

THURSDAY, 13 APRIL 2000

Mr SPEAKER (Hon. R. K. Hollis, Redcliffe) read prayers and took the chair at 9.30 a.m.

SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE**Appointment of Mr W. P. Feldman**

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, I have to report that a vacancy exists on the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee consequent upon the resignation of Dr John Alan Kingston from that committee.

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Leader of the House) (9.31 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That Mr William Patrick Feldman be appointed to the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee in place of Dr John Alan Kingston."

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Pacific Motorway, Signage

From Mr Baumann (3,644 petitioners) requesting the House to authorise the installation of directional and advisory signage to Sanctuary Cove/Hope Island from north and south bound traffic on the Pacific Highway.

Highfields, Police Station

From Mr Cooper (794 petitioners) requesting the House to establish a 24-hour manned police station in the residential area of Highfields and servicing the rural and residential areas of Meringandan, Meringandan West, Kingsthorpe, Gowrie Junction, Cabarlah Hampton, Blue Mountain Heights and Geham areas.

Four-Wheel Drive Hire Vehicles

From Mr Dalglish (247 petitioners) requesting the House to review its control over the 4WD hire Industry to make this industry more accountable to ensure the safety of the drivers hiring these vehicles as well as the safety of other road users.

Petitions received.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**Visit to United States**

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.33 a.m.), by leave: I have great pleasure in tabling the report of my official visit to the United States from 20 March 2000 to 31 March 2000. I have already reported to the House on several outcomes of the visit, which focused on a number of key initiatives: firstly, a meeting with President Bill Clinton in Columbia, South Carolina, at which I highlighted our growing relationship with the United States, our key interests, and I took the opportunity to invite him to the Brisbane 2001 Goodwill Games; secondly, the signing of our agreement with the Smithsonian Institution—a very historic agreement; thirdly, my attendance at the second international biotechnology conference in the United States, BIO 2000 in Boston; fourthly, negotiations and discussions with a range of companies in the new economy, pushing Queensland's bid to be a major player in this part of the world for information technology and biotechnology—and I mentioned just three of them yesterday, Oracle, Sun Microsystems and Red Hat, and Red Hat is establishing its regional headquarters for the Asia-Pacific region in Brisbane; and, fifthly, further expansion of the boundaries of our sister-State relationship with South Carolina.

I focus my brief comments in tabling this report on South Carolina, where I signed a sister-State agreement last May. As the Australian Financial Review reported on 19 February 2000, South Carolina is feeling the effects of a new affluence. It has become one of the most successful States in attracting foreign investment, netting \$65.7 billion in the past 10 years. Now we have built on that relationship with an agreement that I signed during my recent visit to work together to promote tourism. It was signed with the Governor.

Improved air travel means that Australia is now within easy reach of many parts of the world and I want to create as many links as I can between Queensland and communities in all continents, which is why we announced the direct flight service between Brisbane and Canada with Canada 3000, which will start shortly. We have overseas trade offices to generate export opportunities and we are taking an aggressive approach to tourism, but we also need special relationships like this to create personal contact and explore new ways of developing initiatives, that is, special relationships with States such as South Carolina in the United States.

Under the agreement with South Carolina, we will develop specific opportunities in tourism and promote tourism-related initiatives. It includes a link between the States' tourism web sites; an exchange of tourism officers to learn new approaches to tourism; and a student exchange program for a student from both States every year. What we intend to do is build this agreement on our relationship to find ways in which we can benefit from a joint approach to tourism and the creation of new jobs.

I have been delighted by the enthusiastic way in which South Carolina has contributed to the friendship agreement that we signed last May. Queensland, in turn, is looking for ways to further the friendship. We are arranging a unique international koala program that will see two koalas being provided for Riverbanks Zoo, South Carolina—one of the top 10 zoos in the United States. Central Carolina Economic Development Alliance wrote to me seeking help to obtain a koala for the zoo this year. The process to transfer koalas from Australia is complex and lengthy. So I asked the Mayor of Kagoshima, Japan, if he was prepared to enter into an arrangement with Riverbanks Zoo to supply it with two of the offspring of koalas that Queensland gave to Hirakawa Zoo in Kagoshima. I was delighted that the Mayor, Yoshinoro Akasaki, agreed to the program and Riverbanks Zoo has agreed to loan specific animals to Kagoshima as part of any transfer process. Riverbanks Zoo—one of the top 10 zoos in the United States—will develop a \$1m enclosure in order to develop a natural habitat for the koalas.

A symbol of South Carolina—in fact, the State tree, the palmetto—will be transplanted into Brisbane's Queen Street Mall. But this will be a palmetto tree with a difference: it is steel and will be transplanted temporarily as part of an arts project to raise public awareness of our relationship with South Carolina. Eighty-five steel palmetto trees, three metres high and more than a metre across, will be planted all over South Carolina and painted with a variety of designs as part of a millennium project. The tree that comes to Brisbane will be painted by Bibi Barba, a Queensland-born Aboriginal artist, and the tree will then be shipped back to South Carolina where it is due to be displayed until October. It will then become a permanent feature in a South Carolina Government locality. Queensland will receive a second tree, which will be painted by Michael Thorstad, an artist from South Carolina, and will symbolise South Carolina. This tree will remain in Queensland as a permanent display to advertise the sister-State relationship. I plan to

house it in a prominent location—perhaps in the foyer of 100 or 111 George Street—or an outside location at South Bank near the arts complex.

I am committed to ensuring that this and all of our sister-State agreements bear fruit for extensive business opportunities for both parties. To that end, I am delighted that the Secretary of Commerce of South Carolina, Mr Charles Way, and the Chief of Staff of the Commerce Department, Mr Wayne Sterling, who is regarded internationally as the best in his field in the United States, will visit Queensland in October of this year for detailed discussions with Government and business to pursue that aim.

I told the House after I last visited South Carolina that I was very keen to look at partnerships and joint ventures between business in both States, looking together at the huge opportunities in Asia. That will certainly be on the agenda for the talks with Charlie Way and Wayne Sterling. I will continue to report to the House regularly on achievements in all of these areas covered by my official visit to the United States. I table the report, the attachments and supporting documents, which are located in those boxes. I do not want anyone to suggest that I have not reported fully and completely and in great detail to the House on these matters.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Visit to Indonesia

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.39 a.m.), by leave: I am pleased to table my report on my official visit to Indonesia last week. The advent of a new administration in Jakarta under President Wahid and Vice-President Megawati has presented Queensland and Australia with an unparalleled opportunity to turn the page on recent events and to build on our long-standing relationships with Indonesia. My meeting with both the President and Vice-President have confirmed that.

The results of my visit, the first of any Premier to visit Indonesia and meet with the President since the election of President Wahid, has surpassed my expectations and I believe puts Queensland in a strong position to achieve increasing business links and opportunities in Indonesia. Trade means jobs.

The objectives of my mission were to reconfirm Queensland's position as a committed and valued trading partner at high levels of the Indonesian Government; to reinforce the sister-State relationship signed

with Central Java in the 1991-92 period; to strengthen economic and business relationships by promoting Queensland companies, products, services and investment opportunities; and encouraging commercial linkages between Queensland organisations and businesses in Indonesia, specifically to promote Queensland's capacity and companies in the mining and mining services sector at Mining Indonesia 2000, a conference that I addressed.

In tabling my report, it is this last aspect I want to briefly highlight to the House. At the invitation of the Indonesian Mining Council I presented the keynote address at South-East Asia's biggest mining equipment and services conference and exhibition in Jakarta. The subject of my address was: Queensland-Indonesia Mining, Cooperation in the New Millennium. Queensland's mining sector has an enormous amount to offer the Indonesian mining industry and our mining expertise is particularly relevant to mining projects in the remote conditions of such a vast nation of islands as Indonesia. The 17 Queensland companies exhibiting at and attending Mining Indonesia 2000 provided an excellent sample of the goods and services Queensland can offer. Australia had the largest stand in the Mining Indonesia 2000 exhibition and Queensland the largest in the pavilion, right at the entrance. Under the theme Resourceful Queensland, Queensland's stand at the exhibition provided a range of products and services from software, education and environmental management services to the general engineering of specialised mining equipment and mine supplies. I opened both stands with the Australian Ambassador to Indonesia, John McCarthy.

Queensland's participation in Mining Indonesia 2000 was part of the push to increase exports of value-added products and services. Queensland is an ideal partner for the Indonesian mining sector as it continues to develop and make such an important contribution to the Indonesian economy. Both Indonesia and Queensland are rich in mineral and energy resources and the mining industry is a good example of the way in which cooperation and collaboration can be developed.

Queensland's expertise in mining technology and mining and support operations in remote areas is recognised throughout the world. Queensland companies already provide a range of technical and engineering services to operations in Indonesia, including coal, copper, gold and petroleum. We have the skills and knowledge to meet Indonesia's

service and general infrastructure requirements, not only in mining but in industries such as transport, communications, environmental management and education and training.

I am determined to strengthen the friendship and trade that exists between Indonesia and Queensland. I gave that message to the Indonesian Minister for Mines and Energy, Lieutenant General Bambang Yudhoyono, when we met to discuss future directions of mining in Indonesia. I raised concerns that the Queensland mining sector had about mining issues in Indonesia and the Minister took these on board in a very positive way. Existing contracts would be honoured, he indicated very clearly to me. He said matters involving devolution would certainly be dealt with and dealt with in a comprehensive way. He said that any complaint about illegal mining would be investigated on an individual basis. These were the three core issues which were pursued.

I also spoke to members of the Indonesian parliamentary mining sub-commission, whom I have invited to Queensland, and opened the new corporate headquarters of PT Thiess Contractors, Indonesia. Thiess has been a long-term investor in South-East Asia and this new office and the headquarters for their extensive operation in this region of the world is greatly appreciated and supported. This is the sort of partnership between Queensland and Indonesia that my Government is keen to foster, including Mincom, which is also extensively operational in Indonesia.

Mining is this State's single largest exporter, directly employing more than 20,000 people with another 60,000 jobs in related industries. We are also determined to support regional Queensland and businesses in their move into Indonesia.

I table my report plus attachments and supporting documents.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Raceway, Willowbank

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Minister for Communication and Information, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Sport) (9.44 a.m.), by leave: I wish to inform the House of the arrangements for the sale of the Queensland Raceway at Willowbank. As members would be aware, following the poor performance of the September 1999 Queensland 500 V8 motor

racing event, Queensland Motorsport Ltd was unable to meet its financial commitments.

The directors of Queensland Motorsport Ltd subsequently voted to place the company into voluntary administration. The Queensland Government moved to protect its interests and those of other secured and unsecured creditors by appointing a receiver on 5 October 1999. The Queensland Treasury Corporation appointed receiver has now completed an expression of interest process for the sale of the raceway. This action also followed the decision of creditors on 24 January 2000 to place Motorsport Queensland Pty Ltd into liquidation.

I wish to advise the House that, as a result of the expression of interest process, the successful purchaser is Willowbank Race Circuit Pty Ltd. The group includes founding members of Motorsport Queensland Pty Ltd, some of whom are also unsecured creditors. The sale of the raceway is for a total of \$2,350,000, to be settled on 19 April 2000. The proceeds of the sale will pay out the amounts owing in the following order: employee entitlements, \$10,229; Ipswich City Council, \$105,000; receivers' costs, \$160,000; the Bank of Queensland loan taken over by the Queensland Treasury Corporation, \$740,000; Shell Australia, \$823,000; and approximately \$511,771 of the \$537,000 Philip Usher Construction debt with an amount of \$25,229 as unmet debt.

The figures I am quoting today are current estimates only. Final payouts will be calculated at the time of settlement, which is 19 April 2000. These will also include income and expense items from the receivers' management of the facility up to that day. However, it is anticipated that any variation will be minimal. Outstanding debts which will not be paid from the sale proceeds include unsecured creditors totalling \$1.2m; the Queensland Treasury Corporation loans totalling \$2.9m and the \$25,229 unmet debt of Philip Usher Constructions. The Queensland Treasury Corporation debt is made up of a \$2.1m loan and an \$800,000 loan. Both were structured with various levels of deferred interest and principal repayments. These could have been met had the income estimates provided by Motorsport Queensland Pty Ltd management been achieved.

As members of the House are aware, this was not to be the case. The Queensland Treasury Corporation loans of \$2.1m and \$800,000 will be paid out by my department under the original guarantee agreement executed in June 1999. I must emphasise

these figures do not include the original grant of \$1.5m to Motorsport Queensland approved by the previous Government.

The sale has achieved the following objectives: the continued operation of the Queensland Raceway has been assured; the rights of Motorsport Queensland members have been recognised with some modification and the inclusion of an annual administration fee; and, as the sale is acceptable to the Queensland 500 promoter, AVESCO, the staging of the Queensland 500 V8 race at the raceway will continue. AVESCO has also scheduled the V8 sprint event at the raceway in July of this year. What we now have is an excellent motor sport facility that can only develop further into one of the best in the country, contributing not only to the sport of motor racing but also to the economy of the Ipswich region and the State.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Building and Construction Industry Workplace Health and Safety Task Force

Hon. P. J. BRADY (Kedron—ALP)
(Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (9.48 a.m.), by leave: I would like to draw the attention of the House to the work of the Building and Construction Industry Workplace Health and Safety Task Force. Members may recall I appointed the joint employer, trade union and Government task force under the chairmanship of Mr John Crittall last December. Its task is to identify options for the building and construction industry on how the industry can better comply with workplace health and safety legislation.

Its aim was to help lower workplace deaths and injuries in what is one of the State's most dangerous industries. The task force has already identified critical problems in the industry that highlight exactly why the Government is cracking down on workplace safety breaches. Let me detail just two statistics uncovered by the task force. In a comprehensive four-year study from 1989-1992, Queensland recorded the third highest number of deaths in the building and construction industry, behind Victoria and New South Wales.

Sixty-two Queensland workers, or 21% of the national total, lost their lives while at work. Queensland had the second worst incidence rate of 12 workers killed per 100,000— more than twice the all industry average of 5.5. Add to that the conservatively estimated 3,300 injuries each year and there is a genuine concern for the safety of workers in this

industry. Task force chairman John Crittall speedily organised a series of meetings of the members of the task force and this week published two workplace safety issues papers dealing separately with the housing and construction sectors. I table the two issues papers and I commend these documents to all interested parties.

I urge workers and employers alike to make their views known to the task force, which is seeking input from those with an interest in this most vital of industries. The task force particularly wants feedback from the construction industry on how to improve its level of compliance. The publication of the papers is part of the consultative process which seeks to identify the key reasons and obstacles that prevent or impede compliance with workplace health and safety issues. Both papers present a range of options on issues such as regulatory provisions, accountability, prosecution, consultation, education and training. The papers pose serious questions throughout. It will be the industry's answers that will help shape the final recommendations to the Government.

Mr Crittall is currently conducting a tour of the State to take his issues papers to the Division of Workplace Health and Safety's regional inspectors. Inspectors from Thursday Island to the New South Wales border will give Mr Crittall their expert views on how the industry can better comply with health and safety rules. The Beattie Government is serious about workplace health and safety and has already implemented new policies to shift the balance towards enhanced enforcement of our workplace laws.

The new policy includes blitzes of work practices and industries of major concern. Two of the three blitzes already have concentrated on the building and construction industry, on falls from heights and mobile cranes. The third blitz currently being held throughout Queensland on electrical safety will also revisit many construction sites. The task force papers will add to the industry and community debate on how we can ensure all workers return home safe and well after a day's labour. I commend the task force issues papers to the community and urge members of the House to read and comment on the new strategies suggested.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Mount Isa Mining Expo

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP)
(Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister Assisting the Deputy Premier on Regional

Development) (9.52 a.m.), by leave: It gives me a great deal of satisfaction to place on record the success of Mount Isa's first mining expo in the new millennium. Since the initial expo was held in 1995, this event has grown in significance each year in parallel with the increasing momentum of the new mining development era in north-west Queensland. These new mines are under way on the strength of the region's mineral resources.

Last year the Cannington mine reached full capacity to become a world significant silver and lead producer. This year the Century mine is expected to ramp up to full production and then yield about 8% of the Western World's zinc with lead and silver credits. Also this year the \$270m George Fisher zinc/lead/silver mine and the \$327m Enterprise mine, part of the Mount Isa copper operation, are due for commissioning. At the \$700m Queensland fertiliser project at Phosphate Hill facilities will be progressively commissioned to design capacity.

Mount Isa's mining expo fulfils an important business function in complementing these tremendous new developments. It has become the essential place for explorers, mine developers and operators, service companies and equipment suppliers to meet, seek out opportunities and to gather information on current and future developments. For the first time, the north-west Queensland development initiative has a booth. For the information of members who may not be entirely familiar with this initiative, it is a collaborative initiative between Government, industry and the community and it is aimed at creating opportunities for enterprise development across all sectors of the economy, not just mining. The initiative is designed to be as wide ranging as possible and is also addressing transport and infrastructure needs as well as the area's employment, education and training requirements.

This year's expo has once again been a great success. It is a great achievement for the Queensland mining industry and the Mount Isa/Cloncurry district. I have to add that the Opposition spokesman for Mines and Energy, the member for Callide, also attended the expo and he is now fully aware of where the strength is in our State. He is also now fully aware of just how competent the Minister for Mines and Energy is.

In finishing, I would like to say that mining is still the cornerstone of our State's economy, with the Mount Isa region being the engine room of Queensland's metalliferous mining industry. Long may she live.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Rail Strike

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (9.55 a.m.), by leave: Queensland commuters and rail customers woke this morning to the news of a wildcat strike by the Rail Tram and Bus Union. The strike is irresponsible, unnecessary and unjustified. The RTBU has taken its industrial action without notice, without regard to the Industrial Relations Commission recommendations and without regard to the people of Queensland.

The RTBU action is ostensibly about safety concerns arising from Queensland Rail's trial of a driver-only operation on the Mount Isa line. Those safety concerns are not substantiated and are inconsistent with the RTBU's own agreement to participate in the trial on 31 March this year.

I table for the information of members a copy of a letter dated 31 March 2000 in which Les Crofton, the Secretary of the RTBU, agrees to participate in the trial of driver-only operation on the Mount Isa line. In fact, in a meeting on 20 March with Les Crofton, the Secretary of the RTBU, and Greg Smith, the President of the AFULE, I specifically requested that the RTBU provide in writing any outstanding safety concerns they had regarding a trial of driver-only operation on the Mount Isa line. Those concerns have still not been provided to me.

Members should also note that the main union representing train drivers, the AFULE, has agreed and continues to agree to participate in the trial and is not taking part in today's industrial action. Driver-only operation has been introduced in other parts of Queensland and other parts of Australia and operates safely and with the agreement of the unions concerned, including the RTBU. When driver-only operation was first mooted on the Mount Isa line, QR and the unions agreed that every step should be taken to ensure a safe operation. In fact, QR has introduced safety procedures and technologies in advance of those utilised elsewhere in Australia where driver-only operation operates. Some of the measures include—

- global positioning system train location displayed in Townsville Control Centre and drivers cab from 31 March 2000;

- GPS warning to alert driver of approaching limit of authority;

- GPS warning to alert driver of passing limit of authority;

- an automatic train protection-type "train stop" system to be developed by July 2002 on the Mount Isa line;

- eight safety audits to be conducted during the first two weeks of the trial with a report back on 18 April 2000; and

- train crew rosters to be reviewed prior to the completion of works on the Mount Isa line.

These measures are enough to satisfy the AFULE and its members that they should participate and are enough to satisfy the Queensland Transport Rail Safety Accreditation Unit that the trial can proceed and that appropriate safety procedures are in place. Clearly they were also sufficient for the RTBU to sign the agreement on 31 March.

The RTBU's behaviour in this matter has been inconsistent and illogical. As I indicated, on 31 March they agreed to participate in the trial. On Monday, 10 April the RTBU reneged on that agreement and wrote to QR saying it would no longer participate in the trial. QR notified the Industrial Relations Commission and at a hearing on Tuesday, 11 April the commission said that it was persuaded that there were no genuine safety concerns and recommended that the RTBU resume its participation in the trial.

Just after 11 p.m. last night the RTBU notified QR of its intention to take strike action on this issue from midnight. This action was taken without notice. There was no time to warn commuters and allow them to make alternative arrangements. It was clearly designed to cause maximum disruption.

On behalf of the Government, I wish to express my anger at the inconvenience caused to the people of Queensland by this action. QR took immediate action and had the matter relisted in the Industrial Commission this morning. QR will have the Government's full support in taking steps to end the disruption caused by the RTBU's wildcat action. Specifically, the State Government encouraged QR to seek a return to work by RTBU members such that normal train services can resume in time for this afternoon's peak. The State Government has indicated to QR that it will support the seeking of orders from the commission to achieve this result. The State Government, in conjunction with QR, is also prepared to consider all options available under the Industrial Relations Act should this matter not achieve an early resolution in the commission this morning.

I have just been advised that the commission has ordered a return to work at

midday today of the RTBU members who are currently on strike. I understand that it has further ordered that the RTBU communicate this decision to its members. In addition, it has ordered the RTBU to participate in the trial of driver-only operations. The commission has also recommended that Queensland Rail use its best endeavours to bring on "train stop" at the earliest possible time and engage an independent safety consultant to review the trial. QR has indicated that it is prepared to accept the recommendations of the commission.

We are determined to ensure that the people of Queensland are not inconvenienced by the irresponsible actions of a few in the RTBU, and I call on its members to return to work in compliance with the orders of the commission just handed down.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Korrawinga Aboriginal Corporation

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Women's Policy and Minister for Fair Trading) (10.02 a.m.), by leave: Today I would like to update the Parliament on how partnerships between indigenous community groups and the Government are turning modest business ventures into models for economic development and job creation in regional Queensland. Around the State, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are signalling the will to break out of the welfare cycle and take the initiative to build a more independent future. Their vision is the same as the Government's: the promise of meaningful employment for young Queenslanders.

One of the impressive examples is the work of the Korrawinga Aboriginal Corporation at a place called Scrub Hill near Hervey Bay. Korrawinga runs an export plant nursery and a range of cultural, tourist and artistic enterprises on 65 hectares at Scrub Hill. Thanks to the grassroots initiative of the Batjala Aboriginal people, Scrub Hill has blossomed into a centre for diverse enterprises and is a beacon of hope for young indigenous people from the region.

Korrawinga has joined the thriving export trade in Australian-grown plants. The people now send kangaroo paw to the lucrative Japanese market and also export South African proteas to the Netherlands. They pressed their first tea-tree harvest last year, they take backpackers and school groups on tours of the bush tucker plantation, and they

produce an array of ceramics, textiles, jewellery and crafts.

The Government is proud to work alongside the people of Scrub Hill, giving them the tools to realise the long-term potential of their enterprise. The Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, the Department of State Development and the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations are all linking with the Aboriginal people, and \$75,000 provided by DATSIPD will boost the employment status of the business. The funding will enable three workers who have previously relied on CDEP to become permanent full-time salaried employees of the Korrawinga Aboriginal Corporation.

Corporation workers say that Scrub Hill has given them a renewed sense of pride and purpose, unity and a vision for the future. In the words of Aunty Frances Gala, the corporation president, it has opened up a whole new world for them. This spirit of enterprise and ambition is not unique to Hervey Bay; it is present in many other indigenous communities across the State. Groups from Hughenden, Cunnamulla and Mitchell will also receive assistance from the Queensland Government to start up their own projects.

People from Hughenden and Cunnamulla have already travelled to Scrub Hill to learn about its enterprises and business practices and have taken new ideas home with them. A \$50,000 grant for the Hughenden group will kick-start a business based on seed collection, a tree nursery and a worm farm. The Cunnamulla and Mitchell groups are exploring a number of economic opportunities, including firewood production, landscaping and building construction, retailing, tourism and farming. They have demonstrated that the important spiritual value of country can in some cases be complemented by economic worth and that country can be the basis for jobs and development. The Government wants to ensure that all Queenslanders take a fair share of jobs growth in this State, and we enthusiastically support indigenous community initiatives that carry the promise of jobs and economic development.

I will continue to raise issues of importance to indigenous people in this Chamber because, unlike the member for Keppel who is struggling to cast a shadow in this portfolio, I am proud to belong to a Government that has the interests of indigenous people at heart. The member for Keppel admitted this morning on radio that he

has never visited an indigenous community. Perhaps the member should start walking forward along the road to reconciliation and take the coalition with him or, at the very least, he could take the road to Woorabinda.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

National Competition Policy

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Racing) (10.05 a.m.), by leave: On Monday, Cabinet agreed to commence a National Competition Policy review of the Racing and Betting Act 1980. The public consultation phase of the review will begin with the mail-out of an issues paper to all members of Parliament and Queensland race clubs, associations and controlled bodies. The NCP review relates only to the Racing and Betting Act 1980. It does not include wider gambling issues or totalisators, which are regulated under the Wagering Act 1998. That particular Act removed the regulation of totalisators from the Racing and Betting Act 1980 in the sale of the TABQ.

This issues paper will help people to make submissions on parts of the Racing and Betting Act that they consider restricts competition and whether those restrictions are considered to be in the public interest. Provisions considered anti-competitive can be retained only if they are in the public interest or the objectives of the Act cannot be achieved in any other way. A public benefit test will be included as part of the process and will form part of my report to Cabinet following the review.

Four NCP issues have been identified in the Act: restrictions caused by the legislative establishment of a regulatory regime, direct prohibition of any new codes of racing, direct prohibition on proprietary racing and restrictions on the operations of bookmakers. Consultation with stakeholders and interested parties is an integral part of the review process. Input from racing industry stakeholders and other interested people on the costs and benefits of these restrictions will improve the regulatory environment in which the industry operates. No firm or final position has been established, but similar reviews conducted in other Australian jurisdictions with similar legislative frameworks have led to reasonable expectations that similar issues will arise in the Queensland NCP review.

As well as being sent to all members of Parliament and all Queensland race clubs, copies of the issues paper are available on the

Internet at the Department of Tourism and Racing web site.

PARLIAMENTARY CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Report

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (10.07 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House a Criminal Justice Commission report and a summary of that report entitled Prisoner Numbers in Queensland: an Examination of Population Trends in Queensland's Correctional Institutions. This publication is not a report of the CJC for the purposes of section 26 of the Criminal Justice Act 1989. The Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee stresses that it has in no way conducted an inquiry into the matters the subject of this publication. However, the committee is tabling this document as it believes that it is in the spirit of the Criminal Justice Act that all non-confidential publications of the CJC be tabled in the Parliament.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Censure of Beattie Government and Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (10.08 a.m.): I give notice that I shall move—

"That this Parliament censures the Beattie Government and the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads over their inept handling of industrial relations matters within Queensland Rail."

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Rail Strike

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.08 a.m.): Today tens of thousands of Queensland commuters and Queensland businesses have been disadvantaged as a result of the total inability of this Government to have any sort of reasonable working relationship with rail unions. The irony is that during the previous 28 months of National Party/Liberal Party coalition in this State there was not one rail strike. This year we have had two under this Government as relations between the rail unions and the Government become increasingly poisonous.

It is the commuters of Queensland who pay the price. We have an inept Minister totally devoid of any sort of relationship with the rail unions and a bureaucracy that is out of control. At present we see being distributed in

rail workshops invitations for expressions of interest for voluntary separation as the Government embarks on its strategy to reduce the number of rail workers by some 5,000 across the State.

My attention has been drawn to correspondence from one of the rail unions to the member for Mundingburra, who wrote to all those people who had their names on a petition from the RTBU expressing disgust at the Government and saying that they would be looking at their options at the next election. The member for Mundingburra wrote to the petitioners saying that "Labor and this Government are really your friends". What did the AMWU say to the member for Mundingburra? They said—

"Railworkers are quite correct in expressing their disgust at the statements made very publicly by the Premier and the Minister for Industrial Relations ..."

It goes on to say—

"There is a belief, within the party, that traditional labor voters will not abandon the ship because the alternative is worse."

They are wrong.

Time expired.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (10.11 a.m.): Honourable members are aware that I have spoken in this Parliament on three previous occasions about the bad faith behaviour of insurance companies in the management of temporary and permanent disablement claims lodged by diagnosed sufferers of CFS—chronic fatigue syndrome. One of the realities of life is that decent, hardworking career-driven men and women make commonsense decisions about their future in the hope that dollars invested in income and property protection with an insurance company will protect them in a time of need. They sign up with insurance companies in good faith.

We all know that insurance companies spend millions of dollars in slick advertising in order to convince people to sign on the dotted line. Today I will pull the wrapping off the slick words and attention-grabbing footage of ads used by the insurance company AXA. I have a message for all Australians. If they want an insurance company that has an established record of bad faith behaviour, of using every dirty trick in the book to deny and frustrate the sick and vulnerable until they drop off and commit suicide, look for AXA. The name says it all.

I say this to fair dinkum Australians who expect a fair go in life: if they want an insurance company that is not accountable for its actions, if they want an insurance company that puts more effort into protecting its no precedent policy on CFS permanent disability payouts than protecting the interests of the sick and disabled, one that puts its claimants under prolonged surveillance and refuses to accept the advice of treating specialists, is well known for using referral specialists who are biased and open to cash for comment, if as an insured person they are prepared to suffer financial hardship, the loss of income, loss of home, loss of self-esteem, relationship breakdown and become dependent on the welfare system, remember AXA. The name says it all. They are corporate vandals who have destroyed the lives of ordinary Queenslanders and Australians. I have been contacted by people from all over Australia. There is growing evidence of an insurance industry that is guilty of unconscionable behaviour. Not only have I had contact with people—

Time expired.

Industrial Relations

Mr QUINN (Merrimac—LP) (Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (10.13 a.m.): Two months ago the Premier issued a media release with the headline "Trains and IR laws both on track". But today they have both run off the rails—again. Earlier this week teachers slapped a dozen or so work bans on schools, and today we wake to find the State paralysed by a crippling rail strike. This chaos is the product of the Premier's political opportunism in Opposition and political weakness in Government. Three years ago he stood on the back of a truck outside this House and said that the coalition's public sector pay offer of 4% was peanuts. Now he is offering 3%, take it or leave it. They are not taking it.

Our train stations are empty. Hundreds of thousands of commuters have been left in the lurch and our school students face similar treatment within months, if not weeks. Why? Because the Premier raised unrealistic expectations in Opposition and does not have the courage to enforce his own IR laws when in Government. No wonder the State is in such a mess. He promised the workers the earth in Opposition and he is shoving their nose in it now that he is in Government. He picked a fight with his mates at Trades Hall, and they have obliged. As far as they are concerned any excuse will do, and driver-only trials are as good a reason as any. The coalition does not

condone union militancy and wildcat strikes. But we all know where the fault lies on this occasion. The remedy is clear, Premier: enforce the law. That is the remedy.

Slacks Creek Police Station

Mr MUSGROVE (Springwood—ALP) (10.14 a.m.): One of the first things I did when elected was to inspect my local police station, the Slacks Creek Police Station. I was absolutely appalled by the condition of the police station on my visit. Members of the Police Service are jammed in there like a meeting of the Ryan FEC. The station, which was originally built for 18 officers, had over 50 officers jammed into it in the most appalling health and safety conditions I have ever seen. I am pleased to announce that the Minister for Police and Corrective Services has approved an expansion of that police station of some half a million dollars to upgrade the conditions for those police officers.

An Opposition member: Pork-barrelling.

Mr MUSGROVE: I take the interjection from the honourable member about pork-barrelling. The honourable member also made that comment when the police shopfront at Springwood was announced. That commitment was given when Springwood was an 11.8% Liberal Party seat so there goes that, digger! This is not pork-barrelling; this is taking care of the Police Service. Those officers do a fantastic job. I mention in particular Senior Sergeant Keith Bowen, who has just moved on from the station. He has been promoted. I offer my congratulations to him. He has done a fantastic job for the local Police Service, which we all appreciate.

Law and Order

Mr PAFF (Ipswich West—CCAQ) (10.16 a.m.): The issue I raise this morning is a disgrace. My office was inundated with calls from concerned residents from Ipswich who now believe that a clear message has been sent to violent criminals of this State that gang violence is acceptable. The same residents read with horror yesterday morning and today in the Courier-Mail that six members of this dingo pack of gang thugs never even faced the court. What is happening to law and order in this State when persons violently assaulted, robbed and left to die in the main street of a major city and in full view of security surveillance cannot find justice.

Who is standing up for the victims of our society? The bleeding hearts of our society are quick to defend and protect the criminal

element of society, but who will defend the victims? Surely one of the most basic and important obligations of a Government is to provide an environment where decent, law-abiding citizens can walk our streets in safety and with the confidence that they will not be the victims of untrammelled violence. This Government is derelict in its duty to provide the degree of safety that our citizens should have the right to expect.

What are the Attorney-General and the Minister for Police and Corrective Services going to do about this appalling situation? Are they going to sit on their hands or do they believe that the current situation is acceptable? I do not believe it is acceptable. City Country Alliance members do not believe it is acceptable. I call on the Ministers concerned to implement immediate action to reverse this trend towards lawlessness and violence.

Telecommunications Tower, Camp Hill

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (10.17 a.m.): The people of Camp Hill in my electorate are engaged in a struggle to preserve their lifestyle—a lifestyle that they and many other Queenslanders have enjoyed for many years. I refer to the construction of a telecommunications facility by the provider company OneTel. Last Saturday 82 year old Mrs Stevenson, who has lived in her home for 74 years, stood arms linked on a peaceful picket line to protest against this construction as a tower loaded on the back of a large truck edged towards her. She said that she had never done anything like this in her life and did not expect to do it at this stage of her life.

What has brought Mrs Stevenson and her fellow elderly and younger citizens on the streets to protest? At 520 Old Cleveland Road, Camp Hill, a World War II vintage shop has been turned into a telecommunications facility. While the Federal law governing these facilities allows for a low-impact facility at a three metre height, the company has made a farce of this legislation. What they have done is constructed an entirely steel structure with concrete foundations under the shop such that it is free standing, independent of the shop. The shop could be removed and the tower would still stand. It leaves the transmission facilities of this tower just metres from a resident's bedroom.

