not do anything while the population base grew. They did not invest in infrastructure relative to that population growth.

I am concerned that during today's announcements we did not hear of the government's commitment to interim health needs before some of the new hospitals come online. A new Sunshine Coast hospital has been promised by the state government, yet its own reports show that interim beds need to be made available before the hospital comes online in the next decade. The Nambour Base Hospital has one of the busiest emergency departments in Queensland. It has the only true intensive care unit between Brisbane and Townsville. It has a very high-functioning intensive care unit that provides a high level of service. Yet the government's own reports show that the Sunshine Coast requires an extra couple of hundred beds before the new hospital comes online in the next decade. The government's own reports show a need for transitional beds built into existing infrastructure before the new hospital comes online, because in the past 10 years under this government that capacity has not been built into our hospitals. I ask the government what it will do about the rest of the hospital rebuilding program and the beds that are required before the new hospitals come online. Those questions need to be answered.

Maybe it has another proposal to sell off another piece of infrastructure. Maybe it has not told us about another government contract that it is going to roll back. At the end of the day, it is time there was greater transparency about the real costs in the way that this government has done business because ultimately the people who really pay the price are not the government ministers; they are the taxpayers who are sitting for too long in emergency departments waiting to be treated.

Incidentally, state hospital waiting list figures are not published publicly. You do not get a schedule per hospital as to the amount of time that people are waiting in emergency departments. I know that that information was previously collated, but it is not currently on the web. I am concerned that, when beds are not put in place in a timely way, once again people will be shoved into emergency departments without access to the usual standards of care that they would receive when admitted to a hospital ward. Busy emergency nurses and doctors are doing their best, but they are not equipped to treat people as de facto in-patients waiting on trolleys in the corridors.

The other concern I have that is somehow slipping under the radar is that people are waiting up to six months before they get home help after leaving hospital, and I have some examples of that. So this government can find money to pay Peter Beattie to go overseas as trade commissioner on increased wages and it can find money for bureaucrats and government staffers, such as Chris Cummins, to come back into the fold of its government mates, but when it comes to things that matter it seems to have very poor priorities as to where and how it spends its money.

Queenslanders do deserve better. They deserve better in the way infrastructure is planned, the way it is scoped, the way contracts are written and the way financial oversights are put in place so that people get value for money so that they are no longer sitting on congested roads, so that they are no longer wondering if their water is going to run out, so that they are no longer waiting in emergency departments wondering if there is going to be a hospital bed. This is what good economic management should be about addressing. It is what this government has failed to do. It has failed to adequately plan and cater for growth by trying to blame other people. Now we have a situation where we are wondering what it will sell off next now that the economy is starting to wobble in some sectors. It has failed to put in place infrastructure in a timely way over the last 18 years.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (4.01 pm): I am pleased today to speak to the appropriation bills. I want to cover a number of areas, particularly local government because that is the area that I am responsible for as shadow minister. There is certainly a number of issues relating to local governments in this state that I want to cover here that I think are important.

The government has basically short-changed local government, and this is no secret. It has certainly been talked about in this House and in the media before. I think it is important that we do raise these issues here in this chamber. In relation to the council amalgamations—and we had the elections just recently—the government has talked about the fact that the cost of putting all of this together is \$27.1 million. With a number of recent announcements, the sum that will go to local government has stayed the same. But the real cost is probably closer to \$200 million, so the ratepayers have to pick that up. I do not think it is fair in anybody's language that the ratepayers have to pay that amount of extra money. So the ratepayers will have to pick up at least \$185 million for a philosophical belief of the government.

The minister and the Treasurer have said in the past that local governments have to justify that, and I am sure that they will and they can. As they go along, they are finding that the communication between the towns and the different buildings and administrative offices they have is costing an enormous amount of money. That is the way it will be. If the government wants to amalgamate these councils and make them larger, those councils have to have the resources to provide the services to their community. So we are going to see ratepayers having to pay for a lot of that money whereas in fact the government should pay for it. I say to the Treasurer that this is his chance in this budget to provide that money to the councils.

The elections of councils also cost nearly double—\$15 million is what it cost this year for the elections. The elections were not the best run. The Electoral Commission did its best under the circumstances. It was forced into it in the first instance and neither did it have the resources nor the

capability or the staff. The Electoral Commission did upgrade its computers, and it got \$1.1 million to do that, to try to put in place a system that would work. But we had enormous problems with it which I have already raised in this House and I will not go through them again. There were a number of issues and there were probably hundreds of people overall that in fact did not get to vote. I think we need to make sure that next time we have a better system. In fact, I think the councils themselves should run those elections. There was no evidence that they did not do a good job in the past, and it would save probably \$7 million or \$8 million.

Another important issue is the water assets of local governments. They have basically been short-changed nearly \$800 million here in the south-east corner. This shortfall comes from the tax arrangements and the water equity in South East Queensland Water—in other words, the assets of Wivenhoe, Somerset and Pine Rivers dams have been undervalued. There is nearly \$1 billion just in those three items that I have talked about here today that I believe local government has been short-changed. I am sure the Treasurer will be very keen to reimburse local government for those losses in the forthcoming budget.

There is also another hidden cost that the government and members of this House need to be aware of. For the first time in the Western world that we are aware of—in fact anywhere in the world—local governments in Queensland are now decorporatised. It is unknown what the cost of that will be. The Local Government Association and councils requested when this legislation went through that the government indemnify local authorities for any unforeseen circumstances that arise because of this specific legislation.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): Order! Member for Warrego, I have been fairly tolerant but we are dealing with extraordinary payments in 2006-07. How is that relevant to future payments? How is what you are arguing relevant to the 2006-07 appropriations? Please come back to the bill.

Mr HOBBS: I will and I will certainly explain why. It is because these events happened in the previous year and the funding will have to be provided in the next year as well. It covers the two periods—the previous financial year when these events occurred and as to when the government should provide this funding. Not only that, but councils have had to pay out CEOs. Numerous CEOs got paid enormous amounts of money because their contracts had to be paid out.

There is a similar situation with road funding. The road situation is deteriorating as we all know, and it is no secret. I think the season we have had has played an important part in that—we have had the drought and then rain in some areas. There was an enormous amount of rain in the north. It does not matter what structure we have in place; we are going to end up with a considerable amount of damage to the roads from seasonal fluctuations. We are desperately short of funding for roadworks. The RACQ has recently put out a hit list of roads that it thinks are the worst. I do not think anyone disagrees with that list. The minister put out a statement talking about each of those roads and how much money was being provided by the state government. It was nowhere near enough, but at least it was a recognition that those roads do need money put into them. But there are more roads than what was on that list that need funding.

The Warrego Highway, heading to the far west, is deteriorating dramatically. I do not think that road got a mention on that particular hit list from the RACQ. I particularly make mention of the 40 kilometres from Wallumbilla to Roma, where the speed limit has been reduced from 110 to 100 simply because the bump meter—which I have seen a map of—showed that that road was deteriorating. Even though maintenance is happening, it is not keeping up with the deterioration rate of that road. The life of the road is about 10 years and that 10 years is up. It would cost \$40 million in one hit to fix that 40-odd kilometres of road. That is happening across-the-board.

There is never enough money for Queensland Health, as we all know. We would all like to see better services in our areas, even you, Mr Deputy Speaker Hoolihan. I think more pressure is being put on our regional districts because any money that has not been spent for various reasons—probably good reasons—is basically lost and then that money has to be bid for again. We are finding that there are difficulties in doing that. There are some instances where money is allocated but it cannot be spent for various reasons—good reasons—and then it is very hard to get that funding back again. I think Treasury needs to be aware of the fact that those districts do require that funding, and I hope it takes a lenient view to applications for additional funding.

I have a very serious situation in my area in relation to funding of western air services. MacAir has just ceased flying. It stopped flying the route from Brisbane to St George to Cunnamulla to Thargomindah on 30 April, and we believe that it might not fly again until the 20th. The route from Brisbane to Charleville to Mount Isa via Birdsville and other places stopped on 31 March. Members would be amazed to hear of some instances where planes left Brisbane, flew as far as Charleville and then the pilot said, 'That's it; I'm out of hours.' There were kids on that plane who were meant to be going right through to the west, and they were stranded.

We have had planes that were cancelled. People arrived at Brisbane airport ready to depart and there was no plane, and the MacAir phones were not being answered. I call on the government and the department of transport to look at the funding that is provided for western air services. I am not sure

whether or not the contract has been signed with MacAir, but a subsidy is obviously paid—even if there was not a contract signed—to ensure that that service runs. The service has stopped. We are losing essential medical services to those regions as well because the specialist cannot get out and people cannot get to their medical appointments either.

Another important issue is government debt. This has been canvassed pretty well today and I was not going to touch on it, but I think it is important that we exercise our minds in relation to how much debt we can carry before we get concerned about it. When we look at what is proposed—selling off the airports at Cairns and Mackay and selling shares in Brisbane airport—the government is basically selling a revenue-earning asset to build non-revenue earning assets. I do not say that there should be a hard and fast rule, but the reality is that hospitals and schools should be built from recurrent revenue as a principle, not necessarily as a rule because we understand there needs to be some flexibility. If we are going to transfer one asset, we should transfer it across to another one that will increase in value and create an asset for the state in the future. That is not being done here, and I do not think it has been done for a long time and that is really concerning. The government is drawing down the assets to prop up the recurrent losses in the budget.

Is it the right time to do this? We are talking about selling airports. Today there is an article in the paper about Virgin Blue falling out of the sky and the shares going down. Have we missed the boat? Should we sell airports now when things are going crook? Shares have fallen from \$2.85 to 86c. The industry is in a downward spiral and yet the government wants to flog it off. The government sold the gas pipelines and the marketing assets before the gas market was set to rise. That was not the smartest time to do that. It sold the wind farms before renewable energy became really valuable. While there is a need to sell assets—and we are not arguing against the need to sometimes sell assets—we need to ensure that when we sell those assets the money goes back into the right projects.

Ms Jones: Into infrastructure as opposed to paying the bills, like you did when you were in government?

Mr HOBBS: No, you have missed the point.

Mr Dempsey interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): Order! Member for Bundaberg and member for Ashgrove: the member for Warrego has the floor.

Mr HOBBS: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, but she has given me great inspiration for another 10 minutes.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I draw your attention to the clock.

Mr HOBBS: I have only seven now. I thank the member for that. All I am saying is that some assets are revenue earning and some are not, and that is the difference. You can spend money to buy a house and you can rent it and make some money, but if you are going to live in the house you will not necessarily get the same revenue coming in from it.

I want to mention another issue which I spoke to the minister about a while ago, and that is some Main Roads work being done, particularly on Sumners Road. About \$700 million of federal government money is being spent there on work that the state government is basically doing. I think there are some good points and some great benefits in doing it, but we need to ensure that we can still provide the right access for those people. We have to make sure that we do not give them more congestion, which I think is likely to happen under the present plan. The minister is having a look at it at the moment. I hope that he is able to come up with a satisfactory solution that keeps those accesses open until such time as there are sufficient other accesses built or improved so we do not have further road congestion in that area. It is simply a matter of money. The money is there in this case, so we do not have to go chasing it, but it is about ensuring we do a sensible job. This appropriation bill is obviously an important one. I acknowledge the work that the shadow minister has done and his contribution. We support the legislation before the House.

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (4.16 pm): It is my pleasure to rise to speak to the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) 2007 and Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2007. As the shadow Treasurer and member for Moggill has stated, these bills provide supplementary funding for government departments for the 2006-07 financial year. My comments will be specifically addressed towards the appropriation bill, which I note authorises the Treasurer to spend nearly an extra \$4 billion from the consolidated fund for departments. I note that, of this, \$21.6 million will be spent on health, making up the shortfall between the budgeted amount for health and the actual expenditure during the last financial year.

I would like to note for the record that the budget for health in 2006-07 was over \$6 billion and this year in 2007-08 it is over \$7 billion. So it would seem to be not a very large amount that is having to be appropriated, but I am interested in where that money has been spent and why it has, because there is not a lot of detail given in this bill.

I note the concerns of my coalition colleagues—and also the member for Gladstone—such as the members for Warrego, Burnett and Toowoomba South about health matters in their areas. Clearly, these are matters that affect all Queenslanders who have ongoing concerns with the health system.

The supplementary appropriation bills are interesting in the sense that this additional spending goes beyond the budget. It gives the Treasurer a mandate to hand out money not accounted for in the central budget. As I mentioned before, the question needs to be asked: how does a government determine the extent of extra expenditure and where is this money invested? Unlike the detailed ministerial portfolio statements, which itemise expenditure, the bill before the House does not provide any detail of where this revenue goes once it is handed over to the department.

We note that the Bligh government is no stranger to spending beyond its means. The most recent state budget—and this is a point made especially by the member for Moggill and the member for Toowoomba South—illustrated how the government is punching above its weight when it comes to borrowing and spending in Queensland. For our approximately \$32 billion of income for the budget for 2006-07, Queensland will soon be \$55 billion in debt. The interest payments on \$55 billion, as other members have mentioned, is about \$10 million a day. It begs the question of how many elective surgery procedures could the health minister fund if he had some portion of that \$10 million a day to spend? How many patients would receive a new lease of life if they received their surgeries sooner through programs like Surgery Connect? Yet, instead of tackling our crippling waiting lists or building the vital infrastructure that we need, the Bligh government is wasting nearly \$10 million a day on interest repayments.

Closer to home, the Gold Coast streets are gridlocked because there are not enough viable public transport options on the Gold Coast—one of the fastest growing regions in the country. The Gold Coast is the sixth largest city in Australia with population projections forecasting no reprieve from growth over the next few decades and yet the Bligh government will not commit to building a decent public transport system that will bring the Gold Coast into the 21st century. Melbourne has its trams, Sydney has its trains, Brisbane has its buses but on the Gold Coast residents have no choice but to use their cars because the current public transport system is inadequate.

It is of great concern to me and others on the coast that it has been recently indicated that the \$600 million that has been set aside for the Gold Coast rapid transit system may now not be enough to complete that system. The minister for transport might be able to build something that will stand the test of time rather than be deficient within 10 years if he could spend some of the \$10 million a day that is spent on loan repayments on getting our roads moving again. Instead, that money will be sunk in interest repayments on a debt that this government will struggle to service. The Bligh government is driving Queensland more and more into debt.

We saw this morning just how cash strapped Queensland is under the Bligh government. The Premier has been forced to sell off more of the state's assets to pay for social infrastructure. This time she is selling airports to build hospitals. I am happy that Mackay and Cairns will finally get the infrastructure and services they need. North Queensland has been the economic powerhouse of this state since the mining boom. The Bligh government pockets more than a billion dollars each year in mining royalties and millions more from tourism to famous destinations like the Barrier Reef and the Whitsundays. Yet, despite the massive injection of funds it receives from the north of Brisbane, the state government has failed to deliver the infrastructure and services the north so desperately needs.

Since I became the shadow health minister I have been highlighting the shortcomings of the health services in regional Queensland, particularly in Cairns and Mackay. I have visited these facilities on a number of occasions. I have spoken to local doctors, residents and patients. I have been concerned at the state of their hospitals. In Mackay during the heavy rains surgery has to be cancelled because the operating theatres flood. Access to the hospital is obstructed by running water, making it difficult for ambulances to reach the emergency department. Mackay Hospital is outdated, dilapidated and simply cannot meet the needs of the local community.

I note the injection of funds into health in the last state budget, including additional moneys for capital works programs to upgrade hospitals, and yet a boost in the department's bottom line is no longer enough. The Labor government can no longer bankroll basic infrastructure from the central budget, forcing it into an assets fire sale in order to afford to build new hospitals.

Today's announcement that the state government will be selling off the Mackay and Cairns regional airports and its remaining share in the Brisbane airport raises questions about how this government goes about appropriating public moneys. It seems whenever there is a health crisis on the front page of the paper the health minister is able to come up with new money to put out the spot fires.

In Cairns and Mackay the local media have been waging robust campaigns for new hospitals. Every week the *Cairns Post* and the *Daily Mercury* in Mackay have filled their pages with damning stories about the inadequacy of health services in their regions. They implore the Premier, the health minister and the local members to wake up to the problems in the north and take action to ensure that patients' lives are not put at risk because of insufficient services.

It was interesting to note that the week before last we even had the member for Cairns, Desley Boyle, suggest that some of the Cairns mudflats may be able to be filled in to allow for the esplanade to be widened so that the hospital can stay in its current position. This is a former environment minister who I remember standing up at the Rockhampton regional parliament and saying that she was going to stop dolphin feeding in Tin Can Bay. She has seriously put forward a potential solution for retaining the Cairns Hospital in its current position by filling in part of the mudflats. It is unbelievable what the member says in Cairns compared to what she must say around the cabinet table in Brisbane.

It has been a hard-fought campaign in these two centres, and one in relation to which I have been very supportive. I have been vocal about the problems in Cairns and Mackay. I am pleased that the residents will finally get the services they so desperately need and deserve, but I note the comments of the honourable member for Maroochydore. She asked what is going to happen in the years before these facilities are built. These communities are struggling with the facilities that are clearly unable to service the needs at the moment. What kind of precedent does it set? Should we be encouraging the *Townsville Bulletin*, the *Rockhampton Morning Bulletin*, the *Toowoomba Chronicle* and the *Gold Coast Bulletin* to wage similar campaigns to get a better deal from this media-driven government? The health minister's method of addressing the health crisis—throwing buckets of money to put out spot fires—is unsustainable as is this government's fiscal management.

We have seen in the last few days that the health minister has managed to find a tin can full of money under the bed to fund more elective surgery procedures at Noosa Hospital only after the hospital begged for more money in order to stay within budget. The hospital threatened to stop admitting public patients unless the state government upped its investment in the hospital.

It was a similar story at the Princess Alexandra Hospital last year. The hospital was running over budget so the Premier and health minister delved into their pockets to bail them out. It seems the more publicity a person can get the more likely they are to be treated. Does that mean we say to Queenslanders who courteously wait their turn in a queue that they need to be out there trying to get some publicity because that is the way they can get treated? I do not think that people who want to do things the right way should have to act in such a way in order to get treatment under this government.

I am not questioning the need for greater investment in the state's hospitals. One look at the elective surgery and specialist outpatient waiting lists clearly shows that the state government needs to be spending a lot on health. What I am concerned about, however, is that the money the state already spends on health is not paying dividends. Queenslanders are not seeing any real benefit from the massive injection of funds into health. There has been little change in public waiting lists. In fact, in most cases we have actually seen an increase in the number of patients waiting for surgery for specialist appointments.

It is the same story with dental services and mental health services. In Townsville, Charters Towers and Cairns most recently we are seeing the school dental van program being scaled back. The dentists, the hygienists, the therapists and the nurses who work in these programs are now only going to provide examinations. If a person needs more treatment for their children they are going to have to go privately despite the fact that this government spends more on dental health than any other state. That is not to mention the morale problems that that is going to cause for those working within the system. If they clearly do not feel like they are using all their professional skills and are becoming deskilled then they are likely to suffer morale problems and not want to stay within Queensland Health.

This is something that was outlined by Peter Forster in his review. He suggested engaging more with the private sector to find some innovative ways of dealing with dental issues especially. When dentists working within the public sector feel that all they are doing is extractions or temporary fillings they will feel they are becoming deskilled and this will lead to them choosing to go elsewhere. That leads to problems with recruiting within the dental sector.

There has been a not insignificant boost in mental health spending in the 2007-08 budget but so far this has failed to improve the system for patients seeking help for mental health problems. The community suffers the consequences of an inadequate system. There are no community based mental health beds in Queensland so patients with less serious ailments are sent back to the community because there are not enough acute mental health beds in hospital.

I do not think I need to remind the House about the recent tragic case of Carmel Wuth on the Gold Coast. Her sad story illustrates the human cost of this government's financial mismanagement. I want to note that today's *Courier-Mail* reveals that overtime payments for nurses have blown out for the first eight months of this financial year. If that continues for the last quarter of the year it will result in a larger supplementary appropriation for 2007-08 and we will be standing here this time next year talking about a larger appropriation for Health.

I also note that the recruitment program that the health minister is talking about—extra doctors, nurses and allied health professionals—has been put on hold, obviously because of budgetary constraints. This is in a memo sent out by the acting director-general of Queensland. I have great concerns about stopping recruitment programs to provide professionals that the Queensland public needs to maintain the health system.

Mr WENDT (Ipswich West—ALP) (4.28 pm): This afternoon I rise to make some short comments in support of the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2007 and the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) 2007. In doing so, I would like to inform the House of how much unforeseen expenditure was required for 2006-07. In the first place, supplementary appropriation, as sought under the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2007 for departments for the 2006-07 financial year, totalled about \$3.989 billion. The largest requirement for this appropriation was by far for the Treasury department, and that appropriation amounted to \$2.643 billion. That appropriation reflected the transfer of proceeds from the sale of the state's retail energy assets to the Queensland Future Growth Corporation. The next largest requirement for appropriation was for the Department of Infrastructure and Planning, which amounted to \$346 million or thereabouts for investment in the South East Queensland (Gold Coast) Desalination Company Pty Ltd, financing transactions with special purpose vehicle companies for the procurement and/or delivery of south-east Queensland's water infrastructure project and Airport Link, and funding for the Queensland Water Commission for drought strategy investigations and the south-east Queensland water asset audit. The supplementary appropriation sought under the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) 2007 for the Legislative Assembly and the Parliamentary Service for the 2006-07 financial year totalled about \$1.461 million.

In contrast, in 2005-06 supplementary appropriations sought under the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2006 were about \$1.872 billion. Although this amount was significantly less than the current supplementary appropriation requirement of \$3.989 billion, the 2006-07 requirement is higher primarily as a result of the sale of the state's retail energy assets. That funding needed to pass through the Treasury's accounts to the Queensland Future Growth Fund. The supplementary requirement for the Legislative Assembly and the Parliamentary Service in 2005-06 was \$1.572 million, which was generally in line with the current supplementary requirement for the parliament of \$1.461 million. I commend the bills to the House.

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Treasurer) (4.30 pm), in reply: The appropriation bills which are being dealt with in cognate this afternoon provide the legislative basis for funds that have been appropriated to departments in the 2006-07 financial year. These funds are applied in accordance with the Financial Audit and Administration Act for subsequent legislative ratification through what is by standard means: appropriation bills introduced part-way through the financial year each and every year. The member for Burnett seemed to indicate an expectation that there would be more than one of these bills introduced part-way through a financial year. That is not the way in which the Queensland budget works. Certainly, we do not envisage in any circumstance there being a need to introduce extra appropriation bills. This is a standard procedure that occurs in the Queensland parliament each and every year and, as such, is not out of the ordinary—a description which I think was used by the member for Moggill in his remarks earlier.

I dealt with the specific question asked by the member for Toowoomba South in his contribution to the debate. I also indicated this to the member for Gladstone but, to be specific, as I announced this morning in relation to the government's decision on the future ownership affecting the Cairns and Mackay port authorities, that necessitates a review of the structure of ports. That review is not about whether we divest those ports but about the way in which those ports are managed. Given that the Cairns and Mackay airports are significant parts of the Cairns and Mackay port authorities, that requires us to look at the way in which all the ports are managed. Clearly, we have undertaken recent reforms in relation to the ports of Brisbane and Bundaberg and the Gladstone port authority. Therefore, at this point we will look at the port holdings generally to make sure that we have the best management structure. But to be clear, this review is not about seeking to divest or to otherwise sell the port assets that exist in Queensland. We think it is important that we have direct participation in and ownership of key export infrastructure in a growing state such as Queensland, given what is occurring in the resources industry. I wanted to explicitly put those views on the record.

I will deal with other issues raised in specifics before turning to other matters. For the benefit of the member for Moggill, the shadow Treasurer, who asked about the ongoing issues relating to a proposed divestment of the Cairns and Mackay airports, I indicate to him—and this is information that would be able in large part to be deduced from looking at publicly reported information—as I said earlier, that the approximate book value of the airport holdings that we are proposing to divest to fund the new hospitals is in the order of \$800 million. The expected dividends are in the order of \$18 million. Given the circumstances, I am not sure that the member for Moggill would identify the \$18 million as a significant impost on the budget bottom line. We believe that those assets can realise a better result for taxpayers out of the strictures of GOC ownership, out of the strictures of public ownership, and therefore provide a benefit in immediate terms to the real services that people require, and that is the core business of government.

I have to say that on occasions in Mackay, and in fact in Cairns as well, I have had people raise issues with me. In fact, the last time I was in Cairns someone stopped me on the Cairns Esplanade at about 5.30 in the morning when I was out for a run and raised with me the issue of Cairns Hospital. Nowhere—not ever—has anyone from Cairns or Mackay or, frankly, anywhere else ever raised with me the urgent attention required by the baggage carousel at either the Cairns airport or the Mackay airport.

In reality, people are interested in hospitals and health services. It is the single biggest challenge and the single biggest priority for governments everywhere in the world. We make no apology for this decision. We think it is the sort of decision that governments in a modern economy should make.

In that regard—and I thought it would be a while before I reached this point—I have to use the phrase ‘I remember when’. I remember when the Liberal Party stood for something. I remember when the Liberal Party described itself as the party of free enterprise. Let everyone recall how the day’s events have unfolded. When the government quite properly advised the people of Queensland through the parliament of Queensland of its decision to undertake what is on any measure a significant transaction, the opposition members through that period and right throughout question time—they did not ask a question—sat mute and absurd. Why? They did not know what to do, because one little part of the dog wanted to walk one way and another little part of the dog wanted to walk another way. So the opposition members had to scurry out of here after question time and have the brawl about whether they were going to truly be a modern opposition and truly be an opposition that had some semblance of credibility when it comes to decisions that governments around the world make at every point in time. Guess who won? The old Nats, as they always do. So here we go. We have this debate occurring in the opposition at the moment about whether they merge, about what assets from what party go into which part of what party—a conversation about themselves with themselves, which they describe as the future of Queensland. But when it comes to something that actually matters, such as the role of government—is the role of government building hospitals or is it running airports?—they rushed into the room, had the brawl and the old Nats won.

I remember when the Liberal Party actually had some semblance of credibility—some semblance of integrity, something to believe in. The old bloke—the old deity Mr Howard—was in town last night. What would Mr Howard think if he was looking down on his brethren here? He always had a view while he was in office about just how hopeless the state Liberals were. I bet members that Mr Howard does not get any comfort from seeing where the Liberal Party of Queensland is today. The big end of town—business or the people who the Liberal Party claims are its natural constituency—will be tut-tutting and shaking their heads at what they know is a complete capitulation by the most pathetic excuse for a political party that walks across the political landscape in Queensland today.

We get from the Liberal Party, and in particular from the shadow Treasurer, this kind of pathetic hand-wringing, lip-quivering account of where the policy goes. ‘We are a bit worried about everything, Mr Speaker,’ say the Liberal Party members and the shadow Treasurer. ‘We are a bit worried about this. We are worried about what is happening.’ They never provide a solution to anything. They never offer a proposition. The answer is this: if they are not going to participate in putting forward real propositions for how to run the Queensland budget, if they are anti raising prudent capital finance to appropriately fund, through debt financing, infrastructure built for generational benefits, if they are anti PPPs, if they are anti undertaking any asset sale, what is the solution? Is it the magic pudding?

The solution would be a reversion to the last time the Liberal Party was in government—a capital works freeze. They cannot have it both ways. My challenge to the shadow Treasurer and that politburo that must be the economic policy committee within the opposition is: what is it that they will not build? What are the roads they will stop building? What are the hospitals that they will deny? What part of the water grid do they want to stop? What are the assets—the capital works—being built around Queensland that, because of their view, they logically have to stop? What are they? They should come forward to the people of Queensland with a list and actually articulate a position instead of wringing their hands on the sidelines.

Members opposite like to talk about the concept of debt as being something that is in some way an issue that is of such concern that we need to pull up stumps. It is not. We in this state have had over a generation of strong financial management in general—and from people on the other side of politics as well—that has contributed to the state of the balance sheet today. It would be utterly irresponsible if we did not exercise the strength of that balance sheet to be able to appropriately finance long-term infrastructure. This is economics 101. Sometime in the past the Liberal Party in this state used to understand it, but now they are captive to the old command economy Gazprom view of the world that is the National Party.

Dr Flegg interjected.

Mr FRASER: I thank the shadow Treasurer for reminding me. We used to be able to build schools and hospitals, says the shadow Treasurer meekly. We still do. Let me ask the shadow Treasurer a revelatory question. When we build through a PPP a hospital or a school, it is not for free; it is not magic money. It is a different way of financing it and we provide those funds. We pay for the school and hospital, delivered through a different mechanism. I am so glad he raised the point because I remember being in this parliament and having an interesting debate. Even better, the member for Surfers Paradise is in the chamber, and he introduced the bill at the time as the shadow education minister. A debate was had, particularly about ABC Learning—and does that debate not have an interesting footnote to it? Members opposite stood up and proselytised and argued with us about not just delivering through private enterprise the structure of a school or a hospital; they wanted schools to be able to be operated in this state for profit, that is, they wanted people to be paid by the state or through other mechanisms to

be able to achieve for-profit education. Now all of a sudden a year later they are trying to mine what they see as a seam of opposition relating to PPPs and schools by completely, hypocritically and dishonestly producing a policy position in direct contradistinction, and those three members opposite know it.

I say that this is clearly a turning point in the way in which the debate about the future of Queensland is going to be conducted. Over the next 18 months we will see a level of hand wringing never seen before from those opposite. They will try to tell the people of Queensland that there is a problem when there is not. They will try to tell the people of Queensland that there is a problem with the Queensland budget and the Queensland economy when there is not. We have had our AAA credit rating affirmed and, more to the point, let me give honourable members a perspective on this.

The interest expense on the borrowings that we have on budget, that is, the part of financing that is paid for directly by the Queensland taxpayer—what they are liable for—this financial year is 1.2 per cent. It is growing, but it will be growing to three per cent by the end of the forward estimates. It may then move to somewhere in the order of four per cent. However, every single business I have ever spoken to since I have been in this job and every single family I know who is paying off a mortgage would love to start from a position of having an interest expense of four per cent. Every single person in my generation moving into the housing market would love to start the family budget by having an interest expense of four per cent.

Members opposite can create a figure and try to blow it out by a factor of 10 as they have done and they do continuously, but unfortunately for the opposition in this place out there are people who understand this, and they think the mob opposite are an embarrassment. They think that the sort of propositions they are putting forward are a disgrace to the traditions they are meant to represent.

I have long held a view that it is a complete furphy out there in the body politic that it is the Liberal and National parties who are the better economic managers because they have always lived off the fat of the land and never once in the history of this state—or the federation, for that matter—have they been the authors of true economic reform and true economic destiny. These people lived off the fat of the land from the work of the federal Labor government that was elected in 1983. Similarly, it has been Labor in Queensland for the better part of the last 20 years that has authored this prosperity. More to the point, it will be Labor that provides the next period of prosperity. We are taking seriously our obligation to invest the boon from the boom.

In the context of this appropriation debate, while we have seen the hallmarks of what will no doubt be the type of debate that the opposition will seek to conduct from this point onwards, we know this: they cannot have it all. They cannot be against it all without actually naming and putting on the block the projects they would stop, the taxes they would raise or what magic pudding they have under their desk.

I am glad for the opportunity on a day like today to be able to draw from the opposition, from the Liberal Party in this place, exactly what it is that they propose as their philosophy for managing the state's finances. We have a continued obligation and a continued practice of managing our finances in a responsible manner with a AAA credit rating and budgeting for surpluses—not borrowing to fund recurrent expenditure—borrowing to invest where appropriate with an interest expense of 1.2 per cent this financial year and moving to three per cent or four per cent. When we go back to the basic principles of the matters that underpin this budget, it is clear that, after the last 10 years and looking to the next decade, this state is uniquely placed to meet those challenges. What will stop it dead is if the mob on the other side without a clue, without a plan, without believing in anything, ever end up on this side of the fence. I commend the bills to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bills read a second time.

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2)

Clause 1 (Short title)—

Mr FRASER (4.47 pm): I move the following amendment—

1 Clause 1 (Short title)

At page 4, lines 3 to 4, '*Appropriation (Parliament) Act (No. 2) 2007*'—

omit, insert—

'Appropriation (Parliament) (Supplementary 2006–07) Act 2008'.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 1, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 2, as read, agreed to.

Appropriation Bill (No. 2)

Clause 1 (Short title)—

Mr FRASER (4.48 pm): I move the following amendment—

1 Clause 1 (Short title)

At page 4, line 3, '*Appropriation Act (No. 2) 2007*'—

omit, insert—

'Appropriation (Supplementary 2006–07) Act 2008'.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 1, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 2, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading (Cognate Debate)

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Treasurer) (4.49 pm): I move—

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

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

Motion agreed to.

Bills read a third time.

Long Title (Cognate Debate)

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Treasurer) (4.50 pm): I move—

That the long titles of the bills be agreed to.

Question put—That the long titles of the bills be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

BUILDING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 27 February (see p. 443), on motion of Mr Lucas—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (4.50 pm): The opposition will be supporting this legislation, which covers a wide range of issues. Certainly, in our consultation with industry it does not appear to be controversial, but we reserve the right to seek clarification and further guarantees about its implementation on specific aspects.

In summary, this bill will address changes to the Building Act 1975 and seeks to clarify the definition of 'boarding and share accommodation', redefining them as 'budget accommodation' in certain circumstances which will require development approval for a material change of use and also compliance with the Fire and Rescue Service Act. There are also changes with regard to building surveying technicians and how temporary structures are caught up within the Building Act and other legislation. There are also amendments to the local government superannuation scheme.

Firstly, in addressing the issue of the fire regulations and changes in the definition of 'shared accommodation', I support the government's moves to tighten fire regulations. The current range of legislation is a dog's breakfast and not straightforward for people who are seeking to comply with fire regulations if they have six or more tenants sharing a house. Current provisions are scattered across an array of legislation—the Building Act, development codes, the Fire and Rescue Service Act as well as different types of tenancy acts such as the budget accommodation and student accommodation legislation. I note that the legislation we are looking at does not necessarily make it any easier for people to find various references affecting compliance with a shared house with six or more, but I would urge the government to take this opportunity, with the tightening of the legislation, to educate landlords and the public as to their legal responsibilities.

'Six or more tenants' is designated by this legislation as constituting budget accommodation or shared accommodation and therefore required to comply with the Fire and Rescue Service Act. My understanding previously was that that act would have captured those types of accommodations anyway, but I understand that this legislation is coming forth because there have been challenges in court such that these types of accommodation have successfully had actions overturned. If there are negligent people who are trying to flout the law or the intention of the law, the book should be thrown at

them. However, I also note that in this day and age, where people may be taking in boarders and have existing family members in that house, it may not be unreasonable to expect that there may be six people living in a house who now would have to clearly, under this legislation, ensure they are certified under the Fire and Rescue Service Act and also have proceeded through local government channels in terms of a material change of use. Therefore, there are implications in that area. However, I understand that the intention of bringing this legislation forward is to overcome a problem where there have been clear concerns about increasing numbers of people being put into accommodation and the potential for an escalating risk of fire.

The legislation as it stands may be closing a loophole, but there is still an issue of people being aware that they need to comply, because I think there are many people who potentially would have tenants in a shared accommodation situation who may not view themselves necessarily as a boarding house. As a result, there is a need to educate them as to their legal responsibility under this act and how to go about reaching compliance. Under the existing fire regulations, share accommodation providers can face fines of more than \$12,000 per breach. If there are a number of breaches, the fines can really add up. In supporting good fire safety to protect people, I would also urge the government to support good education programs to ensure that people are aware of their legal responsibilities.

It is interesting to note that when I raised these issues in consultation with a number of bodies, including the REIQ and the Insurance Council of Australia, their feedback was not one of a terrible degree of concern. But if a landlord—and I will admit that I have a rental house, but I would certainly not want any more than the four people who are currently in that house—does not know that somebody in their tenancy adds additional people to that house and as a result they are taken over that legal threshold, they may find that they are no longer insured. They may find that they consequently, as a landlord, face the possibility of substantial fines, even though that house may in fact be quite safe. I would urge the government to add to the current legislation, which is tightening a loophole, the need for people to be aware of their legal responsibilities. But perhaps we should ask the Deputy Premier just how many people a reasonable person can add to a domestic dwelling, because I believe he is quite an expert in this regard. However, I would welcome the minister's explanation as to what the feedback has been from government stakeholders, how this education program will be rolled out and how to put that information into the hands of real estate agents and into the hands of tenants who have a right to know what level of fire safety they should expect in their rental accommodation.

This legislation addresses a number of other issues, as I have mentioned. It also brings temporary structures under the Building Act, and I accept that this has been highlighted in light of the tragedy regarding a Western Australian mining camp accident where there was an event involving cyclonic winds and lives were lost. That has highlighted the fact that people can be in these structures and be quite vulnerable in the event of adverse weather, and we certainly recognise the need for this to be addressed in legislation. There are also a number of provisions in this legislation that seek to improve efficiencies in relation to the building technicians surveyors act.

With regard to the water-saving measures, I note that these provisions are also being brought in under this particular legislation under the Building Act 1975 with an update to schedule 1 with reference to the new and renumbered parts of the Queensland Development Code which came into force on 1 January 2008, including the parts introducing the new water-saving measures which are part and parcel—

Mr Lucas: No, it is just adopting the renumbering. They have been adopted separately, not as part of this legislation.

Miss SIMPSON: I accept the minister's explanation that they have been adopted separately, but there has been clarification with the renumbering that is embedded into this new legislation. We also note, though, that there are quite a number of new water regulations that have separately recently been published that will also be coming into effect in the near future with the reforms and the other alterations that we have seen—institutional changes with the ownership of water, changes with local government and a range of measures—and they are going to be quite extensive.

This bill amends the superannuation provisions in the Local Government Act 1993. The feedback from the Local Government Association is not one of concern with regard to these particular changes, and we acknowledge that. However, there is clarification with regard to how the Ombudsman Act is applied to local government owned corporations. In fact, there is recognition that the Ombudsman did not have jurisdiction in certain circumstances, and this has been clarified so that in fact there will no longer be immunity from the Ombudsman with regard to this particular jurisdiction. In summary, we support the legislation. We seek the minister's clarification on the specific aspects that we have brought forward, as this is what we would call SLUMP legislation covering a wide range of issues, many of them technical in nature. We commend the bill to the House.

Mr STEVENS (Robina—Lib) (4.59 pm): I rise to speak to debate on the Building and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008 as I believe that this is a very important and significant bill that addresses loopholes in the safety of building standards and building provisions for the state of Queensland. The bill seeks to amend the Building Act 1975, the Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990 and the superannuation provisions in the Local Government Act 1993.

The Building and Other Legislation Amendment Bill seeks to amend the Building Act by bringing in minimum standards for temporary buildings or structures through Building Code assessment provisions such as the Queensland Development Code. As stated on the Department of Infrastructure and Planning web site, the Queensland Development Code consolidates Queensland specific building standards into a single document. The standards cover Queensland matters outside the scope of and in addition to the Building Code of Australia, such as requirements for private health facilities. The Queensland Development Code looks at detached housing, fire safety, special buildings, building sustainability and general health, safety and amenity and other areas not referenced under legislation.

Other amendments to the Building Act include the following: a new definition of 'budget accommodation building' to include share houses and boarding houses no matter under what situation the occupants hold their tenancy within those premises; it makes sure that alternative solutions used to comply with the Building Code are documented and specified on a certificate of classification and are prominent in or near the entrance of a building; and it removes restrictions on local government in which building surveying technicians can perform building certifying functions.

The amendments to the Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990 relate to the definition of 'fire safety installations'. The amendments to the Local Government Act 1993, and in particular the local government superannuation scheme, will implement consistent provisions with those of the Commonwealth. The other amendments will also clarify the application of the Ombudsman Act 2001 to local government owned corporations and enable the timely adjustment of superannuation contributions in line with changes in members' salaries, some of which have been extraordinary in this last round of local government amalgamations.

The amendments to the Building Act 1975 relating to unsafe practices in buildings are as a result of a fire that occurred in August 2005 at the Binary Industries pesticide manufacturing and storage plant in the Narangba Industrial Estate. A range of industrial businesses are located within the precinct of the Narangba Industrial Estate, including waste disposal facilities, chemical manufacturers, tanneries, crude oil storage and concrete batching plants. In his second reading speech the minister refers to the above amendments which will ensure—

... maintenance of conditions of use and occupation and the supporting enforcement powers for the duty to maintain fire safety measures are in part a response to the findings that there is a need to minimise risks of unsafe practices in buildings.

The fire at Binary Industries burned for six hours, resulting in major contamination of the environment surrounding the area. I remember seeing on the news plenty of people coughing and spluttering, as I am sure we all do. Businesses in the area of the Narangba Industrial Estate were worried about the impact of the contamination of the area on their own businesses and the wider community. Because of the concerns of businesses in the Narangba Industrial Estate and the community around the estate, Queensland Health set up the Narangba Health Action Plan to address community concerns regarding any issues, specifically health issues, relating to the Binary Industries fire. This led to the bill currently before the House.

As we all know, building standards across the globe vary significantly, but Australian building and construction standards are considered to be some of the best in the world. By tightening the laws through the amendments before the House, we will ensure that we uphold that very high standard. In Queensland the construction industry is experiencing a boom that has created a skills shortage. This is one reason why the amendments relating to building surveying technicians performing certifying functions is justified, needed and appropriate. We need to harness the knowledge and skills that workers have so as to maximise their output. That can only benefit the industry in a very effective way.

In conclusion, we in the opposition support the bill and support any amendments that will ultimately increase the minimum standards which buildings, temporary or otherwise, must comply with. We would like to see some issues relating to the legislation addressed. The extensive consultation by the government with the relevant stakeholders, led by the department and the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, provided only technical input. Some of our sources involved in these matters tell us that no consultative sessions were held. We would like the minister to address those issues in his summing-up speech.

In addition, under this bill Queensland landlords are offered no further protection. The onus lies with the landlord when it comes to the responsibility of ensuring they comply with their obligations with regard to local government and fire compliance. As the member for Maroochydore said earlier, if tenants sublet rooms the landlord is exposed to penalties in the event of noncompliance and there is a further shifting of responsibilities to the property owners, at the property owner's expense. However, given that this is an important step towards improving building standards for Queensland, I certainly join with opposition and government members in supporting the bill before the House.

Ms STRUTHERS (Algeria—ALP) (5.07 pm): Doing everything possible to prevent fires in commercial and residential buildings is important. Therefore, I rise to support the bill, particularly the elements that aim to enhance fire safety. Among other things, the bill will amend the Building Act 1975 in relation to temporary buildings and clarify the definition of 'budget accommodation building'. The bill also

amends the Building Act 1975 to ensure the effective enforcement of the alternative solutions for fire safety that are specified in approvals for commercial buildings. It also makes minor amendments to the Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990 in relation to fire safety systems.

There is a high number of commercial and industrial properties in my electorate, particularly around Acacia Ridge and the new industrial areas of Larapinta and Heathwood. From time to time constituents raise concerns with me about the hazards to our local area from numerous factories, many of which have been around for a long time. Just in the last month or so a fire at a mattress factory close to my office caused a fair bit of concern in the community. Therefore, it is very important to continue to be stringent in our management and compliance measures in relation to fire safety. Among other things, an objective of the amendments is to ensure that owners and occupiers are aware of any restrictions on the building's use to help ensure that the day-to-day use of the building and any future modifications do not compromise compliance with the Building Code's performance requirements. The other critical element of these measures is that fire safety officers and local government officers must have the tools and the teeth to enforce fire safety provisions. This bill gives extra teeth to those fire safety provisions and enforcement measures.

The bill amends the Building Act 1975 to require that any future temporary buildings comply with any specifically applicable building standards that are in force. This amendment will enable the introduction of minimum standards for temporary buildings through building assessment provisions such as the Queensland Development Code. This amendment will provide certainty for budget accommodation building owners in relation to their obligation to ensure their buildings conform to fire safety standards.

The minister mentioned in his second reading speech that the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service staff and local government officers have identified that there is a proliferation of new boarding houses. I have certainly seen on the southside of Brisbane numerous homeowners who are seeing money to be made in knocking up extra walls within their rental properties and sandwiching in as many students as they can. It is particularly concerning that this is being directed at the more vulnerable international students. I know my colleague Phil Reeves, the member for Mansfield, has been a champion of this issue in recent times on behalf of international students and students generally, and I know he will have more to say on this issue when he speaks. It is an important concern. Sandwiching people into inappropriately renovated properties without suitable exits and other fire safety provisions does pose increased fire safety hazards.