I am not getting bogged down in the scientific debate about the health effects of these towers. The jury is still out, but our residents will not be used as guinea pigs. I call for a bipartisan approach to this issue and a

summit of all interested authorities to confront this growing blight on our suburbs. The roll-out of the new technology requires tighter grids. This will lead to more penetration into our suburbs. More providers are carrying out this process in order to compete with the lucrative networks instead of providing services in the bush. The Federal legislation is inadequate. The cavalier and cowboy attitude of this company sees no end. It is the height of corporate arrogance when we see the commencement of a new facility in the electorate that is contrary to city council building guidelines and regulations.

Time expired.

Greyhound Racing

Mr HEALY (Toowoomba North—NPA) (10.20 a.m.): If this Government does not want to see the sport of greyhound racing go in the same direction as it has in New South Wales, where damning evidence is being given before an ICAC inquiry, then it had better do something about it, and quickly. There is no better example of how the Labor Party can lose votes within its own constituency than at present with the way greyhound racing is being administered in this State.

A typical example is the decision last week by the Greyhound Racing Authority to close down greyhound racing in Toowoomba. A better example is that of the Mackay and District Greyhound Racing Club resuming racing tonight after a board enforced closure of two months because the roof of the kennel block at the Mackay Showgrounds needed just \$1,900 to repair a leaking roof.

The current Labor-appointed board has created havoc, not only in Toowoomba but also right down the east coast of Queensland and out to Mount Isa. The Minister for Racing had better start taking notice of the mood out there in the industry, and so too should the Premier. There are people out there in the industry—traditional Labor voters—who have vowed never to vote Labor again.

The Toowoomba case is one of the greatest travesties of justice I have seen. For eight years the Toowoomba club was under the administration of the GRA. Over that period the GRA, not the Toowoomba club, has run up debts of substantial amounts—tens of thousands of dollars. I repeat: it is the GRA that has run up the debts. The Toowoomba club, the showpiece of grass track racing in Australia, has been closed down by a board which, quite frankly, has become a joke within the greyhound racing industry in this State.

If the Minister has any credibility at all, she should sack the remainder of the GRA, start again and appoint some top-line administrators, not cronies. If she does not, she will suffer the consequences of massive anti-Labor sentiment within the greyhound racing industry in this State—from Toowoomba, through to Mackay, through to the Burdekin and out to Mount Isa. The greyhound racing industry in this State is crying out for leadership and direction. This Government has chosen to ignore that plea and to pursue an agenda of rationalisation through its support of the decisions made by the current Labor Government appointed board. I say to the Minister again: she ignores this issue at her own political peril.

Liberal Party Performance, Brisbane City Council Election

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (10.22 a.m.): Recently a lot of attention has been focused on the performance of the Liberal Party. That is understandable, due to its disastrous performance in both the Brisbane City Council election, in which it won eight wards out of 26, and the Townsville election, in which it won zero out of 10. At a State level, who could forget the Liberals' worst by-election results in 50 years in Bundamba and Woodridge?

What has the National Party done about this? Has it supported its coalition partners through these tough times in the interests of conservative voters? No. The National Party has been cynically exploiting the Liberals' predicament and seeking to deny the Liberal Party the democratic right to field candidates in seats to which it has fair claim.

The member for Nerang, Ray Connor, encouraged Liberal mayoral candidate from the Gold Coast, Joan McDermott, to further her ambitions in Surfers Paradise, only to be met with abuse from the Leader of the Opposition. This is in a region of Queensland in which every Federal seat is held by the Liberal Party and in which both the State seats of Surfers Paradise and Southport have previously been held by Liberal members. Those in the National Party do not even support their coalition colleagues.

West of Brisbane and on the Darling Downs, the Federal seats of Groom and Blair are held by the Liberals. Again we see a concerted effort by Ken Croke, Rob Borbidge and the Nationals to stop the Liberals running in Lockyer and Cunningham, despite the coalition agreement allowing it. Lockyer is a traditional Liberal seat, held by Sir Gordon Chalk for many years.

I can understand why the Liberals, with their paltry Brisbane base, want to run in these seats. They hold Federal seats based in Cairns, Townsville, Toowoomba and the Gold Coast, but still they buckle down to National Party claims of a divine right to run for them at the State level. Honourable members should remember what happened when the Nationals tried to bully the Liberals out of contesting Groom. They won the seat with Bill Taylor and they have won it again since with Ian Macfarlane.

What I know gall most Liberals are claims of National Party pre-eminence. At the 1998 State election the Liberals received 16.1% of the primary vote, while the Nationals received 15.2%. What has happened since then? The latest Newspoll shows that support for the Liberals is up 10% to 26%—still a joke—while support for the Nationals is down to 13%. The Nationals have half the Liberals' support but will not let them run for any seats. The fact is that the Nationals are the duds. They will not support their coalition mates. Liberal Party supporters throughout Queensland do not have the right to have a say in their electorates.

Time expired.

Pacific Motorway

Mr VEIVERS (Southport—NPA)
(10.24 a.m.): On one of my frequent trips from the electorate of Southport I happened upon an interesting scene which I think exemplifies the record of the Beattie Government. I was driving on the Pacific Motorway, which members will recall the Labor Government said would be impossible to build. It said that the answer to all of the traffic problems south of Brisbane would be cured by the now Treasurer's koala tunnel through the Redlands. I remind the House that the now Deputy Premier also supported this absurd proposal.

I remind the House that the Pacific Motorway project was designed, funded and commenced by the coalition in less than two years. The Beattie Government inherited the Pacific Motorway from the coalition Government. Labor's only contribution to the road was to put up a sign saying how many jobs it had created with the project. Of course, this was absolute hypocrisy, coming from a Government which said that it was impossible to widen the Pacific Highway to eight lanes.

The shadow Minister for Transport, Mr Johnson, mentioned in this House during the last sittings that with the two-year anniversary of the Beattie Labor Government all too

quickly approaching, the workers on the motorway are now packing up and leaving because there are no major road projects for them to go to—no other major projects, for that matter. These signs remind them that they have no new job to go to because of the inaction of the Labor Government.

These workers from the Pacific Motorway could have moved to the Tugun bypass, as the member for Currumbin and the Minister for Transport know only too well. This project has languished in the Minister's too-hard basket since Labor came to office. The member for Gregory has suggested that those signs about the number of workers employed on the Pacific Motorway—1,760 to be exact—should remain there as a permanent memorial to the inaction of the Beattie Labor Government, as the workers now pack up and head south looking for employment. The Minister must have taken heed of what the shadow Minister said, because the other day I witnessed workers taking down the signs and throwing them in the back of a truck.

Time expired.

Medication Costs

Ms STRUTHERS (Archerfield—ALP)
(10.26 a.m.): Yesterday the 2UE news on our pagers ran the following headline: "New drug to rival Viagra set for release". It is an indictment on our community priorities and values that lifestyle drugs such as Viagra capture top billing on the world news. There are many more substantial events and health priorities that emerge worldwide each day. I hear constantly about the financial hardship endured by families who cannot afford the cost of medication and health aids. Drug companies are not struggling to pay their bills, but many constituents in my area are.

The Pfizer company hit the jackpot with Viagra, earning more than \$1 billion in sales in its first year on the market. This morning I received a petition from Year 7 students at St Pius primary school in Salisbury. They are concerned about their classmate Emma, who has suffered kidney damage and uses numerous catheters each week. This places a huge emotional, physical and financial burden on Emma and her family.

Pharmaceutical and medical aid companies justify the high cost of medications on the basis of the high cost of research and development. The health needs of young people such as Emma will be better met if a significant shift in worldwide health priorities can occur. As a start, I call on drug companies

to refocus their research and development priorities to life and death matters and allocate a fair proportion of their profits from lifestyle drugs such as Viagra into worthwhile public health projects and charities.

Trees in Residential Areas

Mr GOSS (Aspley—LP) (10.27 a.m.): There is a growing problem between neighbours in Brisbane. Where allotments are getting smaller, people have a tendency to plant their trees near the side fence. As a result, leaves block roof gutters—not only those of the tree owners but also those of nearby houses, which may be owned by pensioners who cannot afford to have the gutters cleaned and the offending trees cut back.

The other major problem is the planting of trees that are totally unsuitable for suburban areas—rubber trees, some fig varieties and even some of our native eucalypts, which grow extremely tall and drop branches. The roots of fig trees quite frequently head to the under side of slab homes and draw out the moisture, making the ground dry and uneven, causing cracks in slabs and brick work. This is becoming a serious problem throughout Brisbane. Builders are blamed for it, but quite often it is roots from nearby trees that are causing major problems. Unfortunately, many of the tree owners will not go to dispute resolution.

It is time the old rules were changed to prevent damage to people's homes and to reduce arguments in the community. I notice that Energex is running ads about trees and powerlines, but it is time we looked at a ban on trees that are totally unsuitable for residential areas and that grow extremely high. If people want to know which trees are suitable to be planted in residential areas, they can go to their local nurseryman, who will be only too happy to give advice.

Time expired.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The time for Private Members' Statements has expired.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Rail Strike

Mr BORBIDGE (10.30 a.m.): In directing a question to the Minister for Transport, I refer him to the fact that the previous coalition Government formed a good working relationship with rail unions, which meant that there were no rail strikes during our term in

office, and I ask: why is he so inept that he was unable to warn tens of thousands of Brisbane rail commuters this morning of a train strike prompted by his own inability to negotiate or have any sort of reasonable working relationship with the rail unions?

Mr BREDHAUER: The premise of the question from the member for Surfers Paradise is fundamentally wrong. He asks me why I was unable to warn Queensland commuters of the rail stoppage. The simple reason is that the RTBU did not notify the Chief Executive of Queensland Rail of its intention to take strike action.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will allow the Minister to answer the question.

Mr BREDHAUER: The RTBU did not advise the Chief Executive of Queensland Rail—

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting.

Mr BREDHAUER: The RTBU did not advise the Chief Executive of Queensland Rail of its intention to take strike action until 10 minutes past 11 last night. The union advised Mr O'Rourke at 10 minutes past 11 last night that it was intending to take action from midnight.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! This is my final warning to the Leader of the Opposition. He will cease interjecting.

Mr BREDHAUER: At approximately—

Mr Seeney: Blame everybody else; blame the GST.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Callide will cease interjecting.

Mr BREDHAUER: At approximately 11.20 last night I was advised by the Chief Executive and I suggested that he should proceed to put in place as much communication as possible. Yes, I will accept the challenge from the member for Callide to blame the GST because let me tell honourable members what the big issue is for railway workers. The big issue for railway workers during the enterprise bargaining negotiations has been their uncertainty about what the GST is going to do to the cost of living.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Callide will cease interjecting.

Mr BREDHAUER: That is because they do not know what those opposite and their Tory mates in Canberra are going to deliver to them in terms of cost increases.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Toowoomba South!

Mr BREDHAUER: The big thing that the rail unions asked for in negotiations with Queensland Rail was for a GST clause to be included in the enterprise bargaining agreement. We, acting responsibly and in consultation with Queensland Rail, agreed to the inclusion of a GST clause in the enterprise bargaining agreement. That was the source of the initial disputation with Queensland Rail unions over enterprise bargaining. It had nothing to do with the quantum of the increase.

If honourable members opposite want to know about the quantum of the increase, I invite them to have a look at what they were offered and also have a look at what they accepted. They accepted basically what they were offered in terms of the salary increase. However, they sought a GST clause to be added to give them some protection from the impact of the tax which those opposite support.

Mr Johnson: That's got nothing to do with it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gregory!

Mr BREDHAUER: They wanted protection from the impact of the tax on the cost of living—a tax which those opposite support. The member for Gregory can sit there and smile and whinge, but he knows that the railway workers are scared of the potential impact of the GST.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gregory will cease interjecting. The member for Toowoomba South will cease interjecting. The member for Callide will cease interjecting. The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting. The member for Warrego will cease interjecting. I am now telling all those honourable members that this is my final warning. The Minister has finished answering the question.

Mr BORBIDGE: It is easy to see that the Government is under pressure.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That is a reflection on the Chair. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw that statement.

Mr BORBIDGE: Well—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask you to withdraw the statement.

Mr BORBIDGE: Well, I withdraw—but I will not forget, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That is another reflection on the Chair. I again ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw. If you would like to continue, I will warn you under Standing Order 124.

Mr BORBIDGE: I will withdraw.

Rail Strike

Mr BORBIDGE: I direct a further question to the Minister for Transport, who apparently thinks that the GST is the reason why we have a strike, when he is the reason why we have a strike. I ask this most inept of Ministers a very simple question: what action will he and the Government take if the unions do not abide by the orders handed down by the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission this morning? Will he, on this occasion, enforce the law, or is that going to be the fault of the GST as well?

Mr BREDHAUER: Mr Speaker—

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have already issued a final warning to the member for Callide. I now warn him under Standing Order 123A.

Mr BREDHAUER: I would have thought that the Leader of the Opposition, if he had taken the time to read the legislation which was debated in this House, would have known that if a union seeks to defy an order of the Industrial Commission in a dispute such as this, it is not the Government which would put in place the penalty provisions. The penalty provisions in the legislation are automatic if a union seeks to—

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I give the Leader of the Opposition a final warning. I now warn him under Standing Order 123A.

Mr BREDHAUER: If a union seeks to defy an order of the commission, the penalty provisions and the processes which put in place the penalty provisions are automatically instituted under the Act.

Mr Santoro: Not true! The parties have to initiate action; you know that.

Mr BREDHAUER: I would have thought that the member for Clayfield would have been better off closing his mouth and having people here think he is a fool rather than opening his

mouth and removing all doubt. If the member for Clayfield had a look at the industrial relations legislation in this State, as shadow Industrial Relations Minister I would have thought that he might have known that under the—

Mr SANTORO: I rise to a point of order. The Minister is misleading the House. When an order is handed down and it is not adhered to, one of the interested parties clearly needs to make application for it to be enforced. That is what happened during the last rail strike. The unions disobeyed the commission's orders and those orders were not enforced because the Government did not enforce its own legislation.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! This is not a debate. The member for Clayfield will resume his seat.

Mr BREDHAUER: The member for Clayfield and the member for Surfers Paradise are wrong. The penalty provisions under the Industrial Relations Act are automatic. What happened in the last dispute—

Mr Santoro interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Clayfield will cease interjecting.

Mr BREDHAUER: What happened in the last dispute was that, subsequent to an agreement being reached between the parties in front of the commission, the commission's orders were amended so that the rail unions were no longer in breach of the order and the penalty provisions no longer applied.

Mr Grice interjected.

Mr Santoro interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Clayfield will cease interjecting. This is my final warning. The member for Broadwater will cease interjecting.

Mr BREDHAUER: The penalty provisions of the industrial relations legislation apply and are activated in the event that a union defies an order of the commission. The Queensland Government has advised Queensland Rail that we will seek appropriate recourse and remedy under the Industrial Relations Act should the union seek to defy the order. I think it is peremptory for us to discuss that matter now. The orders of the commission have only recently been handed down. I urge the RTBU to abide by those orders.

Tree Clearing

Mr SULLIVAN: My question is directed to the Premier. I refer to claims by the Leader of

the Opposition that the former coalition Government never intended to introduce controls on tree clearing on freehold land in Queensland. I ask: is this true?

Mr BEATTIE: The Leader of the Opposition has claimed not once but repeatedly that the coalition only intended to introduce voluntary tree-clearing guidelines for freehold land that would be developed at a regional level by local land-holders. He has done this most recently in a letter to the editors of newspapers all around Queensland. The letter says in part—

"Land-holders have been subjected to a few untruths from Premier Beattie during the tree-clearing debate but his latest that the laws are somehow a product of the former coalition Government is one of his more outlandish efforts."

This letter was published not just in the Balonne Beacon; it was also published in the Tablelander, the Queensland Times, the Weekend Independent in Bowen, the Daily News in Warwick, the Proserpine Guardian, the Central Queensland News and the Longreach Leader. So it was a widely distributed claim. However, in an address to the National Party central council meeting at Longreach last weekend, Federal Environment Minister Senator Robert Hill exposed who really is telling the truth. He stated—

"But let us make no mistake—effective land clearing controls are needed in Queensland. The former Borbidge Government acknowledged this when it signed the Natural Heritage Trust agreement with the Commonwealth. This agreement commits Queensland to working with the Commonwealth toward the aim of 'reversing the long-term decline in the quality and extent of Australia's native vegetation cover'."

Senator Hill went on to state—

"In particular, Queensland agreed to—

prohibit clearing of endangered regional ecosystems and prevent any adverse impact on the conservation status of regional ecosystems on leasehold and Crown land;

develop mechanisms to protect vegetation on freehold land, including bioregional planning; and

develop and implement incentive and reward schemes to secure the protection of priority remnant

vegetation areas on leasehold and freehold land."

I table all of those relevant documents for the information of the House.

That exposes the enormous dishonesty of the National Party on all of this. One person is speaking untruths about this, and the documents confirm it. The Borbidge Government's untruth is exposed by someone from his own side. So let us have no more hypocrisy from the Leader of the Opposition; let us instead have his support for a regional outcome.

That is the sort of behaviour that we get from the Leader of the Opposition. He will say and do anything to try to get a vote. He would disrupt a church service if it meant that it would get a vote. He has gone out and misled every one of those farmers, every one of those people in the bush, from one end of this State to the other. Senator Hill has confirmed his dishonesty and his unmitigated lie.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. The comments made by the Premier are offensive and untrue and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr BEATTIE: In accordance with the Standing Orders, of course I withdraw. I refer every member of this House to the speech by Senator Hill, which I table in the Parliament. It speaks for itself.

Rail Strike

Mr JOHNSON: I direct a question to the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads Minister. I refer the Minister to yet another wildcat train strike, which has crippled the State, and I ask: can the Minister inform this House why, if Queensland Rail was informed of this strike at 11 p.m. last night and he soon after, as he mentioned in this House this morning, no-one bothered to inform the Brisbane City Council and private bus companies so that additional services may have been arranged to avoid a chaotic public transport situation this morning?

Mr BREDHAUER: As I mentioned previously, I had a phone call from the Chief Executive of Queensland Rail at approximately 11.20 p.m. last night. He advised me that he had been told about 15 minutes prior to that, or 10 minutes prior to that, of impending action. During my discussions with the Chief Executive of Queensland Rail, we agreed that we would put in place immediately actions that we could to try to notify members of the public that the—

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gregory has asked the question, he will now hear the answer. That is my final warning.

Mr BREDHAUER: We agreed that we would put in place the normal processes that are undertaken by Queensland Rail in emergent circumstances such as this to notify members of the public and to put whatever alternative arrangements that were possible in place.

However, I would have thought that even members of the Opposition would realise that being notified just prior to midnight of an impending strike and that it was due to occur from midnight places certain constraints on the normal arrangements that one would put in place in such circumstances.

Mr Johnson: You put it in the Courier-Mail, though.

Mr BREDHAUER: We managed to get it on the front page of the Courier-Mail, which I thought was not a bad effort given the circumstances. We managed to get the information out to as many radio stations as we could.

Mr Borbidge: You didn't tell the Brisbane City Council.

Mr BREDHAUER: Queensland Rail went through their normal processes in an endeavour to notify all of the parties affected and to put in place whatever arrangements they possibly could. I personally am not aware of the time at which the Brisbane City Council was notified. I will check that with Queensland Rail. In my discussions with Vince O'Rourke at 11.20 p.m. last night, the agreement that we reached was that we would take whatever steps we could at that late hour of the night, and with less than one hour's notice of an impending strike, to alert them to the fact that the action was occurring.

Industrial Relations Legislation

Mr PURCELL: I ask the Minister for Industrial Relations: will he inform the House why the member for Clayfield's statements concerning the Queensland IR legislation provisions relating to non-compliance with Queensland Industrial Commission orders are wrong?

Mr BRADY: With the greatest of pleasure. The situation should be known to members of the House. It is very important that the shadow Minister be educated. I know that the Courier-Mail says that he is the hardest working member of Parliament, but he

does not understand the IR legislation. Section 233 of the Industrial Relations Act relates to enforcing the commission's orders. It indicates quite clearly that, when an order is made, an order must direct any of the following persons to file an affidavit with the registrar within a stated time: the organisation or person against whom the order was directed, the party to the proceedings who sought the order, or any other party. It then goes on to state further in section 233(6)—

"An affidavit ... must state whether there has been compliance with the order.";

Then it goes on to state—

"At the end of the time stated for filing an affidavit ... the registrar must ... examine all affidavits."

It then states further—

"The registrar must ... decide whether there has been substantial compliance with the order."

So it is all directed. It all flows automatically from the issuing of the order.

Mr Santoro: What happens if he doesn't.

Mr BRADY: The member would have been better off had he read the legislation. Section 233(7) states—

"If the registrar is not satisfied that there has been substantial compliance with the order, the registrar must issue a notice under the rules calling on the organisation or person to whom the order was directed to show cause to the full bench at the stated time why the organisation or person should not be dealt with under section 234."

Section 234 relates to the remedies on show cause.

So it is quite clear. The registrar must be told whether there has been compliance. The registrar must make a decision. If he is satisfied that there has not been compliance, he must issue a show cause notice to the organisation. So what the member for Clayfield is saying is quite wrong. Our legislation requires compliance.

Mr SANTORO: I rise to a point of order. I find the comments by the Minister offensive, because what happened the last time was that when they did not show cause, the Government did not apply.

Mr SPEAKER: This is not a debate. The member will resume his seat.

Mr Elder: You don't know your own legislation.

Mr Santoro: I know my legislation.

Mr BRADY: The member's legislation and Peter Reith's legislation is the sort of legislation that had an MUA dispute and a Gordonstone dispute running for months and they could do absolutely nothing about it, unlike our legislation, which requires the registrar to issue a show cause notice. If there is not compliance today, that will flow. The only the way out of that is if the industrial commissioner, of his own volition, extends the time, which was done on the last occasion.

Murder of Mr H. Te Kooti; Police Resources

Mr HORAN: In directing a question to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services, I refer to the brutal killing of Mr Heora Te Kooti captured on the Ipswich city mall video security system, and I ask: what actions will he take, particularly in regard to the financial and staffing capacity of the Queensland Police Service, to deploy expert investigators and access required case preparation resources to ensure that the perpetrators of this crime are brought to justice as the people expect?

Mr BARTON: Every Queenslanders is appalled at the brutal murder of Mr Te Kooti in the Ipswich mall. The Police Service at Ipswich would have been the most appalled of anybody and at the time applied enormous resources to the investigation of that murder. They also had excellent support from the Aboriginal community in Ipswich in identifying the youths who were involved. They identified those youths; they collected all of the available evidence that was there to be collected; they had access to the videotapes. One of the unfortunate aspects of the videotapes is that those cameras rotate; they move. I understand that at the time at which the fatal blow was delivered the camera was not pointing at the group of youths and at the incident itself.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BARTON: I think we should be treating this with the respect that it deserves, not with the interjections that we are hearing.

What the Police Service did was collect the evidence and charged a number of people, one with murder. It is a decision of the DPP as to whether charges proceed. A murder charge proceeded against one individual. The person was tried before a Supreme Court jury—under the system of justice that we have in this State and that we have inherited from our British forebears. The jury was not convinced beyond reasonable doubt of that murder charge.

That is a matter for that jury. It is not something that we are able to interfere with, nor should we interfere with it or should seek to investigate it. I made it very clear in a ministerial statement to this House on Tuesday morning that police had the case open and that police were continuing to look for further evidence, but of course we all understand that under the double jeopardy provisions in the Code people cannot be charged again with the same offence once they have been found innocent by a jury of their peers. The police have made it very clear that they are seeking further evidence. I am hopeful, as are the police, that the public may be able to come forward with further evidence that may allow charges to be laid against others.

I also read the Courier-Mail and in fact was contacted by the Courier-Mail last night about the distasteful reported action of some of the people that are reported to have been involved. I, like everybody else, find that, if it is occurring, to be totally distasteful. I know comments have been made about tags being changed on graffiti. That seems to be anecdotal information at this time and I call on anybody who has any firm evidence on even that to come forward to the Ipswich police as soon as possible.

We have during our period in Government substantially increased the police staffing levels at Ipswich which were absolutely appalling under our predecessors and on this occasion the police have worked exceedingly hard and do not deserve the criticism of the Opposition which they have received this morning.

Beef Exports

Mr MULHERIN: In directing a question to the Premier, I refer to the effects of the Asian economic crisis on Queensland's live cattle trade with Indonesia, and I ask: following his recent trade visit to Indonesia, can he report to the House what has happened in this market in recent months?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the member for Mackay for his question. Beef exports from Queensland to Indonesia have in fact been soaring. Live cattle shipped to Indonesia were worth \$7.6m in 1999, compared with \$1.5m in 1998. Exports of boxed beef from Queensland also reflected similar trends, totalling \$7.9m in 1999 compared with \$1.6m in 1998. Beef exports for January/February made Indonesia Australia's second largest export market, which is one of the reasons I visited Indonesia to have discussions in relation to encouraging live beef exports.

The latest figures show that for January this year Australian live cattle exports to Indonesia were 20,127 compared with 9,212 in January last year, an increase of 119%. Some Queensland companies have also successfully integrated feedlot processing and supermarket distribution in Indonesia with their own live cattle supply to the market. Over the past two years nearly 30 Queensland beef and agribusiness organisations visited the Indonesian marketplace and I encourage them to continue to do so.

More than 1,000 international visitors are expected to attend Beef 2000 in Rockhampton, where a major focus is on developing international trade. I know that both the Deputy Premier who was there this week and the local member for Rockhampton, the Minister for Housing, would be very supportive of what Beef 2000 is doing. Indeed I was appointed an official ambassador of Beef 2000 while I was there last year.

This year, funding will support the creation of an international business and reception centre, the provision of interpreters for visiting international buyers and international and interstate launches. The Department of State Development has provided \$50,000 to support Beef 2000 and will liaise with organisers and international visitors and work closely with larger delegations to assist with meetings. The funding will assist in maintaining the quality image of Queensland beef in key overseas markets, such as Indonesia, whilst supporting the industry and seeking export growth through market diversity into new and emerging markets.

The Queensland Government will also facilitate a beef mission for four Indonesian importers from 3 April to 12 April 2000, combined with other countries. Indonesian perceptions of this country are clean and green and because of our major quarantine requirements we have a high level of freedom from disease and food safety status. An increasing number of Queensland farmers and food manufacturers now have hazard analysis and critical control point systems and the Queensland Government has recently established a new food safety authority to coordinate risk-based and HACCP food safety systems. I believe we can further increase our exports of top quality beef.

Indonesia has sent a large delegation to the Beef 2000 exhibition in Rockhampton, which shows there is a strong interest in what we have to offer.

Wunjunga Boat Ramp

Mr KNUTH: I ask the Premier: can he explain to the Chamber and the people of Queensland why a local tribal group, namely the Birragubba, and Northern Archaeology Consultancy Services were paid \$900 and \$3,600 respectively plus expenses by Queensland Transport for a walk-through of the proposed boat ramp site at Wunjunga in the Burdekin, even though the Birragubba tribe has no native title claim to the area?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for his question. To the best of my recollection, this question is identical to a question he has put on notice, for which I am endeavouring to provide him with full and detailed information. That is where it ought to be.

Let me talk in general terms about these issues. As all members of this House would be aware, my Government has put forward a number of pieces of legislation to establish a Queensland native title regime and that is designed to facilitate and improve the approval process for projects in this State. That will see a benefit, not only in terms of jobs, but also a benefit to indigenous people who will share in those benefits.

For example, if we look at the negotiated outcomes in respect of Century Zinc, we see that indigenous people in the local community—the young people in that area—have ended up with about 130 to 150 local apprenticeships and traineeships. I think there has been a benefit of some \$60m to the local community. There was mutual sharing. Our native title legislation is designed to achieve that. That is why we see major projects going ahead, such as Comalco, Australian Magnesium, Century Zinc —

Mr KNUTH: I rise to a point of order. I asked the Premier a question. They have no native title over the area.

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

Mr BEATTIE: As I was saying, one of the reasons why projects such as Comalco, Australian Magnesium and Century Zinc are going ahead is that we are working through native title issues. We ensured that those projects would go ahead by giving a clear direction forward.

As I said, the question has been put on notice. I do not have at my disposal in the House every application for native title interests. I assume the normal consultation process which allows projects to go ahead is taking place. The Native Title Unit in my

department has facilitated a negotiated outcome in relation to issues of native title. Certain matters need to be established in determining whether or not a native title claim exists. There is detailed consultation with indigenous groups to come up with a solution and to negotiate an outcome so that major projects, such as Century Zinc and the other projects I have spoken about, go ahead. Of course there is consultation between—

Mr McGrady: Foxleigh.

Mr BEATTIE: Foxleigh is another mine that has gone ahead as a result of the same process of negotiating an outcome and consulting with people who claim to have an interest. If we get a negotiated outcome, the project goes ahead. The alternative to that is confrontation, a slowing of programs and a loss of jobs. The question has been put on notice, and I will give the honourable member a detailed response in accordance with the guidelines. But I am giving him the broad principles. The honourable member for Burdekin shakes his head because there is nothing in it. What he would like to see is the usual confrontation, which produces nothing. I am determined to get negotiated outcomes.

Timber Industry

Mr MICKEL: I ask the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade: would he advise the House of any moves the Government has made to provide security for the timber industry in south-east Queensland?

Mr ELDER: I thank the honourable member for the question. Through the committee he chaired he played a vital role in negotiating an RFA. Under the system of which those opposite were so proud, the timber industry had one-year security contracts. That is one of the reasons why under members opposite the number of people employed in the timber industry fell from around 3,000 to just on 1,300. In other words, under them the timber industry in this State was a dying industry. That is why they did nothing in the time they were there.

Today I shall be signing the first agreement that allows for 25-year security. It is with Wondai Saw and Planing in the electorate of Barambah and close to that of the honourable member for Callide, both of whom have been strong critics of the RFA. Why is Wondai Saw and Planing signing? Why is Laurie Gardner signing? Because it gives him 25 years of timber security. What has he done with that security? He has invested three

quarters of a million dollars in the timber mill and that has secured the jobs of 45 people and provided jobs for a further six people. Clearly, the criticism of the honourable member for Barambah rings hollow. Laurie Gardner's decision demonstrates to the honourable member what businesses can do when they have security of supply. Hyne and Sons in Maryborough put on an extra 65 people over the past couple of months. The Leader of the Opposition knows that, because after his last effort in this House he received a call. They have done that because we are delivering in terms of the supply of timber. These are the sorts of outcomes that are important to the industry, yet they are the outcomes that the Opposition and the Federal Government and the Federal Minister, Wilson Tuckey, walk away from.

The Timber Board has advised all of its members to sign. Most of them will be signing over the next few weeks. In relation to the contracts, we are looking at the ability to provide transport subsidies to those that have to cart timber further. We will be doing that for three years and we will be reviewing that and re-signing, if necessary. In other words, we have met all of the commitments that were set down and negotiated with the Timber Board and the industry. That is why the jobs and certainty are there for all of those timber communities in the electorates of members opposite.

The fact of the matter was—and I agreed at the time with Wilson Tuckey; it is about the only time I agreed with him—that if we are going to develop this industry it has to be through value adding, whether it be through small mills or large pulp mills. That requires large amounts of capital. That capital will not come unless they are given security of supply. That is about the only time I have agreed with him. We have given the industry the certainty of supply that it wanted. The only reason we have not heard from members opposite is that we have been able to do it and they could not.

Dairy Industry

Mr VEIVERS: I refer the Minister for Primary Industries to the supply management scheme in the dairy industry under which Dairyfarmers company suppliers have to date also supplied 50 million litres of milk per year to Pauls for the Brisbane market. Now that Pauls has decided to purchase that milk elsewhere—allegedly from Norco in New South Wales—I ask: what action has the Minister taken to prevent those Queensland farmers from losing up to 50% of their income overnight? Is this

another example of what will happen to dairy farmers as a result of this Government's handling of dairy industry deregulation?

Mr PALASZCZUK: At the outset, I inform the House one more time that dairy deregulation is being forced upon the States of Australia by what is happening in Victoria. The Victorian Government decided to deregulate its dairy industry and, as a consequence, the domino effects are being felt by the rest of the Australian States, including us. The Victorian industry is responsible for 63% of national production. We in Queensland have only 8% of national production. At the end of 1998, this House deregulated the dairy industry post farm gate. It was a unanimous decision by all honourable members to deregulate the industry post farm gate. Unfortunately, deregulation has become a fact of life; it is being forced upon us by what is happening in the Victorian market.

The Commonwealth Government, through the intervention of the Australian dairy industry, has put together a \$1.74 billion compensation package for dairy farmers throughout Australia, and Queenslanders are going to access \$220m of that. The fourth Opposition National Party spokesman over the past two years has called on me consistently to accept the Commonwealth Government's compensation scheme. That is all the National Party has asked for in all that time.

Mr ROWELL: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, the Minister is misinforming the House. I ask him to withdraw that. We never accepted deregulation.

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

Mr PALASZCZUK: All the Opposition has asked this Government to do is to accept the package. That is what it wanted. It thought the package was enough to satisfy the dairy industry in Queensland. The third Opposition spokesman for Primary Industries, Mr Russell Cooper, was doing the same thing also. But we waited, because we knew that that was not enough.

Mr Schwarten: What about the \$12m?

Mr PALASZCZUK: At the end of the day, we in Queensland were able to achieve an additional \$12m to assist the dairy industry and the displaced dairy workers in Queensland. They should stop crying crocodile tears. The legislation is before the House. I wait to hear what the member for Southport and the fourth Primary Industries spokesman will have to say about the legislation.

Consumer Confidence

Mrs MILLER: I refer the Treasurer to yet another consumer sentiment survey which shows consumer confidence plummeting, and I ask: what is causing this phenomenon and what implications are there for Queensland's economy?

Mr Springborg: The rail strike!

Mr HAMILL: The Deputy Leader of the National Party thinks it is the rail strike but, unfortunately for him, the evidence can be seen from a series of surveys that have been conducted that the toxic combination of interest rate rises and the GST is having a devastating effect on business confidence and consumer confidence out there in the wider community.

Yesterday the Westpac Melbourne Institute index of consumer sentiment report was released, showing that consumer sentiment fell by 3.7% from 99.6 in March to 95.9 in April. It states—

"This represents to the lowest level of consumer sentiment since February 1995 in the aftermath of the cumulative 2.75 per cent interest rate increase in the second half of 1994 ..."