I commend the teams of fire safety officers operating at Sunnybank Hills and Durack in my electorate. It can be a tough, high-risk job. They do a great job in my local area. They are also doing such important fire safety awareness work with kids and community groups with their mobile kitchen unit, where they throw the water on the pot and it all goes up in flames and people jump back and get a hell of a fright but it does alert them to the concerns around how to manage fires in their own home. Who could forget good old Blazer Bear and his stop, drop and roll strategy and other things kids are being taught? They are certainly doing a lot of good local community work, and I take this opportunity to put on record my thanks to those local services.

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (5.11 pm): It gives me great pleasure to rise and support the Building and Other Legislation Amendment Bill before the House. As the member for Algester just hinted at, I have been a strong advocate regarding the unsatisfactory practices occurring with student accommodation in residential areas, particularly in the area of Macgregor in the electorate of Mansfield, which I am proud to represent.

I informed the House on 5 September of my concerns regarding the provision of illegal and unsatisfactory student accommodation in residential areas on the southside, particularly in the suburb of Macgregor. House owners are converting their downstairs areas into an extra two bedrooms, even though sometimes it may be below the building regulation height, and then turning their garage into another two bedrooms. Amazingly, a four-bedroom residential house now becomes an eight-bedroom student accommodation service with only one or, if they are lucky, two bathrooms. They are doing this by getting unethical certifiers to agree that they can build extra rooms by calling them storerooms. Homeowners are charging up to \$200 per week per room. So, instead of collecting for an average three- to four-bedroom house about \$350 to \$450 per week, they are now getting anywhere from an amazing \$1,000 to \$1,600 a week. As a result, many families who want to live in these local areas are simply priced out of the market. They are using the most vulnerable—international students—and are charging the big rents.

We have an enormous number of high-quality, purpose-built student residences in our local area and these are properly planned and developed to accommodate a large number of students. This inappropriate conversion of domestic style homes creates overcrowding and promotes unsafe congestion in our local streets. On 5 September I called on the Lord Mayor of Brisbane to conduct an immediate inquiry. I know he has met some aspects of that, but I still call on him to ensure the enforcement of the state building codes. I also said that if there is a need for legislation from the state perspective then I would do everything in my power to make sure that happens. Right here today is a perfect example of that.

This legislation, which amends the definition of 'budget accommodation building' in the Building Act 1975, will make the law clearer in relation to fire safety requirements for budget accommodation buildings, especially in the student accommodation sector. This amendment will ensure that fire safety standards and requirements for fire safety management plans also apply to the accommodation scenario of large numbers of unrelated persons sharing a house. Through the clarified scope of the definition, the amendment will help to safeguard budget accommodation residents, including those sharing houses, from risk of fire. The amendment also includes changes to clarify that share houses may be 'budget accommodation buildings' regardless of whether meals are provided to none or some of the occupants and irrespective of whether there is any legal basis by which occupants derive their right to occupy their room or bed.

The amendment of the definition of 'budget accommodation building' makes it clear that a share house accommodating six or more unrelated persons is a 'budget accommodation building' and subject to fire safety requirements under the Building Act 1975. It is an important step in addressing an important part of the wider public policy and amenity issues surrounding the growth of high-occupancy share houses in our suburbs, about which I first started this speech.

In a practical sense, the amendment means that these buildings will at least need to have interconnected smoke alarms in corridors and a smoke alarm in each bedroom and owners will need to maintain a minimum number of designated exits. Owners will also need to have a fire safety management plan on site so that the building's occupiers know how fire safety is to be managed.

Some share houses have been known to have up to 20 residents, many of whom are international students. These buildings need to be subject to adequate fire safety standards and management plans. The amendment has the practical effect of requiring these types of share houses to at least need to have interconnected smoke alarms.

As I said on 5 September, I will do everything in my power to try to eradicate this unethical behaviour. I said that we would work together with the Brisbane City Council to address this issue. I congratulate the Deputy Premier for introducing this legislation. This will have a real impact on many of these unethical student accommodation residences, particularly in the area of Macgregor. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the community of Macgregor, particularly David Hughes and Alan Druery, who have been very strong in their advocacy not only for their local area of Macgregor but also for other parts of Brisbane. I think they even met with the Deputy Premier—

Mr Lucas: No. I haven't met with Alan, but he's a good Villanova parent.

Mr REEVES: Yes, he is. He has had a very long and esteemed history in Catholic education. He continues to contribute to the community, and in this regard he has. They met with the Premier and other ministers at the community cabinet on the Gold Coast. I congratulate them for fighting the good fight. I am only too pleased to commend this bill to the House because this in some small way will start to eradicate these unethical practices, particularly on the southside of Brisbane. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (5.17 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to debate on the Building and Other Legislation Amendment bill. The stated purpose of the bill is to clarify existing provisions and to make minor amendments to the Building Act 1975, the Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990 and the Local Government Act 1993.

The amendments to the Building Act 1975 are intended to clarify existing provisions to expand the definition of buildings used for budget accommodation, minimum standards and certification for budget accommodation buildings and remove restrictions on local governments in which building surveying technicians can perform building certifying functions, and it is with respect to this part of the bill that I wish to largely confine my remarks.

Clause 4 of the bill seeks to ensure that alternative solutions used to comply with the Building Code are properly specified and that their maintenance can be adequately enforced. This is an important amendment which I hope is designed to acknowledge that accommodation venues vary widely in their age, size and design and that compliance with building codes as they evolve may become increasingly difficult for individual accommodation venues.

In my electorate of Hinchinbrook, as in many areas of regional Queensland, many primary industries, particularly horticultural industries, depend greatly on itinerant and seasonal workers such as backpackers to harvest fruit and other crops. In my electorate, the banana industry is a major industry and is heavily reliant on itinerant workers to harvest the fruit, and their dependence has been exacerbated in recent years due to the skills and labour shortage. Budget accommodation is an essential requirement for itinerant workers, particularly backpackers, to be able to come to the communities in my electorate, such as the Tully district and the Innisfail district, to work in the banana industry and other horticultural industries for the purposes of working in the area for a period of time.

There are a number of budget accommodation venues throughout the district which specialise in the provision of affordable accommodation and meal packages to cater for those workers, and some have even established strong relationships with banana farmers to secure workers for their farms when

they arrive in town. There is a shortage of budget accommodation available in north Queensland in these areas. I wrote to the Minister for Natural Resources and Water last year in relation to proposals to expand affordable accommodation available in Tully at the Green Way Caravan Park. Substantial investment was needed in the site to make it worthwhile for the leaseholders, which they were prepared to do if they could secure a long-term lease to make it worthwhile, and that is where the DNRW came in.

In early 2007 the shortage of labour in the banana industry in north Queensland following Cyclone Larry was being exacerbated by a lack of accommodation for workers, particularly for itinerant and seasonal workers. The relationship between the Green Way Caravan Park and the local banana farmers in the Tully district was very strong, and I was contacted by several growers supporting the proposal to expand the capacity of the caravan park because it was much needed to source more labour for the area.

There was a clear economic benefit that these workers would bring to towns like Cardwell, Tully, Innisfail, Babinda, Mareeba and surrounding districts which are at the heart of that industry in north Queensland. Critically, the banana industry itself would struggle to function without the itinerant and backpacker labour. The problems are associated with attracting and accommodating labour for the banana industry and other north Queensland horticultural industries.

Let me be absolutely clear that I believe there should never be a situation where building code standards are exempted for any venue that would lead to a situation where safety standards are compromised. However, I need to raise on behalf of these budget accommodation venues in my electorate that are so critical for the major agricultural industries in the area the issue of the possible costs associated with compliance at venues that may require substantial investment by the owners of the building. I hope that clause 4 of the bill—which seeks to ensure that alternative solutions used to comply with the Building Code are properly specified and that their maintenance can be adequately enforced—will achieve its stated aim and can provide effective alternatives for budget accommodation venues where for some reason compliance cannot be easily achieved and avoid a compliance nightmare in the short term, as budget accommodation venues which may face compliance difficulties take a period of time to finance or secure other assistance to comply with the regulations.

Again, I want to make it clear that I am not for a moment suggesting that building owners not be required to comply with the standards being proposed. But I would like it recognised that the age, the size and the design of some of the venues may mean compliance is more difficult for them than other venues. A heavy-handed approach would have a serious impact on people's livelihoods and the industries that I have mentioned in north Queensland and on other industries in other regions of Queensland.

Clause 9 amends the definition of budget accommodation to ensure that share houses are captured by the definition and that a boarding house is a budget accommodation building irrespective of whether meals are provided to occupants. Having been a university student in a share house in a previous life in the western suburbs of Brisbane—

Ms Jones: Not that long ago!

Mr CRIPPS: Not that long ago.

Mr Gray: Which suburb?

Mr CRIPPS: Well, I was a resident of Taringa and Toowong previously. Rising rents and housing affordability pressure, which has been demonstrated through many press stories in Brisbane—and, indeed, as far as students are concerned, in Townsville in north Queensland at James Cook University—are a concern where many students are trying to fit into a single dwelling. However, I want to echo the concerns expressed by the shadow minister, the member for Maroochydore, about landlords being exposed to liability if overcrowding is occurring without their knowledge.

Part 3 of the bill proposes amendments to the Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990 to complement the amendments to the Building Act with regard to the definition of fire safety installations. Strong fire safety regulations are important and these proposals follow amendments that were made following debate on the Queensland Building Services Authority and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, which acted on recommendations after the backpacker hostel fire in Childers to improve fire prevention standards. Those measures were welcome and supported, as are the amendments in this bill to try to ensure that other tragedies of that nature and severity do not occur again.

Amendments relating to the restrictions on the local governments in which building surveying technicians can perform building certifying functions are also proposed to address the critical shortage of building certifiers. This is certainly an issue faced in a number of regional and rural electorates in Queensland including my electorate of Hinchinbrook. The Hinchinbrook Chamber of Commerce, Tourism and Industry recently sought assistance from the Hinchinbrook Shire Council to step up its efforts to secure a building certifier, which they had been without for some time.

There were many reports of applications for buildings being delayed in the local area for considerable periods of time. These efforts have recently been successful, but the efforts were considerable and caused some disruption to the progress of a number of projects in the shire.

Temporary buildings used for sleeping accommodation are often substandard and it is proposed that a minimum standard be introduced for such buildings. Section 67 of the Building Act currently allows for a building certifier to approve a temporary building or structure for a certain period that does not comply with the building assessment provisions provided that certain conditions relating to structure, fire safety, health and amenity are met.

Amendments to the Building Act will provide that building certifiers will not be able to apply section 67 of the Building Act to temporary structures when this standard has been introduced by regulation. The goal of achieving higher standards for temporary buildings as far as structural integrity, fire safety, health and amenity are concerned is a worthy goal, but achieving widespread compliance without creating an equally widespread upheaval in many areas of Queensland will be difficult.

The very significant numbers of temporary buildings that have been put in place to service the thousands of workers employed in the mining and resources sector in regional areas of Queensland comes immediately to mind. The mining industry no doubt has the capacity to meet the costs of compliance where the structures currently do not apply, but the time frames to achieve compliance may be a challenge in that area. With those few comments on the record, I am pleased to support the bill.

Mr RICKUSS (Lockyer—NPA) (5.26 pm): I rise to say a few words on the Building and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008. This bill is of particular interest to me because I had raised issues about shared housing with the member for Bulimba when he was the emergency services minister, and I will raise the issue with the next emergency services minister as well.

We have an issue in the Lockyer where shared houses are being abused by some of the work contractors. They are putting 10 or a dozen people into a three-bedroom house—overseas backpackers and other workers—and charging them quite considerable rents. The only way they can get work on the farms is if they reside in these shared tenancies. Unfortunately, it has become a quite dangerous situation and has created quite a bit of conflict amongst the neighbourhoods, too. I think a shared house with six persons who can share a house is quite a reasonable proposition. To me, that is quite enough. I am just interested in the two junior members of the House who are waving to each other across the chamber. One of them is going very red now, by the way.

The amendments to this legislation will give the fire services and the local council more support in trying to regulate this issue of overpopulating a small residence that does not have appropriate fire escapes, fire alarms et cetera. Not only that, a lot of these residents do not have the appropriate toilet amenities, kitchen amenities or any of the things that are needed in this situation. This is quite a constructive piece of legislation in that respect.

As I have said, I have lobbied emergency services ministers about these issues and I have spoken to my local auxiliary fire officers about these issues, too, because it does concern me. We want backpackers or other farm workers living in good conditions. I heard the member for Hinchinbrook mention accommodation on mine sites, but in this modern day most standards can be met fairly easily and fairly well. I do not think it is overly onerous to meet the standards in this legislation. I support the bill.

Ms PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (5.29 pm): I rise to support the Building and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008. This bill addresses a number of issues. I am pleased that the scope of the definition of 'budget accommodation building' has been expanded to include share houses with six or more unrelated occupants and boarding houses irrespective of whether meals are provided to occupants. Clause 9 amends the definition of 'budget accommodation building' in section 216. The minister stated in his second reading speech—

The amendment will provide certainty for budget accommodation building owners in relation to their obligation to ensure their buildings conform to fire safety standards.

I note that the member for Maroochydore acknowledged the need for this amendment. She recognised that more and more households have share accommodation. She agreed that this is fundamentally a safety issue.

I also note that the member for Mansfield said that this issue was having a huge impact on student accommodation, particularly around Griffith University in his electorate. He said that it was a practical and sensible amendment. He also recognised that owners need to have a fire safety plan for exits in their houses. I think that is essential.

The member for Hinchinbrook said that safety cannot be compromised. This is the central element of the bill. I also acknowledge that the member for Lockyer talked about the situation in regional Queensland where there is more and more overcrowding of backpacker accommodation. Hopefully, this will go a way towards ensuring the safety of individuals who reside in this sort of accommodation.

Today I particularly want to address my remarks to the provisions in the bill that deal with the application of the Ombudsman's jurisdiction to local government owned corporations. Members may be aware that the Queensland Ombudsman reported in June 2005 on the workplace electrocution project. The workplace electrocution project investigated the adequacy of the responses of government agencies to nine electrical incidents that resulted in the deaths of 12 people, including a three-year-old

child. The Ombudsman's report also provided a number of recommendations to the government on how the investigation of such electrical incidents and the electrical safety system in Queensland could be improved. This bill specifically deals with one of those recommendations.

In the course of his investigations the Ombudsman sought information from a government owned corporation. Despite the Ombudsman making it clear that he was not investigating the corporation itself, the corporation refused to cooperate with the Ombudsman, citing its then immunity to investigation. The immunity had initially been created as part of competitive neutrality obligations under the National Competition Policy agreements. The immunity was created as private corporations would not be subject to Ombudsman investigations. However, as an unintended consequence, the provision granted total immunity. Using this immunity, I am advised that the government owned corporation refused to cooperate. When the Ombudsman brought down his report he recommended that immunity for government owned corporations and local government owned corporations be removed.

Until March 2007, the Government Owned Corporations Act 1993 included a similar provision that the Ombudsman did not apply to a statutory owned corporation. However, in response to the Ombudsman's recommendations the Government Owned Corporations Act was amended by parliament in March 2007. Section 728 of the Local Government Act 1993 identifies that the Ombudsman Act 2001 does not apply to a corporatised corporation prescribed under a regulation.

The Building and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008 includes proposals to make similar amendments to the Local Government Act to remove the total immunity of local government owned corporations from the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JARRATT (Whitsunday—ALP) (5.33 pm): I rise to participate in the debate on the Building and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008. Tonight I wish to speak in some detail about the Deputy Premier's amendment to the Building Act 1975 which allows for specific standards to be set for temporary buildings. This amendment will ensure that the government can provide safety and amenity standards for temporary buildings generally or for particular types of temporary buildings as the need arises.

This amendment is particularly relevant to my electorate and more broadly to the Mackay-Whitsunday region. What we have seen in mining areas in particular are workers camps pop up seemingly overnight. They are mushrooming in these areas. It is not just confined to mining areas.

There are an enormous number of construction workers living in Airlie Beach at the moment. Development seems to be quite rampant at the moment. A particular construction company buys a caravan park and some adjoining land and puts temporary relocatable accommodation in for its workers. It is a good solution—and I am not critical of the solution—but I am pleased that tonight we will pass some amendments that will lay the foundation for the development of future policy, particularly in relation to minimum standards for temporary accommodation buildings through the Queensland Development Code. Minimum standards for temporary buildings and structures are needed to ensure that the buildings are structurally sound and able to withstand wind loads, provide an adequate level of fire safety and provide an acceptable level of health and amenity for those Queenslanders who use them in mining communities and in other parts of the state.

Generally, the building assessment provisions, which include the Building Code of Australia and the Queensland Development Code, apply to all building work other than some minor exempt matters. However, in Queensland section 67 of the Building Act 1975 currently allows a building certifier to approve a temporary building or structure for an unspecified discretionary period that does not comply with the building assessment provisions. It thus enables approval of temporary buildings and structures regardless of the guidance provided by any applicable building assessment provisions of the Building Code of Australia or the Queensland Development Code.

Current section 67 does require a certifier to consider certain general matters relating to structure, fire, health and amenity but does not provide any standard assessment guidance within the provision. Each individual building approval and the time limit that a particular temporary building may stay in place are within an individual certifier's general discretion.

The rapid expansion of the mining industry in parts of Queensland has increased pressure on infrastructure including housing and temporary buildings used for accommodation. Stakeholders have raised concerns about the standard of some of the temporary buildings and structures, particularly in some of the mining regions of the Bowen Basin in Queensland. In addition, many temporary accommodation buildings are used for very long periods without being reassessed as projects are extended and new projects started. There is a roll-on effect. The assessment periods go on for an extraordinarily long period.

There is a need to develop building codes and standards that have regard to societal needs and expectations and that are the minimum necessary to achieve relevant health, safety, amenity and sustainability objectives. While these general principles apply to the standards for all buildings, some particular concessions in standards are sometimes needed for temporary buildings. I understand this is due to the expectation that the life of these buildings will be relatively short and costs can only be apportioned over a limited time.

It is the function of the building assessment provisions, including the Queensland Development Code, to provide any technical guidance in relation to minimum standards. Temporary buildings used for sleeping accommodation are often substandard. Therefore, section 67 of the Building Act 1975 has been amended to allow for minimum standards to be introduced for such temporary buildings in the future through the building assessment provisions. The current wording of section 67 renders this impossible as it currently excludes application of all building assessment provisions.

The amendment of section 67 will require a building development application for a temporary building or structure to comply with any applicable standard through the building assessment provisions of the Building Code of Australia or the Queensland Development Code in force at the time for temporary buildings. If at any time there is no standard through the building assessment provisions applying then the current requirements of section 67 continue to apply. I will cover this issue in a little more detail later.

This amendment and any relevant future standard will apply only to buildings. Caravans on wheels will remain unaffected as they are not classified as buildings. However, applications for caravans with wheels removed and on blocks or otherwise fixed to the ground and used for ongoing accommodation may be included in the requirements. The amendment is not intended to affect existing buildings or retrospectively amend existing approvals. Generally, any compliance issues with accommodation buildings that were not properly approved would be a matter dealt with under the applicable local government's compliance regime, which already applies to such buildings.

The amendment to section 67 does not change a local government's compliance requirements in relation to existing accommodation buildings, including temporary accommodation. This bill reorders the current section 67 subsections and introduces a new subsection to allow any building assessment provision created in the future to apply to applications for particular types of temporary buildings. Therefore, where a standard is in place under the general discretion given to building certifiers under subsection (3) of section 67 in approving temporary buildings, that is removed. Until minimum standards for temporary buildings or structures are introduced through building assessment provisions, such as the Queensland Development Code, the existing provisions of section 67 that set out the criteria for structural soundness, fire safety and health and amenity will still need to be taken into account by building certifiers when they approve temporary buildings.

Although this amendment will not have a practical impact until further consultation has occurred with stakeholders, a regulatory impact statement has been completed and a new part of the Queensland Development Code has been developed setting out minimal standards for temporary buildings. The amendment enables these further steps to be taken in developing comprehensive minimum standards for temporary buildings in Queensland. The amendment will support the government's response to broader infrastructure and accommodation issues in the state's mining areas and, as I have pointed out already, in other areas where rapid growth has required creative accommodation solutions to be applied. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (5.41 pm): I am pleased to speak to the Building and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I want to refer to the areas of this bill that relate to local government responsibility. When local governments were given the responsibility of monitoring low-cost accommodation fire services and suchlike, there was an enormous cost placed on local government. Believe it or not, that figure was ramped up to \$10 million over a five-year period. So in that period nearly \$2 million a year was cost shifted from the state government to local government. That had an enormous impact. Obviously, we could not get the state government to help fund that expenditure.

Although I am not objecting to this legislation, I ask the minister whether there is going to be further costs put on local government because this bill expands the definition of buildings that are used for budget accommodation. Therefore, from a public liability point of view, I assume there will be more of them—

Mr Lucas: They are screaming for this legislation to help them deal with concerns raised by their constituents.

Mr HOBBS: I am sure that is the case, but they would also be referring those matters to the minister's department and also to the Fire and Rescue Service. This bill expands the definition of 'budget accommodation building' and introduces minimum standards for such buildings. So there are more things for local government to do. I am not arguing with the fact that that needs to be done; I am saying that the government should make sure that local government does not have to pick up the bill for it. This bill also contains amendments to support enforcement powers for fire safety maintenance and safety signage in budget accommodation buildings. That means further work has to be done by local governments. Again, I am not arguing that that work does not need to be done, but if there is a cost involved the state government should ensure that that cost does not land on local government's desk.

This bill amends the definition of 'budget accommodation building' to include specifically share houses and backpacker or other hostel guesthouses capable of housing six or more persons. I have no problem with that. But, again, it means that further work will have to be undertaken by local government. This bill also removes restrictions on local governments in which building surveying technicians can

perform building certifying functions. Previously, those buildings were limited to small buildings and sheds. This bill proposes to allow these building surveying technicians to perform housing certifications. The way I see it at this stage, that is a sensible thing to do. That amendment does not involve any extra cost on local government because, obviously, they would be passing on those charges and costs to the people concerned.

This bill introduces a minimum standard for temporary buildings and structures so that they comply with a defined standard across the state. I think that standard should be consistent. After reading the bill, it appears to me that that is reasonable. We are all aware of the tragedy that happened in Western Australia. We do not want that to happen anywhere else. We just have to ensure that we do not make those conditions too strict. But I am sure that if those companies concerned, particularly the mining companies, are aware of the conditions that they need to—

Mr Lucas: We will do an RIS on it. So when we have the actual specific regulation, we will go out to the community with an RIS so they will have an opportunity to comment on the specific regulation.

Mr HOBBS: That sounds reasonable. With those few comments, I support the bill.

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (5.45 pm.): I rise to make a short contribution to this debate on the Building and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008. This bill makes amendments to the Building Act 1975, the Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990 and the Local Government Act 1992. In relation to building classifications under the Building Act 1975, the bill aims to clarify and expand the definition of 'budget accommodation building' regardless of whether meals are provided to occupants. The definition of 'budget accommodation building' under this amendment bill will now include boarding and share houses and backpacker and other hostel guesthouses that are capable of housing six or more people. The Building Act defines dwellings into class 1a and 2. A class 1a dwelling is where a family lives in a detached house, row house, terrace house, town house or villa while a class 2 dwelling is a sole occupancy unit.

This part of the legislation is going to affect many constituents in the Burnett, partly because there is a housing and rental accommodation crisis in the Burnett. Although this situation is being experienced throughout the state, the best example of the extent of the crisis in the Burnett that I can give members is in Childers where there are very few houses that are available for rent. I know for those members who represent areas in the city this may seem like a minimal amount, but it costs about \$250 to \$300 per week to rent a house in Childers. Childers is a vibrant little town that will probably become a city in the not-too-distant future if we note the growth predictions that were outlined in the 2020 summit. I note that the government's own figures indicate that between now and 2026 there will be a 91 per cent growth rate for the Wide Bay and Burnett areas. Much of that growth will be centred around the Burnett, especially around the Childers area.

But with the added advantage of now having an airport at Hervey Bay that offers direct flights to Sydney and Melbourne at a very low cost—at about \$70—we have seen growth out from Hervey Bay and into the southern area around Childers. The area is becoming quite a popular place in which to live. Added to that is also the amount of horticultural and farming activities that are going on around the area. I have been told that the area is probably going to need accommodation for at least another 1,000 workers who will come in to work the farms and pick the fruit. Those people will have to be housed. Short-term accommodation, share houses and temporary residences are going to be a short-term fix for that problem. This legislation will apply in those circumstances.

In the long term we should also be thinking about how we are going to fix this crisis. One of the solutions is just to build more houses. We will have to put considerable and careful thought—both state and local governments—into how we do that. Private industry of course will play a major role, as should, I believe, the state government.

When I was speaking to the previous mayor, Bill Trevor, he said that a developer came in and offered a 1,500 house development at a reasonably low cost. It was going to be three-bedroom housing. The developer consulted widely within the community and talked to groups such as the RSL and similar community groups. Everyone was asking, 'When are you going to provide these houses?' He told me that he had correspondence with the state government and the state government wanted him to knock back the development. It does not seem like a common-sense thing to do. Obviously the state government had its own reasons.

Mrs Sullivan: But actually where is it?

Mr MESSENGER: I take that interjection from the member for Pumicestone. The development seemed to be in a common-sense location. It was on land that was an old volcanic rim and was too steep to farm. That is why the local government thought it would be an ideal place for that development. It was very close to existing residential areas and also a Woolworths shop that had just sprung up. It was in an eminently sensible position, or so the whole of the community thought. Obviously, the state government thought it was not. Once again, it appeared that the state government was getting the local government to do its dirty work in knocking back these developments. I would like the minister to think about that. There is a genuine housing crisis. That housing crisis is contributing to the need for people to rent and live in those types of short-term accommodation.

In speaking to this bill, I would also like to remind members that, if they think it is difficult renting now, they should spare a thought for Indigenous people. I have had many conversations with Indigenous people in the Bundaberg-Burnett area and they have told me how difficult it is to find accommodation to rent. They will often make a phone call, secure the accommodation or go out to visit the accommodation and then suddenly the excuse is offered, 'Sorry, someone else is going to rent this accommodation.' We also need to address that issue as well. There is some housing in my area that is owned by Indigenous groups. Once again, they do need state government help to maintain and run these homes. I know that they are looking very much to the state government to help them out.

The amendments to the Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990 will simply provide consistency across both the Building Act and the Fire and Rescue Service Act regarding fire safety. These amendments allow for compliance inspections to be completed by record inspectors as well as physical on-site inspections. Part of this legislation was inspired by the tragic event which occurred in my electorate almost eight years ago, on 23 June 2000. It was a very dark day for the close-knit community. Once again I mention the name of Childers. That of course was the day that 15 young travellers died in a horrific arson attack at the Childers backpackers hostel. It was not only a dark day for the Childers community; it quickly became devastating news throughout the region, Queensland and also nationally. In an instant it turned a quiet, small, unknown town into a town which is known globally as the place where 15 young lives were senselessly lost. That tragedy has left a scar on Childers. However, as time has gone by, while the memories of those 15 young lives will live on and they will never be forgotten, the scars have faded and the community has been able to pick up the pieces and move forward.

The Isis Shire Council CEO at the time, Steve Johnston, put it very succinctly when he said—

Whilst we will always be known as the town where that fire occurred and 15 lives were lost, we will also be known as a community able to band together, react appropriately and recognise the tragedy with the memorial that has met worldwide acclaim.

The amendment to the Local Government Act 1993 clarifies the application of the Ombudsman Act 2001 to local government owned corporations without compromising competitive neutrality as a result of a fatal electrical accident in 2005 and subsequent investigations by the LGOC operation. The LGOC claimed immunity from investigation and refused access by the Ombudsman to information. These amendments will also ensure that state and Commonwealth local government superannuation provisions are consistent with each other with regard to membership eligibility restrictions and removes restrictions on contributions made by those members aged over 65 years. It will also enable timely adjustments of superannuation contributions through continuous reporting when adjustments occur to members' salaries. Up until now there has been lengthy delay. The amendment will allow for immediate adjustments.

It is important to point out that the government's extensive consultation on these amendments with stakeholders was led by the Department of Infrastructure and Planning—the DIP. The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service only provided some technical input to the DIP but did not undertake any consultative sessions. In common with many of this government's amendments to legislation, while it claims that extensive consultation with key stakeholders was carried out, it was in fact not widely consultative.

Speaking of consultation, when considering this amendment bill the Queensland coalition consulted a number of key stakeholders to gauge their opinion in relation to the amendments. The Master Builders Association, when approached by the opposition, was not even aware of this legislation. After consideration, it commented that the amendment bill had good safety aspects and endorses building survey technicians and a future career path. Overall, the MBA has no problems with the amendment bill. The Housing Industry Association provided positive feedback in relation to the legislation. The Local Government Association of Queensland and the Real Estate Institute of Queensland were also happy with the legislation.

The Insurance Council of Australia has importantly pointed out that the onus is on the landlords to be aware of their compliance and those representing property owners and managers were often missing from such briefings. The last point made by the Insurance Council of Australia echoes the opposition's reservations with regard to landlord compliance and liability. It is of concern that landlords are offered no further protection under this bill, the onus being that the landlords are responsible to know their obligations regarding local government and fire compliance. However, I must state that any legislation that is going to improve the safety of occupants will be supported by me. I am sure that small business owners would agree that in no way would they like to compromise any safety standards. With those few words, I support the bill before the House.

Mr HINCHLIFFE (Stafford—ALP) (5.58 pm): I rise to participate in the debate on the Building and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. While I acknowledge the member for Mansfield and others who made contributions about the significant provisions in this bill affecting boarding houses and student accommodation, I specifically would like to commend the Deputy Premier's amendments in relation to building surveying technicians. As many in the House will appreciate, the construction industry boom in Queensland has meant that our state is currently experiencing a serious skills shortage in a range of construction related occupations. In particular, the shortage of building certifiers is a very real concern to local governments and the construction industry. I note the member for Robina's contribution earlier and his understanding of these issues from a local government perspective.

I commend these amendments as an important initial step towards addressing this critical issue. Removing the current restrictions on local governments' building surveying technicians makes good sense. Also, allowing an accreditation standards body to set accreditation standards for building surveying technicians is a very sound reform, especially as reinforcing this level of accreditation may form a bridge for more people to attain the full building certifying qualifications.

The Building Act 1975 currently requires building assessment work to be undertaken by licensed building certifiers. Building certifying functions include such things as assessing building development applications, undertaking inspections of building work and giving certificates for building work. Three categories of building certifier exist: building surveyor, assistant building surveyor and building surveying technician. The first two categories are not affected by the amendments before the House.

Currently, section 154 of the Building Act limits the role of local government building surveying technicians in relation to the size and number of storeys of buildings they can perform certifying functions on based upon their level of accreditation and in relation to whether they are employed by what is determined by the act as a designated local government. For example, they can perform certifying functions for most domestic houses and sheds without the supervision of a building surveyor or assistant building surveyor but only within local governments that are not a designated local government. Currently, under section 154 of the Building Act these designated local governments are generally the less populous shire councils. Section 282 currently allows building surveying technicians in designated local government areas who were employed by a local government as a building certifier immediately before 21 October 2003 to continue performing building certifying functions until 20 October 2010.

Section 185 of the Building Act provides that the accreditation standards body for building certifiers must ensure that standards comply with the Australian Building Codes Board's national accreditation framework for building certifiers. The national accreditation framework for building certifiers has been adopted by all states and territories but has not been implemented by all states. Queensland has not implemented the national accreditation framework, as it does not recognise building surveying technicians as a third level of building certifier accreditation and would, if it was adopted, further limit the availability of certifiers.

Members might well ask what has initiated these changes in relation to this matter. Obviously with the recent local government boundary changes effected by the elections on 15 March 2008 some designated local governments will have combined with some non-designated local governments resulting in some building surveying technicians being able to perform building certifying functions in some areas within the new local governments but not in other parts, which is, of course, an impractical outcome. The Local Government Association of Queensland has also recently raised concerns in relation to the shortage of building certifiers.

Provisions within the bill before the House address these issues in two ways. Firstly, references to a designated local government have been omitted from section 154 to address the issue of some areas within those designated local governments combining with other areas that are non-designated local governments. A further amendment of section 154 and the consequential omission of section 282 will enable local government building surveying technicians to perform the same level of limited certifying functions based on size of the buildings and the number of storeys in all local government areas indefinitely as an initial step to respond to the growing shortage of building certifiers. Secondly, the bill achieves the removal of restrictions on the issuing of accreditation to a building surveying technician employed by a local government. A new subsection (3) of section 185 is inserted so that it provides that the accreditation requirement in section 185(2)(b) does not apply to a building surveying technician employed by a local government as mentioned in section 154(a) or to a person who has applied to be licensed as a building surveying technician and who will, if so licensed, be employed as mentioned in section 154(a).

These changes to section 185 clarify that an accreditation standards body can develop standards for local government building surveying technicians not currently covered by the national accreditation framework for building certifiers. The amendment of section 185 of the Building Act enables an accreditation standards body to not be bound by the national accreditation framework for building certifiers which had that restrictive effect as I mentioned earlier and would limit the career paths for building surveying technicians. This will enable the retention of a third level of accreditation and improved career paths for building surveying technicians.

There is a good policy rationale to tailor the tasks to be undertaken with an appropriate level of training. In this instance, the level of training undertaken by building surveying technicians is quite appropriate for local government building surveying technicians to approve houses and sheds. There is no need to insist on a higher level of qualifications. Requiring higher qualifications than is necessary for the task may increase costs for councils and certainly increase the costs to industry and therefore to people in the wider community. It will also reduce the number of persons willing to undertake the training. Conversely, recognising this entry-level qualification will make the building certification career path more attractive.

The amendments in relation to the building surveying technicians help to respond to the emerging critical shortage of building certifiers. Removing some restrictions in relation to the role and potential career path of local government building surveying technicians will help councils to provide much-needed services and it will help keep their costs down. All local government building surveying technicians will be able to perform the same level of building certifying functions irrespective of the local government area. Ongoing consultation with stakeholders will provide further policy options to respond to the continuing issue of the shortage of building certifiers, one that needs to be addressed across the length and breadth of Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms GRACE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (6.05 pm): I rise to support the Building and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008. This bill amends the Local Government Act to ensure that the 67,000 members of Queensland's local government superannuation fund, LG Super, get the most from their retirement savings. We all know and understand that superannuation is the single most important plank underpinning the future financial security and independence of Queenslanders entering retirement. Superannuation provides workers with a structured savings plan and a cost-effective way of creating wealth through investment. Under the tax benefits applying to superannuation today it is the best long-term investment choice for most working Australians. The government helps to protect the superannuation of our local government employees by providing a robust regulatory regime that ensures that their superannuation remains well structured and well administered in a low-cost and generally low-risk environment.

The changes being proposed today to the Local Government Act will contribute to the ongoing improvement of the regulatory regime for local government workers served by LG Super. The amendments in this bill will help ensure that the funds administered by LG Super continue to be administered effectively and efficiently by removing inconsistencies between Queensland's legislation and that of the Commonwealth and by enabling members' entitlements to be updated as and when their salaries change. It will also strengthen provisions relating to membership of the Local Government Superannuation Scheme by moving these from the local government regulation to the act. These provisions would rarely be subject to change, and the Office of Queensland Parliamentary Counsel has suggested that they would be better located in the act.

Sections 1182 and 1138 of the Local Government Act deal with the obligations of local governments and their permanent employees to make contributions to the Local Government Superannuation Scheme. These currently require contributions to be made for all permanent employees regardless of their age or hours worked each week.

Under Commonwealth law, however, contributions for employees aged over 65 years are restricted depending on hours worked, age and whether an industrial agreement or award is applicable. In this instance it is necessary to amend the state legislation to avoid conflict with Commonwealth law and ensure consistency between the jurisdictions. These changes increase clarity and certainty for LG Super members and for the fund administrators by removing any potential inconsistency. As we all know, when there are inconsistencies in legislation it does make it difficult for workers to calculate exactly which law they should be abiding by.

Similarly, section 1183A of the Local Government Act is being removed because it relates to the reasonable benefit limit, which was abolished by the Commonwealth on 1 July 2007. That being abolished, there is obviously no need for that requirement to now remain in section 1183A.

Local government workers will benefit from a proposed amendment to section 1186 of the act, which currently enables the Local Government Superannuation Board to require local governments to report the details of employees' salaries only twice a year, as at 1 January or 1 July. At present this means that if an employee's salary increases in February, August or at any other time, there will be several months delay before their benefits are adjusted. The bill amends the act to enable the adjustment of benefits immediately following changes in an employee's salary. As we know, superannuation is a long-term investment so it is absolutely crucial that workers' salaries become effective immediately that rises are instigated to enable long-term investment opportunities to be realised for those superannuation account holders.

As honourable members would be aware, even a small incremental increase in the course of a superannuation account's life over a long period can eventually lead to a much healthier balance at retirement age. This amendment will enable LG Super members to benefit from timely adjustments which, together with a long-term investment strategy, will work to produce a greater balance in final superannuation retirement accounts, thus ensuring greater financial security and independence in retirement.

These amendments have been supported by the Local Government Superannuation Board and the Local Government Association of Queensland. They represent best regulatory practice and will help secure the financial futures of the hardworking men and women who serve our local communities on a daily basis in Queensland's local government sector. I commend the bill to the House.

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for Infrastructure and Planning) (6.11 pm), in reply: I thank members for their contributions to the debate on the Building and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I will summarise the key amendments introduced by the bill and thank the opposition for its support of the bill. The amendment bill responds to matters raised by government and industry stakeholders in relation to the Building Act 1975, the Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990 and the Local Government Act 1993.

The amendments will help to keep buildings safe for Queenslanders in a number of important and practical ways. Significantly, a suite of amendments relating to certificate of classification requirements will help keep commercial buildings safe from the risk of fire through the availability of important fire safety information and an improved compliance framework. An amendment of the definition of a budget accommodation building will ensure that fire safety requirements also apply to high occupancy share houses in our suburbs, as well as other high occupancy accommodation buildings. Another amendment will enable the development of safety and amenity standards for temporary buildings through the Queensland Development Code, following consultation through a regulatory impact statement that will be available for public viewing and comment.

Importantly, the amendments will enable the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and local governments to more efficiently and effectively implement their building monitoring and fire safety compliance programs. For example, in the past the QFRS has attended a house containing 30 beds in which Irish backpackers were accommodated in Milton and at times has observed share houses of up to 16 university students. These amendments are important to ensure that the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and local governments can effectively monitor fire safety in all situations, due to the previous uncertainty about whether budget accommodation can include share houses of six or more persons. The amendments will also include measures responding to the growing shortage of building certifiers by removing restrictions in relation to the local governments in which building surveying technicians can approve smaller buildings and sheds, and an accreditation standards body setting accreditation standards for building surveying technicians.

I note the support of all members in relation to budget accommodation buildings provisions. I thank all members for recognising the importance of fire safety across-the-board. This amendment is a specific adjustment to legislation that has been in place since 2003 to make it clear that fire safety legislation is always applied to share houses of six or more people. Fire officers and local government officers have implemented this legislation on the ground since 2003 and conducted numerous inspections and ongoing liaison with relevant stakeholders. When the legislation was first introduced there was a comprehensive communication program including dedicated building certifiers and community liaison officers. Community liaison officers visited all known buildings to speak to the owners directly. Since that time local government officers and fire officers across the state have kept relevant stakeholders, including the REIQ, informed about compliance issues and the role of the budget accommodation and fire safety compliance program.

The member for Hinchinbrook has raised the issue of alternative solutions and the need to ensure that cost-effective accommodation is available for workers. The budget accommodation standard has been designed to improve existing buildings as cheaply as possible. Alternative solutions are designed to ensure that no less a standard of fire safety is provided in a building and in some cases may provide a higher standard and allow for renovated design solutions. I thank the member for Hinchinbrook for supporting greater numbers of building surveying technicians being available in required areas.

The member for Lockyer has referred to the potential costs of temporary accommodation building standards for existing buildings. However, the new standard will not apply to existing buildings.

The member for Burnett asserts that there has been inadequate consultation in respect of the bill. This is not the case. The Department of Infrastructure and Planning has consulted in detail with all of the relevant building industry stakeholders, including the QMBA, HIA and LGAQ. The department has a standing building industry consultative group and all stakeholders have attended regular meetings. They have supported the changes and contributed to them.

In an irrelevant contribution the member for Burnett spoke about how the government has apparently contributed to housing affordability or lack thereof by refusing to approve a particular development. I will say this about regional town planning: some of the greatest resorts on earth have existed in the regions when it comes to local governments and rates rezonings. The regional plan puts an end to that. For example, the Far North Queensland Regional Plan will have an agreed area of the urban footprint, and what might be done in that area and other areas where rural industries, for example, will exist.

In the past in regional Queensland one of the great problems we have had is rates rezonings outside of the town planning scheme. A sugarcane farm may be miles and miles from the towns and is sold on some spurious basis that it is affordable. Of course it is affordable; it is a long way from anything else. It might be affordable to buy, but it is incredibly expensive for governments to service and for people to get to and from. That is the sort of local government reform that the member for Burnett believes in. However, I will not visit his silliness on other members of the opposition.

The member for Warrego talked about \$10 million in compliance and monitoring costs. Currently local government has jurisdiction over building safety and it has significant obligations to the community. These changes will make their work easier. State government agencies will provide significant ongoing support to local councils through the statewide community liaison program. Compliance work now arises upon a complaint and this is not a large body of work.

The legislation makes it clear that landlords have an obligation to provide safe accommodation, no matter what the tenancy arrangements. Only recalcitrant landlords will be affected or severely impacted by this. Those who want to do the right thing already do so because there is a right thing to do. Promoting these safe actions is something that the state government has been actively doing since 2003. I say this: if you are a landowner and 16 people are living in your house, maybe occasionally you might drive past and check it or have a real estate agent look at it. This is about being sensible. I make no apology for ensuring fire safety and for ensuring that the legislation says that the legal arrangements between the various parties is irrelevant. It should be irrelevant to fire safety. Does it matter whether it is a share house, a rented house or some other sort of accommodation if there is the potential for someone to be burnt to death? Of course it does not! That is why these standards will apply here.

I thank honourable members for their contributions. The bill has been specifically drafted to clarify existing provisions and introduce some minor but practical and important policy and administrative changes. It achieves this by laying the foundations for minimum standards to be introduced for temporary buildings and requires future temporary buildings to comply with any specifically applicable building standards in force. It ensures that alternative solutions for fire safety are specified and approvals for commercial buildings are clear and can be effectively enforced. It ensures that fire safety information recorded on certificates of classification is accessible. It clarifies the scope of the definition of 'budget accommodation building'. It takes the initial step in addressing the shortage of building certifiers by removing current restrictions on local governments so that building surveying technicians can approve small buildings and by allowing the accreditation standards body to set accreditation standards for building surveying technicians. This will allow more technicians to achieve full building certifying qualifications and to upgrade their qualifications. It makes it better for local government; not worse.

The bill will also benefit Queenslanders by ensuring the appropriate jurisdiction of the Queensland Ombudsman and by protecting the superannuation benefits of local government employees. I commend the bill to the House.

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 29, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for Infrastructure and Planning) (6.19 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a third time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Long Title

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for Infrastructure and Planning) (6.19 pm): I move—

That the long title of the bill be agreed to.

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

Motion agreed to.

PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 12 February (see p. 71), on motion of Mr Schwarten—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Mr STEVENS (Robina—Lib) (6.20 pm): I rise to speak on the Professional Engineers and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008. From the outset, I would like to state that the coalition has no difficulty with the fundamental objectives of the professional engineer component of this bill. However, after community consultation we have certain reservations regarding aspects of the public record changes and their effect on the capacity of open and accountable government in Queensland. Before I continue, I would like to thank the minister for his departmental staff's briefing on the bill. They were very efficient, very effective and very helpful, although clarification on the impacts of the amendments to the Public Records Act through his staff was very difficult as departmental staff were not versed in the Freedom of Information Act and aspects of how changes to this legislation may impact upon the Freedom of Information Act.