They were the words of Westpac's General Manager of Economics, Mr Bill Evans. He went to say—

"As noted in the March report, our most recent quarterly reading on news heard showed that whereas in 1995, by far the most recalled news items related to interest rates (30.7 per cent of respondents), taxation is the most recalled in 2000 (37.8 of respondents, compared to 16.7 per cent for interest rates) ..."

Mr Evans concluded—

"It is very likely that part of the falling consumer confidence is related to uncertainty regarding the GST."

I know that the Liberal Party is not listening; I know that the National Party is not listening, but business out there is speaking with one voice. Those comments from Westpac and that survey are a direct echo of the statements that we heard recently from the Queensland Confederation of Industry. It stated that its survey of businesses was saying that interest rates and the GST are undermining business confidence and undermining consumer confidence.

We also saw earlier this week the National Australia Bank business survey blaming interest rate rises fairly and squarely for a

slump in business confidence. Only recently we had the Yellow Pages Small Business Survey branding the GST and interest rates as being totally responsible for the dramatic slide in business confidence in relation to small business not only in Queensland but around the country. When will they start listening? The GST and interest rates are killing jobs and killing small business.

Gold Coast Hospital, Early Discharge Program

Mrs GAMIN: I refer the Minister for Health to the Gold Coast Hospital's early discharge program, which provides midwifery services to mothers with newborn babies, where there is a huge black hole with no services at all for women residing between Burleigh heads and Currumbin; and I also refer the Minister to her response to a question on notice in February wherein she advised me that the Gold Coast Health Service is undertaking a review of the current service boundaries of the early discharge program, and I ask: will she expedite completion of this review in light of the total absence of midwifery services for women residing between Burleigh Heads and Currumbin and will she ensure that this very large group of mothers who qualify for the early discharge program will be able to access it in the future?

Mrs EDMOND: I thank the member for the question. I also put on record that she has acknowledged that I have already answered it. This is an area that we are very concerned about, that is, providing the expert care and picking up those women who are at risk of suffering postnatal depression, effects on their children and so on. That is why the Gold Coast is one of the areas where we are expanding the children at risk program where we have established links with the child health programs, the midwives and so on; picking up those women who are at risk; forming a relationship between the health workers and those women before they even given birth to the baby; then continuing to visit them for up to a year after their birth; and attempting to bring them into mainstream care so that they can receive advice.

Indeed, these are very popular parenting programs to reduce some of the impact that some of those women are suffering in terms of postnatal depression and the fact that their children may be at risk. These are very highly effective programs and I think they are a recognition of the importance we place on strengthening families and getting those support procedures in place very, very early. It

has been recognised in health circles for probably 20 years that we can often pick the women, the people, the families who are going to have problems with their children. These children often end up being the ones—

Mrs GAMIN: I rise to a point of order. I was not asking the Minister about mothers at risk; I was asking about the early discharge program, where mothers who give birth to normal babies are allowed to go home early after a day or so in hospital and receive the attention of a midwife so that they do not have to make other arrangements for the care of children already at home.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I think the Minister understands that.

Mrs EDMOND: That is one of the programs that is involved in that. Many women out there receive no support, do not have the family backup and need all of these services. We will continue to place importance on the family and strengthening those family relationships. As I have already indicated to the member, that particular program is under review. We are looking at it; it was a pilot program. We will be informing her of the outcomes when they have been determined.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the next member, I recognise in the public gallery students, parents and teachers from the Mater Dei School in Toowoomba.

Police Resources

Mrs LAVARCH: I asks the Minister for Police and Corrective Services: could he highlight what steps have been taken to increase the number of operational police in the Queensland Police Service?

Mr BARTON: I thank the member for the question, but before I proceed to the answer I would also like to draw the attention of the Parliament to the fact that today is the last day of that well known member of the press gallery Mark Symons, who is leaving to take up a position in Sydney. I am sure that all members of the Parliament who have worked with Mark over many years would join with me in wishing him well in his new role. Sometimes he has made us look good; sometimes he made us look bad, but he was always fair.

Turning to the question, yesterday the member for Toowoomba South went on with his usual tirade about police in Queensland. Any review of Hansard will reveal that it is virtually the same speech that he makes on every occasion. He trots it out; he has one speech and we hear it over and over again. He

so obviously believes in the theory that if one says something often enough it will suddenly come true.

I pointed out on that occasion that he is consistently wrong about regional budgets and police numbers, but he did come up with one variation in his speech yesterday. He said that only 70% of all police were operational. That figure intrigued me. I wondered where it came from. We thought that perhaps he pulled it out of thin air and put it forward as a fact, as the Opposition, and the member in particular, normally do. When we had a good look at it, we saw that we had recently given him an answer to a question on notice about what percentage of police receive the operational shift allowance, and that answer was 71%.

This proves again that the member for Toowoomba South knows absolutely nothing about policing issues, because he now seems to think that the only operational police are those who receive the operational shift allowance. The operational shift allowance is for those who are on shift, particularly those who are on a five and seven-day type roster, and there are hundreds and hundreds of additional police on top of that, such as the people in Police Beats, shopfronts, traffic duties and a whole range of other operational duties who are not actually working shiftwork.

I want to point out to the member for Toowoomba South that, at this point under the Beattie Government, the fact is that 91.4% of police are operational police. The last time it was down in the seventies was back when the coalition was in office, when Terry Lewis was the commissioner. The percentages were raised very dramatically during the Goss years. Even in the very short period that the Beattie Government has been in office, they have increased by another 0.8%. Yet for the two and a half years that the coalition was in power, they increased by only 0.6%.

Hospital Beds, Anorexia Nervosa

Mr GOSS: I ask the Minister for Health: is it true that there are only six beds at the Brisbane Royal Hospital available for an estimated 30,000 individuals who suffer eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa? Why must subsequent patients outside those six be admitted to psychiatric units for treatment for serious medical problems resulting from eating disorders where they are taught by seriously mentally ill patients to commit suicide and self-injury? Are the reports true that the number of dedicated eating disorder beds at Royal Brisbane is to be reduced to three?

Mrs EDMOND: Eating disorders are a very serious matter. A lot of people regard anorexia as the only eating disorder there is. I have raised the fact in this House before that there are other eating disorders, that it is not just anorexia and it does not just affect young women. Of course, there is the high profile bulimia that we hear about, particularly with models, in the media. The other eating disorder that is often not given as much media prominence is Billy Bunter syndrome, which particularly affects young males who eat too much and become the class clown. I see the member for Merrimac nodding. It is a recognised syndrome in high schools. Because of their eating habits and disorder, these young boys become very obese. They do not take part in sports because they are embarrassed and shy. It is another hidden tragedy of our young people and the over importance that is placed on image. It is a serious disorder. I think people should give it attention, too.

Eating disorders are a pattern of a mental health syndrome and are treated not just in one place in the Royal Brisbane but across the State. There are services for them through our youth and mental health resources, which have been dramatically increased under this Government around the State in the community setting. Obviously, the most important place to treat young people with an eating disorder is in the home with their family. It is only in desperate situations that we have them treated in hospital and in mental health units.

There is no decision made to reduce the number of eating disorder beds. What we try to do is integrate those beds with those in the other adolescent mental health unit at the Royal Brisbane Hospital. We are increasing the number of youth mental health beds across the State, with an extra 10 or 12 coming on line in Logan in a month's time. Increased resources are being put into this very difficult and sensitive area of need for young people and adolescents as they go through a trying period of their lives.

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the next question, I recognise in the public gallery students, parents and teachers of the Highfields State School from the Crows Nest electorate.

Community Cabinet Meetings

Mr PEARCE: My question is to the Premier. I refer to the State Government's excellent Community Cabinet program. I ask:

when will the next meeting of Community Cabinet be held?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for Fitzroy for his question. As a member representing a regional Queensland electorate, he knows how important it is for the Cabinet and the Government of the day to get out and listen and talk to people. The honourable member is correct. This is an excellent initiative of my Government and one which will continue despite a recent failed attempt by members opposite to politicise the process. Indeed, this weekend my entire Cabinet will travel to the Whitsunday region for the 24th Community Cabinet. The Sunday community meeting will be held in the Proserpine Cultural Centre, where my Ministers and I will be available for informal meetings and deputations from about 1 p.m. until 5 p.m. Of course, the next day, Monday, is when the normal Cabinet meeting will be held.

The Cabinet will meet in Airlie Beach and I will later host an informal luncheon for community members on behalf of the Government and Cabinet. As a measure of the success of this initiative, there have been more than 2,200 formal and 1,800 informal deputations made to Ministers since we started our Community Cabinet process. That is proof of its success. The bottom line is that the success of Community Cabinets is that they clearly demonstrate that we are a Government for all Queenslanders and that we are working together as a team to deliver for all Queensland.

Compare this to those opposite. I read with some interest an interview with the Leader of the Opposition in the Australian Financial Review in January. He said this—

"I think it is probably fair to say that from the time of the State election through to the second quarter of 1999 the Opposition's performance was pretty average, to be generous."

He went on to say that they had dropped the ball for a while. I think he not only dropped it but deflated it and then buried it. The clear difference between this Government and the Opposition is that this Government is getting on with business, this Government is delivering and is out there listening to people. On the other hand, even the Leader of the Opposition admits that the Opposition has not been performing. Even the Leader of the Opposition got it right once when he said that they have not been out there performing.

I want to say a couple of things about Mark Symons from Channel 10, who is leaving us today. Mark has been a very important part

of the gallery in this place. He has been fair to both sides of politics. There have been many occasions when I have not liked his reports, although I have enjoyed his reports once or twice. That indicates that he has been a key part of the gallery. He used to live next door to me.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: No, it has nothing to do with land values. Whenever I did not like his reports, I used to send my dog Rusty next door. Instead of going for a walk of a morning, if I did not like the Channel 10 news I used to say to Rusty, "You go next door and see Mark." He would come back a lot lighter and then we would go for a walk.

Mr Hamill: Rusty thought it was his home away from home.

Mr BEATTIE: Rusty did think it was his home away from home. Mark, on behalf of all members of this Parliament—I know the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues join me—we wish you well. Your lawn is going to be a much safer place from here on in.

Local Content Policy, Gladstone Electorate

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: My question is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade. Calliope and Gladstone residents have welcomed the announcement by Comalco. There are concerns, however, that much of the new work for the region may be lost to overseas contractors, particularly steel construction. I ask: what obligations or requirements have been placed on Comalco regarding employing local contractors and other workers, especially given the significant contribution of Queensland taxpayers' dollars to the company?

Mr ELDER: I thank the member for the question because the issue is one that we as a Government are vitally concerned about. In fact, we are the only Government in Australia that has introduced a policy to deal with enhancing the opportunities for local suppliers and local businesses to provide support, equipment and services into these contracts. The local content policy is an Australian first. No other Government has a policy like it in place. That policy requires our Government owned corporations to provide industry participation plans. Those plans, once completed, are sent directly to my department. A three audit process is in place—at the beginning, during the project and towards the end of the project—which sees that those

GOCs in particular are meeting their obligations in relation to supporting local industries.

In relation to Comalco, because Comalco has received Government support, we are asking Comalco to do something similar, that is, create industry participation opportunities and provide plans to Government detailing how they will do that. To their credit, Comalco have said that a significantly large proportion of that work will go to local contractors in Gladstone and contractors in Queensland. There is a portion of work on all of these major projects that cannot be provided in Queensland and, for that matter, in many respects cannot be provided in Australia. Those products are sourced from overseas, but that has been inherent in these large projects for a long time.

The fact of the matter is that all of the companies we have dealt with have given us a strong commitment to our local content policy. Debate in relation to big projects that do not have a Government contribution will always be just how much and how far a Government can go to enforce a policy of this type. The reality of life is that, in the private sector, with a private market and with market forces applying, it is impossible for Governments to dictate to those large private sector companies. What we have got from them is a commitment and an assurance that they will support the policy. More than any other Government in Australia, we are looking after the interests of our workers and our regional communities.

Energex; Green Energy

Mr FENLON: Can the Minister for Mines and Energy inform the House of the response to the green energy option which is being offered to electricity users by Energex?

Mr McGRADY: I thank the member for the question.

Opposition members: Time!

Mr McGRADY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I have to get this in. The poster I am holding has won an international award and I want to thank Energex for this little fellow. I am also wearing my froggie tie for the occasion.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order! The time for questions has expired. Before I call the Treasurer, I acknowledge the presence in the public gallery of the Gold Coast branch of the Australian Britain Society.

QUEENSLAND COMPETITION AUTHORITY AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP)
(Treasurer) (11.30 a.m.), by leave, without
notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a
Bill for an Act to amend the Queensland
Competition Authority Act 1997."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and
Bill, on motion of Mr Hamill, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP)
(Treasurer) (11.31 a.m.): I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second
time."

The purpose of this Bill is to amend the
Queensland Competition Authority Act 1997,
the QCA Act. In 1997, the QCA Act
established the Queensland Competition
Authority, the QCA, as Queensland's State-
based competition regulator, charged with
regulatory responsibility for—

the State's monopoly prices oversight
regime for Government monopoly
business activities;

the State's third-party access regime; and
the State's competitive neutrality
complaints mechanism.

The Bill amends the QCA Act by—

extending the coverage of the State's
monopoly prices oversight and third-party
access regimes to local government
business activities and facilities;

establishing a deterministic prices
oversight regime for private water
suppliers;

clarifying the principle of competitive
neutrality as it applies to Government
business activities; and

making miscellaneous amendments,
mainly to the State's third-party access
regime.

These amendments will provide essential
safeguards against the possible misuse of
market power by suppliers of essential industry
inputs, particularly water, by way of exploitative
pricing. Together with the existing competition
frameworks and safeguards in the QCA Act,
they will ensure that the Queensland economy
has the greatest opportunity for economic

development and to enjoy the maximum
benefits from that development.

The first component of the Bill extends
the existing prices oversight regime for State
Government business activities to cover
monopoly or near monopoly businesses
owned by local governments. Many monopoly
government business activities provide
essential utility services, for example water
supply, to the community and have a critical
impact on the efficiency of those industries
which are reliant upon these essential inputs.
In the absence of a competitive market,
however, it is important that there be an
independent oversight of prices in order to
ensure that services are provided at the most
efficient level possible and at the most efficient
price.

Accordingly, this Bill will establish an
independent mechanism to investigate
whether a local government business which is
in a position of market power is engaging in
pricing practices which represent a misuse of
that power. However, in recognition of the fact
that local governments have responsibilities to
all members of their community, the regime
allows owner governments to make the final
pricing decision for their businesses, based on
QCA recommendations. In this way, the
regime allows a local government to make
decisions about pricing that reflect all of the
economic and social policy objectives which it
may wish to achieve by way of pricing.

In this respect, the Bill does not contain
mechanisms to reduce the delivery of
community service obligations, nor does it
force government businesses to abandon the
provision of these services. Moreover, the Bill
contains specific requirements that a
comprehensive range of public interest matters
be considered before a decision is made
about pricing reform.

The application of the State's third-party
access regime to local government will place
local government infrastructure on the same
footing as privately owned infrastructure under
the regime. That is, the infrastructure will only
be affected if it meets all of the relevant criteria
and only after extensive consultation with the
affected owner. In this respect, the Bill
provides for an additional step of consultation
in that the Ministers must allow 90 days for a
local government to make submissions to the
responsible Ministers regarding a proposed
declaration.

The objective of the third-party access
regime is to promote competition by allowing
third parties to utilise a service provided by a
natural monopoly facility in order to compete in

another market. Access is designed to balance the benefits to the public in having competition and the legitimate business interests of the owner of a facility.

The second component of the Bill establishes a deterministic prices oversight regime for private water suppliers. The establishment of such a regime is necessary to counter the possibility of misuse of market power by way of, for example, the hoarding of water or monopoly pricing in the supply of water by private water suppliers.

The Bill establishes a regulatory framework which allows private sector water suppliers to operate freely in the market on the basis that if they misuse their market power an aggrieved party may seek compulsory arbitration with an enforceable outcome. This framework, based on the commercially focused negotiate/arbitrate model used in the third-party access regime, provides maximum flexibility for the market to operate with minimum interference by government. In this respect, it provides the most appropriate regulatory framework for private operators.

The regime will complement other proposed reforms to the regulatory structure for the Queensland water industry relating to the allocation, management and trading of water, and regulation of service quality and safety matters.

It is important to note that the regime will only apply to those persons or organisations which are in the primary business of supplying water, or associated services, and only if they hold a position of market power. In this respect, the regime will not cover every person or business who is in a position to supply water to another person. For example, it does not cover those people or businesses who may hold an allocation, or allocations, of bulk water and who may be in a position to supply spare water to a neighbouring business, for example a neighbouring farm or other business dependent upon water.

It is intended that this coverage be reviewed in the context of the proposed water trading regime. For example, it is possible that, with the advent of the trading regime, a person or organisation could purchase water allocations in a water supply system such that they hold a position of market power. While this of itself is not an undesirable situation, it is necessary to ensure that the person or organisation does not misuse that market power by hoarding water for speculative purposes or charging prices which are well in excess of what the market would otherwise set.

As noted earlier, water is an essential commodity for many industries and it is critical that supply not be distorted by market power issues. The prices oversight regime for private sector water suppliers will be especially important in the rural and regional areas of Queensland which are heavily reliant on reasonably priced water for irrigation and other primary producer purposes.

The third component of the Bill amends section 38 of the Act as it relates to the application of competitive neutrality to declared Government significant business activities. This amendment ensures that the Queensland Government retains control of the competitive neutrality agenda under the National Competition Policy.

It ensures that the principle of competitive neutrality complies with the requirements of clause 3(4)(b) of the Competition Principles Agreement. It ensures that Government businesses are required to pay a fee to neutralise any cost of funds advantage that they might have because of their Government ownership or control. They are also required to pay tax equivalents and to comply with the same procedural and regulatory controls as their private sector counterparts.

These amendments ensure that decisions about payment of community service obligations and subsidies are rightfully decisions for elected Government, given the wide range of factors involved. It is important that Governments are ultimately responsible for determining appropriate levels of service provision, rather than unaccountable economic regulators.

This component of the Bill makes miscellaneous amendments to QCA Act, mainly in relation to the State's third-party access regime. The amendments to the access regime are necessary to enhance the effectiveness of the regime, thus promoting the economic development benefits that flow from effective third-party access to natural monopoly infrastructure.

The other key miscellaneous amendment that the Bill makes is to amend the time frame within which the Ministers must respond to QCA recommendations from 30 days to 90 days. This amendment will permit the Ministers to fully consider the QCA's recommendations and consult with relevant portfolio Ministers.

In conclusion, the policy objectives which have driven the development of the Bill are of increasing importance—namely, the desire to have a safeguard by way of an independent oversight of prices charged by private water suppliers and local government business

activities that hold market power. Although the number of private water suppliers is small, the scope of their operations is significant and the potential for the emergence of other private suppliers is strong, especially in the context of the proposed water trading regime. The increasingly commercial focus of local government water businesses underlines the desirability of regulatory oversight of their pricing practices. It is essential that these amendments be in place to provide an independent regulatory mechanism for oversighting pricing practices.

The development of the Bill has been the subject of extensive consultation with a wide range of organisations. Particular care has been taken to ensure that the prices oversight regime for private water suppliers would be as commercially focused as possible, while still providing adequate and accessible safeguards for water users.

Ultimately, the safeguards which this Bill will implement will facilitate reforms which will result in growth in the economy, providing more jobs and higher living standards for Queenslanders. However, the fulfilment of both State and local government social objectives will not be compromised.

It is in Queensland's interest that there be a safeguard for pricing by local government business activities and private water suppliers. Both of these sectors provide essential inputs into a substantial sector of the Queensland economy, particularly businesses in rural and regional parts of the State. It is important that there be appropriate checks on the way that these inputs are priced by suppliers who are, in many cases, in positions of market power or are monopoly suppliers. The refinement of the third-party access regime will also be in Queensland's long-term interests by facilitating competition and efficient service delivery for major sectors of the Queensland economy, thus assisting regional and economic development.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Beanland, adjourned.

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT BILL

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Kedron—ALP)
(Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (11.42 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to provide for training and employment, and for other purposes."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Mr Braddy, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Kedron—ALP)
(Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (11.43 a.m.): I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

It is my great pleasure to introduce new legislation which will support the real progress the Beattie Government has made in the vocational education and training system since taking office. The Training and Employment Bill 2000 reinforces Queensland's leadership in training reform throughout Australia. It will provide support for a flexible, high quality training system that will develop the skills of Queensland's work force both now and for the future. High quality, relevant vocational education and training is vital for the future of this State and its people.

Since coming to office, this Government has made significant improvements to the system it inherited. This legislation cements those improvements and provides a strong framework to support quality in training. The Beattie Government's approach to reform is balanced and fair. Its central imperative is to meet the needs of those most affected.

Queensland's workers need skills for jobs and employers need access to a skilled work force. Our industries need a forward thinking approach to skills development to ensure success in a competitive environment. Competition and choice are important in the training market. We need to also ensure the quality of training meets the needs of our job seekers, workers and employers.

Since coming to office, we have implemented necessary reforms, including introducing: a rigorous audit program of training providers; a fairer user choice system; new streamlined administrative arrangements for apprenticeships and traineeships; proper processes for the introduction of training packages; and affirming the importance of TAFE as a pre-eminent training provider. The need for these reforms was highlighted by the 1999 Schofield report entitled "Independent Investigation into the Quality and Effectiveness of Training in Queensland's Traineeship System".

The Schofield recommendations are currently being implemented as part of our commitment to building a strong training

system with an appropriate balance between private training providers and the public provider, TAFE. The Beattie Government has already demonstrated its commitment to a viable TAFE system, a system which had been exposed under the previous Government to the extremes of a competitive market with no support or preparation. A strong public provider is vital to ensure we have the capacity to meet training needs for all of Queensland.

To protect and strengthen TAFE the level of contestable funding was capped and the Government's 10-point plan has ensured that TAFE takes its rightful role as the major provider of training in the State. The Government has also worked closely with private training providers to ensure they have the protection and assurance of strong administrative and quality assurance systems.

Over the last 12 months we have introduced a rigorous program of quality and contractual audits of training providers to safeguard the integrity of the training system. A new user choice system requiring training providers to guarantee quality and continuity of training will be introduced from 1 July this year. This Bill will ensure Queensland actively contributes to the national training system while preserving those key features of the Queensland system which work effectively for our community.

The Training and Employment Bill 2000 recognises the role of industry in the accreditation of training programs and the registration of training providers. It also reaffirms the important role of industry training advisory bodies. Extensive consultations have been undertaken with employers, unions, industry training advisory bodies, TAFE and private training organisations in the development of this Bill.

Objects of the Bill

The primary object of the Bill is to develop and support a high quality, flexible training system. It will build quality into apprenticeships, traineeships and vocational placements. It will provide more efficient regulation of the apprenticeship and traineeship system. It will also ensure the procedures for registering training organisations are nationally consistent, and will establish a more effective advisory structure to Government.

Apprenticeship and Traineeship System

The new system will ensure the integrity of the apprenticeship and traineeship system. It will set out in clear terms the obligations and responsibilities of all parties involved—the apprentice or trainee, the employer and the

registered training organisation. For the first time this Bill gives statutory recognition to the requirement for employers and training organisations to deliver training to apprentices and trainees in line with an agreed training plan. New processes reinforced by appropriate penalties will guarantee that training is delivered as required.

In extreme cases, the legislation provides for the revocation of the registration of a training organisation. If an employer is not fulfilling his or her obligations, he or she may be prohibited from engaging trainees or apprentices. Prohibited employer status will be applied to employers who repeatedly fail to deliver training—in other words, consistent misusers and abusers of the system. For the first time, the agreed training plan will ensure apprentices, trainees, employers and training organisations know their responsibilities from the outset and can work towards positive training outcomes.

Apprenticeship and Traineeship Ombudsman

This Bill will create the position of an independent apprenticeship and traineeship ombudsman. This is an important and unique appointment designed to protect the interests of apprentices, trainees and their employers. It is also an Australian first. Complaints by trainees or apprentices about the nature, scope and quality of training they receive and the environment in which they receive training, may be referred to the independent ombudsman. This appointment delivers on a major recommendation of the Schofield report.

Training and Employment Board/Training Recognition Council

A Training and Employment Board and a Training Recognition Council will be established. The Training and Employment Board will replace the existing Vocational Education, Training and Employment Commission and the Training Recognition Council takes on the functions of the existing State Training Council, the Accreditation Council and the State Planning and Development Council.

The Training and Employment Board will provide high-level strategic advice to the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations and the Government on the planning and resourcing of the vocational education and training system in Queensland. The board will comprise 15 members drawn from industry, unions and the community, giving it broader representation. It will have the power to recognise industry training advisory bodies and group training organisations. Industry training advisory bodies will be

retained as the principal source of advice to the board on vocational education, training and employment issues facing their industry.

The Training Recognition Council will oversee the regulation of training organisations, accreditation of courses, training contracts, the apprenticeship and traineeship system and vocational placement in Queensland. It will also be responsible for advising the Minister on national systems of qualifications.

The new board, in consultation with the Minister, will determine the most effective mechanisms to ensure coverage of issues currently addressed by subcommittees of the commission. I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank all those who have contributed to the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Commission and its subcommittees over the years, particularly founding Chair Bill Siganto and current Chair Barry Smith.

Registration and Accreditation

The new system will adopt registration and accreditation procedures consistent with the Australian recognition framework. This will help achieve a nationally consistent registration process where training organisations can be evaluated using the same national criteria. Training providers registered interstate will be able to deliver training in Queensland while being required to meet Queensland's audit and quality requirements. Training organisations registered in Queensland will be able to deliver their services anywhere in Australia. This new system will provide the flexibility to accommodate quality national standards now and in the future.

TAFE Queensland

From 1993 to 1995, Queensland's 32 TAFE colleges were restructured into 16 institutes to provide a more efficient and comprehensive service. The Bill recognises these institutional changes, giving legislative backing to the appointment of institute councils.

Appeals

A new appeals process is being introduced. Industry stakeholders see the existing system as lacking substance and independence, being overly bureaucratic and cumbersome. The new appeals mechanism addresses these concerns and reflects the needs of a modern, streamlined training system. Under the new system, appeals from decisions that have substantial impact on a person or an organisation's commercial

activities can proceed to the Magistrates Court. This includes decisions relating to the registration of training organisations, the accreditation of courses and the recognition of industry training advisory bodies and group training organisations.

An appeal on matters of law may be taken to the District Court. Appeals relating to the training and employment of apprentices or trainees may proceed to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. This recognises that a growing proportion of apprentices and trainees are adults, where previously the majority were under the age of 18. The commission will hear appeals related to the scope and quality of training provided to apprentices and trainees and to disciplinary matters. A further appeal on points of law may be taken to the Industrial Court in matters relating to disciplinary issues.

Vocational Placement

The Bill incorporates vocational placement provisions formerly contained in the Vocational Education and Training (Industry Placement) Act 1992. Vocational placement allows full-time students to undertake training in a work environment. This is a critical element to the effective delivery of training packages for full-time students by allowing students to attain work-ready competency before entering the workplace.

The new system will ensure that vocational placement students are required to be provided with a training plan. This will assist in delivering high-quality and relevant training. It is a further demonstration of the Government's commitment to reducing abuses of vocational placement where students have been placed in workplaces where they undertook duties unrelated to their formal studies.

Industrial Relations

Schedule 1 of the Bill makes amendments to the Industrial Relations Act 1999. The amendments to the Act fall within three categories. The first involves technical amendments that ensure the provisions of the Act operate in the manner that they were intended. Users of the Act have brought these to my attention since the introduction of the Act in July 1999. These amendments do not involve any change to the policy position established in the Act last year.

The second involves the unfair dismissal provisions for Federal award employees employed by non-constitutional corporations. A ruling of the High Court, handed down after this House passed the Industrial Relations Act

1999, has prevented the operation of the complementary laws established under the Industrial Relations Act 1999. As a result these employees have no avenue to seek a remedy for an unfair dismissal. The amendment to section 72 will allow these employees to access the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission.

The third category involves amendments that are consequential to the introduction of the Training and Employment Bill 2000. These amendments complement the provisions of the Bill and in some cases they continue provisions that were not incorporated in the Bill but were contained within the Acts that are to be repealed. This is consistent with the recommendations of the Industrial Relations Task Force, which recommended that industrial relations arrangements for apprentices and trainees should be under the Industrial Relations Act 1999.

Conclusion

Queensland industry and our community need relevant and effective vocational education and training. Queenslanders need quality vocational education and training. This Bill positions Queensland's training system for the future and establishes a platform to build a strong, effective and balanced system. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Beanland, adjourned.

MINING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP)
(Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister Assisting the Deputy Premier on Regional Development) (11.53 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend certain Acts administered by the Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister Assisting the Deputy Premier on Regional Development."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Mr McGrady, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP)
(Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister

Assisting the Deputy Premier on Regional Development) (11.54 a.m.): I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

As the name indicates, the Mining and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2000 amends a number of mining Acts. The Bill provides for essential but minor amendments to the Coal and Oil Shale Mine Workers' Superannuation Act 1989, the new Explosives Act 1999, the new Coal Mining Safety and Health Act 1999 and the new Mining and Quarrying Safety and Health Act 1999.

The primary objectives of the Bill are, firstly, to provide a statutory basis for an existing administrative arrangement whereby the obligation on both coal employers and employees to pay superannuation contributions does not apply in respect of periods when an employee is on unpaid leave. The Bill makes it clear that any obligation to pay contributions in such circumstances was never a requirement; secondly, to correct minor inconsistencies and omissions that had arisen during the passage of the new mining safety and health Acts so that both Acts will then be consistent with each other; and, thirdly, to extend the automatic expiry of the existing explosives regulation to allow time for a new regulation to be drafted and made.

I will now address the first of these objectives relating to the proposed amendments to the Coal and Oil Shale Mine Workers' Superannuation Act 1989. Up to December 1989, the superannuation entitlements of coalmine workers in Queensland were controlled by the Coal Mine Workers Pensions Fund, which was administered by the Department of Mines. During 1989, the then State Government decided it was more appropriate that coalmine workers superannuation entitlements be managed by the coal mining industry. On 25 December 1989, the Act was proclaimed transferring the superannuation entitlements of the Queensland coalmine workers into the Queensland Coal and Oil Shale Mining Industry Superannuation Fund. The trustee of the Queensland Coal and Oil Shale Mining Industry Superannuation Fund comprises representatives from both employers and unions in the Queensland coalmining industry. All employees make the same contributions of presently \$13.82 per week, while employers make a contribution of \$41.46 per week for each employee.

The superannuation fund has a membership of 16,845, of which 7,593 are classified as contributing members. Members

have seen the funds under management in the Queensland Coal and Oil Shale Mining Industry Superannuation Fund increase from \$200m to in excess of \$800m in the 10 years since the transfer from Government to industry control in 1989.

The proposed amendment to the Act will provide a statutory basis for a longstanding administrative arrangement of the trustee of the superannuation fund of not requiring contributions from either the employer or employee in respect of periods of unpaid leave of an employee. This arrangement is consistent with provisions of the State Superannuation Fund and other industry funds. The Bill also includes a transitional provision which makes it clear that any obligation to pay superannuation contributions under the existing Act never applied during periods of unpaid leave.

The current primary purpose of the Act is to provide for superannuation contributions by employers and employees in the coal and oil shale mining industries. The current long title of the Act is to be amended to reflect its current intent. Through savings provisions, the existing Act contains a number of references to the repealed Coal and Oil Shale Mine Workers (Pensions) Act 1941. For ease of reading, the existing Act is to be amended to include these provisions. I am pleased to report the proposed amendments are fully supported by the mining industry and all coal mining unions.

I now turn to the second objective of the Bill, which relates to a number of proposed amendments to the new mining safety and health Acts. The new legislation was passed by Parliament as cognate legislation in August 1999. The proposed minor amendments to both Acts correct anomalies and inconsistencies that had arisen during the passage of the legislation. Once amended, both Acts will be consistent with each other. For example, section 237 entitled "Court may order suspension or cancellation of certificate" of the Mining and Quarrying Safety and Health Act includes a provision that allows a person, dissatisfied with the industrial magistrate's decision to suspend or cancel the person's certificate of competency, to appeal to the Industrial Court. The equivalent section—section 258—in the Coal Mining Safety and Health Act does not include a right of appeal. To correct this anomaly and inconsistency, the Bill amends the Coal Mining Safety and Health Act to provide for an appeal to the Industrial Court.

Finally, I will address the third objective of the Bill relating to a proposed amendment to the new Explosives Act 1999. The new Act, which was proclaimed on 11 June 1999, includes a transitional provision which provides for the existing explosives regulation to expire one year after the commencement of the Act, that is, on 10 June 2000. Owing to other legislative priorities it is unlikely that the new explosives regulation will be drafted and made by that date. Accordingly, to allow time for the making of the new regulation the Bill includes a provision to extend the automatic expiry of the existing regulation to 30 June 2001.

As I indicated at the outset, whilst the Mining and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2000 provides for essential amendments to a number of mining Acts, the proposed amendments are of a minor and non-controversial nature. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Seeney, adjourned.

ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister Assisting the Deputy Premier on Regional Development) (12.01 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Electricity Act 1994."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Mr McGrady, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister Assisting the Deputy Premier on Regional Development) (12.02 p.m.): I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

This Government is committed to providing a balance between the commercial performance of electricity entities and community and consumer protection measures.

The Electricity Amendment Bill 2000 will allow the establishment of an arbitration process which authorises energy arbitrators, as

independent third parties, to hear disputes between electricity entities and customers, to determine matters in dispute and to make orders against electricity entities as necessary. The Bill will authorise the appointment of independent energy arbitrators for this purpose. In addition, the Bill will authorise that advisory committees such as regional electricity councils may be established, and in this instance continue in existence.

In December 1999, the Electricity and Gas Legislation Amendment Act 1999 postponed the automatic commencement of the Electricity Industry Ombudsman provisions in the Electricity Amendment Act (No. 3) 1997 to 5 December 2000. As part of the electricity industry restructure, the Government gave approval to establish an office located within the Department of Mines and Energy, which would be structured in a manner that would provide all of the benefits of an ombudsman model of dispute resolution without the need and use of overly complex and bureaucratic processes. I also committed to an evaluation of the performance of that office compared to an ombudsman model before making a final decision on a preferred method of dispute resolution.