The Board of Professional Engineers of Queensland administers the Queensland Professional Engineers Act 2002. The act provides for the registration of professional engineers to practise in Queensland. As stated on the Queensland government Board of Professional Engineers web site, it prohibits persons who are not registered from providing professional engineering services in Queensland. The only exception is for individuals who practise under the supervision of registered professional engineers. It provides a process for persons who are aggrieved by the conduct of a registered professional engineer to lodge a complaint about their conduct. The current legislation that the board administers is the Professional Engineers Act 2002 and the Professional Engineers Regulation 2003.

I now turn to the specific amendments in the Professional Engineers and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008. The amendments to the Professional Engineers Act 2002 are in the main to do with the assessment of qualifications and competency of professional engineers. The amendments will introduce a simplified coregulatory scheme which will enable the Board of Professional Engineers of Queensland to assess whether engineers are fit to practise in their chosen field of endeavour.

The amendments to the Electrical Safety Act 2002 are minor changes so that any references to electrical engineers are uniform with the Professional Engineers Act 2002. Engineering is the application of scientific and mathematical principles to practical ends such as design, manufacture and operation of efficient and economical structures, machines, processes and systems. Engineering is also regarded as the science of production, with the work of professional engineers being predominantly intellectual in nature as they work to produce solutions to real life problems.

Mr Lawlor: Did you swallow a dictionary?

Mr STEVENS: I will speak in small syllables so that the member for Southport can understand these matters—syllables of one. Consequently, engineers and their vocation permeate every aspect of modern industrial economies. Engineers are crucial for an organisation's positive outcomes as they are the critical cog in the wheel to have a cohesive outcome that balances both ideas of engineering and the practical implementation of the designed ideas. Engineers, along with the designers and draftsmen who draw up designs, contribute to nearly every aspect of modern-day life. The growth of various industrial sectors over recent decades has provided the engineering profession with greater visibility in the occupational hierarchy. Hand in hand with a globalisation process and privatisation, engineers have increased their contributonal profile toward restructuring and maintaining the competitiveness of the Australian economy.

The engineering sector is one of the most important sectors in the Queensland economy as the mining boom and the need for infrastructure have become essential priorities, particularly because of years of neglect of necessary infrastructure by this state Labor government. This neglect has recently been highlighted because the state Labor government has for many years ignored the need for infrastructure although having seen the growth and influx of many people moving to Queensland. This mass flood of 1,500 individuals into Queensland per week should have been the catalyst for infrastructure development not just for today but for the last 10 years that the Beattie-Bligh government has been in power. Pressure for engineers to perform in short time frames and the overall skills shortage is the end product of a state Labor government that has not performed as a state Labor government should for those people who elected it.

The consulting engineering industry is a significant contributor to the overall economy of Australia. In 2005-06 the industry generated \$17 billion in revenue, equal to 1.8 per cent of national gross domestic product of \$962 billion. Between 2001 and 2006 the value of exports of the industry's services averaged \$400 million per annum. Approximately 120,000 people are employed in the consulting engineering industry. Employment in the industry has risen by approximately 50 per cent

since 2001. More than two-thirds of employees in the consulting industry are employed in firms with over 300 staff. The number of firms in the industry is 18,000, 97 per cent of which have less than 20 staff.

In my discussions with engineering groups the issue of professional indemnity insurance for engineers was raised, which is not mandatory as per the legislation as the minister would be aware. I suggest to the minister that this is a matter that should be addressed, particularly in the context of securing the safety of investment projects throughout Queensland. To that end, I suggest that this could be something along the lines of percentage based professional indemnity insurance on the jobs that they endure. Obviously big firms doing major constructions could look at, say, one per cent of the cost in terms of their insurance and be insured up to that amount. Perhaps in future legislation and amendments to this act the minister might consider those matters.

I would like to touch briefly on the significant qualifications that are needed for this industry. Australian universities offer studies in engineering leading to professional qualifications in many diverse fields such as manufacturing, chemical, automotive, mining, mechanical, industrial, construction, transport, electrical, environment, computer and materials. With the skills shortage in Queensland and across Australia, we have to make sure that there is no pressure to push these students through at a higher rate to the detriment of the university and thereby dumbing down what they are teaching the students in these engineering courses just to make the learning process a profit-making entity in the university world in which we live today. University training is important for the industry but we must also harness and retain the invaluable industry participants who have an organisation's corporate experience and knowledge, as it is important to make sure it is handed down to entry level workers. In the past, corporate knowledge in organisations has not been retained because there was a stage when organisations thought that younger was better so as to mould them into what the company wanted. But with the skills shortage and the realisation of companies that corporate knowledge is needed to be retained for a business to move forward for development, this direction has now been changed.

I now turn to the specific clauses of the Professional Engineers and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Part 1 and part 2 of the bill will commence on assent. Clause 4, amending section 23 of the Professional Engineers Act, titled 'Applying for restoration', inserts reference to the application fee prescribed under a regulation and the annual registration fee to be charged for processing applications for restoration. Clause 5 inserts new section 35A in relation to qualifications to practise as a registered professional engineer and addresses the person's fitness to practise in that role. It also inserts new section 35B, which allows for a report of a relevant personal's criminal history to be provided if the Commissioner of Police is asked to do so by the board.

Clause 6 deals with the deregistering of an engineer before disciplinary action can be taken. Clause 8 changes reference to the Queensland Division of the Institution of Engineers Australia. Other clauses will be discussed during the consideration in detail stage. Clause 10 provides support for the board and, on the consent of the board, engages other Public Service employees to provide services for the board.

Sitting suspended from 6.30 pm to 7.30 pm

Mr STEVENS: Clause 11 prescribes that the board will reimburse the public sector unit that provides the services to the board. Clause 12 looks at the insertion of part 6A in the Professional Engineers Act 2002 and refers to assessment entities and schemes in sections 112A to 112B.

I would like to bring a matter to the minister's attention in terms of the clauses. On clause 16, titled 'Amendment of section 132 (Orders relating to former registered professional engineer)', I note that in clause 16(2)(b)(iii) it states in the changes 'make an order disqualifying, indefinitely or for a stated period, the person from obtaining registration as a registered professional engineer'. In terms of orders relating to a former registered professional engineer, it would be very difficult to disqualify someone who is not currently registered. They should be prohibited, perhaps, from—

Mr Schwarten: From applying.

Mr STEVENS: From applying. Could the minister note that in terms of changes when the matter is debated? I would also like to bring to the minister's attention the matter of refusal of an application, which is proposed section 112M on page 18. If a minister proposes to refuse to grant an application, a person may appeal and that appeal is to the minister. What we have is the minister acting as judge and jury. I understand that the matter has to go somewhere, but if the minister has refused it then the guy has to come back to the minister again. The chances are, I think, that the minister is going to refuse it again. I do not think the minister would make a mistake, with respect. Could the minister address those issues in terms of the mechanics of the bill?

In division 2, section 112B refers to the suitability of assessment schemes for approval. The scheme adequately provides for the assessment of qualifications and competencies of engineers. The scheme is in line with national and international standards. The assessment is conducted in an independent and professional manner. The scheme has adequate monitoring procedures. The fees are reasonable. The scheme includes adequate continuing professional development requirements. The

entity conducting the scheme employs competent persons to perform assessments. The entity has the financial capacity to conduct assessments. The assessments are conducted in a timely manner. I could go through a lot of this, but I think I am going over material that the minister is very well aware of.

In relation to the Electrical Safety Act 2002, clauses 64 and 65 incorporate the definition of 'electrical engineer', which is a person registered under the Professional Engineers Act. However, I think the crux of the problem with this legislation is clauses 66 to 69 of the bill which make amendments to the Public Records Act. I am very happy to go forward and support the minister greatly in relation to the amendments to the Professional Engineers Act. The section is of concern to the opposition as we are highly suspicious—and that is a naughty thing for an opposition to be—of legislative amendments that will further erode the capacity of the Freedom of Information Act to provide open and accountable government in Queensland, which the minister would be as well, I am sure.

The big problem for me in my briefings with the minister's officers and in general is that the ramifications of these changes are still clouded in terms of the Freedom of Information Act. The amendments to the Public Records Act 2002 refer to the record of documents by parliamentary secretaries. Ostensibly these will be treated in the same manner as ministerial records to be on the public record. There has been considerable media attention on this amendment in the bill to the Public Records Act. This change to the Public Records Act, as I have stated previously, is to do with documentary records of parliamentary secretaries. Through these amendments, parliamentary secretary records are proposed to be treated in the same manner as ministerial records so as to be on the public record. Currently, parliamentary secretaries are not recognised under the Public Records Act 2002, and not everything that a parliamentary secretary handles would be classed as a cabinet matter.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I rise to a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I take the point that the honourable member makes. I know him to be a very sincere person, and I know he is concerned about the level of intrusion that may occur into the FOI Act. I have before me crown law advice which states that the proposed amendments to the Public Records Act do not detrimentally affect access to documents under the FOI Act. My point is that the honourable member said that he is concerned about this matter and that I am concerned about it. So my point is that I ask that that be tabled. It is an unusual step in this parliament to table advice from crown law. I ask that it be tabled because it will answer the serious questions that the honourable member has about the briefing that he has raised.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Darling): Order! It is not a point of order, Minister. I will seek advice on whether you should be tabling it now or in the consideration in detail stage. Would you like to seek leave to table the document?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I seek leave of the House to table that document which reinforces the briefing that the member had from a crown law perspective.

Leave granted.

Tabled paper: Copy of a letter, dated 7 April 2008, from Glen Cranwell, Principal Lawyer for Crown Law to Mr Brad Lutteral, Legal Officer, Department of Public Works, in relation to the Public Records Act 2002 (Amendment)—Impact on FOI Act (Advice).

Mr STEVENS: I thank the minister for the provision of that crown law advice. Unfortunately, I have not had the opportunity at this particular point in time to read the crown law advice. I think that is excellent and I do appreciate crown law's advice on the matter. That will assist greatly in the confidence that people have in the matter, but I still have to run through the information that I have gleaned in terms of my studies into the changes to this legislation. Whilst I am not crown law and I respect crown law, there are issues that I would like to bring to the attention of the House. Hopefully when I see that crown law advice it will address the matters that I bring before the House. So I will continue.

Currently parliamentary secretaries are not recognised under the Public Records Act 2002. Not everything that a parliamentary secretary handles would be classed as a cabinet matter and, therefore, could not be wheeled into cabinet to provide an exemption under the FOI Act. I am no expert on FOI; I am just going forward with the advice that I have been given by legal people who do profess to be experts on the matter. Currently under the FOI Act 1992, material received by or originally by a parliamentary secretary is exempt only when it is submitted to cabinet, is proposed to be submitted to cabinet, or is prepared for a briefing of a minister in relation to a matter submitted to cabinet, or is proposed to be submitted to cabinet.

The amendment to the Public Records Act refers to documents created and received by a parliamentary secretary in the course of carrying out their duties as a parliamentary secretary, including documents created or received in the course of carrying out a minister's portfolio responsibilities, as being public records. Documents created or received by a parliamentary secretary which relate to his or her personal or party political activities or his or her capacity as a member of the Legislative Assembly are not public records.

Minister Swarten is saying that personal and party political records held by the parliamentary secretary will not be regarded as a record of that secretary under the legislation. This is achieved in subparagraph (a) of the proposed definition to be inserted into schedule 2. However, subparagraph (b)

of the definition appears to be casting the net wider by excluding all records held by the secretary in his or her capacity as a member of the Legislative Assembly separate from his or her role as a parliamentary secretary.

Schedule 2 is to be amended by adding a definition of 'record of parliamentary secretary' which is proposed to be defined as meaning a record created or received by a parliamentary secretary in the course of carrying out the parliamentary secretary's official duties but does not include a record related to the parliamentary secretary's personal or party political activities or a record the parliamentary secretary holds in the parliamentary secretary's capacity as a member of the Legislative Assembly. This wording appears to be going beyond excluding records of a personal and party political nature to also exclude all records held by the secretary in his or her capacity as a member of the Legislative Assembly.

This could be a reasonable thing to do but since subparagraph (b) appears to be drawing a distinction between the MP's role as an MP and his or her role as a parliamentary secretary—and I am deep into FOI territory here when I should be dealing with public records, but it has a flow-on effect, unfortunately—and since parliamentary secretaries can only be appointed from members elected to the Legislative Assembly under section 24 of the Queensland Constitution, this definition may provide the government with the scope to claim that particular records are not public records because they were held as part of the MP's capacity of being an MP and not a parliamentary secretary.

The amending act also provides in clause 69(3) for parliamentary secretaries to be included within the definition of 'public authority', with that term then being central to the definition of the term 'public record'. The proposed amendment leaves section 6, relating to what is a public record, reading—

(1) A **public record** is any of the following records made before or after the commencement of this Act—

- (a) a record made for use by, or a purpose of, a public authority, other than a Minister;
- (b) a record received or kept by a public authority, other than a Minister, in the exercise of its statutory, administrative or other public responsibilities or for a related purpose;
- (c) a Ministerial record;
- (d) a record of a Parliamentary Secretary.

With the new amendment, section 6 will contain four categories of public record. Paragraphs (a) and (b) exclude ministers and secretaries while paragraphs (c) and (d) include records held by them. In relation to (c) and (d) there is a definition in the act as it now stands covering 'ministerial record', and this amendment provides for a similar one under the heading of 'record of parliamentary secretary'.

As ministers are defined under the act as being 'public authorities', doing the same for parliamentary secretaries is consistent with having two separate definitions even though those definitions are almost identical. Ministers are charged with portfolio responsibilities whereas parliamentary secretaries carry out official duties. With ministers being defined as 'public authority' for the purposes of the act, the same for parliamentary secretaries would be appropriate, which would include all their material as being accessible under the FOI legislation.

I question the reason the amendment to the Public Records Act was placed within the Professional Engineers and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The good officers of the minister's department tell me it has been an ongoing process in terms of the introduction of parliamentary secretaries, which we as the conservative parties appropriately introduced. They have been grossly expanded by the current government. We have gone from three to 11 parliamentary secretaries. We still question why the government needed to bring this matter through under the Professional Engineers and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. It would have been more appropriate to be part of the current FOI review that is being conducted by Dr David Solomon and that the Premier has supported as being in the interests of more accountability for the Queensland government and for the Queensland people into parliamentary processes. This would have alleviated the public perception of something being rotten in Denmark when it may well not be rotten in Denmark.

I now turn to industry consultation and response. Associations and industry groups were approached on this bill and, unfortunately, we received a favourable response on these matters from the Association of Consulting Engineers only. The Association of Consulting Engineers' response was that the ACEA had participated in the process of formulation of the amendments currently being debated. There is broad industry support for the bill in that it should enable the Professional Engineers Act 2002 to work as it was originally intended. Queensland could be said to be providing leadership in setting the scene ultimately for a consistent national registration system. However, the professional engineers obviously made no submission in relation to the amendments to the Public Records Act 2002 and one can only make dire conclusions as to the necessity to include an FOI matter in legislation dealing with professional engineers.

There are a couple of other reservations that I would like to add to the discussion in relation to the bill. Firstly, under the bill there is no provision for a merits based review of a negative decision of the minister in relation to the approval of an assessment scheme. This is a matter brought forward by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee as documented and presented to the parliament. There is no removal of the right to seek a judicial review of decision.

My concern is that a judiciary review would be a financial drain on the organisation involved. One of the things the minister is trying to do is assist the professional engineer organisations in providing assessments to these bodies. Any financial drain on the organisations would be seen to be of detriment to the legislation. My concern is that a judicial review would be a financial drain on the organisation wanting approval and moving through the process to eventually implement their scheme.

The Board of Engineers of Queensland has seven members as prescribed in the legislation. I ask the minister: does this process ensure that will keep them at arm's length and independent enough from government—that is, that the minister will have final say on all these matters—and make sure that any decisions are independent of government for the industry to develop? We believe that the national and international standards for professional engineers should be adhered to when developing a simplified coregulatory scheme for assessment of the competency of engineers.

The increase from 40 to 200 penalty units for a person who is not a professional engineer at the time of a tribunal decision as part of disciplinary action in clause 16 is a major increase although, as the explanatory notes express, it is consistent with maximum penalties in discipline cases provided for by the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal Act 2003 and consistent with similar regulated professions both interstate and overseas.

In summing up, I would like to again state that the professional engineers component of this bill will be agreed to by the coalition. However, we are adamant that any changes to the Public Records Act should not proceed until the full ramifications of the independent review, which the Premier has promised to the people, to the media—to all of Queensland—of the Freedom of Information Act to be undertaken by Dr David Solomon are known.

We appreciate the minister's efforts. We certainly understand that we are going forward in these matters in relation to professional engineers. However, we feel that the amendments to the Public Records Act could be addressed at a better time.

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (7.50 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Professional Engineers and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008. This bill introduces a simplified coregulatory scheme which allows the Board of Professional Engineers of Queensland to continue assessing engineers and their fitness to practise. It will also allow the board to continue to register engineers and it will allow it to carry out its disciplinary processes in a professional manner. It should be noted that the board will have powers to request a registered professional engineer to undergo health assessments if it is the board's belief that the engineer may be physically or mentally impaired. That is a very important provision as people in the community rely on engineers, particularly civil engineers.

In my electorate road engineers ensure the community's safety. The people in the electorate of Bundamba have a great respect for the engineers who are currently working in their community. Never before have so many engineers worked in the local area—Main Roads engineers such as Mango Murphy, Patrick Dennehy, Paul Mengene, Eddie Peters, Paul Peters, Julie Mitchell, Jenny McMillan and Ross Blinco to name but a few. The engineers report to me that their work in building roads is challenging and more complex given the size of the projects and also the expectations of the community. However, they get on with the job. Their sleeves are rolled up on a daily basis and they liaise with businesses, contractors and particularly the residents on a daily basis. I admire these Main Roads engineers greatly and I would like to pay tribute to their professionalism as professional engineers building the roads of the future in the Bundamba electorate. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHOI (Capalaba—ALP) (7.51 pm): It is indeed a pleasure for me to rise to speak in support of the Professional Engineers and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. As far as I know—and I stand to be corrected—I am the only engineer in the parliament at the moment. I think it is prudent that I take the opportunity to remind the honourable members of this House of the significant contribution by engineers past or present, male or female, to the wellbeing of this state and the economy of our nation as a whole. It has been pretty well agreed that the words 'ingenuity' and 'engineering' are linked to the same Latin word root and that the verb 'to engineer' means to be ingenious. So the kinds of things that engineers have done have been generally ingenious.

If we just take a casual scan of our workplace or at home it would be pretty obvious that a lot of the things that we take for granted are products or outcomes directly contributed to by engineers. Motor vehicles allow us to travel far and wide, aeroplanes allow us to see the world with our own eyes, electricity turns darkness into light. Water treatment delivers safe drinking water. Electronics, computers, telephone, the internet, just to name a few, help us communicate with others faster and cheaper. Even medical breakthroughs are usually not possible without the contribution of biomedical engineers.

Queensland has also received its fair share of contributions by early engineers. The Queensland State Archives contains a handwritten report by the first Institution of Electrical Engineers representative, Alexander Matveieff, in copperplate style, following an investigation of the wiring of Queensland's Parliament House for electricity in 1886. Unfortunately, Mr Matveieff found much to criticise and the government electrician was eventually dismissed and new electricians were appointed. As we debate this bill today, I think it is fitting that we are able to do so in the full knowledge that this

building is safe because of engineers, that we can telecast the passage of this bill to the world because of engineers and that we can do so in the comfort of air conditioning as well as with adequate lighting because of engineers.

The prime focus of this bill is to seek to further complement the coregulatory model for the registration of engineers. The coregulatory model involves joint administration by the professional engineering bodies and a statutory governing body. The main objects of the Professional Engineers Act 2002 are to protect the public by ensuring that professional engineering services are provided by registered persons in a professional and competent way, to maintain public confidence in the standard of professional engineering services and to uphold the standards of practice of registered professional engineers. In order to achieve those objects, the act provides for the registration of individuals as registered professional engineers and for the monitoring and enforcement of compliance with the act. The act also imposes obligations on people practising as engineers and establishes the Board of Professional Engineers of Queensland to oversee those processes.

The new registration scheme and the other associated amendments that are introduced by this bill seek to enhance the high standards of professional engineering services that currently exist in this state. The bill does this by improving the provisions of the act that relate to disciplinary action, health assessments and criminal history reports. The bill also introduces a new registration scheme that operates on a coregulatory basis and which allows the board to do what it does best: assess fitness to practise requirements, register professional engineers and carry out disciplinary processes. At the same time the scheme will utilise the experience and existing processes of various professional engineering bodies to assist them in carrying out the assessment of qualifications and experience of engineers seeking registration. In order for professional engineering bodies to become approved as an assessment entity, they must satisfy the minister, on the advice of the board, on a range of matters, including that the scheme adequately provides for the assessment of the qualification and experience of engineers.

The bill also proposes to strengthen the disciplinary actions of the Professional Engineers Act by increasing the penalties that the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal may order and by providing the tribunal with further options when making orders against professional engineers once the tribunal has decided that a disciplinary ground is established. Under the act, the maximum penalty is \$3,000. The proposed amendment will increase the maximum penalty to \$15,000, which will align the provisions of the Professional Engineers Act with those that can be applied to professional engineers and other occupations under the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal Act 2003. This increase in penalty will assist to deter unprofessional conduct by registered professional engineers which, in turn, will better protect members of the public who use their services.

Engineers are involved in every part of our lives. Misconduct by engineers has severe consequences and at times has caused the loss of life. It has been said that doctors bury their mistakes. Not so for engineers. When an engineer makes a mistake, unless the mistake is detected early, that failure can be catastrophic and, as a consequence, could cause a massive loss of life. That is why this bill is important, as it strengthens the Professional Engineers Act. Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Paul Hummel and Don Muir of Engineers Australia and the Board of Professional Engineers respectively for their advice on this legislation. I also commend their work and contribution to the engineering fraternity. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr WENDT (Ipswich West—ALP) (7.58 pm): I am pleased to address the amendments to the Professional Engineers Act 2002 that are made by the Professional Engineers and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008. This bill introduces new options for the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal to make orders if a disciplinary ground is made out against a professional engineer. However, it is important to note that the amendments would also introduce two further options for the tribunal to impose a condition on the professional engineer's registration including, for example, to submit to an audit of the professional engineer's practice or to suspend the registered professional engineer's registration for a stated period.

It should be noted that the Board of Professional Engineers of Queensland has been active in pursuing disciplinary processes under the act. It has also prosecuted unregistered persons providing engineering services. Currently, Queensland is the only state in Australia that comprehensively registers engineers, thereby ensuring the best possible protection for the general public who use such services. However, in order to further enhance the public protection provisions already in the act, this bill will require registered engineers who, by reason of any physical or mental incapacity, are unable to practise for a certain period to notify the Board of Professional Engineers of Queensland. Once the board receives that notification, the proposed amendments will allow the board to suspend registration during any period of incapacity.

Honourable members might ask: by extension, is it possible that a circumstance will arise where a registered professional engineer may not be aware of their physical or mental incapacity and, in such circumstances, may not advise the board of their incapacity? To avoid the situation where this might

occur, the bill will introduce an amendment which entitles the board to direct a registered professional engineer to attend a health assessment if the board suspects that the engineer is suffering from a physical or mental condition which affects their ability to practise.

In addition, the act currently allows the board to take into account whether an applicant for registration as a professional engineer has a conviction for an indictable offence and then decide whether that applicant is fit to practise. However, under current guidelines, if the board wishes to inquire into the criminal history of an applicant, it would be required to write to the Commissioner of Police requesting such information and then the provision of the information would only be at the direction of the Commissioner of Police. With this in mind, the bill before the House today will introduce a provision which allows the board, if it considers it appropriate, to ask the Commissioner of Police for a criminal history report relating to any applicant. This will allow the board to then ascertain, with the assistance of the police report, which convictions may be relevant to the application being considered. However, it is important to remember that any report provided by the Commissioner of Police may only be used for the purpose of the act and must be destroyed as soon as practicable after it is no longer required. Everyone would understand that such requests to the Commissioner of Police for criminal history checks would be rare and likely to amount to no more than one or two per year.

Finally, it should also be pointed out that the amendment is also consistent with the provisions in the recently passed Legal Profession Act 2007. I am confident that these provisions will further enhance the public protection objectives of the act. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JONES (Ashgrove—ALP) (8.01 pm): I will only make a short contribution—and I am sure honourable members would be pleased to hear that, as would Boyd and Brad who are sitting there in the advisers box—to the amendments made by the Professional Engineers and Other Legislation Amendment Bill to the Public Records Act 2002. The proposed amendments to the act confirm that records created and held by parliamentary secretaries have official status as public records under the Public Records Act. I strongly support these amendments because they make it explicit that parliamentary secretaries are subject to the same obligations as ministers in their handling and storage of documents. Far from the concerns and fears raised by the shadow minister, this bill will actually ensure that public records are protected from inappropriate destruction and clarify beyond doubt the responsibilities of parliamentary secretaries in managing their records. The proposed amendments will clarify an area of public records that has remained unclear for some time and will provide certainty for parliamentary secretaries, their staff and the state archivists in their handling of such documents.

Referring to the comments made by the member for Robina, I also bring to his attention the comments made by the Premier in this parliament on 27 February 2008. It was incorrectly reported that the proposed amendments impacted on the availability of documents under freedom of information laws. However, in her speech, the Premier clearly states that the amendments being made to this act do not in any way affect the availability of documents generated by parliamentary secretaries under the FOI Act.

The Department of Public Works has obtained crown law advice, as I am sure the minister will advise the House tonight, which includes that the amendments to the Public Records Act contained in this bill do not in any way detrimentally affect access to documents under the FOI Act. The advice of crown law is that it could be said that the amending bill actually enhances access to documents under the FOI Act, which I am sure the shadow minister and all members of parliament would think is a great thing and a move in the right direction.

The amendments introduced by this bill to the Public Records Act make it absolutely clear that parliamentary secretaries are subject to the same requirements as ministers in the handling and storage of their documents. All existing arrangements in relation to the release of any documents held or generated by parliamentary secretaries under the FOI Act will continue without change with the introduction of this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology) (8.04 pm), in reply: I thank everybody for their contribution tonight, particularly the members on this side of the House who have raised issues. I want to touch on one raised by the member for Ipswich West. It may seem like quite a light matter to have an engineer brought before a medical professional on the basis that they are not in a position to basically know what they are doing. I noticed a couple of wry smiles around the parliament. That is a very serious issue. There has been some experience in another profession where people were not mentally competent and were not aware that they were not mentally competent to do the job. Honourable members have to remember that architects and engineers, two of the groups for which I have responsibility, are people who have an enormous responsibility on their shoulders. I know there has been some concern about this, but I do not have any problem with having people referred to medical professionals to judge whether or not they are competent to carry out their roles.

In terms of a couple of the issues raised by the shadow minister, professional indemnity insurance is something that is near and dear to my heart. I believe that it is something that professionals ought to have. I also would make the point that professional indemnity insurance was something we insisted on

back in Minister Spence's day in the area of building certifiers only to find that they could not obtain that insurance. I will take this back to the board. It is something that I have discussed before. Architects have it by virtue of their position. It is something that the board needs to revisit. I am, however, concerned that we would not want to revisit a situation where they could not get professional indemnity insurance or they would be held responsible because of that. I take it as a positive and meaningful suggestion that the member has made and I appreciate his input on that.

With regard to the applications that are independently assessed by the board—the Caesar judging Caesar type of situation to which the member refers—the bottom line is that it has to stop somewhere. People can keep appealing these things, but at the end of the day the board will provide advice to me on a matter and I will make a decision on that. A person can come back to me and prove to me that that advice is flawed. That is no different from a lot of other decisions that I make in this life and I see it in that sense. If people want to extrapolate it down the pathway, where will this end, how long will it take and how much will it cost to get a decision that most likely would be changed, I can assure members that the checks and balances that are required by any person who occupies my position these days would be such that a decision would not be taken lightly in that area. It is a reasonable concern to have. It is a reasonable point to make, as indeed was the other point about prohibited persons.

We in this parliament are subject to the advice of Parliamentary Counsel. No matter what the term 'prohibited' or 'disqualified' might mean to us as laypeople, it has legal meaning. I would not want to see us go down a path of saying to people that they can apply to be an engineer when they do not have the qualification to apply in the first place. If honourable members recall, we went through that with the blue card where people could appeal against a decision to have their blue card disqualified when in fact they could not hold a blue card per se because of a criminal conviction. I take the point. I am advised by those in the know that it meets that end.

I neglected to mention at the outset that the member for Gladstone wanted to make a contribution here tonight but owing to a personal and family matter she is unable to do so. She has advised me that she does support the bill and in her normal fashion would have done so quite articulately but unfortunately is prevented from doing so here tonight.

Let us now deal with the real nub of the issue tonight, and that is the FOI issue. I know the honourable member to be a reasonable person and I accept the politics of this issue. I accept that we are all politicians and politicians will always be tempted to score a political point. The Leader of the Opposition, who is not here tonight, was the one who kicked the ball off on this. The conspiracy theory that he had about this is just so off beam that it is not even on the planet. It is no wonder that they call him 'Loopy Lawrence' out there. This really beggars belief. Why was it included in the first place? I did not get up one morning, stretch and say, 'Why don't we have some reference to FOI for the parliamentary secretaries?' Anybody who knows me knows that I do not act like that. Anybody who knows this government knows that we do not do things accidentally like that. The notion that we are burying some capacity to prevent documents going out of government by slipping something into the Professional Engineers Act is just beyond belief. That is what the Leader of the Opposition contended at the time. That is a contention that was unfortunately repeated in the media despite all the evidence pointing the other way.

I have tabled the crown law advice in this matter—which is not a very regular practice in this parliament for a very good reason—to put to an end any speculation whatsoever that somehow some underhanded deal has been done. I do not seek to create a precedent by this. Suffice it to say that the reason that crown law advice is not tabled in this parliament is that it can be used in litigation matters. I am sure there is no litigation as a result of what we are doing here tonight. It is merely to provide evidence to back what we have stated: that this is not the shabby, underhanded deal that has been alluded to by the Leader of the Opposition. It is not about trying to take away the rights of FOI. Indeed it could be contended, not by my words but by independent people in the Crown Solicitor's office, to suggest that it actually enhances the accountability of government, and how could anybody ever draw any other conclusion!

To back that up we also checked with the State Archivist, because I am the minister in charge of the Public Records Act and as such the State Archives. The archivist has advised that in fact this strengthens the public policy around the keeping of records; it does not do anything to diminish them whatsoever. Indeed, if anybody was ever in any doubt, David Solomon, the chair of the Freedom of Information Review Panel, has advised the Leader of the Opposition—

I note that the bill to which you refer does not seek to amend the Freedom of Information Act 1992, nor, having examined the part of the bill that amends the Public Records Act, would it appear to have any impact on FOI.

They are three sources that are independent of government. It is not the Premier saying it; it is not me saying it, although I have said all of those things. I challenge anybody in this House to take this bill to any legal person with any legal nous whatsoever and ask them to give a statement of support to what the Leader of the Opposition said. I know of no person in this state with any credibility who would give testament to that. It is nonsense. It is a red herring. It is, in my view, a shameful abuse of the privilege that this parliament expends to people in the esteemed position of the Leader of the Opposition. The

fact that it was swallowed hook, line and sinker by some sections of the media tells me that the whole debate is not about what is factual but rather what might grab a headline. With those words of endorsement for the bill, I commend the bill to the House.

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 69, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology) (8.15 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a third time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Long Title

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology) (8.15 pm): I move—

That the long title of the bill be agreed to.

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

Motion agreed to.

MAJOR SPORTS FACILITIES AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 11 March (see p. 704), on motion of Mr Schwarten—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (8.15 pm): It is my pleasure to rise to speak to the Major Sports Facilities Amendment Bill 2008. We are continuing this debate from our last sitting of the parliament. The main objectives of the bill are to amend the act of 2001 to change the name of the Major Sports Facilities Authority to Stadiums Queensland and to make explicit the authority's role in developing major sports facilities. In my first term in the parliament we debated an amendment bill to this act after a review. That was in October 2004. I am certainly happy to see the title of Stadiums Queensland coming in to give some nomenclature to the stadia that people can easily relate to. There were six facilities covered in the legislation in 2004. Since then we have added Skilled Park at Robina and the State Tennis Centre at Tennyson which is due for completion in the near future. Wherever they go in the world people love seeing stadiums, whether they are full or empty. It is certainly nice to see them full, but people are fascinated with stadia. It is interesting to note that in the minister's second reading speech she said that the big events help portray Queensland as a premier sporting destination to an audience across Australia and internationally.

That brings me to the crux of what I want to say this evening, and that is that I noted back in 2005 that sport is the livelihood of many players and an injury caused by a spectator interfering with them in the course of the game could open up a Pandora's box of litigation. While such action may not end up at the feet of the state because stadiums are under a public authority, such actions could certainly hurt the sport and willingness of sportsmen and sportswomen to play in Queensland. I said on that day, 8 March 2005, that I would encourage the authority to exercise the maximum penalty where possible and make it to be seen that it is doing so. This may prevent further behaviour of this nature. In 2004 the objective of the increases in the fines for people invading was to deter invasions on to the ground, protect participants' and spectators' safety and ensure that Queensland is able to attract major events. That is very important, bearing in mind what the minister had to say about keeping Queensland as a premier sporting destination.

The reason I bring these matters to the House's attention is that we have had a number of incidents recently that have been pretty well covered in the media. On 4 March I was at the Gabba. The honourable minister was there as well. There were two incidents that evening where streakers came on

to the Gabba ground. Robert Ogilvie was subsequently fined \$1,500. This was after he had been shoulder charged by Andrew Symonds. Subsequently a second streaker was fined \$3,000 and had a conviction recorded against him. Australian umpire Simon Taufel commented that when the second streaker came running onto the field he was concerned that from the position that he was standing in the streaker was running straight for a player. It is very important to note that that could cause serious injury. There are many people who think this is just a bit of fun, but I think that it could have serious repercussions as has been noted by other people whom I will refer to shortly.

I note that outside court Sean Currie, the second streaker who was fined \$3,000, said—

It was pretty good, actually. It was like, 30,000 people stand up and roar when I jumped the fence.

How many people can say they've streaked at a cricket final? Not many.

My point is that he was fined as much as possible under the legislation, which is \$3,000. The fine is \$6,000 if you interfere with a player. Of course, the moot point is whether Robert Ogilvie, the fellow who was shoulder charged by Andrew Symonds, could have been given that fine. I suppose the debate would have been who handled whom, as Andrew Symonds got Robert Ogilvie with the shoulder charge. As I recall, he was pretty proud of having been shoulder charged by Andrew Symonds. My point is whether there is a deterrent effect in the penalties in the current legislation.

I note another incident occurred at the first game of the Gold Coast Titans at Skilled Park. That facility will be covered by Stadiums Queensland and we definitely consider it to be a premier sporting destination, to use the minister's words. Dwayne Joshua Norman was fined \$900 for running 50 metres up the field where he did a sidestep and scored in the corner during the Titans first home game at Skilled Park. It cost him \$900. According to the *Courier-Mail* Magistrate Catherine Pirie said—

Your explanation is that this was a bit of fun that's been taken too far.

She is later quoted as saying—

I accept some deterrence should be built into the fine to prevent this type of behaviour.

Even the magistrate acknowledged that there should be some sort of deterrent for other people. I certainly think that is the case. The *Courier-Mail* also stated—

In imposing the \$900 fine, Ms Pirie said she hoped the warning had served as a deterrent to other spectators.

I note that the *Courier-Mail* has commented on this issue and the minister has said that the government will look at changing legislation if stadium hirers ask for a ban. I note that the same *Courier-Mail* article states that one of the hirers of the Gabba, Queensland Cricket, has confirmed that it will approach Stadiums Queensland, and therefore the minister, to pursue total bans as part of Cricket Australia's overall review of behaviour issues. The *Courier-Mail* quoted Graham Dixon as saying that pitch invasions could result in the International Cricket Council putting a black mark against the Gabba as a venue. That would create a real problem for Queensland's premier sporting destinations, so I am pleased to see that the minister is taking that into consideration.

The Brisbane Lions is the Gabba's other major tenant. The *Courier-Mail* quotes Lions CEO Mike Bowers as saying—

We're concerned about player safety and, certainly, major deterrents are not being put forward by the courts so we thank the Government for the ability to have some input.

It is fairly clear that the minister has acknowledged that the government would look at changing legislation, and I would encourage her to do so. In doing so she may be able to look at some of the legislation in other places. In New South Wales I see that the—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I have given you substantial time. However, I ask you to come back to the bill. This is about changing the name of the facility that runs the stadiums. I have given you some latitude. Please come back to the bill.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am referring to a direct quote from the minister's second reading speech, which is that Queensland is portrayed as a premier sporting destination. This goes to the heart of that. I note the contributions of the members for Chatsworth and Charters Towers in the last sitting of parliament, during which considerable latitude was given. I am coming to the end of my remarks, Mr Deputy Speaker, but I thank you for your guidance.

I note that in New South Wales there is the potential of a life ban. The crux of my comments is that we should possibly consider that. In New South Wales, a person who is removed for unauthorised entry onto a playing field is banned from entering the venue for 12 months and will face a life ban if they enter the venue while the ban is in force or if they have previously been banned from the venue. In Victoria, if a person has been convicted of these offences on two or more occasions over a five-year period a magistrate can order they be banned from entering a managed venue or access area during all or part of an event period.

I certainly agree with the minister that it is important that Queensland is portrayed as a premier sporting destination. The points I have made this evening are salient. I look forward to a response from the government in due course, hopefully before we see something that may reflect poorly on Queensland in terms of its sporting accessibility.

Mrs SMITH (Burleigh—ALP) (8.24 pm): The proposed name change of the Major Sports Facilities Authority to Stadiums Queensland provides a clearer link between the authority and the Queensland government and, I think, is much more identifiable than the current name. The government has a responsibility to ensure the best possible opportunities and benefits are available to the people of Queensland, given the scale of Queensland's investment in its major sports facilities.

The Gold Coast now has its own stadium, Skilled Park, which is home to the Gold Coast Titans. I had the pleasure of attending the Queensland government's people's day at the stadium's official opening in February. There were 20,000 free tickets snapped up for the opening, with many diehard fans also signing up for membership. The adage 'build it and they will come' proved true. With no parking on site, sceptics were saying that chaos would reign. Well, I can tell you they were wrong! The public transport arrangements worked well. For the first Titans game I hopped on the bus at Burleigh Heads and returned the same way. The wait for the return bus was made enjoyable by the enthusiasm of the crowd—a Titans win was being celebrated.

Another sporting facility in my electorate of which I am very proud is the Burleigh Bears Leagues Club, situated at the popular Pizzey Park sporting complex in Miami. Burleigh Bears is a feeder club for players who miss out on being graded for the Titans. Having the Burleigh Bears as a feeder club gives good local players an opportunity to play for their local side in the NRL. Benji Marshall played for Keebra Park High School but had to go to Sydney to play in the professional league. Now the Gold Coast has a Rugby League breeding ground at Palm Beach Currumbin High School and players have a local team to aspire to. This keeps local talent local.

Burleigh Bears has successful teams playing in the state league competition and an A Grade and a Colts under-19 side playing in the Mixwell Cup, which is based in Brisbane. All home games are played at Pizzey Park on Bob Singh Oval, next to the Olympic pool. Like the Olympians housed and trained at the pool, this club boasts a playing and coaching staff that have been synonymous with Rugby League in Queensland. Some of the past players now have sons playing and some have been fortunate to see their sons play with NRL clubs and watch the tradition live on.

The Major Sports Facilities Amendment Bill will mean that important facilities such as Skilled Park will not be underestimated in the community. Skilled Park not only provides a home ground for our Gold Coast Titans, whom I have no doubt will win this year's premiership, but also has far-reaching benefits for our community. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr WEIGHTMAN (Cleveland—ALP) (8.27 pm): I rise to support this legislation, which proposes to change the name of the Major Sports Facilities Authority to Stadiums Queensland. The name change better reflects the link between the stadiums and the Queensland government, but it does not change the onus on the government to fundamentally manage, operate, use and promote the stadiums.

Currently seven stadiums come under the auspices of this authority, with an eighth to be constructed—that is, the State Tennis Centre at Tennyson. The stadiums include such Queensland icons as Suncorp Stadium, previously known as Lang Park; the Brisbane Cricket Ground, which is known locally as the Gabba; the Queensland Sport and Athletics Centre, which was known as ANZ Stadium or QEII; the Sleeman Complex, which was the site of the 1982 Commonwealth Games; the Brisbane Entertainment Centre, which is the premier entertainment centre of Queensland; Dairy Farmers Stadium in Townsville, which is the home ground of the North Queensland Cowboys; and the latest addition of Skilled Park at Robina, which is the home ground of our newest NRL team, the Gold Coast Titans.

A lot has been said by previous speakers over the last couple of sittings about the history of the stadiums and it has all been very entertaining. I would just like to say that Queensland management of these stadiums has been exemplary over the past number of years. The stadiums themselves, as I said, are steeped in a lot of history. Like the member for Charters Towers, I have some fond memories of Lang Park in my playing days. In 1979 I played in the reserve grade grand final against Easts. It was the same year that the Wayne Bennett coached Souths fell to the Ross Strudwick coached Valleys team. Because we won that grand final I do not have very much of a recollection of the A grade game apart from what I read in the paper. But 1979 was a significant year. It was my first year as a police probationary officer. Whilst I was quite lucky to have a win on the day, Souths was coached by Wayne Bennett, who was our PE instructor, and one of my classmates was Mal Meninga, who was playing for Souths that day. Monday morning at the academy was not a great place to be because both Wayne and Mal were not particularly happy with their loss, but I can tell you that I was full of celebration for our win.

I have been to the Brisbane Cricket Ground many, many times. I have watched the place grow from when it had the dog track around the outside and the young kids used to sit on the dog track—it was quite a common sight for kids to be running on to the field to congratulate batsman who had scored centuries—to what it is now. It is a magnificent stadium, which plays host still to the cricket team the Bulls, to major cricket events as well to the Brisbane Lions. It is quite interesting that the first cricket match to be played at the Gabba was a game between the parliament and the press on 19 December 1896. The result was a tie—61 runs each. Maybe we should bring back those cricket matches. I doubt whether there would be a tie at this stage but it definitely would be an interesting proposition.

I know a lot has been said by previous speakers about the different stadiums. In essence, this legislation is good legislation in terms of creating a closer tie and a more recognisable tie between the \$1 billion of assets and the Queensland government. As I said, it does not change the purpose of the previous legislation—that is, in the use, management and promotion of the facilities. I commend the bill to the House.

Hon. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Sport) (8.33 pm), in reply: I thank all of those members who have contributed to this debate. Since the Major Sports Facilities Authority was established in 2001, the number of major venues under its control has grown to seven with an eighth, the State Tennis Centre, under development. When established in 2001, the authority owned the Gabba. In June 2002, the Queensland Sport and Athletics Centre, formerly QEII, the Sleeman Sports Complex and the Brisbane Entertainment Centre were transferred from the Brisbane City Council. In 2003, the authority acquired Suncorp Stadium. In 2004, it acquired the Dairy Farmers Stadium in Townsville. This year the authority has opened the new Skilled Park at Robina and by December the development of the new State Tennis Centre at Tennyson will be completed. This expansion has occurred through direct state investment in new venues, the upgrading of existing venues and the transfer of major venues of whole-of-state significance.

The newly built Skilled Park I think is a jewel in the crown as far as Gold Coast people are concerned. It is a wonderful new, 27,000-seat, rectangular sports stadium, which is home to the Gold Coast Titans and potentially other sporting teams in the future, and of course it is a wonderful entertainment venue. Many have commented that it is the best regional stadium in Australia.

This year as well, the State Tennis Centre will be a state-of-the-art facility, hosting the Brisbane International—a major new men's and women's lead-in event for the Australian Open. It will also cater for state and national player development programs, Tennis Queensland tournaments and community use seven days per week.

The Major Sports Facilities Authority will tonight after the passing of this bill—and I am pleased to see that people do support the name change—be renamed Stadiums Queensland. It oversees assets currently valued at more than \$1 billion. The Queensland government's investment in these facilities has enabled Queensland to compete for major national and international events including the Rugby Union international, the 2003 Rugby World Cup, the 2008 Rugby League World Cup, test cricket and one-day internationals at the Gabba, the national swimming championships at QSAC and three concerts at Suncorp Stadium this year. It is worth noting that four of these venues are currently being considered by the Football Federation Australia as potential match or training sites if the FAA proceeds with a bid for Australia to host the 2018 football world cup.