The Bill provides the authority for independent arbitrators to be appointed by the Minister for Mines and Energy, and equips them with the powers to make determinations and decisions to resolve disputes that cannot be resolved through mediation.

The Bill also contains a minor amendment which provides a statutory basis for the establishment of advisory committees such as regional electricity councils and provides for the existing regional electricity councils to continue in existence as if they had been established as advisory committees under the Electricity Act 1994.

Mr Speaker, as part of the electricity industry restructure in early 1999, the Government determined that a unit, which is now known as the Consumer Protection Office, was to be formed to deal with customer grievances and provide a means for electricity customers and others to have complaints investigated by a third party if they are not satisfied with the response from the electricity entity with whom they are dealing.

The Bill provides for the appointment of independent energy arbitrators with powers to hear and determine the matter in dispute and make, against the electricity entity concerned, a monetary order of up to \$10,000 or a non-monetary order to remedy any issue in dispute.

Under the existing provisions of the Electricity Act 1994, the Regulator (the Director-General, Department of Mines and Energy) is empowered to provide a mediation role in disputes between electricity entities and customers or others affected by the electricity entities' operations, but the Regulator does not possess the authority to make decisions in relation to such disputes.

The Bill provides for the Regulator's existing role to be extended such that, in the event that a dispute cannot be resolved through mediation, the Regulator can refer the matter to an independent arbitrator who will have the power to make decisions and orders in relation to matters in dispute. The Bill provides for the Minister for Mines and Energy to be able to appoint a panel of independent arbitrators for this purpose.

The Consumer Protection Office will incorporate and extend the Regulator's statutory role in relation to complaints and disputes between electricity entities and customers or other affected parties. In effect, the office, in conjunction with the energy arbitrators, will perform the functions of an electricity industry ombudsman.

Specific functions and duties will include—

- ensuring that the public is aware of this dispute resolution service, its functions and access arrangements;

- investigating complaints referred to the office by electricity customers and others about the performance and operations of electricity entities;

- mediating in disputes between electricity entities and customers and other parties in an attempt to resolve the matter in dispute, or with the agreement of the customer, refer the matter to an independent energy arbitrator for decision;

- advising on the appropriateness of internal complaint handling procedures implemented by electricity distribution and retail entities;

- liaising with key stakeholder groups and peer organisations in order to develop best practice in mediation processes and an increased awareness of any issues in the energy sector which may lead to increased consumer complaints and disputes; and

- identifying areas where electricity customer complaints are emanating from systemic causes in sufficient

numbers to warrant, with the cooperation of the entities involved, the conduct of a research program to identify problem areas, propose new approaches and change the patterns of administration in the area concerned.

To ensure that disputes between electricity entities and customers or other parties affected by the electricity entities' operations are addressed in a timely and cost effective manner, a three stage process is proposed.

Stage 1 involves invoking the relevant electricity entity's internal dispute resolution and customer complaint process. A customer who has a complaint or dispute with an electricity entity should firstly allow the electricity entity concerned to attempt to resolve the issue through its own internal processes. In the event that the customer is not satisfied with the electricity entity's response to the complaint, the customer may then refer the matter to the Consumer Protection Office.

The second stage of dispute resolution involves mediation by the Consumer Protection Office. Disputes may be referred to that office if the matter has first been dealt with by the electricity entity's internal dispute resolution processes and the customer is not satisfied with the outcome. Upon a dispute being referred to the office, mediation between the parties concerned will be used to attempt to settle the matter.

In the event that the mediation process fails to resolve the dispute to the satisfaction of the customer, the Regulator, and only the Regulator, may refer the matter to an independent arbitrator for decision. The matter may only be referred to an arbitrator if the customer agrees.

The third and final stage of dispute resolution is formal arbitration. The arbitrator to which the dispute is referred may hear and determine the matter in dispute and may make, against the electricity entity concerned, a monetary order of up to \$10,000 or a non-monetary order to remedy any issue in dispute. This process will not prevent any party exercising other rights before a court or tribunal.

It is proposed that up to seven independent energy arbitrators will be appointed through Gazette notice by the Minister for this purpose. These arbitrators will be selected on their ability to provide impartial decisions regarding disputes that have not been able to be resolved satisfactorily through

either internal complaint procedures or by mediation. Each arbitrator will either be a graded member of the Institute of Arbitrators and Mediators or, alternatively, will possess qualifications or skills which are considered appropriate for the requirements of this role.

It is expected that some of these arbitrators will be regionally based. Unless otherwise determined, a single arbitrator will preside over all hearings. The arbitrators will be paid on a fee-for-service basis plus be reimbursed for their actual expenses. This process will ensure that electricity customers and other affected parties have an accessible and effective means of having complaints and disputes with electricity entities investigated and determined by an independent third party.

Whilst cost alone should not and has not been the determining factor in deciding between a separate statutory authority, as is the case with an electricity industry ombudsman or a departmentally located Consumer Protection Office, preliminary cost estimates indicate savings with the latter option. It is estimated that the recurrent funding of the Consumer Protection Office, based on six staff, will be \$0.79m. This represents a saving of approximately 36% on the estimated costs of establishing an ombudsman's office in Queensland.

All costs associated with the dispute resolution functions of the Consumer Protection Office and the independent energy arbitrators will be funded by a levy on the electricity entities. The Bill includes an amendment to the Electricity Act to allow for the application of this levy. The public will be advised of the establishment of the Consumer Protection Office to ensure that consumers are aware of the existence of the office, and the availability of a process to attempt to resolve any issues that they may have in relation to disputes with electricity entities.

In August 1999, seven regional electricity councils were established to provide a forum for external community involvement in the operations of the regional electricity network, including proposed changes to the local network and improvements in the way Government owned electricity distribution and retail corporations operate within the region. A regional electricity council's function may be to give information and advice on matters impacting on communities in a particular region, including—

- service levels provided by electricity entities;
- reliability of electricity supply;

environmental concerns;
major electricity infrastructure projects;
and
proposed changes to the local electricity network.

The proposed changes within the Bill with respect to the establishment of advisory committees are intended to broaden the role of such committees through a minor legislative amendment which will allow the continuation in existence of the regional electricity councils which were established in August 1999. This process is distinct to the current appointment of members under the prerogative power of the Crown.

The Electricity Amendment Bill 2000 will provide consumers with a means to ensure any complaints between them and electricity entities are investigated promptly and effectively, and ensure that disputes are resolved through investigation, mediation and arbitration processes. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Seeney, adjourned.

EQUITY AND FAIR TRADING (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Women's Policy and Minister for Fair Trading) (12.14 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend Acts administered by the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Women's Policy and Minister for Fair Trading."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Ms Spence, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Women's Policy and Minister for Fair Trading) (12.15 p.m.): I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

The purpose of the Bill is to make minor and technical amendments to legislative provisions in a number of Acts administered by the Department of Equity and Fair Trading to overcome difficulties with the administration of the legislation. Amendments are to be made to the following 10 Acts—

Associations Incorporation Act 1981;
Auctioneers and Agents Act 1971;
Bills of Sale and Other Instruments Act 1955;
Business Names Act 1961;
Charitable Funds Act 1958;
Collections Act 1966;
Cooperatives Act 1997;
Liens on Crops of Sugar Cane Act 1931;
Returned & Services League of Australia (Queensland Branch) Act 1956; and the
Security Providers Act 1993.

An urgent amendment is required as a consequence of the passage of A New Tax System (Goods and Services Tax) Act 1999—the GST law—to enable licensees under the Auctioneers and Agents Act 1971—the A & A Act—to charge clients an additional amount on top of the regulated commission rate to cover their GST liability.

At present, section 78 of the A & A Act makes it an offence for a licensee to demand, receive or retain an amount in excess of the prescribed commission rate. Section 7 of the A & A Act and section 47(3)(zp) of the Collections Act 1966 provide that a regulation may be made to exempt a person from the Act or a provision of the Act. These sections are in breach of fundamental legislative principles under the Legislative Standards Act 1992 in that they permit exemptions to be granted by the Executive from compliance with the law as made by Parliament.

Such provisions are commonly referred to as Henry VIII clauses. The Bill will repeal these sections. As a consequence of the repeal of section 7 of the A & A Act, the age qualification of 21 years will be changed to 18, and the requirement that a person must be resident in Queensland or within 65 kilometres of the boundary of Queensland in order to qualify for a licence as a manager or licensee of a place of business will be repealed. Maturity and the ability to operate a business in Queensland remain relevant considerations as to whether an applicant for a licence complies with all the requirements of the Act.

Further, an amendment is proposed to section 119 of the A & A Act to allow the

registrar to accept claims of a certain amount made outside the time frame. As a consequence of the repeal of section 47(3)(zp) of the Collections Act 1966, section 29 is redrafted to require that the constitution of a registered charity must provide that its income and property is not to be paid to or distributed to its members, unless the charity is one that is listed in a new Schedule 5 to the Act.

The Associations Incorporation Act 1981 and the Cooperatives Act 1997 have both been amended to take into consideration modern technology to allow persons to inspect the registers by using a computer and to allow extracts of the register to be made available from a computer. Amendments have been made to the Associations Incorporation Act 1981, the Business Names Act 1961 and the Cooperatives Act 1997 to allow access to the register on a continuing basis with the use of an account system and to be billed in arrears. A number of the Acts, including the Associations Incorporation Act 1981, the Charitable Funds Act 1958, the Collections Act 1966 and the Security Providers Act 1993, have had amendments made to change the definition of the term "auditor" or "accountant". The amendment reflects the outcome of discussions with the National Institute of Accountants that auditors satisfy certain requirements before being entitled to practise.

Under the Equity and Fair Trading (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1999—the Act—the Bills of Sale and Other Instruments Act 1955 and the Liens on Crops of Sugar Cane Act 1931 were to be amended by declaratory provisions to remove any doubt as to the validity of new registration systems which commenced by regulation two weeks before the systems' enabling provisions commenced. As the provisions were drafted with an automatic expiry provision of 31 December 1999, they expired before the Act commenced on 10 March 2000. It is proposed that these provisions be re-enacted in this Bill.

The Returned & Services League of Australia (Queensland Branch) Act 1956 is to be amended to allow district or sub-branches to incorporate. It is not the intent of this legislation to in any way take rights away from sub-branches or to alter any existing rights to control and manage properties. This will, however, provide the protection of limited liability to members. To ensure that the property relationship between the district and sub-branches and the Queensland branch is maintained, district and sub-branches that take advantage of incorporation will be required to hold their property on the same conditions as

those contained in the former trust applying before incorporation.

These amendments have been requested by the Returned & Services League—the RSL—in order to clarify the intention that long established arrangements regarding property are not to be affected by access to incorporation. RSL Queensland Branch President, Ray de Vere, has written to a number of members of Parliament to express his organisation's desire to expedite this legislative change. I am sure honourable members will want to cooperate with the Government in ensuring that the RSL's wish is granted for this change to be passed before the RSL's State convention in July. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Beanland, adjourned.

SUGAR INDUSTRY AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP)
(Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (12.21 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Sugar Industry Act 1999, and for other purposes."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Mr Palaszczuk, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP)
(Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (12.22 p.m.): I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

This is an important Bill which continues the reform process of the Queensland sugar industry following on from the introduction of the Sugar Industry Act 1999. This is, in effect, part 2 of the reform package and gives effect to a number of matters that were still being finalised at the time that part 1 of the reform package, namely the core provisions set out in the 1999 Act, was enacted.

The Bill now before the House will ensure a continued focus on industry adjustment, facilitating a more flexible, commercially focused industry. The focus of the Bill might be

summarised as "giving the sugar industry ownership and control of its marketing and handling assets". The major amendments to the Sugar Industry Act 1999 contained in the Bill are—

Firstly, Replacement of the Queensland Sugar Corporation with an industry controlled marketing company.

As requested by the industry, responsibility for the single desk marketing of raw sugar will be transferred from the Queensland Sugar Corporation to an industry owned and controlled raw sugar marketing company to be known as Queensland Sugar Limited, or QSL. The creation of QSL is a major turning point for the sugar industry. This step is a recognition of the maturity of industry and the willingness of growers and millers to take control of their own destiny. Five years ago, a step like this would have been unthinkable. Now it will be a reality.

The corporation's staff, marketing assets and liabilities will be transferred to the new industry owned company, which will then be responsible for the marketing of Queensland's entire sugar production. Marketing will be undertaken not in Sydney but in Brisbane, so our State will have the benefit of the presence of world-class traders. Our long-term relationship with Czarnikow of London will be maintained. This is consistent with the restructuring of statutory marketing authorities in a range of industries, such as grain, cotton, tobacco, peanuts and eggs, where industry ownership has been recognised and given a tangible corporate form in place of the traditional statutory structure, where ultimate ownership was either indeterminate or left in the hands of Government in a strict legal sense.

The all-important raw sugar vesting powers, which underpin single desk selling, will be retained but will also transfer to QSL from the Sugar Corporation. Queensland Sugar Limited has a constitution that has been agreed to by industry. The board will have four grower and four miller members, together with the chief executive, two independent members and an independent chair. Provision is also made for the establishment of an oversighting statutory authority, known as the Sugar Authority, to ensure the raw sugar vesting powers are appropriately used. It will provide ongoing monitoring of the performance of QSL in the exercise of the single desk selling role that flows from vesting.

The Sugar Authority will comprise the Sugar Industry Commissioner. However, the Governor in Council may also appoint, as

appropriate, other persons to assist in the functions of the authority. Given the importance of the vesting and single desk arrangement to the industry, the Bill provides for the Sugar Authority to exercise an important fall-back position should ownership and control of Queensland Sugar Limited ever move out of the hands of the Queensland sugar industry. In that event, the vesting powers would then transfer automatically from QSL to the Sugar Authority. The vesting powers would also transfer to the Sugar Authority if the constitution of QSL did not comply with the requirements of the Sugar Industry Act or if QSL went into receivership. This is an important precautionary measure to ensure that control over the single desk arrangements can always be exercised in a manner that benefits the Queensland sugar industry.

I am confident that Queensland Sugar Limited will serve the industry well. It will be one of Queensland's largest companies, with an annual turnover of up to \$2 billion. QSL will continue to manage and operate the bulk sugar terminals, which leads me to the next major change in this Bill.

Secondly, Transfer of Bulk Sugar Terminals to Industry.

In accordance with a scheme developed by the industry, the Bill amends the Sugar Industry Act to bring about industry ownership of the bulk sugar terminal assets for which industry has paid. The amendments provide that the bulk sugar terminal assets and liabilities will initially vest in the Queensland Sugar Corporation and for their subsequent transfer to a company known as Sugar Terminals Limited, or STL, which is industry owned and controlled. Part of the consideration for the transfer of assets will be shares in STL, which the corporation will then distribute to growers and mill owners who are deemed eligible to receive the shares. Distribution of the shares will be in accordance with a share entitlement methodology that has been developed by the industry via the Bulk Sugar Terminals Management Group.

To facilitate the smooth transition of Queensland Sugar Corporation assets to the two new companies, namely QSL and STL, the legislation will provide for the appointment of the Sugar Industry Commissioner as administrator of the corporation to identify and distribute the assets to industry in accordance with the Act. In relation to the distribution of STL shares by the corporation, details of entitlement distribution will be described in a public document to be provided by STL. The

criteria for share entitlement were devised by the Bulk Sugar Terminals Management Group following extensive consultation with all sectors of the industry.

There will be an appeal process available, should it prove to be necessary, for any eligible shareholder who is dissatisfied with his or her share allocation. Any appeals will lie with the Magistrates Court. As I mentioned earlier, the operating assets of the terminals will stay with QSL in order that it can manage the terminals. It is the Government's belief that marketing and handling should be undertaken by the same body to achieve an integrated approach to the supply chain. This integrated approach will keep us ahead of our international competitors, particularly Brazil.

These amendments relating to STL give me particular satisfaction. They give the industry ownership and control over what it has paid for over a long period of time. This certainly has been a long time in coming. This Bill very clearly shows that it is Labor that is committed to the sugar industry; it is Labor that understands the sugar industry; and it is Labor that delivers for the sugar industry. It should be remembered also that the transfer of the bulk sugar terminals to industry was the idea of Ed Casey. This is the same Minister for Primary Industries who opened up the Burdekin to expansion, who played a key role in the creation of the Mackay Sugar Cooperative and who also brought about significant reforms through the landmark 1991 Sugar Industry Act.

Times are tough for the sugar industry, but as a Government we have pursued a vigorous reform agenda which will yield results for the industry in the years to come. Our record stands in stark contrast to the neglect of the industry by the National Party during its recent period in office.

Thirdly, Conversion Options for Cane Protection and Productivity Boards

These amendments provide each of the 20 locally based cane protection and productivity boards with the option of converting from a statutory authority to a non-statutory corporate form such as a company, cooperative or incorporated association. These boards are established under the Sugar Industry Act 1999 to enhance the productivity of the sugar industry by increasing the quantity and improving the quality of cane produced by crops grown in its area. The boards provide agronomic advice to growers in the local mill area, supply clean plant cane for growers and cooperate in the prevention, control and eradication of pests and diseases.

Following a forum of the boards in Townsville in December 1999, a formal request was made to include optional provisions in the Act to enable the transition of those boards who want to go down this path into some form of corporate body, with ownership and control residing with industry. The Bill provides for this, but it will be up to each board to decide whether to avail themselves of this option or not. Transition into a company, cooperative or incorporated association will better enable each body to seek voluntary industry funding in view of the fact that the previous statutory levy funding arrangements have had to be terminated due to legal factors beyond the control of the State.

Fourthly, Empowerment of Local Industry Boards to Recover Their Costs of Providing Services

The Bill proposes an amendment to allow cane protection and productivity boards and cane production boards to recover from growers the cost of providing services requested by growers. The ability to recover the cost of services provided to growers will underpin the viability of the cane protection and productivity boards prior to their conversion into non-statutory bodies. In the case of the 25 cane production boards, these administer the granting and transfer of cane production areas relating to mills. Under this proposed amendment, these boards will be able to recover costs by way of a lodgment fee on application for a new cane production area. This would be solely on a cost recovery basis and will meet secretarial and meeting expenses.

Fifthly, Other Amendments Sought by Industry to Clarify the Sugar Industry Act 1999

There are several other matters to be attended to. A provision in Division 4 of the Sugar Industry Act 1999 deals with the issue of the supply to a mill of cane from that mill's own cane farms. This was an issue of considerable concern to growers and was resolved by special provisions governing mill-owned cane. In essence, the mill may only supply its own cane in a way that does not have a significant adverse effect on the supply of cane by growers. Currently, growers are concerned that there is an ambiguity in the section which might be exploited by millers. To overcome this difficulty, an amendment is being made to make it clear that the significant adverse effect is upon growers in the collective.

It is also proposed to insert a transitional provision to resolve doubts about the continuity of mill suppliers committees elected

under the now repealed Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing Act 1926. This will allow existing mill suppliers committees to continue their statutory functions under the Sugar Industry Act 1999. An amendment is proposed to the section relating to individual agreements to clarify the process where a grower proposes to enter into an individual agreement with a mill and specifies what notices are required and who needs to provide them.

Finally, Amendment of Primary Industry Bodies Reform Act 1999 (PIBR Act)

This Bill also proposes to amend the Primary Industries Bodies Reform Act 1999 to cover employee transfer and to clarify grower eligibility for the locally funded assets held in trust by the Queensland Canegrowers Organisation Ltd which replaced the former statutory organisation. This amendment has been sought by that organisation. The reform Act terminated the five statutory producer representative bodies and provided for the transfer of the assets and liabilities of these bodies to a nominated non-statutory corporate entity which, in the case of the sugar industry, is Queensland Canegrowers Organisation Ltd. To safeguard local grower interests in locally funded assets at mill and district level, the reform Act provided that the new company must hold these assets in trust for eligible growers as defined in the Act as the beneficiaries at mill and district level.

The amendments will clarify the definition of "eligible grower" for the purposes of the trust arrangements as being those growers in the industry from time to time rather than just those who were in the industry when the trust arrangements commenced. They will also provide that employees of the organisation at district and mill level are covered by the trust arrangements. For legal reasons, these amendments have to be made retrospective back to the time the local trust arrangements commenced. If this did not happen, then, as the section is currently worded, it could have the unintended effect of requiring the trust moneys to continue to be used for the benefit of persons who were in the industry when the trust was established but who subsequently leave the industry. This would be contrary to the objective of having trust moneys applied to purposes that benefit those persons who are actually growing the crop from time to time. The amendments also clarify the relationship between mill suppliers committees under the Sugar Industry Act 1999 and newly established corporations under the Primary Industries Bodies Reform Act 1999. This has

been done at the request of growers in the Kalamia mill area.

There are several other retrospective provisions in the Bill which are corrections of minor technical errors in the Sugar Industry Act 1999. I anticipate that industry will want to know whether stamp duty will be applicable on transactions connected with the incorporation of Queensland Sugar Ltd, the transfer of bulk sugar terminal assets into industry ownership and the incorporation of the cane protection and productivity boards. It needs to be stated up front that, whilst there might be an expectation of an exemption or refund of stamp duty, there is actually no provision for this under the Stamp Act. Also, it is longstanding Government policy not to legislate for specific stamp duty exemptions, although there is a well-established mechanism for refunding stamp duty which is applicable here.

What happens is that stamp duty will need to be assessed and paid in accordance with the Stamp Act 1894, as has been the case with all other primary industry restructuring exercises to date. The subject body will then be able to apply for an ex gratia payment from the Consolidated Fund equivalent to the stamp duty paid. Any such request can be accommodated, subject to the consent of the Under Treasurer, under provisions of the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977. This is normal procedure. I will certainly support any request for an ex gratia repayment of stamp duty in respect of the corporate restructuring exercises covered by this Bill. I would expect such requests to be favourably received by Government providing the procedures set out in this Bill are properly followed.

In conclusion, this Bill represents a further step down the path of reform and restructuring in the sugar industry. It positions the industry to own and control its marketing and logistics to a greater extent than has ever previously been the case. This Bill deserves the wholehearted support of this House. It delivers on what the industry wants. Every one of the key amendments has been requested by industry. I ask that the Opposition put aside petty politics and support this Bill. They should give it wholehearted support and refrain from the sort of filibustering we saw on the last occasion that sugar legislation was before this House.

This Bill is manifestly in the best interests of the sugar industry, an industry that is the lifeblood of many coastal communities in Queensland. In recognition of this, I hope that

all unnecessary verbosity will be kept to a minimum in the interests of getting this sensible legislation in place as quickly as possible. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Rowell, adjourned.

CIVIL JUSTICE REFORM AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 14 March (see p. 343).

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12.40 p.m.): The Opposition supports the amendment Bill before the Parliament. The amendment Bill is largely technical in nature. I understand that it has come about as a consequence of consultation between the Residential Tenancies Authority and the Chief Stipendiary Magistrate in this State to overcome some of the historical difficulties experienced by the Small Claims Tribunal relating to matters of tenancy law.

The Bill simply seeks to amend parts of the Civil Justice Reform Act 1998 and, therefore, should generally be supported by this Parliament. I think it is fair to say that the provisions in that Act were implemented in good faith to try to resolve some of the issues of the day. As the Attorney-General is very aware, historically there have been difficulties and disputes between landlords and tenants in the Small Claims Tribunal in relation to the application of the Residential Tenancies Act. The provisions of the Act we are seeking to remove sought to overcome those problems. I am heartened that the Chief Stipendiary Magistrate and the Residential Tenancies Authority have resolved these issues and believe that these provisions in the Civil Justice Reform Act are no longer necessary.

I will pose one issue for the Attorney-General to consider. As he is very aware, there is a some call by tenants around the State to move towards the establishment of a residential tenancies tribunal. That is of concern to me. I hope what we are doing here today does not necessarily lead to the establishment of that sort of body in the future.

Considering their difficulty, I believe that disputes that arise between landlords and tenants in the area of tenancy law are much better considered in a general purpose tribunal. In that case people would be dealing with magistrates who are aware of a broad range of community issues. I am not sure it would be in anyone's best interests for the State to establish a residential tenancies tribunal. I think there is a role for specialist

tribunals, but I am not sure it would be appropriate in this instance.

I think a cooperative approach is the best approach. As is implicit in this Bill, the Chief Stipendiary Magistrate and the Residential Tenancies Authority have sat down and worked out these issues. That ensures that a general purpose tribunal, which is the best forum in which to deal with these matters, can operate in a reasonable way. I think the legislation before the Parliament will facilitate that.

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (12.43 p.m.), in reply: I thank the Opposition for its support of the Bill. This is, as the honourable member observed, based upon consultation and cooperation between the Residential Tenancies Authority and the Chief Stipendiary Magistrate.

It is not on the Government's agenda to move to a residential tenancies tribunal. I am aware of the arguments in favour of that put forward over many years. For reasons akin to the reasoning of the former Government, which did not move to that, the Government has no plans to establish such a body. In any event, it would be premature to engage in that debate at this stage because the arrangements being put in place are designed to make things work and to ensure that justice is done in a speedy, inexpensive and fair way. I commend the Bill to the House.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Clauses 1 to 3, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

Bill, on motion of Mr Foley, by leave, read a third time.

CORPORATIONS (QUEENSLAND)

AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 14 March (see p. 345).

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12.46 p.m.): The Opposition will be supporting the Corporations (Queensland) Amendment Bill. We have a very good reason for doing so. As the Attorney-General outlined in his second-reading speech, the legislation we are debating today is all about ensuring a

continuation of the cooperative approach taken by the State, Territory and Commonwealth Governments in relation to the Corporations Law.

In the past the Attorney-General has spoken about the operation of MINCO and about the opportunity for him and the Attorneys-General of the various State, Territory and Commonwealth jurisdictions to come forward and ensure that cooperative approach right across Australia. That is something we appreciate greatly. For a number of years, probably over a decade, there has been a desire on the part of all Australian Governments to ensure a greater degree of consistency in relation to not only Corporations Law but also a range of laws.

It pains us, as I am sure it pains the Attorney-General, to have some of these very good schemes and innovations brought into question by decisions of the High Court. I know that the High Court has the right to oversee, to uphold our Constitution and the common law and to innovate in the area of law from time to time. That is something we appreciate, but it is fair to say that that does cause all Attorneys-General a degree of frustration. One example relates to the recent High Court decision in the area of cross-vesting, which is yet to be resolved. I am not sure how it is to be resolved, but these interim measures may be of assistance in the long run.

I recently asked the Federal Attorney-General about the issue of cross-vesting. We know that, short of a constitutional change, courts in the Queensland jurisdiction will have to assume greater responsibility to try to overcome that particular workload.

The Corporations (Queensland) Amendment Bill seeks to ensure ongoing consistency across the States, Territories and the Commonwealth and to ensure that we are abreast of potential problems. I understand that there is currently a matter before the High Court which this particular piece of legislation seeks to address, dependent upon the decision of the High Court in that matter.

I would like to make one final point. Whilst it is very good that we have these cooperative approaches from State, Territory and Commonwealth Governments to Corporations Law and other laws, we need to be careful that we do not cede our genuine concerns to others in relation to individual State prerogatives. I know that there is some concern that the genesis for some decisions and ideas come from the CEOs of Government departments. These decisions are being made by unelected people. This

comes about because of the dynamics of having the various jurisdictions working together. I am sure the Attorney-General is aware of that situation.

I would like to say to the Attorney-General that Queensland very much expects him to stand up for Queensland's interests on all occasions—particularly when he attends MINCO. The legislation which is currently before the House is worthy of the Parliament's support. It is concerned with modernising the Corporations Law and ensuring consistency across all jurisdictions. We must ensure that we stand ready to address any uncertainties that may be drawn to the attention of the Commonwealth, State or Territory Governments by any decision of the High Court.

The Opposition supports the Bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mickel): Order! Before I call the Attorney-General, could I ask the House to recognise the parents, teachers and students of the Highfields State School in the electorate of Crows Nest.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Minister for Justice and Attorney-General and Minister for The Arts) (12.51 p.m.), in reply: I thank the Opposition for its support of this Bill.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Clauses 1 to 10 and Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

Bill, on motion of Mr Foley, by leave, read a third time.

STATE HOUSING AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 12 April (see p. 823).

Mr GOSS (Aspley—LP) (12.53 p.m.): I am pleased to speak on the State Housing Amendment Bill. When we consider Governments going into business, as such, it is necessary that we recall such events in the past as the home loan scheme and the rental purchase scheme. Both those schemes were absolute disasters for many people. The people affected by those schemes included the purchasers of homes and the taxpayers of Queensland. The State had to bear the losses suffered under those schemes.

I am concerned about people buying houses on a very minimal deposit. Large numbers of people in our community are naturally bad money managers. When they see an offer on TV of six free steak knives they use their Bankcard. Their homes are full of steak knives. In our community we have people who spend their money on impulse. All too soon they find themselves in financial difficulties.

Many people struggle in order to raise a deposit in order to purchase a home. It is necessary that people receive counselling about their commitments. People consider the payments they must make on their loans, but they do not look past that point. In the future they will be paying rates and insurance and the cost of maintenance. We all see advertisements on TV which say, "Why pay \$160 a week rent when you can own a house for the same amount per week?" That is a false statement because one has to consider the additional payments that one has to make.

I assume that the 200 or 300 homes which will be sold each year will be spread across the State so that there is no major effect on valuations in particular areas. It would cause problems if people are trying to sell their homes and the Government offloads too many properties in the same area. That would tend to deflate prices. In many areas of our State people who bought homes four or five years ago cannot sell them for the same price they paid for them. I do not believe that a Government should be in a position of causing additional hardship to home owners.

I have noticed in my electorate that some houses have asbestos roofing. I assume that matter will be taken into consideration when the properties are valued. People will have difficulty obtaining replacement sheeting if their roofs sustain damage in a hail storm. I am sure insurance companies would not pay for an entirely new roof. I am told that some of the roofs are very brittle and one has to be very careful when walking on them. People have fallen through such roofs.

The maximum income limit specified is \$55,000. That is a fairly substantial income for a young couple with a child. However, if a family has six children, such an income might be fairly average. Some people do have large families. In some cases adopted children are taken into the home. Under the previous schemes people wanted to get into their own homes at any price. We must ensure that people are not caught up in a scheme under which they have to pay a very high price for

the right to own their own home. It is the right of every Australian to own his own home.

Pensioners in my electorate who live in State housing regret that, when they were working, there was no scheme whereby they could purchase their own home. If they thought about purchasing their own home, they kept putting it off and never got around to it. Now they find that they regret it. I believe that once they purchase their own home they will have great pride and great enthusiasm in their ownership, especially when so many of the older homes are situated side by side.

Sitting suspended from 1 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

Mr GOSS: I would like to hear some comments from the Minister about capital improvements in terms of the valuation of a property. The valuation of the property can vary greatly, depending on how a person maintains and looks after it and the garden. I know that people in the real estate industry will say that if people are going to sell their house, they should throw some fertiliser on the lawn, mow it, trim the edges and put some flowering plants in the garden, because those things can make a tremendous difference in terms of how much other people perceive that property to be worth.

The problem with valuations is that some people really look after their homes. They rarely ever call for maintenance work to be done, because they do it all themselves. There are other people who do very little to their homes. Every time something is loose and they want a nail put in, those people want Q-Build to come out and do that. I know that it is very hard to say to those people who have looked after their homes, "You have looked after your house, you have done it well, so the property value is higher", when somebody who has not looked after their house and who has not spent any of their own money on it can buy their house for a cheaper price. That is just one of considerations that we have to make.

Finally, if, for example, a nurse, a policeman, a teacher or someone who works in private enterprise is transferred to another location for four or five years, would they be able to rent out their house? Sometimes people are transferred to take up positions elsewhere for a lot longer. In the past, those people who were constantly being transferred never actually owned a home of their own. When the time came for them to retire, they went into rental accommodation, because they really did not have the money to buy a house. They did not have that security, because they had moved around so much. In the Minister's reply, I

would like to hear about the ability of people who perhaps may be transferred a number of times, but have still been good tenants in a house, to rent out their houses.

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (2.33 p.m.): This Bill proposes to introduce the Queensland State Housing Loan, which is going to assist a lot of those people who currently are unable to access private finance to purchase their homes. In many respects, this is a Bill for the battlers out there who, like many people, dream to own their own home but run into that significant hurdle of getting through the bank's door to receive an approval for a loan. I think that this Bill is going to be of significant benefit to a number of people, particularly those people who currently rent a public house and pay the full market rent. It may be that it would be far better value for them to approach the department about purchasing their home.

The product that has been designed in this Bill seeks to improve the protections for people who get access to the loans from sharp increases in repayments when interest rates rise rapidly. The Bill also contains provisions that allow for the benefits to flow to those people in some circumstances when the rates drop. I think that is a very commendable initiative. I congratulate the department and the Minister on bringing this Bill into the House.

I want to touch on a couple of issues in my electorate that relate to public housing. In common with many members, I have a significant level of public housing in my electorate. For instance, in Zillmere around about a quarter—or 23% to 25% of housing—is owned by the department.

Mr Goss: And you're going to get some more soon.

Mr ROBERTS: With the change of boundaries, should I be successful at the next election, I will be getting a little bit more which, currently, is looked after by Mr Goss. I am looking forward to that.

At the moment in my electorate, some quite exciting developments in public housing are taking place, particularly in the Zillmere area. Already, over the past couple of years a significant amount of redevelopment of public housing in the Aspley electorate has taken place. I am quite pleased that that housing program has moved into the Nudgee electorate on the eastern side of the railway line. It is a very good refurbishment program. The homes have received everything from new roofs, kitchens and bathrooms, to repainting and fencing. That certainly gives the entire suburb a lift. I think that the department has

gone about that program in a very ordered way. One can see the benefits where those refurbishment programs have taken place.

Over the past year or so—or within the next year—approximately \$3.5m has been and will be spent within the Zillmere region. As I have said, a significant number of homes have been redeveloped and a large number have been earmarked for future redevelopment. I look forward to working with the department to ensure that those redevelopments go as smoothly as possible and that people in the community, not just tenants but also private owners of homes in those regions, recognise the benefits of that redevelopment, because I think that it provides significant benefits for owners of properties in those areas as well.