I would like to respond to some of the specific matters raised by the shadow minister, the member for Toowoomba South. Firstly, the honourable member sought clarification on the debt structure associated with the authority's venues. There are four venues—Suncorp, the Gabba, Skilled Park and the Tennyson State Tennis Centre—which carry loan obligations associated with their development. These loans are principally serviced through the Community Investment Fund and in the case of Suncorp Stadium and the Gabba through venue operating revenue.

Secondly, I wish to assure the member for Toowoomba South that there have been no issues which have prompted the need to clarify the authority's role in the development of its facilities. As I mentioned when I introduced this bill, the need for this amendment was identified by crown law during discussions regarding the transfer of the State Tennis Centre at Tennyson to the authority. The amendment is designed simply to put beyond doubt any uncertainty relating to the authority's development role.

Finally, the member raised the importance of ensuring that the major sports facilities maintain their reputation as family friendly venues. The government shares the member's views in this regard, and that is why the authority requires the hirers of its venues to have appropriate match day security arrangements in place for the events at our stadia. There has been criticism in the past over what has been termed by the media as heavy-handed security. However, I am sure the member will agree with me that these measures need to be in place so that everyone who attends a major event—be it an Ashes cricket test or a State of Origin match—can do so without fear that their personal safety and enjoyment will be compromised.

The government has also put in place a penalty regime for pitch invasions—and I acknowledge that the member for Surfers Paradise raised this issue in great detail—and other disturbances of this nature which is comparable to that of other major stadia throughout the country. As the member mentioned, we have fines of up to \$3,000 or even up to \$6,000 for pitch invasions. While the courts will always determine the final amount of any fine imposed, these penalties do act as a deterrent to other people thinking about disrupting events and placing themselves and others at risk. I am pleased to hear the views of the Queensland public and others about whether we should toughen up these fines. At the moment we are considering these matters and talking to major sporting bodies about their views in this regard. We will continue to maintain a close watch on the whole issue of pitch invasions to see whether that penalty regime does need to be toughened up.

Again, I thank all members who have contributed to the debate. A lot of members have shown a huge appreciation of our stadiums. I am pleased to see the support for the name change. I am pleased to see the support of members generally and their great understanding of the sporting needs in their own electorates and the Queensland community generally. I commend the bill to the House.

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 9, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

Hon. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Sport) (8.39 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a third time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Long Title

Hon. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Sport) (8.39 pm): I move—

That the long title of the bill be agreed to.

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

Motion agreed to.

PAY-ROLL TAX (HARMONISATION) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 27 February (see p. 442), on motion of Mr Fraser—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—Lib) (8.40 pm): The Pay-roll Tax (Harmonisation) Amendment Bill is one that the opposition has studied in great detail. We have been briefed by the minister's department. We have consulted the stakeholders within this area. The opposition obviously supports the principles of harmonisation. We support making the state taxation arrangements more consistent between the states. We support measures that will reduce red tape. But this bill is in every respect a wolf in sheep's clothing. It is cloaked in motherhood statements. It is cloaked with a name that would make stakeholders and members of the community believe that it does not even merit a second look.

Of course people support harmonisation, reduction in red tape and the like. But this bill contains a poison pill—a poison pill that is integral to the bill itself and that is totally unacceptable to the opposition. I would suggest to the government that it take this bill out of the House and go back and have another look at it. We have had a debate in this House and in our community now for a number of years about the cost of housing for young Queenslanders. This bill directly taxes the delivery of new homes in this state. It will force up the price of new homes. It will directly affect young homebuyers, particularly those who are buying new homes in outer areas. The opposition is not prepared to support such provisions.

There is a great deal that is unsatisfactory in this bill—its handling, its presentation and the dissembling and cloaking of what is really contained in it. I guess it is summed up in one area—one area that this government cannot satisfactorily answer—and that is: is this bill revenue neutral? It says that it is revenue neutral but, despite repeated inquiries for the costings, for the bits that are going to cost government revenue and the bits that are going to raise government revenue, there is no answer. There is no answer because the government has not done its sums or because it does not want to tell the people of Queensland. But on wide consultation, on detailed study, there is no doubt that this is a major new tax impost.

The burden of this new tax will fall most heavily on home builders. It will fall on small, medium and even large businesses. It may force some of those Queensland businesses to the wall. When we were briefed on this bill I asked for the costings. I was told that I would have them, but later we were told that they would have to be obtained from the minister. We have emailed the minister on a number of occasions, but only today did I get a response. I am grateful for the response. It is a considered

response. There is some detail in it, and I appreciate and acknowledge that, but there are no figures. There is no costing. The minister is not prepared to tell home builders, homebuyers, the opposition, this parliament or the people of Queensland how much tax he is going to rip out of young homebuyers in this state. If the government thinks we are going to support this sort of impost on homebuyers, then it had better think again. Quite frankly, I think the government should rethink this whole bill.

I would love to be standing here saying, 'I support reduction in red tape. I support the principle of harmonisation,' and I do. But do not wrap up this poison pill with those sorts of outer garments and then expect us to tick off on a slug for Queensland homebuyers and Queensland business.

The issues in this bill that relate to dependent contractors that will rip tens of millions, if not hundreds of millions, out of construction and home building in this state are an integral part of the bill. From the point of view of the opposition, it is possible to oppose those particular clauses but, as they generate the revenue that fund some of the other measures in the bill and as they are the most drastic measure contained in this bill, I do not believe there is any credible option but to oppose it and to ask the government to throw this out and start again. It is not really credible to oppose an integral part of a tax bill and expect the bill then to stand. We would reconsider our position if the minister were to extensively amend the provisions in relation to dependent contractors. I will go tonight into some detail about why those provisions are so obnoxious that they cannot be supported in their present form.

I will deal somewhat more briefly with areas of the bill where the government is making some small concessions to industry and to reduction of red tape, because my opposition to the bill does not extend to an opposition to each of these particular clauses. The first and perhaps most significant one is a change to the controlling interest test for the grouping of businesses to make it greater than 50 per cent. It was previously 50 per cent. In other words, to group businesses, the test of common ownership now will be that the ownership exceeds 50 per cent, not that it equals 50 per cent. This will be of benefit, and I acknowledge that this will be of benefit to some businesses, in the way that different businesses are grouped together to determine whether or not they fall within the payroll tax threshold, because there is a million-dollar threshold for payroll tax. A vital issue is how those companies are grouped together as to whether or not they reach that threshold. So that is certainly a measure that we would have no problem with. There would certainly be no problem amongst stakeholders that I have spoken to.

The other provisions that make some concession on the part of the government in relation to payroll tax are the grouping provisions for head and branch businesses. They will be removed. Liability will now be determined by grossing up fringe benefits using a lower gross-up rate. There will be exemptions for maternity, paternity and adoption leave. Naturally, we support those parts of the bill and I am very disappointed that I am not going to be able to stand here and vote in favour of them because they have been wrapped up in a measure that will slug homebuyers in this state.

There are exemptions for bushfire fighting and emergency service volunteers and honorary ambulance workers. Again we support those provisions. There are exemptions for wages paid under a community development scheme. There are provisions to increase motor vehicle and accommodation allowances to rates set by the Australian Taxation Office. We have no problem with any of those provisions. We support them. I sincerely hope when the minister gets to his summing-up we do not hear him misrepresent the position of the opposition.

It is a different story when we get to dependent contractors. There is a great deal of uncertainty out there among major industry groups—the industry groups with the sorts of resources it takes to examine and scrutinise the sort of measure that is being thrown up here. There is a lot of confusion. They do not understand it; they have not been consulted and they have not been given enough time to consider it. The more those groups examine the legislation the more unpalatable this dependent contractor provision becomes. It is a direct attack on homebuyers. I am not sure who the Treasurer thinks bears the ultimate cost when we levy tens of millions, if not hundreds of millions, of extra state taxes on the contractors who build homes, but I have been around long enough to know exactly who will bear those costs. It will be the homebuyers.

Another grossly unfair aspect of this bill is that it is, in effect, retrospective. It is retrospective in some very major ways. It will capture businesses that have already signed contracts. Those contracts are binding on them. Many of those contracts are in fact with the state government. One way of the government funding its infrastructure program is to sign everyone up on contracts and when they cannot vary their price slug them with a new tax. It is unreasonable, unfair and dangerous to apply a tax to contractors who are already bound by the provisions of the contracts they have signed.

My information is that some of these businesses may be forced to the wall. It is not very smart in a climate where homebuyers are already struggling with mortgage rates and record prices for houses to not only slug them with an extra tax but also place an imposition on the people who are building their homes so that some of those people go to the wall and their homes are not finished.

The government's approach to this bill has been lazy. Stakeholder after stakeholder has had minimal consultation. Some of them are not going to be very happy when they wake up in the morning because they think they are still negotiating with the government on the clauses in this bill. Some of

them still think they are going to meet the Treasurer. It is going to be a bit late when he has put the bill through the parliament. On major issues like this the homebuyers, the contractors, the businesses of Queensland deserve better and they deserve to be consulted.

The government's approach to this bill is not competent. The government got up in a briefing to shadow ministers and stakeholders and said that this is a revenue neutral bill. But when challenged, when we called their bluff and said, 'Give us the figures. How much extra are you going to rip out of the home-building industry and the construction industry with dependent contractors and how much is going to be returned under the grouping provisions?', there were no figures.

It is a lazy approach to bringing legislation in when those opposite cannot even give the facts. They were found wanting. We called their bluff. They said it is revenue neutral but they have not got the figures to back that up. Any examination of this bill will reveal that it is anything but revenue neutral. This is a grab for cash at the expense of the home-building and construction industries.

I was offered a bet by one person on this side of the House—a bet that I would never take—that if this bill turns out to be revenue neutral they will walk naked up Queen Street.

Government members interjected.

Dr FLEGG: It was not me, but I can tell members that there is absolutely no risk that that member will have to walk backwards up Queen Street because this bill is not revenue neutral and this government knows it. That is why this minister, despite repeated requests, will not give us detailed costings of revenue raising and revenue foregone under this bill. This is not an honest approach to this bill.

The government has not been forthcoming with any figures. We can look as hard as we like but there is not a figure in sight. However, talk to some well-resourced, well-informed stakeholders who are in daily contact with the people who build homes, motorways and the like in this state and there are figures aplenty. The Master Builders Association, for example, estimates that the cost of this new state tax to contractors delivering the state's own Capital Works Program could be as high as \$64 million. A great way to fund the budget is to sign a contract with contractors and then get the money back out of them by whacking a new tax on them.

The cost to new home building in Queensland may well be \$100 million or even more. The cost to the construction and home-building industries may well be as high as \$300 million. There are no figures from the government. I would repeat my call to the minister to give us a detailed costing. He has told the parliament and the people of Queensland that this is revenue neutral. I would say to the Treasurer, 'Prove it; give us the figures because if you have not got them you cannot say it is revenue neutral.'

It is not just the homebuyers of Queensland who are going to get it in the neck with this new state tax. There are many more groups that will be affected. If time permitted I am sure we would uncover more. Particularly hard hit will be contract cleaners. Contract cleaning is a big industry in this state. We are a state that is heavily dependent on things like tourism. We are a state that hopes to grow its business sector. Contract cleaning is the norm for industry. Some contract cleaners have large businesses and some only have medium size businesses. This government has them fairly and squarely in its sights and they are going to get it in the neck. They are going to pay big time. Millions of dollars will be taken from contract cleaners. This is not a very smart move by this government, if I may say so.

Another industry that is going to get it in the neck is the computer software industry. We say that we are a Smart State and that we are trying to encourage sophisticated industries like computer software industries and sophisticated training industries to come to Queensland. We want these industries in Queensland. We want young Queenslanders to have opportunities to train and work in the software industry.

Miss Simpson interjected.

Dr FLEGG: Maybe Chris Cummins did write this when it comes to the software industry. The computer and software industries, maybe more than any other, can go anywhere they like. They do not have to sit in Queensland and do their work. We want them here. We want the job opportunities. We want the highly skilled work. We want the training and educational opportunities. This industry works with contractors. If we slug the contractors with a huge new state tax then they will go somewhere else. The people in the Smart State who work in the smart industries will be working in smart industries in other states and in other countries. This industry does not have to cop it here. We should not be hammering such industries in this way.

The issue of retrospectivity insofar as the provisions of this bill will affect existing contracts is unconscionable. It is completely and utterly unacceptable to have people locked into contracts and then to slug them with a new tax on those contracts. It is almost a form of sovereign risk. Operators come here to do business in Queensland. They lock themselves into a contract with the Queensland government in good faith to build a water pipeline, a school, a hospital, a freeway or to drill a tunnel. After those operators are locked into the contract, the government turns around and slugs them, their workers and their contractors with a new tax that cannot be passed on. From where I come from, that is retrospectivity. I ask the minister to reconsider this provision and amend the bill so that existing

contracts that stand as at 15 April—so there is no opportunity for people to write up contracts after today when they have been warned and there is no opportunity for tax avoidance—will not be caught in the provisions of this bill. Anything other than that is unacceptable.

It has been estimated that under the provisions of this bill the cost of a new home would rise by as much as \$3,500. Other stakeholders have put that increased figure as high as \$5,000 a house in order to pay for this government's new tax—a new tax because it cannot manage the books and the finances of this state. But I will be kind and use the lower estimate because, as the government has not given anybody any information or any figure, there is a certain amount of rubberiness about any estimate. But an extra \$3,500 on the cost of a new home is not on. This Treasurer, who is a young man himself, will be remembered as the young man who slugged every young couple in Queensland when they came to buy their first home. That is what he will be remembered for. I am sure I do not appeal to the Treasurer, but I appeal to him to reconsider what he is doing to homebuyers. I do not believe these provisions should be in the bill. If they are to stay, at the very least the Treasurer should allow a moratorium in terms of the starting date of this bill so that people know what imposts are going to be placed upon them. Today there are many young people who are looking to buy their first or their second home. It is a long-term project for them. They need to know what that is going to cost them.

The other issue that is unacceptable in relation to these dependent contractor provisions is the abject and complete administrative confusion about how these provisions are to apply. Currently, people operate under what might be termed a common law definition of an employee. Businesses in Queensland have become used to that definition. It is a definition that is used for provisions such as WorkCover. The explanatory notes refer to harmonisation, but we are going to have different state government agencies with different definitions of 'employee'. When you inflict abject administrative confusion on businesses in Queensland, you drive up their costs. You force them to put on consultants. You force them to try to work their way through a maze.

In that regard, I could not work out some of the scenarios that have been put to me by stakeholders. I would be very surprised if the Treasurer could work them out. I look forward to the Treasurer in his summing-up explaining to us how business proprietors in the building and construction industry, the software industry and the cleaning industry should administer these dependent contractor provisions and what exactly will be caught in them and what will not. One issue that was raised with me was if the dependent contractor has to provide his own vehicle and his own tools. Will he be a dependent contractor and be caught in this new state tax? I am not really sure. Perhaps the Treasurer could enlighten us.

Another scenario relates to the building industry. If a building contractor engages a concrete contractor—and I would imagine that happens on just about every building site in this state—for a home, a freeway, an office block, a shopping centre or to drill a tunnel, the provisions in this bill state that it is necessary for him to determine how many days the contractor has been on his job to see if he gets caught up in this new state tax. Given that the building contractor will not be in control of the employees of the concrete contractor, is that building contractor going to have to employ somebody to sit there and count how many staff there are or to work out what days they are working, or to work out what the impact of a wet day or a series of wet days will have on that job? If it rains and the contractor has to be committed to that job for a longer penalty, does the building contractor pay a tax penalty because it has rained? How is the building contractor going to know the number of staff that his concrete contractor will have on that particular job unless he actually employs somebody to get there and put a bundy clock on or count the people coming on or off that site? How is the building contractor to know whether the concrete contractor pays payroll tax or has paid his payroll tax? I am not sure the privacy laws would enable the building contractor to look at the returns and I am not sure that in every case a contractor can trust exactly what he is told. This bill is an absolute maze for Queensland businesses that have been given absolutely no guidance by this government about what processes are going to be necessary.

It has been put to me, going from the provisions that apply in some of the other states and even worse situations where this is being imposed at short notice on Queensland businesses, that compliance is a significant issue. In fact, compliance is poor. It is likely that, when small businesses and medium sized businesses in Queensland are presented with a maze of unexplained bureaucratic compliance, people will just opt out. The contractor will simply say, 'That's too hard,' and not nominate what he is doing. Then we end up with a situation that the government will be on the warpath to enforce compliance. We will have small business operators in Queensland getting into trouble with the state government and being pursued by the state government not because they are fundamentally dishonest, but because they have been given an administrative nightmare with which to go to work every day.

Again, I say to the government—and this is a request not just from the opposition but from many people who are involved in business—that because of the complexities there is a need for a period of education on these provisions for people in industry. People working in industries do not understand these provisions. I suspect the government does not even understand them. The government cannot just kick in these provisions and provide no amnesty, no education program and no time in which to understand them. Those things are not acceptable.

I again appeal to the Treasurer to put in place a period in which business operators in this state can be educated on these provisions and also to put in place an amnesty so that innocent small and medium sized business operators in this state will not be pursued by the government in order to impose these new tax provisions. The problem is not that those business operators have been dishonest. They have not attempted to avoid paying tax. The problem is that those business operators were given a complex nightmare of a system that was flawed from the start.

I have spoken to a number of stakeholders in relation to this matter, and some of those comments ought to go on the record of the parliament. The Master Builders Association has been deeply concerned about the provisions of this bill and it is equally concerned about the government's lack of consultation. It states—

This is a major issue affecting medium to large companies in both the commercial and domestic sectors of our industry. The proposed change has the potential to cost many companies tens of thousands in additional tax through the inclusion of dependent contractors common in the industry. The State Government will raise tens of millions in additional revenue while impacting on the cost of public works and housing affordability.

Tens of millions of dollars of additional revenue is a far cry indeed from revenue neutral. The government in its consultation and propaganda certainly has not been able to convince the stakeholders. When we look at this bill it is not hard to see why. The Master Builders Association goes on to say—

Master Builders is currently making representations to the Hon Andrew Fraser MP Treasurer of Queensland in regard to this matter.

That association will get a surprise when its members get up in the morning to find that he has already introduced the bill into the parliament. It goes on—

We are highlighting the lack of consultation and regulatory impact study, in addition to the above concerns surrounding public and private works under contract or tender. For example if Government Agencies fail to allow a change to contract sums for jobs currently under contract the State Government will unfairly benefit from the imposition of the proposed changes to Payroll Tax from 1 July 2008.

I wholeheartedly agree with those comments. If this were a public company on the stock market and it entered into a fixed price contract and then found that the other party to the contract knew all along that it was going to slug them with an extra charge, I think there would be hell to pay. I do not think the government can morally justify this sort of action in any way, shape or form. The tens of millions of dollars that the Master Builders referred to apply to government contracts. When this is applied across the whole economy we see that we are dealing with very substantial sums—a massive impost on homebuyers and the Queensland community—and there will probably be bankruptcies within some industries.

The Housing Industry Association has voiced similar concerns. The Australian Industry Group put out a statement. It is very similar in some respects to the comments that I have made tonight. The Australian Industry Group said—

While supporting the decision to harmonise taxation arrangements with some States and to reduce payroll tax liability in some areas, Ai Group remains concerned about the decision to extend payroll tax liability to some contractors and to subject employee share schemes to payroll tax.

Queensland businesses already pay around \$2.5 billion in payroll tax—around a quarter of the state's own tax base. This is a very substantial tax on the businesses of Queensland, on their customers and on their homebuyers. The impact of this should not be hidden. There should be nothing swept under the carpet here. Homebuyers in Queensland do not want to wake up tomorrow or, if we do not get through this bill tonight, the next day and find that their contracts have had this significant extra slug applied to them and the cost of building has risen.

I will list some of the workers and businesses within the construction industry who will be particularly affected. I will list them because I am sure that, given the nature of the work that many of these people do in Queensland, they are not likely to be sitting on the internet listening to parliament or checking what sort of legislation the Treasurer has introduced. In fact, they are more likely to be going off to bed because these guys are the real workers. They are going to be up early in the morning to get out and start working on the home sites, the business construction and the civil contracting in Queensland. Among those occupations where, according to their own industry groups, dependent contracting arrangements are common if not the norm are carpenters, bricklayers, plasterers, painters, roofers and tilers. In fact, I dare say that there would be barely a handful of people in those industries who would know that this debate is taking place tonight or what the impact on them would be. There are some big businesses as well. There are over 750 ABN holders who are providing labour as self-employed workers. That is just within one industry group.

In the last 36 minutes I have made the opposition's position crystal clear to the government. I have made it clear that the opposition does support principles of harmonisation, of red tape reduction, of removing differences between the states. However, I have made it equally clear that we are not going to conned. We are not going to have a new state tax grab dressed up in those sorts of words and those sorts of philosophies and have the government try to sneak it through the parliament thinking that we and the other people in Queensland will be gullible enough to buy it.

This has been lazy legislation. This legislation has not presented itself honestly. This legislation has not been carefully thought out. It is grossly unfair. Anyone looking fairly at the issues contained herein would understand why the opposition is going to stand up for homebuyers in Queensland, why it is going to stand up for business contractors, software contractors, contract cleaners and the like. Unless the minister can come to his senses and amend this legislation in a major way to remove some of these noxious poison pills that he has built into it, we will not be supporting it.

Debate, on motion of Dr Flegg, adjourned.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): Order! Before calling the Leader of the House I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of the former member for Caboolture and the current member for Longman in the Commonwealth parliament, Jon Sullivan.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (9.19 pm): I move—
That the House do now adjourn.

Peregian Beach, Desalination Plant

Mr ELMES (Noosa—Lib) (9.19 pm): I rise tonight to speak on behalf of the residents of Peregian Beach who are deeply concerned that their community continues to be highlighted as a potential site for a desalination plant on the Sunshine Coast. That a government would even consider constructing a plant in a small coastal village, built on a narrow strip of land and sandwiched between the beach and a national park, would seem at complete odds with common sense, yet this is what the Deputy Premier is proposing for Peregian.

Consultants commissioned by the government ruled out Peregian at first because it did not comply with the land use criteria specific to desalination sites. But despite this, the Deputy Premier insisted it still be considered. GHD's report called *SEQ regional desalination plant siting study: investigation and preliminary ranking of sites* dated December 2007 ranked Peregian sixth on the list.

I fully accept that desalination is a cost-effective alternative water supply option. Indeed, I understand that the cost of water from a significant desalination plant would be in the vicinity of \$2.06 per kilolitre compared to the cost of water from the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam of \$4.65 per kilolitre. Nevertheless, before any of us accept this type of infrastructure anywhere in south-east Queensland, we should insist that it be powered by an alternative and sustainable energy source, such as wind or wave power, to offset the tremendous power consumption from the plant. Using traditional energy would put a strain on the grid that would cost Queenslanders a fortune and completely defeat the very principle of sustainability by further massively increasing greenhouse gas emissions.

We need to use precious resources wisely. I have raised in this place before that 35 billion litres of recycled water is being wasted every year on the Sunshine Coast. It is completely absurd that we have pipes dotted along the Sunshine Coast pumping perfectly good recycled water into the ocean which could be used for industry and farms, and the government proposes to build a plant with more pipes to draw in salt water and treat it for human use.

Peregian residents remain concerned that, although their community is identified as almost the worst possible site, the Deputy Premier—for reasons known only to himself—insists that it be included. This intransigence just wastes more time and money on further reports, speculation and delays and places enormous strain on residents. I want the Deputy Premier to accept the advice of the expert consultants he has engaged and, once and for all, rule out Peregian as a potential site for a desalination plant. The residents and I await his decision.

Griffith Australia Day Awards; Daley, Mr and Mrs B

Mr PD PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (9.22 pm): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to speak about two very good friends of mine, Brian and Barbara Daley. I had the pleasure of attending our Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's 2008 Griffith Australia Day Awards where Brian and Barbara both received recognition for their 40 years of service to the community. The award was in recognition of their work for the St Vincent de Paul Society Sts Peter and Paul Parish where they have been members for over 40 years. Brian has been president for the last 12 years. Ten years ago they started the Casserole Bank which is a monthly roster of families who cook meals to be frozen and distributed to those members of the community who are battling hardship, illness or bereavement. As Barbara said, 'People are grateful for the meals and there is nothing like a freshly cooked warm meal.'

Since Barbara introduced this idea there are now more than 60 local families who make regular deposits to the Casserole Bank. The Purcell family also makes regular deposits to the Casserole Bank. It would be hard to find two more caring, hardworking, community-minded people than Brian and Barbara Daley. As well as running the Casserole Bank, they organise the annual collection and distribution of Christmas hampers for local needy families and arrange a biennial shipment of goods overseas.

Brian has been the president of the Balmoral Local Ambulance Committee since it was reformed in the mid nineties and Barbara is the secretary. The Balmoral LAC has raised well in excess of \$100,000 for the Ambulance Service which has assisted with outfitting ambulances for paramedics and putting new defibrillators in them.

Brian and Barbara Daley are ordinary people doing an extraordinary job. One would think that this huge amount of voluntary service would be more than ample for two people to give, but not the Daleys. Barbara voluntarily helps out with education programs, including organising the work experience for Lourdes Hill College students, while Brian is heavily involved with Career Employment Australia. Career Employment Australia is a not-for-profit organisation which provides training and employment opportunities to disadvantaged job seekers. The group provides a holistic approach to its clients and has continued to grow in strength since it started in 1980. Brian has continually supported and volunteered since its inception and has served as vice-president for many years.

I know it is hard to believe that such dedicated and hardworking individuals as Brian and Barbara have any free time, but they have just spent their first Christmas as grandparents with their baby grandson, Theodore, who travelled from Denmark with his Aussie dad Stephen and Danish mum Lea to celebrate a true Australian Christmas. I had the pleasure of attending Brian and Barbara's daughter's wedding in Maleny. Congratulations, Kim and Geoff Hargreaves. If members would like to assist the young newlyweds, they are the proud owners of the Hog's Breath Cafe at Morayfield. I am proud to call Brian and Barbara my friends and I am humbled by their dedication and hard work for our community.

Queensland Police Academy Induction Parade; Police Liaison Officers

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (9.25 pm): On Friday, 14 March 2008 I was privileged to attend the service induction parade for 19 recruits who had completed the Recruit Operational Vocational Education Program at the north Queensland campus of the Queensland Police Academy. The reviewing officer was the Queensland Police Commissioner, Mr Bob Atkinson. Musical support for the induction parade was provided by the Queensland Police Pipes and Drums, and might I say that they were outstanding.

The ceremony was a particularly special event for me, because a good mate of mine, then recruit but now Constable Stuart Jones, graduated from the academy with distinction. I am extremely proud to say that Stuart was the recipient of both the Queensland Police Commissioner's award for the highest achievement based on academic results, ethical attitude, diligence, integrity, service and skills performance, and the Dux award, sponsored by the Queensland Police Union, for the highest level of achievement in academic studies. I congratulate Stuart and wish him all the very best in his career as a Queensland police officer. His partner Sarah, son Ty, his family and friends are very proud of him.

Police liaison officers have been very welcome and effective in my electorate of Hinchinbrook. At the Ingham Police Station, Tracey Prior and Willie Morganson are police liaison officers who are very active in the local community and are very positive role models, especially for young people in the Herbert River district. At the Innisfail Police Station, police liaison officers Clinton Epong and Carol Lewis are very recognisable and prominent in the local community, frequently taking a lead role in public relations and community engagement activities in the Innisfail area. There was previously no police liaison officer at the Tully Police Station until August last year following the appointment of Ben Ketchell as a PLO. Benny Ketchell is an old mate of mine, having attended Tully State High School. We played a lot of junior Rugby League together when we were growing up in Tully. Benny comes from a local family originally from the Torres Strait and he has made a positive contribution since commencing his duties as a PLO.

Ben has taken it upon himself, in addition to working closely and cooperatively with the local Indigenous community, to work on reducing truancy at Tully State High School. I understand he is having some success. Earlier this year I attended the presentation of seniors badges to year 12 students at Tully State High School. After the ceremony I was speaking with our new principal, Robyn Sprott, and Benny Ketchell. Principal Sprott mentioned how pleased she was with Benny's efforts in cracking down on students playing truant. I remarked that Benny had an unfair advantage and that his success was likely due to him knowing all the good spots around town! With the appointment of Benny Ketchell in Tully, communities in the Hinchinbrook electorate are now very well serviced by police liaison officers and I would like to record my thanks to all of them for their contribution to policing and community engagement.

Beenleigh Logan Cricket Association Annual Awards

Mr MOORHEAD (Waterford—ALP) (9.28 pm): On Friday, 28 March I attended the annual awards night for the Beenleigh Logan Cricket Association. The Beenleigh Logan Cutters have again had a successful year, with a growing number of players and facilities that are the envy of the QCA grade competition. I would like to record my appreciation of the administrators and volunteers of the Beenleigh Cutters, particularly President Rod Hammel, secretary and scorer Jenny Jamieson, scorer Ted Williams and the curators of our lovely grounds, Peter Oppermann and Bill Jackson.

Women's sport is strong in Beenleigh, with the women's teams outshining the blokes in the 2007-08 season. The second grade women's team, led by Gaylene Oppermann, won the QCA Premiership. The under-15s won the Mel Bulow Cup this year. First grade players Jude Coleman, who was the women's cricketer of the year for the club, and Delissa Kimmince also represented our state and country during the season.

The coach of women's cricket, Russell Nielsen, was recognised for his contribution, winning the Clubperson of the Year Award. The men's first grade team also did well, getting to the semifinals where they lost to Wests. The team is well supported by coach Brendan Creevey and long-serving manager Shane Scott. Captain Daniel Payne was recognised for his great season, winning the Cricketer of the Year Award.

That weekend I was also lucky enough to represent Minister Spence at the Queensland Bulls award dinner. Again the Beenleigh Logan Cutters were well represented with Michael Johnson awarded the Queensland Young Player of the Year Award. I must put on record my appreciation to Queensland Cricket Chairman Damian Mullins SC and his director Bryan Phelan for their hospitality and the opportunity to join Queensland Cricket to celebrate the 2007-08 season. It was great to attend the function, as the Queensland government has done so much to support cricket in Queensland with the provision of more than \$1 million of assistance in the last 12 months, including \$135,000 to 37 local clubs to provide training, develop strategic plans and promote participation activities such as come-and-try days. Cricket is in safe hands, both in the Beenleigh/Logan area and in Queensland.

Aged Care

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (9.30 pm): Recently I met with some representatives from a number of residential aged-care facilities in Queensland. All of the representatives expressed real and genuine concern about the lack of new staff coming into the aged-care industry looking to build a career. The representatives suggested that the only real way to relieve the pressure on many nursing homes and aged-care facilities in Queensland is to significantly increase the salary paid to aged-care workers. It was put to me that there is a real crisis in many of our aged-care facilities and that there are insufficient numbers of new staff coming into the industry. They also suggested that a number of patients occupy critical hospital beds simply because some of our strategically located nursing homes no longer have the necessary number of qualified staff on hand to provide the necessary care for patients when in reality the patients should be cared for in nursing homes and not in our hospitals.

In raising this issue tonight I understand the matter impacts on both the state and federal governments. I understand there is real disillusionment with the response of the current federal minister for the aged to the industry's calls for help, so I take this opportunity to call on the state Minister for Health and the state minister for seniors to receive a delegation of Queensland aged-care industry representatives in the near future so that they can hear firsthand of the issues that the industry is currently facing. Often we hear about how a whole-of-government response is provided in relation to the delivery of services. I certainly believe that the state and federal governments can do better in ensuring that the crisis, which I believe is currently happening in our aged-care facilities, does not get to the stage where a coroner brings down adverse findings as a result of certain incidents. Hopefully that will never occur.

Whilst I am on my feet I publicly indicate that a Nambour nursing home which has recently received some sensationalised and critical media coverage has certainly been commended by many residents and supporters. I have received phone calls and letters from supporters and relatives of residents of the nursing home, saying how proud they are of the home and outlining the wonderful level of care provided at that facility. I put that on the record to put some balance into the argument that has been put forward by a member of the media on the Sunshine Coast. I look forward to pursuing this matter further during question time later this week with the Minister for Health.

Moreton Bay Regional Council

Hon. KW HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (9.33 pm): Previously in the parliament I have spoken about the restructure of local government in Queensland. Specifically, I spoke about the new Moreton Bay Regional Council. That council covers the areas of the three existing councils of Caboolture, Pine Rivers and Redcliffe. Tonight I want to acknowledge the people who have been elected to represent the new council. The new mayor is Allan Sutherland, who was previously the mayor of Redcliffe. Allan has a strong background in local government and was a councillor in Redcliffe, then deputy mayor for seven years and mayor for four years before becoming mayor of the new council. I am not a resident of Redcliffe but I know Allan personally through his involvement in and passion for the Redcliffe Rugby League Football Club. Allan gets to the games whenever he can and has an obvious and determined loyalty to the club and all Redcliffe teams.

During the amalgamation process Allan was elected chair of the local transition committee which was charged with dealing with a range of issues associated with merging the three councils. That work would have given him a direct hand in the issues brought up by the amalgamation. At the inaugural

council meeting, which was attended by many local parliamentarians, previous mayors, councillors and local residents, I had the opportunity to congratulate him and told him that I hoped to continue to see him at Redcliffe games in the future. As I said before, he is a very passionate club supporter. There was a great freshness about the meeting. The enthusiasm and excitement of the newly elected councillors resonated through the hall and to the audience in attendance.

Six of the 12 councillors elected represent parts of the Kallangur electorate. They are Deputy Mayor Greg Chippendale and councillors Chris Whiting, Bob Millar, David Dwyer, Adrian Raedel and Julie Greer. Apart from Councillor David Dwyer, all councillors are new to representing various parts of the Kallangur electorate. David has always been a dedicated and hardworking councillor, previously serving on the Pine Rivers Shire Council. I know that he will give his new job the same focused attention and I look forward to continuing to work with him to the benefit of the local area.

Some of the councillors are known to me from their previous local government divisions which did not cover the Kallangur electorate. Boundary changes have put them into Kallangur. Deputy Mayor Greg Chippendale was a councillor in another area and I knew him as the previous deputy mayor of Caboolture shire and as the patron of the Caboolture Rugby League Football Club, the famous Snakes. I have known Chris Whiting for a long time. In fact, many years ago he worked as a media adviser to the Premier. He has been a long-serving councillor on the Caboolture Shire Council. His division now covers Burpengary in the Kallangur electorate. Councillor Bob Millar was introduced to me by the member for Southport and was previously a Pine Rivers councillor. He has inherited the Narangba district as part of his new division in the Moreton Bay Regional Council. Since his election I had the opportunity to introduce him at the annual general meeting of the Narangba Girl Guides and have worked successfully with him on a couple of local issues. I look forward to getting to know and working with councillors Julie Greer and Adrian Raedel. I know Adrian's father, Greg, quite well. I remember he once gave car park counselling to a person who was behaving in an unacceptable way in public. Through his actions he was able to take considerable heat out of a situation.

Time expired.

Bruce Highway Bypass

Mr GIBSON (Gympie—NPA) (9.36 pm): Tonight I rise to recognise an anniversary. It has been 399 days since the release of the final route selection for the Bruce Highway Cooroy to Curra bypass. It has been 399 days and the people of Queensland are still waiting. It has been 399 days and Queenslanders' lives are still being put at risk. It has been 399 days and still nothing from this state Labor government. However, this apathy was not always the case. In February 2006 the Deputy Premier, who was then the minister for roads, said—

The only real solution is to build a complete bypass of the 65km stretch of this federally funded section of highway.

I'm concerned by comments from the local National Party candidate that accept that any upgrade is up to 15 years away.

We need the dollars to be put into the bypass as soon as we have the route, not in 10 to 15 years.

Well, we have the route. We have had it for 399 days. And what has happened during those 399 days? Most recently the Rudd Labor government has stripped away \$500 million in funding for the bypass, yet we have not heard a peep from the Bligh Labor government. So much for a new era in state-federal relations!

I am always prepared to admit when I have it wrong. It is clear that as a candidate I made a mistake in saying that any upgrade was 10 to 15 years away. I can see that with Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and Premier Bligh working together as a team it will take over 50 years to complete the bypass. This is despite the fact that recently the RACQ AusRAP report revealed that better roads could save more lives than better drivers and cars combined. This same report highlighted the Cooroy to Gympie section of the Bruce Highway as amongst the worst in our nation. It is not good enough for either the state or the federal governments to say that there are reports and studies due for release. What we need is cold hard cash to get on with the job of building the bypass and saving lives. Anything less is not good enough.

I also put on the record my support for the great work that long-distance kayaker Steve Posselt is doing in highlighting his opposition to the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam. Last year the self-proclaimed river campaigner paddled and walked from Brisbane to Adelaide using the Murray-Darling system, and this time he has the Traveston Dam in his sights. Steve left Brisbane on Saturday for a two-week paddle along the Brisbane, Stanley and Mary rivers before planning to return via the ocean. I encourage all members to check out his web site, kayak4earth.com, to check his progress. Those in the Labor Party might learn something about protecting the environment rather than being intent on destroying it.

Miller, Mr WA

Mr HINCHLIFFE (Stafford—ALP) (9.39 pm): On Saturday, 5 April, William Alfred Miller passed away. In life he was always Bill. Every community has a Bill Miller—a determined family man, a contributor to his community, a 'good bloke' to his friends and neighbours. However, that does not mean we can brush over the life of Bill Miller and his contribution to his part of Brisbane's northside.

Last Friday his children, Wil, Peter and Grace, family, friends and neighbours gathered to celebrate his life and, in particular, remember a life he shared with his wife, June, who passed away in 2005. Born at New Farm in 1935, Bill was a proud working-class man who provided for his family toiling as a welder, as a storeman and packer and, ultimately, as a wardsman at the Royal Brisbane hospital.

Bill was also a proud tenant in public housing at Stafford. The Millers were engaged residents in Nevitt Street, always ready to support and come to the aid of neighbours who needed a hand. But it was Bill's contribution as a volunteer in a range of community activities—most often with June by his side—that made his broadest mark.

In recognition of his many years of involvement as a volunteer in the Girl Guide movement, Bill was presented with a Golden Friendship Award and life membership. This is particularly notable as I understand that it is very rare for this honour to be bestowed upon a male.

Bill and June were dedicated volunteers with the State Emergency Service, contributing a range of down-to-earth, grassroots skills to the work of the SES. Over many years, using their skills in first aid, Bill and June volunteered with the St John's Ambulance at a variety of events. They were fixtures at major events such as the Exhibition. A highlight for them both was their contribution as volunteers with the 1982 Brisbane Commonwealth Games.

This activity led them to an association with the Fortitude Valley Junior Rugby League Club as the first aid officers for Friday night and Sunday games, beginning in the early 1990s. I can speak from experience in saying that it is hard to be involved at Valleys Juniors and not end up being drawn into that great historic club. And Bill Miller, as a dedicated community contributor, was no different.

Bill started assisting his great mate Ernie Dungleon as the honorary grounds keeper at Emerson Park. At Bill's funeral, the President of Valleys Juniors, Mick Flannery, highlighted something that is widely acknowledged in junior Rugby League circles: Valleys has one of the best fields in Brisbane, a fact acknowledged by the number of finals they host. What is less widely acknowledged, but well understood by the Diehards family, is that this quality field owes significant debt to the sweat and hard work of Ernie and Bill. In 1996, Bill joined the committee and he was awarded life membership of Valleys in 2003.

Bill was also a proud member of the Australian Labor Party. He was a member of the Stafford branch since 1971.

Time expired.

Skilled Park

Mr STEVENS (Robina—Lib) (9.42 pm): When a job is well done, I am the first to recognise the perpetrators of that success. In this case it is Michael Searle and Paul Broughton from the Gold Coast Titans who have delivered an inspirational, community-binding National Rugby League team to the Gold Coast. They have been aided and abetted by the Queensland government and the Gold Coast City Council, who have provided a magnificent arena from which to purvey these modern-day gladiatorial spectacles.

I cannot wait for the ultimate clash of the Titans versus the Broncos at the Gold Coast's very own 'palace of torture'. I would also like to thank Phil Weightman, the member for Cleveland, for wagering against the Titans in their first game against the Cowboys. Thank you, Phil!

As a board member of the previous Rugby League team to play in the premier national competition, the Gold Coast Chargers, I did not think I would see the day that a first-class team would return to the Gold Coast. Ten years has seen the scepticism of southern Rugby League bigots proved wrong, but it would not have happened without the dogged tenacity of Michael Searle, Paul Broughton, Rob Molhoek, Geoff Smith, Roy Miller, Margaret May and others who refused to give up the dream of seeing top grade Rugby League played on the Gold Coast at a fantastic new venue. I salute their vision, determination and commitment in bringing this uplifting Rugby League utopia to fruition.

I have been a constant lobbyist for more parking in the area to ensure the long-term sustainability and success of the Titans. However, I am pleased to say that the initial public transport experiment of moving a capacity crowd of 27,000 worked better than I expected, with patrons being exceedingly patient while waiting in reasonably long queues for up to an hour for buses to depart. The Titans victory over the Cowboys for the very first official game at their new home was icing on the cake, but the real winners were the thousands of Gold Coast and northern New South Wales Rugby League fans who saw a brilliant display of Rugby League skills at their best in their own backyard.

One swallow does not make a summer, and I am still convinced that the long-term sustainability of the Titans is hinged on the provision of car-parking facilities adjacent to the stadium. Long waits in queues will only be tolerated by fans on a temporary basis for blockbuster events. I am sure that week in, week out over many seasons to come car access to the game will be essential to facilitate a filled Skilled Park stadium to substantially ensure the ongoing economic viability of our National Rugby League team. The opportunity to utilise the 17 hectares of council owned flood land immediately adjacent to the stadium for parking should not be lost, and discussions with the council about the future of this land should start now. Go the Titans! They will beat the Broncos this weekend.

Varsity Lakes Railway Station

Mrs REILLY (Mudgeeraba—ALP) (9.45 pm): On Sunday I joined the minister for transport, the Hon. John Mickel, and the member for Burleigh, Christine Smith, for the unveiling of the design for the new Varsity Lakes Railway Station, yet another cog in the world-class public transport system that this government is providing for the Gold Coast. This new station—

Mr Reeves: It can feed Skilled Park.

Mrs REILLY: It will feed the Titans stadium. It is due to open in 2010 and will lead the way in environmental sustainability and provide key public transport connections. The new station is part of the state government's \$324 million Robina to Varsity Lakes extension project, which involves extending the Gold Coast line 4.1 kilometres south from Robina.

The new station represents the very best in eco-friendly modern travel. Sustainable features are an important part of the new station design, which will use solar energy for some of its hot water and electricity. It will also be one of the first stations in QR's urban rail network to be installed with rainwater storage tanks to collect water for bathroom and irrigation needs, and recycled building materials such as timber and reconstituted paving will also be used. The design also allows for natural lighting and ventilation and includes an open plaza concourse, sheltered island platform and a lift to provide a contemporary, pleasant, safe and accessible station. There will be 300 commuter car parks—the member for Robina will be pleased to hear that—plus 50 secure bicycle lockers, a sheltered taxi rank and bus stop.

Over the past 25 years the Gold Coast has experienced the most sustained growth of any Australian city. When the National Party was in power it ripped up the Gold Coast rail line; this Labor government is now rebuilding it. This project will go a long way to meeting public transport demand on the Gold Coast, constructed as it is on a greenfield site in a location where further growth is expected and directly across the Pacific Highway from the significant residential community of Reedy Creek, in the southern part of my electorate. The plans for Varsity Village, encompassing residential and commercial development and services, including a transport hub and interchange for bus and rail travel, represent an exciting and visionary concept for the Gold Coast.

Work on the Reedy Creek Road interchange and overpass will be coordinated with this project to enable improved traffic flow and safety for road users, including pedestrians and cyclists who already use the interchange but will do so in greater numbers when the Varsity Lakes Railway Station and village are developed. Planning for the interchange is now underway. This project is part of the Pacific Motorway upgrade planning study. A newsletter with the preferred concept design recently went out to households and businesses in the local area. Consultation will conclude at the end of this month, with the detailed design to be finalised in May and construction to start in 2009. So the road construction will be coordinated with the railway construction, and this will be a brand new hub for both vehicle and public transport movement in the southern part of my electorate. It is a new project for the Gold Coast and one that will be welcomed by residents. I encourage all residents to make a contribution to the consultation process.

Question put—That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 9.48 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, 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