One of the developments about which I am particularly pleased is the proposed construction of 10 seniors units in Maher Street in Zillmere. I have been a great supporter of the development of seniors units in my electorate, particularly in suburbs where there are significant numbers of older residents. Zillmere fits into that category. It has a lot of long-term and sometimes second-generation people who have lived in public housing. They get to an age at which it becomes difficult for them to look after the yard and to look after a two or three-bedroom home when they are there on their own. Some people may voluntarily wish to transfer to smaller accommodation. However, the problem is that, in many areas, that smaller accommodation just does not exist. It is very pleasing to see the department putting a lot of effort into the appropriate design of seniors units.

Just across the road in a future section of the Nudgee electorate, but which currently is the Aspley electorate, is an excellent development in Funnel Street, which the Public Works Committee had a look at some time ago. The department is really displaying very high levels of commitment to properly designing seniors accommodation for our older residents. During that inspection by the Public Works Committee, I had the opportunity to examine some of the private sector contributions to seniors accommodation. I would say that, in terms of the design features that they are providing, the department would beat them by a country mile.

So I am looking forward to that development in Maher Street in Zillmere. I believe that there is scope for more similar types of seniors units development within that community. One of the reasons why we need

to keep our seniors in their local area is that it enables them to maintain links with their very important social and family networks, whether that be the local doctor or the local shops, with which they are familiar. So that is a tremendous development that I will look forward to promoting over the next 12 months or so.

I will make a brief mention of a very active community group in my electorate, RAGZ—Residents Action Group of Zillmere. For a number of years they have been very prominent in the public housing area. In fact, that group was formulated as a result of a coalition proposal back in the 1980s to virtually bulldoze the suburb of Zillmere and fill it up with high-density units. The group, the core of which is currently Jim Freilich, Val and Vern Pailthorpe and Janice Robinson, certainly keep me well informed. Certainly, on many occasions they contact the Minister, through me, about important public housing issues. I intend to maintain strong links with that group in the coming years.

The other issue that I am pleased to report on today is the refurbishment of seniors units at Edgar Street, Northgate. I am fully supportive of the department's excellent program of refurbishing our seniors units. There was an issue with this development in that the department originally proposed to install a driveway access into a very quiet neighbouring street, Olivia Street. The residents there reacted quite strongly. Under the very expert leadership, I might say, of Mr Grant Dearlove, who is the son of one of the residents, and myself, we managed to convince the department with the help of the Minister's office, which we appreciate, to stop that proposal. I can assure the Minister that the residents are extremely appreciative of his officers' support in that regard. I am sure that the department can find a suitable alternative in terms of future access to that site at some stage.

There is a matter that crops up from time to time that I think the Minister will need to look at, and that is the quality of grounds care at some of our units. Some of them are very well maintained—the lawns are mowed and the gardens cared for—but from time to time complaints and issues are raised with my office regarding the quality of the grounds care provided by some of the contractors.

I am very pleased with the response that I receive from my local Chermside area office when I raise these matters. Recently I had an issue relating to a set of units where the office moved very quickly to address the quality

issues of the work that was being delivered by the contractor. It is an issue to which I think the department needs to pay more attention. Some of these contractors simply believe that having got a contract to maintain Department of Housing unit blocks they can simply go in there, mow the lawn, get the air blower and blow all the leaves off the path and walk away. It is a little bit more than that. I think they need to be fulfilling some of the obligations of their contract and maybe pulling a few weeds out of the gardens. I am pleased to say that is being addressed at the ones where I have raised these issues.

While discussing that, I thank the officers of my local area office at Chermside for their support and the significant efforts they put into addressing the concerns that I have raised on a number of occasions on behalf of my constituents; the manager, Dorothy Woods—I also deal quite regularly with Graham Fresser, Greg Scott and Gary Doran.

Mrs Lavarch: They do a great job, don't they?

Mr ROBERTS: They do a tremendous job. I commend those people to the Minister. I always receive excellent service and response from them on issues that are raised with me.

I might finish on the GST. Of course, the GST will have a significant impact on housing. As a member with a significant area of public housing, I am concerned about those implications, both on new construction and on the ability of the department to continue with refurbishment programs. The cost, as I understand it, to the department is going to be about \$90m over three years. The Commonwealth Government provided us with only approximately \$60m to assist with that. So we are at least \$30m short over three years, which is going to have a significant impact on our ability to continue with the excellent building and refurbishment programs that we have had in place.

It was interesting that the shadow Minister rose in the Parliament yesterday supporting the GST. I really think that speech is something which he might live to regret in some respects, because I think the building industry, particularly after 1 July, is going to face some significant difficulties. A lot of companies are now getting a lot of work; people are rushing in to refurbish and extend their homes before the GST impact, but after 1 July there will be a significant slump. I am quite concerned about employment in the building industry, the impact that it will have generally and of course the flow-on effects it will have within public housing, which is my main point

of interest with this Bill. With those few comments, I commend the Bill to the house.

Mr DAVIDSON (Noosa—LP) (2.43 p.m.): It is pleasing to note that the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing in presenting this amendment to the State Housing Act 1945 has recognised that the incidence of the great Australian dream, that of owning your own home, has for many Queenslanders become the impossible dream.

In 1996 the average ownership trend showed 64% of Queenslanders owned their own home, with north Queensland and the Mackay/Whitsunday areas showing the lowest rates of ownership of 54% and 58%. Whilst home building approval has remained steady and in some respects improved throughout the State, brought about by the impending impact of the GST, it is primarily the impact of the increase in the population of the State over the last decade that has accounted for much of this increase.

The building industry has predicted a decrease in house building activity of up to 16% or 18% after July this year, which when compared with the incidence of population increases, indicates that the level of home ownership will not be reflected in any increase of home ownership in those areas where such ownership has declined. It is highly probable that all that the recent home building activity has achieved is to house our new arrivals but done nothing to improve the relative levels of home ownership among those socioeconomic groups that are traditionally unable to afford to buy homes of their own, even with Government assistance.

This scenario is further entrenched when it is recognised that despite lower levels of interest rates available commercially, the level of personal savings has not improved across the State. This further suggests that those with the lowest incomes are further impeded in their quest for home ownership simply because they are unable to accumulate the most basic of deposits. There seems to be little use in restricting or controlling repayments of interest, as this amendment suggests, if those in the lower end of income scales are simply unable to take advantage of these amendments because they cannot meet the basic requirements to qualify for any form of housing assistance.

Whilst I appreciate the endeavours of the Minister in his attempt to keep interest rate charges and thus repayments to a manageable minimum, it is of little help to the dreams of home ownership to many who

simply cannot get started down this path because of the lack of the initial funds necessary for a housing loan to be advanced. If this disincentive to start on a home ownership program is added to the tragic results of previous disastrous home loan schemes started by Labor Governments in the 1990s, it is not difficult to understand why home ownership figures are in overall decline, more so in Queensland than elsewhere, and especially in the lower socioeconomic groups.

Even with these proposed amendments, the Minister asserts that these changes will apply only to loans made after these amendments become law, thus providing no relief to those still enduring hardship under previously sponsored Government schemes which left 61% of the 4,607 borrowers under the disastrous HOME scheme with a loan balance significantly greater than the amount originally advanced. It is not my intention today to ridicule or demean the Minister's fine intentions to rectify in the future some of the mistake and oversights of past good intentions for future applicants. I am sure these amendments will be of immense solace to the many groups who have been identified by departmental research as suitable applicants for Department of Housing home ownership assistance.

Whilst I appreciate the immensity of the task, I commend to the Minister and his department to undertake programs in State housing assistance that will help the most underprivileged to even consider the dream of home ownership. As the Minister has so precisely indicated in his second-reading speech, "There are some Queenslanders who are unable to access home ownership through the private sector." It is these very people who daily are on the increase that I suggest the Minister might consider in the department's future plans of making home ownership a realisable dream.

However, before the member for Rockhampton takes any pleasure in the probable acceptance of these amendments through the House, perhaps he will tell the House just how he proposes to help another and larger group of distraught Queenslanders for whom he has ministerial responsibility. These Queenslanders are the Minister's current tenants, those people currently trying to live in Department of Housing properties that are falling down around the Minister's ears. Housing Department homes cannot get the simplest of maintenance jobs done simply because the maintenance arm of the Department of Housing has run out of money.

The thousands of Queenslanders on Housing Department waiting lists who are crying out for assistance to achieve any sort of Housing Department home or unit which they can rent far exceed the number waiting on loans, especially those that will be subject to the Minister's new interest regime. Almost daily my office receives complaints from people on housing waiting lists who have been advised by relatives who are fortunate enough to have a Department of Housing home that Government properties in their streets are vacant but in need of attention. They want to know why houses that have been gutted by fire, such as the property at 5 Ernest Street, Deception Bay—one of many I am informed that are vacant—is still not repaired after six months of disrepair.

The house at 5 Ernest Street has been totally neglected. Someone has at least cut the front and back lawns, but this is the only interest that has been shown by the Minister's department in months. This property at Deception Bay has been left in its burnt-out state since fire ravaged it last November. Not one penny, other than boarding up the windows and placing some plastic fencing around the front gate, has since been spent on this home. Many Queensland families would be extremely pleased to have this brick home as a sanctuary for themselves, yet they are denied this privilege through the department's inability to spend enough money on the property to make it livable. How long will Queensland families have to spend on long waiting lists before the Minister gets his act together and fixes this and all of the other fire-gutted homes that have been left in the same condition as the property at 5 Ernest Street, Deception Bay?

This Minister represents a Government that claims and is supposed to be the battler's true friend; the light on the hill that guides the workers to salvation in the arms of the Minister's beloved Labor Party. It would appear that the only light on the hill these days is a burning housing commission home and that Minister Schwarten is not the least bit interested in the message.

I am informed by department staff that they are sick and tired of being abused by housing commission tenants who have waited months for the simplest of maintenance jobs only to be told by department staff that they are currently unable to assist them. Those staff do not deserve to be abused by the tenants, and the tenants should be able to expect that satisfactory repairs are able to be carried out, particularly when they read almost daily of some grandiose scheme that the Beattie

Government has launched itself into with seemingly an abundance of funding available. This entire disaster has been brought about by only one component or the lack of it—money.

The maintenance division of the Department of Housing operates its maintenance programs on three budgets. They include the response maintenance budget which, as its name suggests, is designed to take care of the everyday problems of jammed doors, taps that drip and all of those problems that beset every home owner. The upgrade budget, as its name suggests, is in place to upgrade normal wear and tear on property, such as upgrades to kitchens or bathrooms that are beyond their use-by dates—again, a normal household occurrence.

The third budget is the planned budget. This budget is set aside for all major works and renewals on Department of Housing property. When a property needs to be repainted or needs a new roof or other such major projects, this is the budget from which those funds are drawn. This is a very sensible means of administering department funds and allows tight control. The most important aspect of the administration those funds was that each budget was sacrosanct to its own needs basis. In other words, those budgets should under no circumstances be interlocked to cover any other needs. But, of course, until last week they were so used.

Such has been the paucity of funds available in the member for Rockhampton's domain that last week all budgets were recalled to headquarters. The entire maintenance program for the Department of Housing has run out of money and the advice to staff is that the only money that will be available between now and the end of June will be for absolute necessities, that is, work that has to be completed to satisfy health and safety concerns only. No dripping taps or broken windows will be repaired. There will be no work of substance or absolute necessity anywhere at any time, save for health and safety precautions.

Today we have the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing, the Minister responsible for maintaining and managing millions of dollars worth of Government property, promoting a warm, cuddly, touchy Government initiative on the one hand in announcing repayment controls for future loan receivers and, on the other hand, he has run out of money on which the maintenance of property currently under his control and, with this loss of maintenance funding, the living

conditions of his tenants are utterly dependent. What hypocrisy!

We have people all over the State waiting for the opportunity to be granted a Department of Housing home. People all over the State are waiting to get the simplest of repair jobs done and people all over the State are at a loss to know why they cannot be accommodated with a roof over their head when so many Government properties are lying idle and untenanted for the want of maintenance. Instead of regaling us with propositions that of themselves are of excellent expectation, the Minister should be telling this House how many burnt-out homes are in need of urgent funding, how many homes cannot get their roofs fixed and, most importantly, telling this House how he will cope with this disaster; in other words, doing what he is paid to do, that is, put roofs over the heads of Queensland families.

This intolerable situation is absolutely unacceptable to the many Queensland families who rely on this Minister and his department for the right to live in comfort and safety and who pay their rent to be assured that this will be the case. It is unacceptable that department staff should have to be put in the position of being abused by frustrated tenants who cannot be satisfied by department maintenance budgets, or the lack thereof, because this Government has run out of money.

Another aspect of this absolute farce which no doubt has escaped the attention of the Minister is the effect this money run-out has and will have on the many contractors and their staff who are solely occupied with department maintenance work. In every district of this State there are building contractors whose sole income and operational basis is centred on maintenance of Housing Department properties. Most employ staff to cover their commitment to the Department of Housing and in fact are set up to do nothing else but this form of work. Perhaps the Minister can tell us just how this large task force will exist between now and the end of June without work of any description. I do not imagine that work designated only by health and safety concerns will keep them all satisfactorily employed between now and July. These days the Premier is always promoting his jobs, jobs, jobs mantra—his base electoral promise, or should that be deception, to the voters of this State. It is appropriate that we inquire of Mr Beattie what he intends to do about these contractors, who should be gainfully employed by his colleague the Minister for Public Works and Minister for

Housing but who will now be twiddling their thumbs waiting for a repair job from Minister Schwarten between now and July.

This House and the people of Queensland are continually bombarded by this Government about how they—this mismatch of teachers, lawyers and union hacks—are turning this State of ours into the Smart State. I ask: how smart can we be when we cannot manage to look after people's assets, the many properties the Minister for Housing is obliged to keep in safe and comfortable order for the department's many tenants? How smart do we have to be to restore burnt-out houses that have continued to deteriorate and thus become devalued, because this Minister and this Government cannot manage their budgets and obligations to the people of this State?

The people waiting on Minister Schwarten to do something positive about the maintenance of their homes know how smart we need to be to get this job done. Whilst it is all very nice, warm, cuddly and caring to be promoting schemes that will benefit few in the future, it is not only essential but a requirement of his office that the member for Rockhampton get his department and the money supply in order immediately and attend to what is not only an urgent need but also an absolute disgrace in terms of Government management.

Mr TURNER (Thuringowa—IND) (2.56 p.m.): In hindsight, over the past 50 years the Queensland housing commission has made some very bad decisions in local communities. Nearly every large town in Queensland has ended up with large estates of public housing with a very high density of low-income families, and we are experiencing the problems associated with such estates today. However, the Minister and his department are obviously attempting to right the wrongs of the past with such initiatives as the Bill currently before the House, which will give some good incentives for people to purchase departmental properties.

Also, the Community Urban Renewal Program, which was established to look at crime prevention, has proven to be a great success in the Townsville suburb of Garbutt. The Community Urban Renewal Program has been successful in arranging partnerships between Queensland Housing, the police department and local councils to improve the standard of housing and the amenity of the neighbourhood through beautifying parks and streetscapes and in ensuring that streets are better lit to provide a safer environment for the

public. In Townsville we have seen the suburb of Garbutt transformed into an attractive and desirable place to live. The residents have a safer, more comfortable environment in which to raise their children and the citizens of the area now view the suburb much more favourably. I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the Minister on his good work in this area.

However, Rasmussen, which is a suburb in the Upper Ross area of Thuringowa, is a totally different story. It has street upon street of Housing Queensland homes and has proven to be a hot spot for crime, domestic violence and truancy. My office has noticed a considerable drop in complaints from this area with the introduction of two Police Beats. However, the underlying density problem still exists, and the elderly members of this community are still afraid to venture out into the community and are virtually prisoners in their own homes. We still have gangs of children and teenagers roaming the streets at night, disturbing the neighbourhood, throwing rocks on roofs, littering and stealing.

Time has proven that grouping socially disadvantaged people together in a community such as this is a recipe for disaster. There is a very high indigenous population in Rasmussen, with a one in 50 adult indigenous custody rate as compared with the one in 500 custody rate for the adult population in total. This leads to a higher crime rate in the area and higher than average reoffending rates occurring in this segment of the community. Some 28% of young offenders are indigenous, yet they make up only 5% of the population. This problem needs special attention and these communities need support to assist in developing their own solutions. This area, more than anywhere else in the Townsville/Thuringowa region, needs to be targeted for upgrading.

The Department of Housing has been upgrading and selling houses in the Garbutt precinct to great effect. The mix of private and public housing is being realigned to reduce the density of public housing in the area with great success. I would urge the Minister to now consider the suburb of Rasmussen for inclusion in the Community Urban Renewal Program for the near future, as the problems being experienced there are not too dissimilar to those experienced in the Garbutt area prior to the commencement of its renewal program. I believe it is timely to make this request as the Minister's new Bill is an attempt to promote higher home ownership within the community. A renewal sales program, combined with this

new initiative, should ensure the success of both.

The provision of secure, affordable housing provides parents with a more supportive environment for nurturing children and encourages the stability of the family unit. I believe that Housing Queensland is on the right track in assimilating lower income families into the general community, as this helps to build self-respect and reduces the feelings of social isolation and exclusion. I can see the good work done by Housing Queensland in the Townsville/Thuringowa region, and the introduction of this Bill as a further means of promoting home ownership within the community is to be applauded. This shows that the Minister and his staff are being innovative in their thinking towards providing housing solutions for the people of Queensland. I hope that the Minister will take this opportunity to consider further expansion of the Community Urban Renewal Program into the Rasmussen area. Such a program, combined with this new initiative by the department, will not only inject much needed self-esteem into a currently neglected community but will also ensure that the aims and objectives of this new legislation have a greater chance of success.

I fully support this Bill, and I take this opportunity to congratulate the Minister. Mike Mutzi in Townsville and members of the department there are absolutely excellent to work with. We are achieving great ends in Thuringowa.

Mr NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (3.01 p.m.): I rise to support this Bill. Honourable members would be aware of my background in the banking industry. One of the greatest pleasures in terms of working in that industry was when we were able to approve a housing loan for a young couple or a single person and seeing the look on their faces when they were actually able to realise their dream of owning their own home. It is a great Australian dream and it is a dream that I believe is still very much alive today, despite the fact that some statistics show that home ownership is in a slight decline. However, I think in the main people would dearly love to own their own home. The Bill that is before the House this afternoon will certainly give people an opportunity to own their own home.

I would like to comment on a couple of issues raised by previous speakers. One of the issues of interest in relation to this home loan scheme is the fact that the mortgage insurance fees may be waived. For a lot of people that mortgage insurance fee is a fairly

substantial amount and from time to time is actually a barrier preventing people from owning their own home. I am pleased to see that there is provision in the legislation for mortgage insurance fees to be waived if need be.

I have public housing in my electorate, as do other honourable members. I have a mixture of units—single-bedroom units, two-bedroom units and three-bedroom units—and housing. There is certainly a large number of seniors who avail themselves of public housing. I have to disagree with the honourable member for Noosa, who said—and correct me if I am wrong—that public housing is for the underprivileged. I take some offence at that. What needs to be remembered is that from time to time in life for whatever reason—if the family breadwinner happens to be killed or becomes infirm and they lose their substantial income—people are put in the position of having to rely on public housing. For whatever reason, people who have not previously needed support suddenly find that they do need support from the Government. It is an important point. I think that the honourable member for Noosa should take note of that.

I know that, in the main, people who reside in public housing contribute greatly to the communities in which they live. There have been a number of initiatives by Labor Governments, and in saying that I am not being critical of former Governments. Since 1989, when Labor won power after that long period out of Government, there has been a tremendous effort by Labor Governments to improve not only the stock of public housing but also the quality of public housing and, indeed, the way in which public housing is built. The honourable member for Thuringowa touched on the renewal programs and also the fact that today, instead of building large blocks of public housing, we have a sprinkling of public housing throughout the suburbs. I think that that has been a great initiative by Labor Governments since 1989. I know that it has been well received and quite successful.

I am proud to say that a number of new public housing complexes have been built in my electorate. One new complex in particular actually won some architectural awards. I heard the honourable member for Nudgee talk earlier in the debate about the quality of public housing and the stark contrast between the complexes that are being built today and the old brick sixpacks that used to be built in some of the suburbs of Brisbane. I think that those people in the Minister's office who are involved in designing and developing public housing at

the moment can be very proud of the work that they are doing.

When some of these new complexes are being built, people come up to us and say, "They are nice units. I would not mind buying some of those. Public housing? Dear me!" That is good to see. Certainly the latest units to have been built in my electorate, which are just around the corner from my place, blend into the suburb very well. Those people certainly appreciate and love their new homes. I had the opportunity of inspecting those units before the tenants moved in and I can tell honourable members that they are of a five star standard and are second to none. The people who designed them and the people who built them should be proud. When people drive past those units, they can see the pride that the tenants of those units take in looking after their gardens. The Minister and the department are to be congratulated on that. I hope that the Minister passes on my heartfelt thanks to the people in his department for the work that they do.

I have touched on the issue of mortgage insurance because I think it is a fairly important issue. For those people who have never been able to own their own home, it must be a great feeling to now have an opportunity to do so. Although this is a small piece of legislation, it is a very important piece of legislation. I think that it will go down in history as one of the better things that we have done as a Government during this term. I am hopeful that we will be able to continue that work.

I know that the housing commission has been able to assist somewhere between 10,000 and 11,000 applicants annually in removing them from the housing waiting list. That is no mean feat, and we have been very successful in doing that. I think that, in no small part, that has been because of the commitment of people in the department. I know that people on those waiting lists get impatient from time to time and that the waiting lists sometimes do blow out, but we do the best we can.

One of the criticisms I have of the former Government related to the zonal system they introduced in that people had to take a home wherever it was made available. If they did not take the home, they went to the bottom of the list. The problem with that system was that those people had to move to houses in areas which were away from their family support base, where their doctor was and where their friends lived.

Mr Swarten interjected.

Mr NUTTALL: That is right. People in senior citizens groups, sporting groups or whatever community organisation had to move away from that support. That causes a great deal of distress to people. I know that when the current Minister attained his position he scrapped that system straightaway. I am particularly pleased that that happened. I get criticism within my electorate because there are a number of department units and dwellings that have water views. The argument that is put to me is, "Why don't you sell them? You'll get more money for them and you can build more homes."

Mr Schwarten: They did sell some.

Mr NUTTALL: Yes, they did. The Minister is right. They did sell some of them. The reality is that the area in which these dwellings are being built means that the people who live in them are close to the shops and public transport. That means they do not have to buy a car, which takes that pressure off their budget. They are close to schools. All those things need to be taken into account. It is all right to say that we should leave those blocks of land for the wealthy and that selling land with water views will enable the department to get more money so it can build public housing in the boondocks. That is something I do not agree with and do not support, and nor does the bulk of my community. It is usually a push from the real estate agents—

Mrs Liz Cunningham: Or the toffee-noses.

Mr NUTTALL: Yes, or the toffee-noses, as the honourable member for Gladstone says, and she is right. I am pleased to see that we as a Government have resisted that. As I said earlier, while this is a small piece of legislation, it is vitally important legislation that will benefit many citizens.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (3.11 p.m.): In rising to support the State Housing Amendment Bill, I acknowledge that the owning of one's home is an important part of the Australian psyche. People in Australia have written numerous songs about owning their own home, having a backyard, having a rocking chair and having an Aussie Hills hoist. It is an important part of who we are as Australians. It is one of the things that we as Australians can enjoy with the amount of land we have available to us. I also acknowledge the work of our local housing commission staff in Gladstone, who do a wonderful job. The same can be said about the contacts we make in Rockhampton and, to lesser degree, Bundaberg. They work hard for our

community. They are very responsive to situations that are out of the ordinary.

Public housing is a portfolio area in which people do not sit neatly in a pigeonhole. Because of certain circumstances each family is slightly different from another family. In dealing with the staff in both Gladstone and Rockhampton, I find that they are flexible enough and compassionate enough to be able to understand the differences in the various family situations. I also have to acknowledge my electorate officer, Kitty McDonald, who does a lot of housing commission work. I am not sure if other electorate officers do the same kind of work, but she often liaises with housing commission staff. I know that she finds them very easy to work with.

I have a few questions for the Minister relating to the Bill. I ask the Minister for some clarification when he sums up. I note that the purpose of the Bill is to make payments affordable and that it is proposed that the interest rate to be charged will be 1% below the average variable rate. It is also anticipated that the increases will be capped so that payments will only rise 0.5% per annum until they catch up to whatever rises have been imposed by the banks as far as variable interest rates are concerned. This relates to a completely different area, but when I was involved in local government the council had a rates cap which was slightly higher than that. I know that it gave great comfort to people when there were significant changes in valuations. They knew that the maximum their rates could go up by was 15%. It could go up by 15% each year, but at least that is all it could go up in one year. The 0.5% will achieve the same result. As a result of interest rate rises, there has been significant media comment.

Mr Schwarten: It can never exceed the average rate of the banks. That is the point you are making.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: That is excellent. The fact that it is going to be controlled in this way will give peace of mind to income earners, particularly fixed income earners, who may have great difficulty if their payments are increased significantly. I am concerned—and I am sure the Minister will be able to give me a response on it—that one of the main issues in the Bill, that is, how that variable interest rate is to be determined, has not yet been decided. A table of affordable interest rates for Queensland's low-income earners will be part of the research gathered, but I would have expected that some work had been done to

date to be able to give at least a ballpark figure of what could be expected to ensure that this scheme—it is a good scheme; I think every one of us in the Chamber support it—does not run into the difficulties that the HOME scheme did. No matter what Government is in power—I am not gearing this comment to anyone—public housing is a difficult area. Making public housing affordable for people by keeping the purchase price of housing low is a challenge to Governments, which have to make it not only fair and affordable but also achievable.

There is another issue I want the Minister to comment on. Loans will be available to low-income earners. However, there are criteria for purchase that must be satisfied: firstly, that they are already renting public housing; secondly, that they are waiting to rent public housing; thirdly, that they are wanting to purchase a housing commission home; fourthly, that they are not public housing tenants but want to buy a housing commission home; fifthly, any Public Service employee wishing to purchase a Housing Commission home can do so without fear of prosecution. What I am concerned about is that the implementation of this Bill will mean that there will be a significant draw down on housing commission homes currently available for rental.

I have raised this issue before, and I am sure that the Minister is aware of it. In my area of Gladstone and Calliope housing commission homes have been invaluable. When there has been a boom in industry, some—not all, but some—property owners will evict their current tenants because of the low rent they are receiving for that property. Because there is a boom, property owners can then rent their properties at a much higher rate. Because there is no other safety net, many of those people who have been evicted end up having to apply for housing commission homes. There is a significant bank of housing commission homes in Gladstone and Calliope, particularly Gladstone. They were established when QAL was first constructed. Some of these remain empty because of an agreement with QAL. That is changing over time. However, it is essential that those homes still be available.

The private rental market blows out of all proportion when there is a huge building program on. The rents can be as high as rents here in Brisbane, or even higher. Again, it is not the people who are earning construction wages; it is the people who are on a fixed income or low income—

Mr Swarten: What is the mean market rental in Gladstone now?

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: Around \$160.

Mr Swarten: For a three-bedroom house?

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: Yes. With the construction being mooted for Comalco—and we welcome that—there is the risk that this problem will again arise. People who move to the area either expecting to find work or those already in private rental who are, for whatever reason, forced out of their rental agreement will have nowhere to go. Unless there is that bank of public housing available, then the people in the Gladstone and Calliope area are significantly disadvantaged. I spoke with the Minister some time ago about the retention of public housing for departmental staff. It is the same rationale.

Booms do occur. They are becoming much more manageable as the general population increases, but the public housing rental market is important. I would hate to see those banks of public housing being sold off without a significant replacement scheme. There is also information about the amount of Commonwealth funding that is available under the Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement. That is listed as 1999-2000, \$182.4m; 2000-01, \$180.5m; 2001-02, \$178.7m; and 2002-03, \$176.9m. I want to know if any State money is going into this scheme and what level of funding that might be.

The other issue I raise with the Minister relates to the proposal, which I support, to change the Criminal Code so that complying Public Service employees who want to purchase a public house from the housing stock are able to do so without contravening the laws that cover them. What monitoring will be carried out to ensure that only genuine applications succeed? Unfortunately, human nature being what it is, there will be genuine applicants and there will be those who see a ready buck in it. As I said, I have no problem with the change to the Criminal Code as it is proposed. I just want to know what monitoring will be done to ensure that this relaxation of the Criminal Code is not abused.

There is a significant amount of public housing in our community. I commend the current Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing, as well as previous Ministers for Housing, for the work that has been done. The present Minister has been in this portfolio when some really state-of-the-art construction has been carried out. The member for Bulimba, the Minister and a couple of other members visited for the opening of the

Heritage Village aged care units. As was mentioned by the previous speaker, the member for Sandgate, they won awards.

Mr Swarten: They won Master Builders awards.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: That is right. They recognise the needs of independent aged people. They are quality constructions—aesthetically they are unsurpassed—and they offer a quality of life to the tenants that is equal to anything that is available, particularly in our region. I know that the Minister has been very cooperative in ensuring that the second stage of the Heritage Village goes ahead. In fact, the waitlist will absorb all of that second stage and more will be wanted.

I refer also to some housing commission units constructed in Williams Street. They are double units—upstairs/downstairs—with separate living areas. Those who are capable live in the upstairs units and those who are less mobile live in the downstairs units. Those units have been filled. I know that the tenants really value the quality of the building and the thought that has gone into not just the construction but also the colour scheme, the layout, the aesthetics and so on to ensure that where they live is pleasurable and manageable in the sense of keeping it clean and tidy. All of those things are taken into account. Additionally, these units are now being built as convertible units so that, as a person's mobility decreases, the outfitting can be changed very easily and at minimal cost. Even things such as wheelchairs can be accommodated and the person does not have to lose the social network they have built up over time with their neighbours.

We still have a need for more aged care units and single units. We also have a need for disability housing. A young fellow in the town has cerebral palsy and his condition is deteriorating quite quickly. We get him on to the disability housing list and then he has a good day and he takes himself off it. His wife is just about beside herself. We just keep seesawing backwards and forwards. He will need disability housing very quickly just so that he is not totally dependent on his wife, Carol. We have a list of about three or four who have an urgent need for disability housing.

I have spoken with the Minister about the aged care complex in Phillips Street. The Minister would have to expect that I would raise this matter with him.

Mr Swarten: I would have been very disappointed if you hadn't.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: That raises the issue of the social structure and whether or not the prestige lots should be on the top of the hill.

Mr Swarten: "Snob hill", I think you called it.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: That is what I called it. I am completely opposed to that. I still hold the view that that piece of land in Philip Street should be kept over the long term totally for aged care. It does not have to be developed all in one hit. It can be developed over time. Both publicly and privately funded aged care housing can be built there.

That land presents the opportunity to afford the aged people in our community not only independent units, first level care and nursing home, hospice and hospital care, but also things such as boarding houses for members of families dislocated through death or divorce. Divorces are happening much more frequently now amongst older people. Where some people want a home or a small unit to be able to look after themselves, to do their small amount of housework and to cook their meals, equally there are people, particularly single older men who have never had to do their own cooking or cleaning, who need boarding house type facilities. That would be a self-contained room with an en suite, with meals provided and with some supervision by way of a housekeeper. The tenants have a good quality of life and they have some social interaction with other people in the boarding house.

There is an opportunity to set aside the block of land at Philip Street—28 hectares, not all of which is usable—for long-term aged care. The property is within a short distance of the shopping centre, a doctor and chemist. The ambulance is also readily accessible. All of those facilities are within walking distance for those who are able, and a cab ride home would be less than \$5. It is one of the few blocks of land in the middle of town still available.

Mr Swarten: And some of the best views in Gladstone.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I think the oldies deserve it, actually. I commend the Minister for, to this stage, being prepared to hold that block of land for aged care. There are still some in the community who would see it as being more valuable for use in other ways. I cannot think of anything more valuable than our older people, who deserve a nice place to live.

In closing, I wish to make an allied comment and I trust that Mr Deputy Speaker will be forbearing. Tony Sellers is a builder in Gladstone who has done a lot of work not only privately but, I am sure, with the housing commission, with apprentices and so on. Tony was injured in an accident at work a day or so ago. I put on the record the concern of our community—to his wife Gail, who is a councillor on Gladstone City Council, and to his family. I particularly want to let Tony know that our thoughts and our prayers are with him as he puts up a very stiff fight in these difficult circumstances. There is a slight improvement in his health today. I put on the record: for all the people you have helped, Tony, we are thinking of you. I support the Bill.

Mr PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP)
(3.26 p.m.): I congratulate the Minister on this innovative Bill, the State Housing Amendment Bill. In an environment in which home ownership is falling and workers are finding it harder to afford to buy their own homes, this is an excellent scheme.

Earlier this week I said that when I was working as a builder's labourer I found it very hard to afford to get a deposit together to buy my own home. The banks would not lend me any money. They would lend me money for a motor car, so I got a bank loan for a motor car and never bought the car. Then I went to the trade union building society and said that I had a deposit and it gave me a loan for my home. I can assure honourable members that if I was not a little inventive and did not do that, I would not own my own home now, particularly in the place where I live.

I can assure the House that the scheme the Minister has put together will really benefit itinerant workers who find it hard to get a deposit together to buy their own homes. I know that the Minister realises they are very good payers and that once they get into their own homes they will pay them off. This scheme gives them that start. The families of Australia are workers and we need to make sure that we assist families to buy their own homes if that is what they want to do.

It is very important to keep our seniors in and around the areas in which they have lived. I represent an inner-city area. It is probably not unlike Gladstone, where people have lived in the area all their lives, they know their patch and they know the people around them. Many people have lived in my suburb all their lives and have brought up their children there. They know the people down the road. Their friends, their relatives, their churches and their support groups are all there. We must continue to build

seniors units in areas such as mine, but it is getting very difficult to do so after the previous Government sold so much land out of my electorate. Some lovely land was set aside for public housing by previous Labor Ministers. The coalition Government destroyed that project almost overnight. The coalition sold \$22m worth of land in my electorate. The money was sent down to John Howard on a plate. That makes it very difficult for the present Minister to find suitable land in order to look after people in my electorate. However, I know that he will endeavour to do everything he can.

The member for Gladstone spoke about a block of land on a hill. She wants to keep an eye on it. I can assure her that, if we are not in Government and this Minister is not the Minister, it will be sold off. The coalition sold the best block of land in Brisbane. It has beautiful views. In my opinion, it was virtually given away. The coalition sold 80 acres of land for a little over \$22m. That land was only 10 minutes from the city and had city views. It was just given away. The Department of Housing is being screwed federally. More and more money is being taken out of the portfolio of public housing. The GST is going to devastate the department and the building industry. That land was a money earner. We could have entered into a partnership with a developer and constructed some very good private housing, as well as public housing, and we could have made money out of it. What happened was absolutely criminal.

We cannot talk about public housing without mentioning the people who look after our public tenants. The staff at the Stones Corner office look after the majority of my electorate. There are some areas of Murarrie that will probably come into my electorate after the next election and will be looked after by the Wynnum office. I mainly deal with the staff at Stones Corner. I cannot speak highly enough of them. They are a hard-working staff who work their backsides off for the people in my electorate and for me. They are very cooperative. They are most understanding of the plight of public tenants.

They know that people are battling from time to time when they are in and out of work. As I said, I worked as a builder's labourer. Invariably, one is sacked just before Christmas so that one does not have to be paid for the public holidays at Christmas. That makes it very hard for workers to pay their rent. They have kids and relatives for whom they have to buy Christmas presents. The staff at Stones Corner understand all these things. They have a heart. They are very good people. I ask the

Minister to convey my congratulations to the staff of the Stones Corner office. They do a very good job in very difficult circumstances.

Some members have not been in this place as long as I have, but I can remember going into the housing commission office in town. It was difficult to approach officers in the city because of the amount of pressure that was put on them. They were all working in the one building. I think one of the better things that this Government has done is to set up a regional office at Stones Corner. It has been marvellous.

I am a member of the Public Works Committee and I have had opportunities to inspect public and private housing around the State. There is a difference between public and private housing. We looked at some private housing units and we also looked at some public senior units which had been renovated. The committee compared the two types of units. I believe that anyone who was a member of that inspection team was able to see the difference in construction between the two types of units. A lot of care and attention went into the construction of the public housing units. It was noticeable in the bathrooms, particularly in the shower area. Thought was given to the older people who would be using those facilities. There were grab handles and doorways were of the right size to accommodate wheelchairs. There were no nibs around the showers. It is those simple things that make life so much easier and better for people. A lot of thought was put into the construction of those units. The department does that very well.

Another thing the department does very well is open up its doors to training. The department, in partnership with the Master Builders and other organisations, has built a large amount of public housing. Apprentices have been used in this process. It is not cheap. People with expertise are working on houses in the building industry. Apprentices work on commercial constructions, but it is very difficult to get good work there. We have wood butchers who slam buildings up as fast as they can. They have a four-day week. It does not matter how well the formwork is put in or how well a doorway is erected. It does not matter to them if a stairwell has been set correctly; the builders' labourers come along and jackhammer two or three inches off the construction later. I love builders like that because it keeps the builders' labourers busy fixing up all their stuff-ups.

However, the State does not want to waste money in public housing. The quality of

housing we achieve from our training schemes is excellent. I accompanied the Minister when he opened some units in Gladstone. Those units are a credit to the people who built them. They give dignity to the people who live in them. They are well-built, well thought-out and well set out. The streetscape is beautiful. The units have been built on the edge of a creek. The building has a nice feel about it. When people retire to those units they have the feeling that people care about them. They are units in which people can happily spend the rest of their days.

I have looked at other public housing schemes in Toowoomba with the Minister. A large number of houses were being renovated. The labour which had been brought in did an excellent job. The houses were painted and given a lift. Some of the housing had been there for many years and looked as if it needed some attention. We did not get to speak to the tenants because they had been moved into other accommodation while the repairs were being undertaken. However, I know how appreciative those tenants will be.

My mum never owned her own home; she lived in rented accommodation. I know how she had to battle to get things done in and around the house. Women become houseproud and they like to see things painted and made good.

I reiterate how important it is to be able to allow workers to own their own homes. It is the largest outlay they will make in their lives. It is very important that we allow people to buy their own homes at the right price so that they can raise their families and live life with dignity.

Mr KAISER (Woodridge—ALP) (3.39 p.m.): I rise to support the State Housing Amendment Bill. I would like to add to what other speakers have said in terms of congratulating the Minister and his department for putting together what I think is a fine Bill and a terrific financial product which will be well received in the community.

This Bill introduces a financial package to assist housing tenants, and others, to buy department stock, provided that that stock is available for sale. In the case of tenants, it is the house they live in; in the case of other people, it is unoccupied properties. In no sense will this legislation be used to force people out of their homes. That is an issue which I would like the Minister to specifically address in his summing-up.

There have been instances of scurrilous Right Wing newspapers—rags, fruit loop publications—going around the electorate suggesting that part of what the department is

trying to do in diversifying public housing stock is tantamount to the privatisation of public housing. It is, of course, nothing of the kind.

I recall shortly after the Woodridge by-election campaign that a lady of 85 years of age rang me. She was almost in tears and was very concerned about something that she had read in one of these newspapers. She believed that she was going to be forced out of her home so that the department could privatise that public housing stock. None of the Government's actions have anything to do with the privatisation of Government housing stock. I would ask that the Minister reiterate that in his summing-up so that I can reassure people such as that 85 year old lady who phoned me—a lady who was scared out of her wits—that that is not the case.

This legislation will be well received in Woodridge because the people there know how vital it is to reduce the density of housing stock in their community. They recognise the need for diversity in housing in any community. Diversity means having some public housing, some privately owned homes, some owner-occupied homes and some homes that have been paid off. That diversity is important to a community. Of course, that kind of diversity was never recognised by the Opposition when it irresponsibly developed massive housing commission suburbs such as Inala, where my mother-in-law lives and has been a public housing tenant for in excess of 35 years, or the community that I represent, Woodridge. Of course, it was completely irresponsible of the Opposition back when it was in Government in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s to adopt a policy of corralling public housing tenants into massive suburbs where there existed virtually no other housing other than public housing.

Today in Woodridge, we continually live with that legacy. This legislation will help us break down that legacy and bring back some diversity into that community. The reason the Nationals and Liberals did that back then was that, when they looked around for somewhere to corral these public housing tenants, they decided to do it in the local authority of Albert. Back then that local authority was chaired by none other than Russ Hinze. Of course, good old Russ was good to his National and Liberal Party mates. He did not require the same level of standards that at the time the Brisbane City Council required. So Woodridge was developed with inadequate services, lightly sealed roads and open gutters. Today, the people of Woodridge still live with that legacy. It is that legacy with which we are trying to deal, and this legislation partly assists us in dealing with it.

I take issue with some of the things that were said by the member for Noosa. I think that, if the member knew of such a situation occurring in his electorate, it was grossly irresponsible of him not to raise it with the Minister. I come across problem dwellings in my electorate as well.

Mr Davidson: It is not in my area.

Mr KAISER: If the member was aware of such a dwelling or such a problem anywhere in the State, it is his responsibility to raise it with the Minister. The system is not perfect. I come across problems in my electorate, but I raise them with the Minister or the Minister's staff. I find the Minister incredibly responsive. Anything that can be reasonably done is always done promptly. If such a problem exists, then that is the sort of approach that should be adopted rather than the member coming into this place, raising it on the spot and scoring cheap political points.

As I mentioned, my mother-in-law has lived in public housing for 35 years. My wife was raised in public housing. I can tell members what long-term residents of public housing such as Margaret say and what long-term residents of public housing in my electorate say. They say that they notice the difference when Labor is in office. Those people tell me stories about how they used to be persecuted for ringing up the department and asking for something to be fixed in their public homes. They used to be persecuted for asking for their stove to be fixed or for a step to be repaired. Long-term residents of public housing tell me that, when Labor is in Government, they notice the difference. Things are done. The system is not perfect. No system that relies to this extent on Government funding can be. However, this Minister is responsive to any reasonable request.

I return to the legacy that has been left in Woodridge. It has created a situation in which the Logan area office—and can I say that it is managed excellently by Katherine Saffioti—is the largest public housing area office in the State, with 10.3% of the State's entire stock in that region alone, a very, very high level of client contact and a very challenging clientele: 10.7% of the population of Logan City is over 55; there are 161 different nationalities represented in Logan City; and 10.2% of the population is from non-English speaking backgrounds. So that office has a very, very challenging clientele.

In the context of this debate, I want to raise with the Minister an important issue, and that is the absolute need to move the area

office in Woodridge. It is old, it is antiquated and it is inadequate. I am not talking about moving the area office for the sake of providing public servants with cushier premises; I am talking about the need to move the area office for the sake of the clientele. Public housing tenants tell me that they find the office incredibly impersonal. There is a very small foyer area. The people literally queue up outside the building. They have to deal with their problems in the foyer while other people and other staff members are standing around. Sometimes very, very personal details need to be explained in the foyer of that office. I have raised this issue with the Minister. He is sympathetic. I know that work is being done to try to do this, but it is absolutely essential that we move that area office. Despite the challenges down there, the office, managed by Katherine Saffioti, does a terrific job. I commend her staff for the work that they do.

I know that it is often said that these days, under a Labor Government, people cannot tell the new public housing stock from any other stock in the street. I can tell members that in Woodridge that can be done. The new public housing stock stands out like a sore thumb because of its quality. It is not the sort of trash that the Nationals and Liberals used to force people to live in when they did it on the cheap down in Russ Hinze's territory because he allowed them to do it on the cheap. These days, we have great public housing that, at least in Woodridge, stands out like a sore thumb.

Of course, one of the challenges that we have down there is that 71% of the stock is three-bedroom houses. Although at one stage that might have been what was needed, it is not what is needed now. One of the issues down there is the need to realign the stock, to increase the amount of senior citizen accommodation and to increase the number of one and two-bedroom ground-level accommodation for the kinds of tenants whom we need to house down there at the moment. Generally speaking, we have to reduce the high density of three-bedroom houses in the area. I know that the Minister is aware of that because this Government and this Minister is doing just that. How is this Government trying to do that? One of the ways is through urban renewal. In Woodridge, about 40 houses are going to be upgraded this financial year. That is a tremendous success. I have had the opportunity to walk the streets of Woodridge to see for myself the results of that urban renewal project and to talk with the public housing residents who have been favourably affected by that project. It is fantastic work. In the

process of doing that work, the Government has been innovative in terms of using Community Jobs Programs, such as the one under the auspices of BoysTown Link-Up, to get some of the work done.

Just a couple of weeks ago on a Friday afternoon, at the end of their shift, I met with some young Aboriginal men who, under a Community Jobs Program, are doing the fencing for that urban renewal project. The pride in their eyes in the work that they had managed to do that week really made me feel quite emotional. These young people had never worked before. Now they are working on such a terrific community project as doing up public housing, and they know it. They were proud of what they were doing. They were looking forward, as working class people do, to going out on a Friday night, having a drink, unwinding and relaxing—and doing it with money that they had earned. That was the key thing. They felt an enormous sense of pride not only in the fact that they were doing up public housing in the area but also the fact that they had earned their keep for that week and they were looking forward to spending it, or at least some of it, that night.

Many of the houses under the urban renewal project are being sold to private owners. During the by-election campaign, there was a debate about whether or not it should be offered only to owner occupiers or whether some of it ought to be offered to investors. Frankly, I do not think that it matters. Owner occupiers are obviously preferable. However, we are looking for diversity. If some investors want to buy some of this stock and that is in the interests of creating diversity, then in my view that is okay. Of course, owner occupiers are the ones we need to look at, and in that regard this loan product will help.

The other way in which we are trying to break down the density of three-bedroom public housing in the area is through the Community Housing Program. This is another fantastic initiative—using the stock for worthwhile community projects. Recently, I visited the Samoan kindergarten, which is a community housing project. Those people are as pleased as punch that they now have tremendous accommodation, which was done up for them by the department, where they can, in their own language and in English, teach their young kids and provide preschool and kindergarten accommodation.

There are a couple of other projects that I would commend to the Minister. I have spoken to the Minister and officers of his department about them. Kids Respite Incorporated is

looking for assistance under community renewal to find accommodation to provide respite services to kids with significant disabilities.

In a similar vein, representatives of the Logan City Special School met here yesterday with members of the Minister's staff looking for a community home to provide a living skills program to assist in the transition from school to independent living for disabled young adults.

I recently met with the Logan and Neighbourhood Area Regional Tenants Association, known as LANARTA. I report to the Minister that they are incredibly supportive of this legislation. They are incredibly supportive of his approach and this Government's approach in respect of public housing. There were, of course, issues which representatives of LANARTA Jean Succi and Ann Langley raised with me. Lyn Luxford from the Queensland Public Tenants Association met with me then also. For example, they were seeking some assurance that when the GST is introduced and when public housing tenants do get the lousy 4% compensation that the Federal Liberals and Nationals are going to give them that their public housing rents will not rise by that 4%. I think that is an incredibly important issue. They sought through me the Minister's assurance that that would not occur.

They are also obviously anxious about what will happen beyond 2003 under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement if those funds from the Commonwealth are diverted into rent assistance. They are anxious and that anxiety is being caused by the approach of the Federal Nationals and Liberals, who are saying that there are going to be massive cuts to funding beyond 2003. That anxiety is causing problems because they recognise that that 2003 deadline is looming and they are wondering what might happen beyond that.

They also raised with me the need to train their office bearers and the office bearers of tenant organisations and associations like theirs. They are given a relatively small amount of money. I asked them whether that level of funding was sufficient. To my surprise, because this is a fairly unique answer when that sort of question is asked, they said the level of funding was absolutely sufficient. What they had concerns about was, though, their ability to account for it in the professional manner that is required without the necessary training for their office bearers. I would ask the Minister to look at the possibility of training

office bearers of tenants associations in that regard.

I believe that this group is a highly professional group. They do a tremendous job. They are in constant contact with the regional office and with Katherine Saffioti, who has a terrific working relationship with them. I urge the Minister to include this group, in particular, in any consultations which will occur in relation to the rent review which his department is undertaking. I also urge that that occur locally. I consider asking groups like this to prepare lengthy written submissions a bit onerous, given they all work on a volunteer basis in this organisation. If that consultation can be conducted locally face-to-face, I am sure the department will get a feel for their views in a very sound way.

I conclude there. I commend the Bill to the House. I particularly commend the financial product to members of my constituency.

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—CCAQ) (3.52 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I rise to speak on the State Housing Amendment Bill and at this point I indicate the support of the City Country Alliance, Queensland for the Bill introduced by the honourable member for Rockhampton, the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing.

I also indicate at this stage my support for Queensland Housing in the Caboolture and Redcliffe areas and, in particular, the support I receive from there, especially from Mick Shearer at Caboolture who deals with most of the complaints. It is probably due to his tenacity that I do not bother the Minister more often than I do. I think I have only had to bother the Minister a couple of times, once in relation to some water in someone's yard at one stage and once when a Catholic Sister of Mercy had a parking problem. I think we sorted that problem out. I think she has probably moved on from that area where she was.

Mr Lucas: Was mercy shown?

Mr FELDMAN: Mercy was shown by the Minister on that occasion. We were trying to sort out the parking problem but I think the Sister actually moved. The problem resolved itself in one hit. Some problems cannot be solved, but I know that Diane Roper at Redcliffe does a fantastic job in dealing with them.

I will touch on Compton Village a bit later on in my speech. I know Brett Fyfe does a marvellous job there dealing with the problems with the elderly in respect of that partnership between Queensland Housing and Compton Village.

I am aware that recent indicators show that the percentage of Queenslanders actually buying their homes is falling and has been falling over the past number of years. I believe that the Queensland level of new home ownership is lower than the national average. I know there are many factors that affect that as both older and younger people take that step towards considering home ownership.

Employment is one of the major factors in proving to financial institutions that a person has a stable enough job and a credit rating such that the institution will be prepared to accept the risk. Unfortunately, a lot of financial institutions will not take that risk. However, with employment also comes the risk of people locking themselves into a home in an area where the chances of securing employment cannot be maintained. With the advent of job descriptions such as casual, permanent casual, permanent part time and part time, is it any wonder that financial institutions are not willing to take that risk and gamble on the reliability of clients making their required loan repayments or indeed getting together that deposit that will make home ownership a possibility.

The pending GST and the increased prices of new homes and the inability of young families to stretch their dollar even further is another factor in the downturn of new home ownership and the trend towards the merry-go-round of renting and seeking more and more public housing.

I, like the majority of members, know that home ownership is a privilege, and it should be the right of everyone in our society who wishes to extend himself or herself and work hard to achieve that privilege. Owning a home is a hope that also brings with it the heartache of responsibility that comes with the worry over the stretched financial position, looking after the parts of the home that are deteriorating, maintaining a garden and all those other sorts of things that make the place really feel like it is a home.

While I do not know the effect this Bill will have on lifting the level of home ownership, I feel that its introduction will provide a service and fulfil a role that will assist in securing home ownership for some honest and hard-working battlers out there in our community. Caboolture is no exception. It is a very hard-working area, one for the battlers. Some of those people would not otherwise have had the opportunity of home ownership if it were not for the Minister's introduction of this Bill.

I grew up in the bush on farms and on share farming properties because my parents actually loved the bush.

Mr Lucas: They were Labor voters then.

Mr FELDMAN: Very much so! I think they are changing now. I think a couple of Bills the Government introduced earlier might have swayed them to another party. By today's standards some of the homes that I grew up in would be called shacks. However, as the member for Lytton pointed out, I did have a set of very loving parents who provided not just a house but a home for me to live in. Wooden floors with gaps and cool breezes in the winter whistling up through the floorboards were not strange experiences for me. It just meant an extra Wagga on the bed at night to keep warm.

My wife Gail's experiences while growing up were not that different. She actually grew up in the heart of Inala in Crocus Street, not too far away from the Minister for State Development and his family. She went to school with Jim and I think they actually had a few reminiscences at the opening of Parliament

Mr Hegarty: She graduated, though, didn't she?

Mr FELDMAN: She did; she matriculated. She is very grateful for that time and for her experiences in growing up in Inala that have made her the person she is today.

My in-laws, Bill and Gwenn Smith, took the opportunity to purchase their dwelling at 48 Crocus Street, Inala. It was actually the pride of the street. I am sure the member for Woodridge would acknowledge that, from looking at the condition of houses when walking or driving down those streets, an observer could say, "Renting, buying, renting, buying." Those who were buying had pride in their houses because they knew the value of actually having a roof over their heads. They were given the opportunity to really extend themselves and they really took pride in their home. They are typical of the battlers today. Bill worked for the basic wage at English Electric. Until the age of about 48 he used to ride his pushbike from Inala out to Evans Road until other employment took him away from the area, when they actually rented out their Inala property, which by that stage they owned. It was a shame to see it deteriorate from the immaculate piece of real estate that it was. They, too, made their house a home. Gail and the rest of her family are very proud of their heritage, how they grew up and how their parents made their home.

Children are born, families grow up and eventually people die within the walls of these houses that become homes. One of the aspects of the Bill that pleases me a great deal is the concept of existing tenants being able to purchase their rental dwellings—dwellings that have over many years and sometimes decades become the home of the tenant rather than just rental accommodation. I understand that some 200 or so homes will be made available for sale each year. Have areas and individual homes been earmarked?

Mr Schwarten: It's all over the State.

Mr FELDMAN: Is it?

I have concerns in respect of people who do not want to move—those who have made their house their home; as the member for Woodridge said, there has been a bit of scaremongering about this—having their homes sold out from under them. Most of the people in those places have treated them as their homes—

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr FELDMAN: I thank the Minister. On the other hand, it would be heartbreaking if a tenant wishes to purchase his home but cannot do so because it is earmarked for sale. I know that some people would like to be on that program in order to purchase their home. That may eventuate.

I am also concerned to know what would happen if a tenant who has rented premises for some time decides to buy the home through the scheme and then, for whatever reason, defaults on the loan. What would happen in that instance? Would he still be able to live in the place he called home? This happens all the time to battlers; they extend themselves to buy the home they love and, all of a sudden, things just go wrong.

Mr Schwarten: The worse case scenario—they revert back to rental.

Mr FELDMAN: I thank the Minister. That has allayed my fears and those of a number of other people, too. I think they would be appreciative of that. As I said, a home is a home. It would be a shame to see someone suffer us because of the mere fact that they had defaulted on a loan after they had extended themselves.

I shared some of my concerns with the Minister for State Development when we were speaking about rental accommodation. Battlers tend to extend themselves. We both grew up in somewhat humble circumstances in large families. We all bunked in together. In my instance, there was the boys' room and the girls' room. The kids were double-bunked, and

mum had a room. Most places had only two or three bedrooms. I slept on the sleepout of an old Queenslander for most of my life.

Not so long ago, Gail and I reminisced when we took a drive through Inala. It was a shame to see so many vacant houses. Sadly, people feel that they should be entitled to a four bedroom or five bedroom home, and they do not take the opportunity to grow up as a family. I cannot see anything wrong with a couple of people bunking in the same room together. It is a shame to see so many unoccupied houses. Today public housing tenants expect a room apiece for children, and they want four or five bedroom houses. It is a shame to leave two and three bedroom homes unoccupied while the waiting list grows. I suppose sometimes the location is a problem. Because some may think suburbs have a bad name or that a street might have some sort of problem, people do not want to live in these places. Leaving houses languishing unoccupied is a shame. Some people are crying out for that sort of accommodation. When the State is prepared to put a roof over people's head and is doing the right thing, to demand more is a bit rich.

Putting those issues aside, I know that the Bill will provide Housing Queensland with the flexibility to offer a broad range of housing loans to members of our community by inserting the new interest rate setting provisions in the State Housing Act 1945. One issue in respect of which I wish to voice concern is crisis and emergency housing in Caboolture. The Minister has probably heard this story from everybody. This is an area that needs to be addressed. The community hospices, such as Caboolture Community Care, Family Haven, the Neighbourhood Centre and Breakthrough Housing, are all crying out for accommodation. The community is experiencing domestic violence and other problems. Given the growing population and the increased proximity of residents, this accommodation is a real need that I will be highlighting to the Minister on many occasions to come.

I thank the Minister for the Community Urban Renewal Program in the "Waytown" area. Back in the Hinze era the area was developed by Usher of Usher Paints. They whacked in as much housing as they could. It was very close together. As a policeman, I chased a young fellow across the roofs of those houses; they were that close together. I jumped from roof to roof on two-storey houses. I was almost sprinting right down the street across the roofs of the houses. That sort of development is not right.

Mr Lucas: I heard you were a bit of a flatfoot.

Mr FELDMAN: I was a very quick flatfoot.

Mr Schwarten: A fleetfoot.

Mr FELDMAN: I was a fleetfooted flatfoot.

Mr Lucas: It would be good to say that it was the fall of the house of Usher—Usher Paints.

Mr FELDMAN: I think that might have been the wish of a few people before he built that estate.

It is good to see that the Platypus Creek area is being redeveloped and that the profile of the area is being lifted. I think urban renewal is doing its best to give that area a lift and show that it is worth living in again. That is good to see.

I said I would touch again on Compton's Village. As other speakers have said, it is good to see Queensland Housing moving into the area of advocacy for the elderly. Eventually, I think Compton's Village will overcome a few of its hiccups. I encountered a few problems in relation to the set-up of the units. Some of the rooms are not set up to cater for the disabilities of the elderly residents. Some advocacy is needed so that in future those units better cater for the needs of the elderly. For example, tenants have raised their needs with me, such as handrails, wider door passages and so on. At the moment, Compton's Village is trying to come to terms with the needs of the elderly and work with them and help them. I do not think I have had to come to the Minister with any major problems there. I think that bodes well for the elderly there. The elderly see Caboolture and Bribie Island as a bit of a haven. The hospital and so on up there have done wonders for the area. Again, I commend the Bill to the House and thank the Minister for introducing it.

Mr HEGARTY (Redlands—NPA) (4.08 p.m.): In making a contribution to the debate on the State Housing Amendment Bill, I put on record my thanks to the people of the Capalaba office of the Department of Housing. In common with my colleagues who have spoken in this debate, I think the department does an excellent job in providing housing. Deb McNamara, the manager, and her staff are always very helpful and have been for several years now. Over three Governments, in the short time I have been here, they have acted very impartially and apolitically and do an excellent job.

Mr Schwarten: They work hard under difficult circumstances.

Mr HEGARTY: That is exactly right.

The need for public housing is growing as the population grows and ages. Unfortunately, in the future some people who are able to afford accommodation now through their own means will need Government assistance when they retire. This places a great deal of pressure on the Government to make provision for them. It is not going to be an easy task for whichever Government is in power at that time.

The other area, of course, is crisis housing, which the previous speaker alluded to as well as others. I do not think there would be a member in this House who has not been contacted at some stage by someone in need of immediate accommodation. Of course, the Department of Housing does not provide for that in the main; other organisations provide that short-term relief, but they are very much strapped for stock, for suitable premises, and the monetary wherewithal to increase that stock. I think that anything that we can do to help them would be an admirable thing and a necessary thing in this age of dysfunctional families. It appears that women and children in particular need a safe refuge for the obvious reasons that we hear so much about today.

The other area of public housing I would like to touch upon is the suitable location of housing. The area I represent is very much sought after. The waiting list for public housing is around three or four years, depending on which type of housing a person wants. Of course, there are other areas where people can choose to take a house. I would have to say that, if they are desperate for accommodation, they should move to where the stock is offered. However, there are reasons for their location choice. For instance, they may wish to live in the same area as their families or the people with whom they associate.

It is also important that the accommodation is near transport. If we put housing in areas where there is no public transport, we will really only exacerbate social problems. There are areas in my electorate that could be suitable for public housing and the purchase price might be right—I can recall a couple of examples—but the occupants would be virtually isolated. Most of these tenants are from a low socioeconomic group. They would be lucky if the family owned more than one car, and if they are a working family it is most likely that the breadwinner has that car.

It really makes it very, very difficult for those tenants if they live in an area with no transport, particularly when the children grow into their teenage years. Unless they are on a

bus route or train line with fairly regular services, the only advantage of living there would be that it provides a roof over their head. I would ask the Minister to consider that when he looks at further areas in which to provide public housing. I am sure that he does take advice from the area offices because of their proximity to the market. From time to time other local members and I have been invited to the area office to give a bit of feedback, and we make our contributions. They are some of the things that they need to address.

In his contribution, the honourable member for Woodridge lamented about the state of public housing stocks in Queensland, and I could not agree more. However, a thinking person realises that that stock has accumulated over many decades. Of course, anything that was constructed back in the fifties or sixties is not going to meet today's standards. It does not matter which Government is in power, that situation has to be addressed slowly.

The Inala urban renewal program is under way at the moment. It was initiated under our Government. Similarly, the public housing at Woodridge is now being upgraded. If one asked where people would be housed if that stock was completely removed today, any thinking and practical person would realise there would be nowhere for them. If the member opposite wants to be political about it, I ask: why did the previous Hanlon Government or Governments before that not do something about it? We could go on exponentially. It is futile to start blaming people for the fact that not all public housing tenants live in a three-bedroom house with a patio and an en suite when their houses were built in the 1950s. Hopefully that situation will be addressed no matter which party is in power and as funds become available.

Recently I had the pleasure of meeting Mr Ian Hawkins, the president of the Physical Disability Council of Queensland. That body is a branch of the Physical Disability Council of Australia, which is the peak body for representing people with disabilities. He brought to my attention the fact that there is probably a great need to introduce adaptable housing. I understand that the Government or the Department of Housing has accepted a recommendation to provide adaptable housing, and I believe that was commenced around the end of last year. I would be interested to know how many houses of the new type with the recommended increased dimensions are under construction or have been constructed and where they are located. It seemed to me to be a very practical solution

at least in the public sector. As the Minister has found that recommendation advantageous, he might encourage his colleague the Minister for Local Government to get on to the local authorities around the State to put in place, through their local government ordinances, etc., a similar policy so that if people are unfortunate and become disabled, they will not have to move from their present accommodation. As people become older, eventually they encounter some disability. It will not necessarily be an horrific accident that results in a person being wheelchair bound or something like that.

I understand that some studies were undertaken by the Rowntree Foundation in the United Kingdom. It found that in about 65% of cases there would be no extra cost in building a house suitable for disability access and that it in about 23% of cases it would cost, in Australian dollar terms, about an extra \$300 to incorporate certain modifications. That may mean only widening a few internal doors from 760 millimetres to 830 millimetres—and it would be better if external ones were a little wider—making hallways a little wider than the minimum standards are now, making an adaptable kitchen with a modular design that can be adapted to a person in a wheelchair and, of course, low-floor bathrooms and the like which would be suitable for any home, let alone a person with a disability. It would reduce maintenance, it is cleaner, and it has a lot of features in its favour. I think that is a great idea.

I believe that Ray White Homes already has what it calls a "whole of life house" on the market. Looking at it, a person would not think it was much different from a standard home, but it is marginally wider because those features that I just mentioned are included in the design.

Mr Schwarten: We actually run some competitions on those.

Mr HEGARTY: Have you?

Mr Schwarten: The HIA and the Master Builders.

Mr HEGARTY: Right.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr HEGARTY: I would be interested in that. I thank the Minister.

Those are the things that I wanted to mention by way of contribution to the debate. I believe that Australian Standard 4299 is the one that is suggested. It is not mandatory; it is only a guide, unfortunately. They are the things that we should be looking at having

incorporated in all local government ordinances which would then be part of the Building Code.

I thank the Minister for the opportunity to raise those issues. I would like him to pass on my thanks and best wishes to the staff at the Capalaba office for their assistance.

Mr SULLIVAN (Chermside—ALP) (4.17 p.m.): I rise to support the Bill before the House. I wish to say to the Minister that of all the Government departments that my office deals with, we get the most number of calls from the Department of Housing and yet we probably send the fewest references on to the Minister's office. That is a vote of confidence in two things: in the structures that he has set up within the department and on the personnel who work at the local area office. In fact, in talking with my electorate officer today about my intention to speak, she said that she has always found that the staff deal with public housing tenants in an efficient and courteous manner and they always have their clients' best interests at heart. My electorate officer is an experienced person who has dealt with literally hundreds of calls in this area. I take that as a great recommendation for the Minister's staff.

At the Chermside area office we have the manager, Dorothy Wood, who took over from Lex Thompson, who is a legend out our way among public housing tenants. Dorothy is a great person and is doing a great job along with people such as Graham Fresser, Ron Atkins, Greg Scott, Gary Doran, Evelyn Lopez, Judy Franklin, Angela Stevens and Keith Pitcher. They are a great team of people whom we can contact on a variety of issues and always get good service.

The quality of homes and units that have been built by the Department of Housing has improved dramatically in recent decades. In fact, I have pointed out to people some of the new developments in Chermside at Sammells Drive, Davenport Street and Parkhill Street. They found it difficult to believe that they were public housing. They said, "No, they're private units." Some of them have been built specifically for people with disabilities. They are of an excellent standard and excellent quality. Some of the new pensioner units around Kuran Street, Federation Street and Kingsmill Street are again of excellent quality. There are a large number of seniors units literally just behind my office over the back fence from our car park. The public housing tenants in those units are well served.

In fact, there was a lady who lived on Miller Street who unfortunately died last year. My electorate officer would go and visit her to

fill out her assessment form for the Department of Housing because she found it difficult to read. She was a great public housing tenant and received that help from my electorate officer. We get excellent response from the local area office with respect to maintenance, and there is a fairly high demand on that service. We have an ageing population. There is a great need for seniors units in the area. I am pleased that in the area between Hamilton Road and 7th Brigade Park the Minister is converting some blocks of the old war service two-bedroom homes into units which will accommodate a larger number of seniors. I appreciate that.

I now turn to a letter from the Chermside and District Senior Citizens Centre, Burnie Brae. The Minister visited there last year as part of the Community Cabinet. We had a function there. This particular group is one of the most active senior citizens groups on the north side of Brisbane. They have over 1,000 financial members. Even though I refer to this letter, this would be one of the few times I have not so much a complaint but a plea for the Minister. It relates to the Home Assist/Home Secure and the Home Maintenance programs. This senior citizens centre has found that about 50% of their clients are HACC—Home and Community Care—eligible, but due to lack of finance, for the most part they have had to be serviced through the Home Assist/Home Secure program. What that is doing is taking money from HAS which should come from HACC. Perhaps there is a relationship between the Minister's department and Health that needs to be looked at. In some ways, the Minister's department is picking up some of that funding.

For example, just this year, the Chermside senior citizens centre already have 650 new clients, people who were previously not on their books, and they expect that number to get to about 900 by the close of the year, bringing the total number of clients accessing the program to close to 3,000. Last year, they had only 425 new clients. The number has almost doubled in just 12 months. That reflects the ageing population in the area. That also raises an interesting point, because it is not only the people who are ageing but the houses are also ageing. I wonder whether consideration can be given to that in the HAS program so that instead of working out an average for the whole of the State we work out an average weighting for the age of the home. A home in the Carseldine/Aspley area built in the 1970s with a brick base and some timber top is going to require less maintenance than a home in the Chermside/Wavell Heights area

built post-war totally out of timber, yet the funding arrangements tend to be the same. I want to know whether that can be considered.

I return to the letter from the Chermside senior citizens centre. This is a real plea from the heart from these people. The letter states—

"Our staff are constantly confronted with very old homes in dire need of maintenance. Each year however the amount we can do is becoming less and less as we prioritise and then reprioritise until we finally run out of service delivery funding and all we can say to the 85 year old lady just discharged from hospital with a house falling down around her ears is 'I'm sorry'."

These people are a tremendously active senior citizens group. They provide a variety of programs. I know that they would love to be able to help their clients. It reflects the ageing population. If something could be done there, I would appreciate it.

There is another area I have discussed with the Minister and his staff which I want to reiterate and put on the public record. It deals with the property at 881 Rode Road, Stafford Heights. That land was set aside many years ago as a possible site for a school. It was never used as a school because the McDowall State School was built a couple of kilometres to the west. A few years ago the Education Department reviewed its land holdings and said that it did not need it and offered it to other Government departments under the Government land management scheme. The Housing Department picked it up in the hope of a joint venture of public and private housing.

We all remember that all hell broke loose around the 1995 election when certain residents suddenly wanted to protect that particular area of bushland. Those people had never before expressed an interest in bushland. Their argument in terms of the environment ran something like this, and I am remembering a letter that was written to me by a constituent at the time, "We don't want housing tenants bussed in from the crime ridden areas of Woodridge and Inala to our homes where we'll have rapists, thugs and thieves in our neighbourhood." That was the tone of the letter. It is on the Hansard record. That is the sort of thing that was said at the time.

I had two public meetings in the park with somewhere between 100 and 140 people, many of whom were yelling at me for daring to cut down their bushland, and yet their whole argument was that the value of their homes

would drop if they had public housing tenants in the area. This issue became interesting after a letterbox drop was conducted in the area. Those residents were totally unaware that a lot of the houses in the Chuter Street area of Stafford Heights were former defence force homes that are now public housing homes. After the public housing tenants received this letterbox drop, the second meeting in the park was rather interesting. There was a fairly vocal group of public housing tenants, more of whom I see at P & C meetings and community meetings than those from the bushland preservation group, who stood there and said, "You're writing letters about us." It was a very interesting meeting. I went to the election with the Minister's support on the very strong basis that we would have public housing in that area.

As the Minister knows, there was a swing against the Labor Government in 1995. I had less of a swing in the booths surrounding that area than I did throughout the whole electorate. When the Liberal Party and the three-time loser Zenia Belcher made the prime issue public housing in that part of Stafford Heights, we had less of a swing against us than the rest of the electorate, and it is still apposite today. At that time Santo Santoro, John Goss and Liberal candidate Belcher were all saying, "We will preserve this land for parkland." We found out that when the coalition was in power from 1996 to 1998 they had a plan to sell off that land for private housing development. They broke their promise. They did not intend to keep it. They were going to do the Joan Sheldon trick of selling off the land, pocketing the money and using it for some other purpose.

The member for Aspley and the member for Clayfield did one of two things. They either did not inform the local residents of their plan to sell it off, in which case they were dishonest, or they in fact did the right thing as members of Parliament and told the local residents that they were going to sell off the land and there was not one word of protest, which makes those protesters dishonest. Whichever way it goes, it was a dishonest promise, a dishonest statement by the Liberals.

Mr Schwarten: The didn't mind housing going there, as long as it wasn't public housing.

Mr SULLIVAN: Exactly. They did not mind housing; they did not want public housing. I say publicly that what I want in that area is some development, a realisation of the State asset. If any Minister in this Ministry tries to sell that land off just for private housing, I will lead

the charge down Rode Road. After speaking to the Minister and his staff, I know that when that land is developed there will be a public housing element, and rightly so. This is an absolute disgraceful performance by the Liberals. It backfired electorally, because there was less of a swing against us in the booths surrounding 881 Rode Road than there was throughout the rest of the electorate. That was the major issue that Mr Goss, Mr Santoro and Zenia Belcher made in the Stafford Heights area.

Mr Lucas: She got done like a dinner, didn't she?

Mr SULLIVAN: She got done like a dinner in McDowall. That supposedly safe Liberal ward was again lost by that same losing Liberal, probably because people knew that she would not keep her promises anyway.

There is a very high demand for public housing in the Chermside area. The area is close to major shopping centres, there are good bus services along Gympie Road and there are links to other shopping centres and to the railway line. Those factors lead to a long waiting list.

I am pleased to say that under Labor there has been no queue jumping. This places demands on members of Parliament, our staff, departmental staff and the Minister, but I encourage him to maintain his stance and not allow queue jumping. Once we start playing favourites and jump people up a queue, where does it stop? I do not believe that is fair. What the Minister is doing is fair. I encourage a greater tolerance of public housing tenants among people in the area, some of whom want to act like some of those people in Stafford Heights in deriding public housing tenants. I have found public housing tenants to be excellent.

I welcome any public housing that the Minister wishes to construct within the Chermside electorate, particularly housing for seniors. There is very high demand for that type of housing in the area. The Minister is most welcome in my electorate at any time with any construction he wants to bring. I thank the Minister for the work he does.

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (4.30 p.m.): I am proud to speak in the debate on the State Housing Amendment Bill. Academics and commentators have expressed views about the level of home ownership in Australia and have spoken about why we seem to have such an attachment to it. I think one of the great things about Australia is that we do have a very fond attachment to home ownership. It is seen very much as a commitment. There

are a lot of great people in my electorate who do not have a lot of money, but the one thing they do have is their house, which they treat with great pride. It is the one asset they can leave to their kids when they pass on. I even think our love of sport comes from our love of backyards and our love of getting around the home or having a barbecue in the backyard.

This legislation will promote home ownership. That is very important, because I do not think we should have a society where the only people who can own homes are the wealthy. It is fantastic that the Government can assist people who are less fortunate to achieve home ownership, and that is to be encouraged.

The State Housing Amendment Bill will institute a regime that will assist public housing tenants in particular to buy a home. It will contain a compassionate interest rate regime and a deposit assistance plan. One thing that is important, particularly in areas such as mine, where there is a high demand for public housing, is that in a number of instances the department will not be very keen to sell a particular property because it may be needed in the future. It is important to recognise that the department does have the ability to refuse to sell a particular property in any given circumstances.

This scheme certainly has merit. I know that this Minister is committed to public housing ownership. I am confident that the revenue generated from the sales can be put back into better public housing. One thing about public housing, like any housing, is that it has to be renewed and upgraded from time to time.

It is a pleasure for me to have public housing tenants in my electorate. They really are great Queenslanders and great baysiders—people it is just a pleasure to know. One of the things about this State and this country that makes me particularly proud to be Australian is that someone's station in life does not matter. It does not matter if someone has been born with everything in the world. People have a chance to get on and prove themselves in life.

One of the most important things of all is education. Honourable members may ask what housing has to do with education. Stability of housing, which is an even more basic need than education, generates the ability for a family to get their kids through school. If a family does not have any certainty of housing, their children will be at one school one day and another school the next. The family does not get family ties or community

ties. Public housing is about assisting people who, through the operation of the market, may not be able to have those ties to get some permanency and some certainty so that they can concentrate on what is important.

It is with great pride that I serve in this Government. The Minister has said to me on many occasions that former Labor Premier Wayne Goss was an Inala housing commission boy, that the Leader of the House, Terry Mackenroth, comes from a housing commission family and that the Deputy Premier is also from an Inala housing commission family. They are the sorts of people who have been given opportunities through the operation of a housing system that gives stability and a chance to people who are not born with silver spoons in their mouths. None of those three people are dills. They had their chance, I think due in some small way to the support offered by our public housing regime. People such as the Minister for Housing understand that. They understand that everything is interconnected. Housing is interconnected with education, which is interconnected with social stability. Of course, urban renewal is a part of that. It is not about just whacking up a bit of timber in a neighbourhood. It is more than that.

There are many and varied public housing tenants generally and also in my electorate, whether they be pensioners, families or singles. These days, Housing Department properties are very contemporary. The other day I looked at some of the newer Department of Housing developments in my electorate. I am proud to say that the Minister is very committed to recognising the needs of baysiders. These developments really are great credits to the department.

There is no point spending money on putting up slipshod places. It is a false economy. They do not suit community standards, complaints from neighbours are forthcoming and the houses do not last very long. If we are going to put public housing in a particular area we should make it decent public housing—not only for the tenants but also for the community as a whole.

I have always found that 99.9% of public housing tenants—indeed, like 99.9% of private tenants—look after their properties and see themselves as important contributors to a community. I note what the member for Chermside said about people participating in public housing. People participate just as much and they are very civic minded with community projects. I give them full credit for that.

One of the problems with my area is that Wynnum, Manly and Lota are very popular areas, particularly for seniors. Therefore we do have a significant waiting list. It is important that we always recognise that we have to continue to upgrade and develop our stock to meet community needs.

The member for Redlands was delving into ancient history when he talked about the Hanlon Government. I will say this about the Hanlon Government: it brought in the free hospital system. When people go to the Royal Women's Hospital and they see the statute of Labor Premier Ned Hanlon, they realise who actually recognised the needs of ordinary people, even that far back.

Conservative Governments thought that public housing could just be whacked up in conglomerates in areas and that they did not need to be bothered about services such as transport or conveniently located schools. They are other aspects of housing and social stability. That is not what this Minister does. This Minister is concerned about providing the best possible outcome for public housing tenants and the community alike. My area is popular with people and therefore there is quite a high demand for housing. I know that the Minister has recognised that.

This Minister has shown that he has the capacity to understand that a number of different outcomes can be achieved in the provision of housing itself. I was delighted to have the Minister in my electorate a few weeks ago. He came to Ernest Street, Manly, where the department is erecting a number of units—both ground floor and upper floor units. Those units are being built by the building industry group apprentice training scheme, a HITT scheme. Not only is public housing being built; people are learning a trade while they are doing it. Someone involved in this scheme is a fellow I know well from the local community. He is a great fellow. He is about my age. He came from a rural community originally. There are not a lot of jobs in rural industries any more. He has a chance to get a trade through this trade training scheme. Not only is this Minister providing these opportunities; he is providing quality housing for people at the same time. Full credit goes to the Minister for that.

Another area in which we have been doing a lot of excellent work with the Department of Housing is in Selina Street at Wynnum North. There are a number of older properties in that street. A number of them are now in need of attention. As properties get older they become more and more expensive to maintain. I have been working with the

department, the Minister and the local residents to achieve an outcome in terms of replacing some of that older stock and developing new stock, perhaps in the nature of seniors units or smart town houses, that will add to the character of the street. It is very close to a shopping centre and to a railway station.

What is important is that a number of residents in that street are long-time residents. I can think of Mick and Olga Riys in particular. Mick and Olga have been there for 50 years. They do not want to move because they are happy in their house. This Minister has said, rock-solid, to them, "As long as you want to be in your house, you are there for the rest of your life." They are great people—model tenants. A few years ago I was out at the Workers Heritage Centre at Barcaldine and I was having a look through some of the displays. I saw a photograph of Mick and Olga Riys taken 50 years ago in front of the same house. The photograph was part of the Department of Housing's display.

They are the type of decent working people that we have in public housing. I know that this Minister recognises that.

Mr Schwarten: She's not 85.

Mr LUCAS: I do not know whether Olga is 85, but she is certainly getting up around that age. She and Mick have been great contributors. I am delighted to say that we are looking at an outcome that takes into account not only their needs but also the future needs of the area. The department has said to all the people there, "If you are interested in assisting with the redevelopment, we will temporarily accommodate you and bring you back to where you were living for all that period of time. If you don't want to do it, that's fine." I give credit to Deb McNamara and the department for helping us with that.

I give the Minister full credit for his administration of this portfolio. He is probably one of the best—if not the best—Housing Ministers this State has ever had. There are a few reasons why that is the case. That is not solely my view. I notice the member for Mansfield agrees with me. It is a commonly held view in relation to the Minister's portfolio.

This Minister does not see himself as being on a crusade; he sees himself as doing something for our people—doing something for ordinary Queenslanders. That is important. I know that the Minister was on the tools once. He is an ex chippie. I have seen the Minister on building sites. He has not actually hung a door as yet—and I do not know how rusty he is—but it means a lot to people building public

housing and to people living in public housing. They are pleased to have a Minister who can talk with some authority about their needs. He is a Minister who has his feet very firmly planted on the ground. He understands what local communities want. He understands what our battlers and our working people want. From my point of view, I have found the Minister's attitude very handy when I have talked to him in relation to his portfolio. I give full credit to the Minister.

An aspect that I know appeals to the Minister is adaptable housing design. It is very expensive to convert showers—to take hobs away when people get older. It costs a fortune. Why not do it straight up? That is what this Minister has done in relation to design. He takes a long-term, holistic view of housing. The same thing applies to education, to stability and to social cohesion. That is what this Minister has done.

Another thing for which I particularly commend the Minister is his attitude with respect to the rights of public housing tenants. I receive very few complaints about public housing tenants. I receive very few complaints about private rental tenants as well. Of the minuscule minority of complaints that I receive, a significant proportion of that very small number come from other public housing tenants.

This Minister has made no secret of the fact—and I warmly commend him in this regard—that misbehaviour will not be tolerated. If one pays one's rent and is a good neighbour, one can expect to be in public housing for as long as one wants, provided that one abides by the rules. There is no *carte blanche*, no fiat, for people to believe that they can interrupt the lives of others. Other decent people have the right to live in peace in their houses. I know that the Minister has taken a strong view in relation to that matter. I also know that the community appreciate the strong view that the Minister has taken. Public housing tenants deserve to have stability in their houses. They deserve to have harassment-free living. If that is taken away from them, the attractiveness of living in that community is lost.

I would like to commend the local staff of the Department of Housing, particularly Deb McNamara at the Capalaba office. I would also like to congratulate Rod Harbourne, the acting manager of the Wynnum sub-office at the moment. Rod has replaced Valmai Sinkinson, who has gone on to bigger and better things. I have been impressed by Rod in the time that I have had dealings with him. He is sympathetic

to public housing issues. He gets on the ball straight away. He is a great credit to the department.

Finally, I want to say something about HOME Assist/HOME Secure schemes. I have an excellent HOME Assist/HOME Secure scheme run by Wynnum Blue Care, formerly Wynnum Blue Nurses, in my electorate. HOME Assist/HOME Secure is a great program—a Labor Government program, I might add. The great benefit of it is that it permits people to continue to live in their own homes as long as possible because that is what they want to do. They are given confidence and security in their own homes.

One of the problems in an area such as mine is that I have an older than average population and the housing is generally older than average. It is important that we take that into account in funding formulas. There might be some areas which have older than average populations but they might have relatively new housing stock. I have both. It is important that we recognise that so that we can provide the best possible services in an equitable fashion.

I commend the Bill to the House and I warmly congratulate the Minister on his excellent administration of the portfolio.

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (4.46 p.m.): It is with great pleasure that I rise to support the State Housing Amendment Bill. I do not want to prolong the debate, but I think it is very important that I record my support for the Bill.

I am in a good position to observe community support for this scheme. Fortunately, or unfortunately, a press statement that I sent to the local paper in promotion of this scheme was published and my mobile phone number was used in the article. I think I am now up to 75 phone calls from tenants or potential tenants who want to know about the scheme. The excitement in these people's voices demonstrated to me the support that they have for this proposal. As I said, my mobile phone is still ringing. Obviously people read the local newspapers much more than we thought.

I would like to publicly thank the majority of tenants in public housing in the Mansfield electorate for being such great tenants. We often hear the horror stories but we do not hear enough about the overwhelming majority of tenants who treat their homes as their pride and joy. The majority of speakers in this debate have spoken about the benefits of public housing.

My parents still live in the house that they bought with a Housing Commission loan about 40 years ago. They would not want to live anywhere else.

About 12 months ago, the now Liberal Party Leader in the Brisbane City Council, Councillor Caltabiano, said that Mansfield had a blackened name and was treated differently from the suburb of Carindale. One of the reasons he gave was the high level of public housing.

We now have the Leader of the Liberal Party in the State Parliament, the member for Moggill, and the Leader of the Liberal Party in the Brisbane City Council putting their views on public housing onto the record. We can see why the Liberal Party's popularity is plummeting. The Liberal Party is not in the real world. Dr Watson and Mr Caltabiano cannot see the real worth of public housing in this city and in this State. That is why they are in Opposition. They will continue to be in Opposition if they promote such views. They are treating people in public housing as second-class citizens.

Mr Musgrove: They are prejudiced against poor people.

Mr REEVES: That is exactly right. They are prejudiced against how much money people have in their wallets.

A couple of members referred to the building of public housing in the past. There is a housing area on the left-hand side, the industrial side, of Wecker Road. Just last week I was out there with James O'Brien from the Stones Corner area office. I must commend him for his excellent work. He is acting area manager for the next four weeks or so. One could not ask for two more dedicated staff members than James O'Brien and the area manager of the Stones Corner area office, along with the entire staff of that area office. They actually have a passion for their job. They have a passion to work for the people.

This public housing estate was built in 1988. In common with many other public housing estates to which members have referred, that estate was obviously developed on the cheap. The pavers in the driveway were laid without any base. With all the recent heavy rain that we have had, the pavers have been breaking up and creating lumps, and people have been tripping over them. Thankfully, because of the great work of the department, we are getting that rectified.

Recently the department sold a reasonable parcel of land near that estate. I did not have a problem with the department

selling the land. As I said, this public housing estate was built in 1988 and, if public housing was built on that vacant land, then we would have had a clustering of public housing. The member for Woodridge referred to diversity, which is very important. With the sale of that land, we will have that diversity. I will be continuing to pressure the Minister—and I am sure that he is listening—for some of the proceeds from the sale of that land to be put back into the public housing stock in that area. A lot of that public housing stock, especially those located in the central part of Mansfield, is now getting a bit old.

Just recently, I visited a couple who had been public housing tenants for 38 years. They have been great tenants and the department has never heard a complaint from them. They do not like ringing up and complaining or whingeing; they just want a little bit of modification here or there. Obviously, their needs have changed from what they were 35 years ago. The wife is virtually blind and her husband has difficulty walking. They wanted security so that if they wanted to keep the windows open to keep cool, they would not be worried about security if they fell asleep. They are just the little things of which we need to take stock.

On a number of occasions the Minister has stated that we repay the really good public housing tenants of 40 or 50 years by fixing up their houses for new tenants after the former tenants have died. So the person who gets the reward for being an excellent tenant is the new tenant. I know that the Minister feels very strongly about that. I will continue to put pressure on him—especially now that that sale of land has taken place—to put some of the proceeds of that sale into modifying or undertaking maintenance repairs to a number of the public houses in my area.

While I am talking about land sales, I still shake when I think that the former Government—and thank God they are the former Government—sold a great piece of land that was located right between a high school and a State school, on the bus route, 300 metres from a shopping centre and very close to churches. That Government did not believe that the area should have a mixture of public housing; it just sold it off to the highest bidder. As I said earlier —

Mrs Edmond: The previous member wouldn't have wanted it for public housing.

Mr REEVES: That is exactly right. I am sure that the former member for Mansfield did not want that area to be used for public housing. He would have been a great

supporter of its sale. It just so happens that the former Federal President of the Liberal Party lives opposite that land. So I think that that might have had something to do with the sale.

However, I endorse the sentiments expressed by many members about this Minister and his department. It is great to see a Minister who is so passionate about the portfolio in which he works. I encourage him to keep that up, because his efforts are not going unnoticed by the people who count, the housing commission tenants. I know that the Stones Corner tenants authority say that the Minister can come and visit them any time he likes, because he is their No. 1 fan. I thank the Minister for this excellent Bill and the work that his department is doing. I commend the Bill to the House.

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (4.55 p.m.): There has been an enormous amount of interest in this Bill, which shows the level of interest that members, especially on this side, have in what is a very old practice within public housing, and that is the notion of tenants purchasing their rental premises. Quite frankly, some of the questions that were raised by the Opposition members really made me wonder whether or not they have been in any way connected with public housing in previous years. If they had, they would not have asked those questions. It is nothing new to have a scheme to sell these houses to tenants. Every week I sign off scores of houses to sell into the private market. I have never heard so much as one utterance of complaint from that side of the House about that. However, suddenly, when we want to sell houses to tenants, we have a problem. I do not see it that way at all.

This is a very simple scheme. It is designed to sell homes to people who can afford them. An enormous number of people have been paying market rent well in excess of what it would cost them to pay off their houses, maintain their homes and all the rest of it. We are not doing those people a service by not giving them some mechanism by which they can access a loan.

I wrote half of the speech given by the shadow Minister. It was in question and answer form. If one takes out the interjections and the answers provided by the departmental staff, there was not much left that was of substance. However, among that there were some very detailed and reasonable questions that, in my view, require a written answer,

which will save the time of the House. I will table those for that purpose.

I want to touch on a couple of other issues that were raised by the shadow Minister. He talked about affordable versus realignment; in other words, were we making these decisions on the basis of wanting to get rid of stock or were we making these decisions on the basis of simply trying to find people who could buy their own homes. The answer is that we are interested in selling homes to people who want to buy them and who are in a position to do so. It is as simple and as easy as that. There are only a couple of hundred people associated with this scheme. I do not foresee any problems with it.

Some other members referred to potential interest rate problems. That will not be a problem under this scheme, and that is the reason we are amending this legislation. I must say that not one member opposite actually spoke to a clause of the Bill. However, I accept that, under the circumstances, that is reasonable because, as the shadow Minister pointed out, people are more interested in what the product is going to be.

I will try to touch on a couple of other points made by the shadow Minister. He referred to the \$7,000 assistance grant from the Federal Government. The point I make in relation to that is that it is not equitable. I notice that the shadow Minister was brave enough to admit that it exists to deal with the disadvantage that people will endure as a result of a GST on housing. However, that disadvantage will not be dealt with equitably by this grant, because it will be picked up only by people who buy their first home. On the surface, that may sound all right. However, the truth of the matter is that people in the building industry do not want to hear about any disadvantage for people who want to refinance and build another home, because it is going to cost them more. That grant will also prove to be an absolute disincentive for people who want to upgrade their homes. So builders are saying to me that this grant will be of no assistance to them, because a lot of builders deal with people who are refinancing and building another house. It is not going to help them.

More particularly, the people that it is not going to help are those unfortunates who have been in a problem marriage situation or de facto situation where they have been driven from that home through domestic violence or some other means or because of poverty. If they want to start again in a different relationship, those people will pay. They will

experience the disadvantage that the honourable shadow Minister spoke of in this Chamber yesterday.

Mr Laming: Will you take an interjection?

Mr SCHWARTEN: Yes.

Mr Laming: Have you successfully gone to the Treasurer to alter the principal first place of residence stamp duty along the lines that you suggest, because that is very simple?

Mr SCHWARTEN: No. The response to it is that this is the Federal Government's scheme. We cannot change what the Federal Government has laid down about this.

Mr Laming: You can change the stamp duty.

Mr SCHWARTEN: No, no. I am talking about this scheme here.

Mr Laming: I am talking about the stamp duty.

Mr SCHWARTEN: The member can talk about what he likes, but I have got the microphone. The reality is that this scheme is a disadvantage, as he pointed out yesterday, to those groups of people and they will not receive any recompense for it. I think that that is a shame.

As I said, I have provided very detailed answers to the honourable member in that regard. The former Minister, Mr Connor, also made a contribution. I was quite surprised at his lack of understanding of the systems which were in place already for purchasing homes from tenants and I have provided him with a detailed response which I also table.

Mr Nelson made a very positive contribution on the issue highlighting the fact that there are a lot of homes vacant in his electorate, as indeed there are in many places west of the coast. As he rightly points out, we are selling those houses. No-one wants to live in them. They, of course, are part of this scheme. In most cases they are good homes. The fact is that, for a variety of reasons outlined by the honourable member, they are no longer attractive to people as homes.

The member for Bundamba showed that she was completely on top of the issue of housing in her area and welcomed the scheme. She has dealt with many inquiries and points out that the staff in her area have been very helpful in that regard. She hit the nail on the head when she said the scheme is about allowing people to realise that dream of owning their own home. One of the points she made that ought to be remembered is affordability. That is, that \$55,000, which the shadow Minister thought was a little excessive

and said that people earning that amount would be very privileged. The shadow Minister said that many people simply cannot afford to buy a home for \$30,000. This, I think, was something the member for Aspley was alluding to. When you take the whole life of costs associated with owning your own home, \$30,000 is probably prohibitive.

Speaking of the member for Aspley, I notice that valuation was something of a concern to him. There is no problem with the valuations as they exist under the system that we have. I note that it is said some people look after their home better than others. One of the points that should have been made is that some people simply cannot attend to maintenance issues. I think it is a little bit unfair to say that some do and some do not, meaning that some should. The reality is that a lot of people that I see in public housing simply do not have the capability to do that and I would not encourage some of them to do it either, having spent a bit of time in the trade myself. I would rather that they did not. The point of valuations is not a problem for us now. As I said, on a daily basis I sign off houses that have had values ascribed to them through the normal process. I do not see a problem.

The asbestos super six fibro roofs point is valid. The fact of the matter is that we would make an assessment of those. The one thing that we are not going to do with this is to put people into inappropriate homes. The last thing we want to do is put people into situations where we end up with this home back for maintenance reasons or whatever. What we want to do is present the home in as maintenance-free a condition as we possibly can. Super six fibro roofs have been around for a long time. My parents' house had one. The house was built in the late forties. They are all right provided they are not interfered with. We will make an assessment on that basis. I heard what was said about that. That has been noted and we will proceed down that path.

Again, the shadow Minister spoke about the \$55,000. That is a valid point, as I said before, about the amount of money that people require to service the whole loan. On the matter of transfers, again this is not a system designed to drive people out of the system. It is one that has enough flexibility in it to take into account people's needs. I hear what is said about the nurse or whoever who has a house and suddenly a better job comes up in, say, Mount Isa or elsewhere. There will be a number of options open to that person. We can convert it to the normal Queensland

housing rate or, if it is for compassionate reasons, there will be an opportunity for us to exercise some discretion to assist those people. The situation we want to avoid is one where somebody goes and buys one of these houses, obtains a cheap loan, then goes and moves into another place, puts somebody in and makes money out of it. That is not the intent. It is an honest system intent on providing people with an opportunity to buy their own home.

The member for Nudgee was, as always, a great supporter of his local housing group. I get a lot of correspondence from the member. I ask him to give Jim Freidlich my best regards. He has an excellent housing group in his electorate and the honourable member works closely with that group.

Apart from the local issues about refurbishment and the fact that \$3.5m has been spent in his area, the valid point is that the GST is going to bite this department. I know that honourable members opposite do not want to hear this story, but the truth is that \$90m was the amount that we estimated it would cost us. It was not some fairy story; it was not an invented figure. When the Federal Government got its hands on it they aggregated the whole thing and we ended up with \$70m. Out of that, we ended up with \$60m by the time the other States realised that they had not done their homework properly. Whichever way you want to do it, and I am happy to share the figures with anybody who wants to see them, we are \$30m down the drain over the next three years. I am appalled that the shadow Minister does not understand that. If the shadow Minister was in my position he would be standing here mute about this issue. I take my job much more seriously than that.

Mr LAMING: I rise to a point of order. I asked the Minister to table those figures that he said he would be quite willing to table.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I have not got them with me.

Mr Laming: You will make them available to us?

Mr SCHWARTEN: Yes. There is no secret to it. In fact, I am surprised that it has taken the honourable member this long to want to get hold of those figures. He asks my office for everything else; he might as well have asked for those figures. There is no smoke and mirrors here. He should ask his Federal colleagues about this. They know what the story is. Dean Brown, an honest and decent Liberal in South Australia, does not agree in the slightest with what the honourable member

says. The honourable member gets his riding instructions from Mr Howard; Dean Brown does not. He has been prepared to stand up to Jocelyn Newman and for the State of South Australia over this issue, because he knows full well that the GST is a crippling tax against the building and housing industry. At least he is prepared to stand up for his State rather than to play for Canberra.

The next contribution was from the honourable member for Noosa, who started off all sweetness and light and ended up in the gutter, as he usually does. As usual, he did not do his homework. Everybody knows he is a lazy scoundrel. Somebody wrote his speech for him; he would not be capable of writing it himself. He got it wrong again. Had he bothered to check this out, he would have found out that the house he referred to is under police investigation and has been used for forensic testing. It has been the subject of an engineering report and will be demolished as a result of it. It would have taken only one phone call to my office to check it out. But, no, he came in here, big-noted himself and derided the people who work in Housing and the tenants in that area. In common with everything else he says in here, his claims were ill researched. His ill manner in making those claims do him and this place no favours.

The member said also that there has been a reduction in maintenance. I do not know where he got the idea that all of the money has been spent. About \$10m has not been spent as yet. In contrast to other honourable members, I do not get too many letters from the honourable member asking for assistance to fix up problems with houses. Yesterday I signed off work in the electorates of Lytton, Woodridge and Nudgee. The members for those areas are interested in trying to help their tenants and they play a positive role in that regard. As is normal for the member, he took a cheap shot at the HOME scheme. His contribution was by far the most negative. However, I am not surprised by his antics in that regard. Again, he showed his ignorance, because only about 5% of people failed under the HOME scheme—616 out of 13,157. I challenge the honourable member to go to any bank in Queensland and see whether he can find those sorts of figures for loans. As a result of that scheme, somewhere in the vicinity of 10,781 people are now in homes who would not have been otherwise. What conclusion can we draw from that? If someone such as the member for Noosa was the Minister, those people would still not own homes. He comes in here and bleats that Queensland has a lower home

ownership rate than the other States. However, if he had been the Minister back then—and thank God he was not—there would be an additional 10,781 people in this State who did not own their own homes. He always judges people by looking down rather than looking up. I have wasted enough time talking about the honourable member.

Unlike the member for Noosa, the member for Thuringowa showed commitment to the people he represents. He spoke in very favourable terms about the scheme. He rightly pointed out the value of the Community Urban Renewal Program, which is a hallmark of this Government. We are doing better and better all the time. He said that Rasmussen was in need. A number of areas in the State, including some in my electorate, are in need of some refurbishment and need to be included in the Community Urban Renewal Program. It will take a fair bit of time for us to get through this. These mistakes did not happen overnight and we cannot fix them overnight. But one thing I am determined to do as a Minister is not go back to the days when those sorts of decisions were made and, because they could not afford their own home, people were pushed into a corner away from services and facilities—

Mr Mickel: A disgraceful situation.

Mr SCHWARTEN: It was disgraceful.

Mr Kaiser: Numbers on the footpaths so they could be identified.

Mr SCHWARTEN: That is exactly right.

The member for Sandgate, with his background in banking, understands home lending. He spoke about the changes to people's lives that he noticed as improvements were made to housing in his electorate. He again spoke about the zoning issue and how the situation has been improved for people. Back in our days in Opposition, he was one of the first members who alerted me to the problems of people from his electorate being asked to live kilometres away from their support groups. Thankfully, I got rid of that system and people now have the right to be on a waiting list to stay near their family, friends, local church, cinema, pub or whatever in their local community.

The member for Gladstone made a positive contribution. Every honourable member has heard of Phillips Street. There would not be a debate that did not vaguely resemble housing in which the honourable member did not mention Phillips Street. However, I acknowledge that the honourable member is a great supporter of housing

schemes in her electorate and of public housing and the staff who work in that area. She asked a couple of detailed questions. I have the answers here. I could either table the answers or read them out.

Mr Mickel interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: There is a bird that makes a noise like that. It is called a drongo.

Mr Mickel interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: It will.

The questions were in relation to State housing funds and so on. I have the answers here.

Mr Mickel: How do you reckon that will look in Hansard?

Mr SCHWARTEN: It will look a lot better than it would if we put the member's photo in it!

The member for Gladstone spoke about the need to retain public housing within Gladstone because of the escalation of rents in the private sector from time to time as building booms come and go. I could not agree more. I do not believe that this scheme will impact on that at all. We are talking about a couple of hundred houses throughout Queensland. In my view, that money will be reinvested back into providing more housing and, in any case, the numbers of people buying the house in which they are living will not change the waiting list situation at all for us. I take the honourable member's point in that regard. This is not just about unloading stock; this is primarily about giving people an opportunity to own their own home.

The honourable member for Bulimba is very passionate about public housing. He is a regular attendee at the Stones Corner office. I noticed that he was supported by the member for Mount Gravatt in his praise for the good officers at Stones Corner. Again, he raised the issue of keeping seniors in the areas in which they live, especially in suburbs such as his, which are undergoing some gentrification. Part of that big sell-off of land there has aided and abetted that. My policy in that regard is that we do not want large parcels of land for large estates. Those days are gone. We are now looking at the sort of program that the honourable member outlined, whereby we enter into joint ventures. As the member for Woodridge pointed out in his speech, it is about creating suburbs with a diversity of living circumstances. I believe that we have a role as a department to be lead agency in that. We are doing that at Gona Barracks at the moment.

Mrs Edmond: What about in Paddington?

Mr SCHWARTEN: We are doing that in Paddington also. I thank the honourable member for her interjection and know of her great support in that regard as well.

The member for Bulimba also talked about the HITS scheme, the Housing Industry Training Scheme, through which this Government will assist 600 young Queenslanders in gaining trade qualifications. The member for Lytton and I were at one of those sites just the other day. We saw those young chippies working on site there—block layers, brickies and so on—and it really is a commonsense thing to do. When I became Minister, they said that I could not do it; it would not be possible to sign up that number of apprentices with training schemes over that period, but we are doing it. I have to say that it is tough; we have to be on it all the time, but that should not dissuade anybody from doing it. I believe that in years to come there will be 600 young people in Queensland who will thank us, as indeed will the building industry.

The member for Woodridge, of course, has really warmed to the task of being a great advocate for his Department of Housing tenants out there. I am already sick and tired of writing letters back to him. I do not know whether he and the member for Lytton are having a competition, but he really has shown what an energetic Labor member in that area can do to influence the outcomes of the people whom we are in this Parliament to assist, and they are the battlers in places such as Woodridge. He has been a breath of fresh air down there in terms of the people he has already assisted. He makes a valid point that 71% of the houses down there are three-bedroom houses. I think the member for Redlands made a point in relation to our stock. One of the problems that we have is that people do not want to live in those sorts of houses, but we have them—

Mr Purcell: Send them off to Bulimba; I will have the lot.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Yes. We have them all the same. Part of the task of urban and community renewal is to do something about that.

The member for Caboolture made a positive contribution. He noted that the department's office there was good and also that the rate of home ownership is falling. I did not really like his talk of being able to pick rented houses from houses that are occupied by the owners. I am sure that he did not mean it that way. However, my experience with the

garden competition has been that often the media goes to the wrong house because they think that the beautiful garden cannot belong to the housing commission house.

The member for Caboolture also made a very valid point about these homes. I give him my assurance that we would not shift people out of homes to make way for people wanting to purchase them; that is not the intent of the scheme. I agreed with him about crisis accommodation. If we can get some more money out of the Federal Government, which continues to strip capital funding from us—\$60m in this round—then I will be happy to do this.

The member for Redlands made a very positive contribution. Unlike the member for Noosa, he understands that we cannot fix all of the maintenance problems overnight. There is a maintenance bill of \$700m out there because for 30 years under the National Party in this State not a dinar was spent on the maintenance of public housing. When we came to Government in 1989, there were still people without hot water systems. It is going to take some time to clear up the problems caused by that lack of funding. We put \$50m into it last year and we will put the same amount in again this year to try to improve the quality of life of those people. I have changed the floor covering policy and so on. As the honourable member points out, we can only do what we can in that regard.

In relation to adaptable housing, my view is that all housing should be adaptable housing because we all get old. I have had personal experience of having to renovate a home. My brother was involved in an accident just after his 21st birthday and was rendered a paraplegic as a result of it. So people's circumstances do change. In those days, of course, we did not know as much as we know about that now. That is no longer an excuse. We are getting better and better at it all the time. The department has continued down the path of using adaptable housing designs. As far as I am concerned, we are not doing it as well as we should be. I will continue to drive that issue because, as the honourable member says, it is a sensible and economically smart thing to do.

The member for Chermside again made a positive contribution. He is a bit like the member for Gladstone. Whenever one talks to the member Chermside, he talks about Rode Road. I will tell the honourable member right now that we will not do what the Liberal Party and National Party wanted to do with that site. We will not be selling that site off; we will be

doing just as the member asks and building a proper and sensible development in that area. I thank him for his advocacy in that regard.

With regard to HOME Assist and HOME Secure, again I would like to spend more money in that area. I take the member's point about older homes needing a higher rate of maintenance. Again, that situation is going to get worse under the GST because it will apply to every one of those little jobs. Those people who own their own homes will go into poverty—into penury—as a result of the GST. Any pensioner who owns their own home will go into penury as a result of the GST because the costs will rise and the miserable amount of money that they receive by way of pension just will not cover it.

The member for Lytton is another passionate believer, as indeed is the member for Mansfield. They are great supporters of public housing in their areas and are prepared to go out there, get involved and take a hands-on approach. I say to the member for Mansfield: nice try in trying to get some money spent over there. We will do what we can. The member for Lytton also has that view, as indeed does the member for Woodridge, the member for Logan and every other member of this House. All in all, I think it was a very positive contribution.

I have here an answer to a question asked by the member for Gladstone that I should have dealt with before. The tight internal controls on applications by departmental employees will ensure that there is no abuse of process and will also ensure that applicants are, in fact, eligible for assistance.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—

Mr LAMING (5.26 p.m.): I realise that this clause relates to the title of the Bill, but it is probably the most relevant clause to respond briefly to the Minister in regard to the content of my speech to the second-reading debate. I think he will appreciate that the Bill itself contained very little about the program. The document that I was able to get and the briefing filled in some of those grey spaces. Some of the questions I asked required four pages of response to fill in some of that detail, and I appreciate that. The supplementary questions that I asked during my contribution

to the second-reading debate required another three pages, and I appreciate that. It is a complex Bill and I appreciate those answers. However, it was necessary for me to ask those questions on behalf of the Opposition so that we knew the detail of the Bill. That was the reason that I proceeded in that way.

I would like to add at this stage that the Opposition agrees wholeheartedly with the concept and the principle of the Bill. We certainly hope that it works well for those people who are in a position to take advantage of the scheme.

Clause 1, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3, as read, agreed to.

Clause 4—

Mr SCHWARTEN (5.29 p.m.): I move the following amendments—

"At page 4, line 11, 'means the standard fixed interest rate'—

omit, insert—

', for a period, means the standard fixed interest rate for the period'.

At page 4, line 14, after 'rate'—

insert—

'for a period'."

Very briefly, because I do not want to take the time of the House any more than I have to, the primary objective of the amendments is to ensure that the Minister has the ability to declare one or more fixed interest rates for different fixed periods of time. In other words, it will increase the options that are available to the loan products we have. I think that is about all I need to say.

Mr LAMING: I have a point of clarification. I do not have any problem with the amendments, but the Explanatory Notes to the amendments state "to make it clear that there can be more than one standard fixed interest rate". Does that mean that there could be different fixed interest rates operating at the same time in that some tenants, for whatever reason, pay one interest rate and other tenants pay another interest rate?

Mr SCHWARTEN: Yes, that is what it means. It is no different from what banks or other lending agencies do now when offering a five-year fixed rate or whatever. What we found when drafting the legislation was that it limited us to one option. I did not believe that that was the intent of what we were trying to do.

Mr LAMING: These are most appropriate amendments. When we talked about interest charges and costs and the effect of the GST

on public housing, I noted the Minister's undertaking to provide information to the Opposition on the costs and how they will be arrived at. I want his undertaking now that the methodology and the assumptions, together with the figures, will be provided so that the whole process can be examined.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I do not have any problem with supplying the Opposition with whatever information I legally can.

Mr LAMING: I have one final point. I am not sure whether it was covered in the Minister's summing-up, but the member for Aspley mentioned temporary absences of a person paying for their home if they were transferred on business and whether they could rent it for a short period of time. I do not know whether the Minister covered that.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I did. I pointed out to the member for Aspley that this scheme was designed to be as flexible as possible. He raised the situation of, say, a nurse who was transferred to Mount Isa or somewhere like that. It is not our intention to take the home from that person in that regard. However, we would need to be convinced that this person was not going to turn it into a money making situation for themselves. The option is available to convert it to the normal Queensland housing loan with the market interest rate. The last thing we want to do is make it hard for people in this regard.

Mr Laming: They could rent it out.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Yes, that is right. They could rent it out on that basis. There will be clauses that deal with hardship, just as there are in all our loans. We do not want to be harsh on people about these issues, but by the same token, as I am sure the member would agree, we do not want to be taken for a ride with it, either.

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 5 and 6, as read, agreed to.

Clause 7—

Mr SCHWARTEN (5.33 p.m.): I move the following amendments—

"At page 6, line 1, after 'fixed interest rate'—

insert—

'for a period'.

At page 6, line 26, 'rate'—

omit, insert—

'interest rate for a 1 year period'.

At page 6, line 29 and page 7, lines 3, 4, 6 and 9, 'variable rate'—
omit, insert—

'variable interest rate'."

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 7, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 8, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

Third Reading

Bill, on motion of Mr Schwarten, by leave, read a third time.

MENTAL HEALTH BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 14 March (see p. 352).

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (5.35 p.m.): One of the most significant health issues facing modern society aside from alcohol and drug abuse is in fact the nation's mental health. The 1993 Burdekin report found that in our community at least one in five will experience mental illness at some stage of their lives. A Bureau of Statistics report in 1998 stated that 17.7% of adults, almost one in six, had some form of mental illness in the previous year. The coalition will be supporting the Mental Health Bill with some important amendments, but I particularly wish to acknowledge the extensive work of consultation and preparation that was undertaken by the previous Health Minister, Mike Horan, and his staff and the former director of Mental Health, Dr Harvey Whiteford, as well as the current director of Mental Health, Dr Peggy Brown.

Before discussing the provisions of the Bill as well as my concerns about the funding implications and state of current services, I would like to focus on the significance of mental illness in the community. The World Health Organisation defines a mental disorder as "the existence of a clinically recognisable set of symptoms or behaviours associated in most cases with distress and with interference with personal functions". The Bill defines mental illness as "a condition characterised by a clinically significant disturbance of thought, mood, perception or memory".

The families and loved ones who know the effect of living with a mental illness when the illness is not under control will tell anyone that it can be devastating. Others, too, will talk about their pathway to wellness and the steps taken with the appropriate support to regain

their quest for control over their lives. One report found that women were most likely to suffer from anxiety and depression and men from a dependence upon alcohol. In further information, a Bureau of Statistics report found that marital status was a significant factor, with 28% of separated or divorced people reporting a mental illness. This was almost twice the rate of those still married and slightly higher than those who never married.

Another major factor was unemployment, with more than one in three, or 34.1%, unemployed people reporting a mental illness. This was twice the national average. According to this report, the group with the best mental health were those who were neither in work nor looking for a job and people in full-time employment. The incidence of mental illness also fell sharply as people aged. More than one quarter of 18 to 24 year olds reported a mental illness last year compared with 5.5% of those people over 65. Drugs and alcohol appeared to play a major part in that, with 21.5% of young males reporting either an addiction to or harmful use of drugs and alcohol.

Suicide is a great tragedy in our community. It is a very final outcome for someone who is suffering a mental illness. In Queensland in 1998 some 579 people were recorded as taking their own lives. That figure is shocking enough, but in reality it is likely to be far higher given the anecdotal tales of people suiciding through road accidents. These fatalities, of course, are in the road statistics and not the suicide statistics. Statistics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics also show that 454 of the 1998 suicide figures were men and 125 were women. With regard to mental health in the community, for some sufferers it is a short-term experience. For others, it is a more chronic problem that severely affects their quality of life and daily functioning and also impacts upon the lives of their loved ones and community. There is a far greater understanding of the impacts of mental illness in all its complex manifestations in our community today than there was 20 to 50 years ago, but it is fair to say that there is still further to go.

I refer to the heartache of a parent whose child has been diagnosed with schizophrenia, for example, and their struggle to find treatment solutions and get back in control of their lives, or to the heartache of a child whose parent suffers from a mental illness, making home life a challenging arena as they struggle to understand their own identity and the weight of responsibility. There are many and varied

scenarios that sufferers and their loved ones face.

There is also the increasing overlay of the use of illicit drugs or abuse of legal drugs with people who have a mental illness. Some workers in the field claim that there can be up to a 70% overlay between the existence of a mental illness and the abuse of drugs. This is a major problem, as is the conflicting service delivery models of the health profession and particularly the State Health Department. This is an issue that I believe needs to be addressed.

I believe further safeguards need to be looked at, in the legislation and in practice, to deal with this. For example, it may be that there is a need for further powers to detain people who are taken into a health facility for assessment under the Mental Health Act and who are found not to be mentally ill but intoxicated or under the influence of a drug. They are really not in a position to consent to treatment, yet they are not safe. If they were returned to a home situation or not admitted to a hospital or other treatment facility, they would be a harm to themselves. Unfortunately, there can be a breakdown in services. Somebody may have or may be suspected of having a mental illness but they also have problems to do with alcohol and drug abuse.

During our two short years in Government, the coalition State Government, under Health Minister Mike Horan, took a mental health service with the lowest per capita expenditure in Australia and started to rebuild it under the 10-year mental health plan. The 10-year mental health plan which Mike Horan took to Cabinet was focused on progressing mental health services throughout the State and provides an important blueprint for the planning of services with long-term as well as short-term horizons.

A significant move of the coalition was to quarantine mental health dollars. This is not just a moral issue; it is a legal one, due to the terms of the Medicare Agreement. Under the Goss Labor Government and then Health Minister Jim Elder, Queensland was clearly in breach in both of those areas. In fact, considering the findings of the Ward 10B inquiry, what is damnable is that an incoming Goss Labor Government stole money out of the mental health budget. Between 1992 and 1994, under the Goss Labor Government, funds were siphoned from mental health programs to fund other areas of health expenditure, with \$1.8m of new funding—that was \$1.8m of new funding intended for mental health—delivering only a \$500,000 increase in

actual mental health service funding. In other words, some \$1.3m was siphoned out of mental health funds into other services.

The Ward 10B inquiry revealed shocking issues which had to be addressed, but what is unforgivable is that, following those revelations and recommendations, additional funding was taken elsewhere by a Labor Government. It was such an abysmal record that the then State Labor Health Minister, Jim Elder, was reprimanded by the then Federal Labor Health Minister, Carmen Lawrence, who raised her concerns about this issue with him in writing in 1995.

The history of the legislation is extensive, but it is important to note that the coalition Cabinet prior to the change of Government had given authority to prepare the Bill and the process was started after extensive consultation. It is interesting that this Minister, in bringing the legislation forward nearly two years after taking office, made the comment in 1998 in this Parliament that "all the work and all the consultation had been done before 1996, before the change of Government". Considering that in 1998 this Minister considered that all the work had been done, I wonder what she has been doing for the last two years. Two years later, essentially the same provisions have come forward, many of which we welcome. There are some differences which obviously are of concern and which I will seek to address with appropriate amendments.

In brief, the provisions of the Bill are well outlined within the Explanatory Notes, but some significant aspects of the Bill are the change from the Mental Health Tribunal to a Mental Health Court, the change from the Patient Review Tribunal to a Mental Health Review Tribunal and the change in the way evidence is handled in that Mental Health Court. The focus in this Bill is more and more on the supply of a mental health service in the community as a community-based treatment and on the need to recognise voluntary and involuntary treatment orders that take into account changing models of care. The current models of care options are very different from when the 1974 Mental Health Bill came before this Parliament. As I said, many aspects of this Bill were agreed upon during the time the coalition was in Government.

I think it is appropriate that at this time I outline some of the provisions we will be looking to amend. The first is the issue of the clash between the needs of treating someone with a mental illness and the needs of the victim of a person with a mental illness.

Victims' needs are tragic and, unfortunately, have not previously been well addressed in law or in practice. There has been much discussion about the need to involve the victims of crime perpetrated by somebody with a mental illness. As I will outline later, the majority of people with mental illnesses are more of a threat to themselves than to the community but, tragically, research shows that there is a high correlation between violent crime and mental illness. I stress: a majority of people with a mental illness are not a threat to the community.

The pain, fear and frustration of people who have been the victims of a violent crime committed by someone who suffers from a mental illness are well and truly on the record. This Bill seeks to establish a notification system for victims. I certainly welcome such a notification system so that victims have some concept of what is happening with a person who has been charged and who may be yet to face court, if they are found fit to stand trial at a later date, or who has been found to be of unsound mind at the time and detained in a treatment facility. However, I believe that the Government's provisions fall far short.

There is no provision in the Mental Health Bill to notify those victims of crime if somebody escapes from detention. There is no provision under the proposed notification orders to notify victims if somebody has gone AWOL. There are plenty of examples on the public record of this situation occurring. I will quote one of those. I believe that the stories of some of these victims of crime need to be noted for the public record. The Courier-Mail on 22 September 1999 reported the story of someone who was found not fit to stand trial. It states—

"Claude John Gabriel was charged with murdering Janaya Clarke on November 1998 after he picked up her and two other female hitchhikers on the Gold Coast."

The article continues—

"The murder charge was dropped after he was deemed to be suffering from schizophrenia and he was committed to the John Oxley Memorial Hospital for treatment in July. An autopsy found Ms Clarke, 17, suffered 13 knife wounds to the upper body in the frenzied attack. The incident has outraged victim support groups and Janaya's mother, Robyn Clarke. Gabriel left the hospital grounds at Wolston Park on Friday and was found about two hours later by staff hitchhiking along Ipswich Road."

Despite the fact that the Health Minister's office and prosecution staff had guaranteed that family that this could not happen, it did happen. We acknowledge that people going absent without leave from so-called secure facilities has been a problem. There is quite a well-documented problem in recent times of people going absent when they have been supposedly on escorted leave.

First, let us deal with this issue of notification to victims. This Bill does not give provision for notification to a victim if somebody escapes from detention in a mental health facility. We will be seeking to fix that in our amendments. Furthermore, our amendments will make provision for orders to be made for minimum periods of detention for forensic patients in a mental health facility. I am not proposing a mandatory period of detention but we intend to give the Mental Health Court judicial power to provide for that minimum period of detention in a mental health facility. This acknowledges that there has to be a balance of responsibilities. This will allow for the patient to be treated within the facility.

The coalition's amendments will provide for a toughening up of the provisions regarding escorted leave. Once again, I refer to articles on the public record concerning instances of forensic patients who have gone absent without leave. These are people who have been charged with an indictable offence. Once again, the victims of crime have not been notified. There is a need to toughen up the provisions in relation to that type of leave.

I have spoken with a lot of people who have had mental illnesses. I have also spoken with their families and the staff of these facilities. These are people who have a wide-ranging interest in this issue and are stakeholders in this matter. I am concerned to learn that so many people are allowed to go absent without leave. These are people who had a history of violence—sometimes only a month or two earlier. The victims have not been notified. There has not been sufficient accountability for the decisions that have been made about the level of security that is afforded to the person who has been granted leave from the facility. The coalition's amendments will provide for stricter criteria relating to escorted leave.

I want to refer to an article in the Sunday Mail of 7 March 1999. This was an article which was written by Chris Griffith. It was entitled Mental Patient Alert: Violent Offenders Among 37 Missing. It referred to the fact that dozens of mental health patients, including

violent criminal offenders, had gone missing in Queensland. Among the 37 missing was dangerous schizophrenic Rosemary Helen Saibura who, in 1996, produced a steak knife from her bag and stabbed a stranger. It is obviously painful for people who have suffered in these cases to hear these facts repeated. This information is on the public record.

The article stated that the Queensland Health Department released statistics which stated that three of the 37 voluntary patients had disappeared from hospital grounds, one from day leave and seven from escorted excursions. The other 26 had disappeared while on extended leave to be treated in the community. All the missing persons had originally been held at the John Oxley Memorial Hospital.

It is one thing to talk about the rights of the victims and the rights of the community, but it is another thing to talk about the treatment of the people who have been put into these detention centres for treatment. These people go absent without leave and the people who may have suffered at the hands of these forensic patients are not notified. These patients are not in care and are not being treated. The provisions relating to people who achieve leave from these facilities must be much more strict.

The Bill should contain provisions which ensure that when an issue comes before the tribunal to review the treatment needs of the patient—they may be making application for leave or for different treatment—a range of evidence should be taken into consideration. Obviously the tribunal has the power to call certain evidence. I believe it is time that the professional standing of the mental health professionals who are treating and caring for our mental health patients in the mental health facilities needs to be taken into consideration. In its amendments, the coalition will be ensuring that not only are the reports made available to the tribunal, but the clinical notes of the mental health carers, including nursing staff who are professionals in 24-hour contact with the patients, are available to the tribunal. This will ensure that the best information is taken into consideration by the tribunal in considering the best treatment needs of the patient.

If the Minister makes a forensic order, it is imperative that she takes into account the seriousness of the offence and the protection of the community. This is a matter for the Mental Health Court and the Mental Health Review Tribunal when they make a decision.

I want to refer once again to the question of notification to the victim because much has been made by the Minister of the fact that the victims may be notified. This legislation is dreadfully flawed. For example, there is no way in which the department can be penalised if the person responsible does not fulfil the provisions of the notification order. In other words, if an officer of the department fails to notify the necessary person, there is nothing in this legislation which spells out the onus on the department. By contrast, the person whom the notification order is supposed to benefit—presumably the victim—could face a penalty order if they fail to comply with the notification order. I am shocked to think that we have a double standard here. This legislation contains no information with regard to the onus on the department and the implications if a departmental officer fails to notify someone who has a legitimate need to know.

The legislation does not contain provisions which deal with a patient being absent without leave from a detention centre. In contrast, the patient's victim in that case could face a fine of up to \$3,000 if, in some way, the victim breached the conditions of a notification order. The provisions could be better framed in such a way that they still protect the rights of people who are forensic patients. There are better ways of balancing the situation and providing for the very real needs of the victims of crime who have lived through hell and who find that they are still living with that ongoing situation.

I want to address the issue of standards in the service. It is interesting to note that about five years ago an audit was undertaken of the facilities of the Mental Health Service. I call on the Minister today to guarantee that there will be an independent audit of the Mental Health Service, both operationally and financially. There is a great need to spend more money on mental health facilities. However, it is five years since the last audit was undertaken. That audit found that the Labor Government had not been spending the mental health dollars available on mental health services. The audit found that all mental health facilities which were audited did not meet minimum standards.

I ask the Minister to advise the Parliament of how many of the mental health facilities meet the minimum standard and whether she will support an independent audit of the mental health facilities in this State. It is important that we have an audit of the financial side of the delivery of care. This Government has siphoned off the mental health dollars. It is important that we have an

independent audit of the way in which these dollars are spent. We need to spend more money on mental health, but it is not solely a question of the amount of money that is spent. We also need to know where it is spent and how it is spent to make sure that it gets to the area of service delivery.

Debate, on motion of Miss Simpson, adjourned.

CENSURE OF BEATTIE GOVERNMENT AND MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND MINISTER FOR MAIN ROADS

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (6 p.m.): I move—

"That this Parliament censures the Beattie Government and the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads over their inept handling of industrial relations matters within Queensland Rail."

Yesterday I brought to the attention of the Minister and this House the unrest that is occurring in Queensland Rail because of the policies of the Beattie Labor Government. The Minister chose to argue that the advertisements in the QR weekly notices is not an advertisement. The Minister also refused to advise this House and rail workers how many jobs are to go from Queensland Rail and, more importantly, if specialist jobs such as sheetmetal workers, boilermakers, carpenters and the like go, that they will be replaced.

It is this type of arrogance and complete disregard for rail workers that has led to the unrest in Queensland Rail that underlies today's rail strike. It is the policies of former Labor Governments and other Labor Governments right throughout this country that this Government is currently following. It will lead this Government to the same scenario. It is because of the failure of the Beattie Labor Government to properly administer the Transport portfolio that the citizens of this State are yet again faced with the failure of the public transport system.

We not only have a rail union holding this State to ransom by calling a wildcat strike but also this morning on radio the head of the Brisbane City Council transport system advised that they had not received notification from Queensland Rail about the strike until 5 a.m. this morning. Consequently, the Brisbane City Council was not able to make arrangements for additional public transport and private transport bus operations or reorganise rail passes. If Queensland Rail was notified of the strike at 11 p.m. last night, why was the

Brisbane City Council not advised by QR immediately?

The Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads should apologise immediately to the people of Queensland for his failure to properly administer the public transport system in this State. The Minister must also institute an immediate inquiry into the failure of communications in relation to this strike, which has left people throughout this State stranded. My colleague the member for Warrego has advised me that he has received advice from the parents of children who were returning home from boarding school that they have been stranded by this strike. I call upon the Minister for Transport to ensure that these children are returned home by this Government.

Unfortunately, the circumstances that I have outlined seem to be typical of the slipshod administration of the public transport system that we have come to expect from the Beattie Labor Government. Of course, the public of Queensland will now sit back and see just how the industrial relations system in this State responds to this irresponsible action by some people who are just thumbing their noses at this Minister. Why? Because they have been kept in the dark.

The public of Queensland are asking how the industrial relations system in this State can permit these strikes to go ahead without notice. How can parents plan to send kids off to school each day when there is a possibility that trains will not be running? Workplaces face the same dilemma as employees cannot get to work. Tonight on TV we saw footage of the lines of cars that are impacting on the road network in the city because of this strike.

However, it is important to remember that this action by the rail union has been aggravated by the hypocrisy of the Beattie Labor Government. The union is calling out for help. They were asking for one issue to be addressed, and that was for safety mechanisms to be put in those railway locomotives on the Townsville-Mount Isa line. Again, they are talking about a safety issue. That is why they reverted to this ploy today.

Prior to the last election, the shadow Minister—now the Deputy Premier—went around this State making promises to rail workers about jobs, jobs, jobs. Rail workers now know that the only job Labor was interested in was the con job that was perpetrated upon rail workers. Yesterday in this House I asked the Minister for Transport to respond to rail workers' concerns about the voluntary separation offer being made by

Queensland Rail. The Minister refused point-blank to indicate to the electors of Queensland how many rail jobs are to be flushed by the Beattie Labor Government. This Government, which takes out full-page advertisements prior to by-elections to skite about the jobs it hopes to create by throwing taxpayers' dollars at overseas companies at the expense of local companies, now refuses to answer questions in this House about how many jobs will be lost. Will it be 1,000? Two thousand? Three thousand? Five thousand? Only they know.

Even Lord Mayor Jim Soorley came out and confessed prior to the local government election that Mr Beattie was wasting public money on the Virgin Airlines deal, because they were coming here, anyway. Rob Borbidge played a very significant role there, but he never got a mention. No, the Government does not want to give credit where credit is due. However, we know the way in which Labor works.

This morning in a ministerial statement, the Minister for Transport said that he had no indication that there was to be a rail strike. I can only suggest that he must be living in a hollow log, because strike action has been on the agenda since the unions accepted the EBA settlement after the last strike. Of course, in Brisbane, the Minister needed only listen to the Triple M rumour file, which has been replaying its predictions all day. Unfortunately, the Minister cannot hear Triple M in Cairns. However, it does not really matter because he is not listening, anyway.

I will read some recent correspondence that will give this House—and perhaps even members of the press gallery, who have continued to ignore this rail job issue—some appreciation of just what the unions are saying about this Government. The Leader of the Opposition released an epistle from the member for Mundingburra in response to a petition from Townsville rail workers and the response from the assistant State secretary of the AMWU which indicates the poisonous states of relations between the unions and this Government. In case members were to think that these feelings are restricted to Townsville, I will read an extract from a letter to the Premier and to the AMWU State secretary from 14 union delegates from the Rockhampton workshops of Queensland Rail. It states in part—

"At a Shop Stewards meeting of AMWU delegates at Rockhampton Workshops of Queensland Rail on 3/3/00, the following concerns were raised and this letter endorsed to be forwarded to you.

A vote of no confidence was passed in the ability of QR management and the Minister for Transport, Steve Bredhauer, to successfully manage and look after the well being of QR workers.

The following points were put forward to be brought to your attention and something done, not just the usual letters of dribble, from Vince and Steve."

I table that document. Those workers are terrified that their jobs are going to be eroded by the take-up by Freight Corp of some of the operations in this State because QR did not tender for those jobs.

I also have copies of the circular from the Queensland Rail, Tram and Bus Union dated 3 April, which indicates clearly the dissatisfaction with, as they term it, QR's demand to introduce driver-only operations on the north-west line. This circular refers to QR, and states—

"... QR variously threatening to seek intervention of the Industrial Commission and taking action against Traincrew if they refuse to work the DOO."

I table that document. Members can see that it is from the Rail, Tram and Bus Union—people from whom the Government drags money to prostitute its own cause and defy their needs.

Despite all of that, the Minister claims that he had no idea a strike was imminent. This Minister has failed the rail workers of Queensland. He has failed the people of Queensland who rely upon rail transport. He has failed the Beattie Labor Government in his administration of this Transport portfolio. He has not gone anywhere near the rail workers in this State. Recently, I was in the workshops in Townsville. I have been in other workplaces at Sarina with my colleague the member for Mirani. The workers there are absolutely terrified that those specialist jobs are going to be withdrawn from that region, which is where the most productive part of QR is located in carrying coal to the port of Mackay and the port of Gladstone. If those specialist personnel are taken off those lines and we do not have the expertise to carry out the maintenance for overnight or day operations of those coal trains, we are going to see major disasters.

I have to say to this Minister that these workers are decent, fair dinkum blokes who want a fair go. They will not bite him. They will not harm him. They just want the Minister to go there and listen to them. I will give the Government the mail: if they tie up a dog or leave it in a cage unattended and just chuck it a bone every now and again and occasionally

give it a drink of water, it is going to get savage. That is exactly what is happening with the railway employees in this State. They have wives, they have husbands, they have operations to run at home—whether they are paying a mortgage, car repayments or whatever. They have to put tucker on the table for their families, but they do not want to be treated like mushrooms. That is exactly what this Minister is doing. I say to the Minister: go and talk to these people so that we do not have a further crisis in this State.

Time expired.

Mr QUINN (Merrimac—LP) (Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (6.10 p.m.) I rise to second the motion moved by the member for Gregory. In doing so, I think we need to look back at the origins of these types of actions by industrial organisations in Queensland. We had the illegal picket at Gordonstone in central Queensland, the demarcation dispute at Sun Metals in Townsville and the last illegal rail strike in February this year. On each of these occasions they were illegal strikes and, at the end of the day, no penalty whatsoever was visited upon the unions.

So over a period of time the unions have learnt they have got the measure of this Government. They can call a wildcat strike; they expect no punishment—nothing to be visited upon them whatsoever. So naturally when it comes to pressing their claims again, as they did last night, they pull another wildcat strike. What does the Government do? Nothing at all! All the tough talk, but no action. The first thing the Premier does is call a press conference. What does he say? "I am disappointed. I am angry." But that is as far as it goes. The unions are shaking in their boots! What does the Transport Minister say? He says, "I am concerned." Again, the unions are shaking in their boots. Not a penalty on the horizon! Not a penalty anywhere!

So the unions know they have got this Government over a barrel. Any time they want to press their claim all they do is call a wildcat strike. What does the Government do? It steals away quietly in the night to try to do some sort of back-room deal that appeases the unions and enables it to come out the next morning and say, "We have solved the issue." But it does not address the principle involved. That is, Government members cannot prevent the wildcat strikes because they really have no idea how to manage industrial relations in this State.

The member for Clayfield says that significant penalties can be imposed on wildcat

strikers, but tonight on the news we had the Premier admitting, "No, we cannot do anything at all." If he is right, what we have in this State is a series of industrial laws which are neutered, which have no penalties at all for any union—any industrial organisation—that wants to take the law into its own hands. If that is true, what do we have? We have the worst industrial relations laws in this country. They are not the best, as the Premier says, they are the worst industrial laws because they promote—encourage—illegal activity at the expense of the Queensland economy and hundreds of thousands of commuters in this State. That is the sort of industrial relations regime we have in this State, if the Premier is right—and we on this side contend he is not right. If the member for Clayfield is right and significant penalties can be imposed on unions, then why is action not being taken? Why is action not being taken to prevent these wildcat strikes? Either way it is the Government that is in the gun barrel here. Either the Government has useless industrial relations laws or it itself is useless. Members can take their pick.

These wildcat strikes are costing the Queensland economy millions of dollars. They are tarnishing our reputation. They are putting massive numbers of people all over the State to inconvenience which they really should not be subjected to. All over the State the ramifications are quite clear for those who want to see them. We have had three rail strikes in the past decade, all of them under Labor Governments. So members opposite should tell me whose industrial relations laws are not working. Who has the worst industrial relations laws? The coalition when we were here or the Labor Party? I think the jury would take five minutes to make up its mind on that question. They would go into the jury room and come straight back out again. Where does the fault lie? With the Labor Government again!

The remedy is quite clear. If there are penalties involved within the IR legislation, enforce the law; prevent these wildcat strikes from going ahead. If the Premier is right and there are no penalties, do something about it. Do not call a press conference. Do not sit there wringing your hands saying, "I am concerned. I am angry. I am disappointed." From their actions now, I can see the trade union blokes in town laughing at members opposite. They are laughing at the Premier calling a press conference, taking off his glasses and saying, "I am concerned." They can see how much concern there is.

Time expired

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (6.15 p.m.): The rank hypocrisy of back-door Bob over there is boundless. I rise to oppose the motion and I move the following amendment that has been circulated in the Chamber—

"Delete all words after 'Parliament' and insert the following—

'commends the Beattie Government for the steps it has taken to ensure that QR remains a viable, efficient, publicly owned railway into the 21 st century, providing secure and rewarding employment for thousands of workers throughout Queensland.'

In this debate, as in most others in the House, members of the Opposition have no credibility. They seek to criticise the Government for its handling of industrial relations in Queensland Rail when it is their record and their legacy that deserves censure. Those opposite are well known for not allowing the facts to stand in the way of their wild and unsupported allegations.

The facts in this matter speak for themselves. First, let me deal with today's industrial action and the 48-hour stoppage which occurred earlier this year. As I indicated this morning, today's industrial action was wildcat strike action taken without regard to the commission recommendation, without regard to the RTBU's earlier agreement to participate in a trial of driver-only operation on the Mount Isa line and without regard to the interests of the people of Queensland.

The basis for the industrial action was alleged safety concerns with the driver-only trial. Those concerns are not well founded. Every action has been taken by QR to ensure that driver-only operation is introduced on the Mount Isa line with proper safety procedures. Some of the measures taken include global positioning system train location displayed in the Townsville control centre; GPS warning to alert driver of approaching limit authority; GPS warning to alert driver of passing limit of authority; ATP "train stop" system to be developed by July 2002; and a number of other initiatives.

Driver-only operation is not a new concept in Queensland or indeed elsewhere. Driver-only operation is already operating in 50% of the freight areas in Queensland. There are already significant freight services operating on a driver-only operation basis without automatic train stop protection. These include most freight services into, out of, and within the Brisbane region. In most instances, driver-only

operation has been introduced with the agreement of the RTBU. At the commission's hearing this morning orders were made for a return to work at midday today. I table a transcript of those orders. It is now apparent that the RTBU has complied with those orders and that trains were running as scheduled for this afternoon's peak.

The RTBU's industrial action was regrettable and unnecessary but, far from establishing any defect in the Government's approach, this incident has established beyond doubt the success of the Government's industrial relations laws. In the face of unprecedented wildcat action, the matter has been resolved and train services restored within 24 hours.

Similarly, the 48-hour stoppage earlier this year was a wildcat stoppage. Once again, however, the Government's industrial laws resulted in the resolution of that stoppage. This contrasts with the position which would have existed under the former coalition Government's industrial laws and under the Federal Government's current industrial laws. Under those laws disputes could drag on for months, generally in the courts.

During the previous enterprise bargaining dispute the Queensland commission was able to conciliate an agreement between the unions and QR over pay rises for QR employees. QR employees recently had an opportunity to vote on the proposed pay increases. The results of that vote give the lie to any suggestion of widespread dissatisfaction with the employment conditions in QR under the Beattie Government. Some 14,400 ballot papers were sent to QR employees. Over 7,350 ballot papers were returned, which is in excess of 51% of the total sent out. The result of the vote was 5,515 in favour of the proposed pay increase with only 1,832 against. That is an overwhelming 75% of rail employees demonstrating they were in favour of the Government supported offer to QR employees. Amongst the RTBU members, the result was 2,133 in favour and 737 against; again, that is almost 75% in favour.

This Government stands for a viable, efficient, publicly-owned QR which provides secure and rewarding employment for thousands of workers throughout Queensland. The coalition parties, on the other hand, have done everything they can to undermine QR and to undermine the conditions of ordinary Queensland workers.

The Beattie Government has done all it can to secure a viable future for QR and its employees. Under our Government the

Brisbane to Rockhampton tilt train has been launched. We have commenced work on the Brisbane to Cairns tilt train. The GSPE has gone into service. Some 750 fixed-term employees have been made permanent. A \$240m track upgrade between Rockhampton and Townsville has been approved. A record was set last year for coal freight haulage in excess of 100 million tonnes. QR has received full funding for its community service obligations for the first time. The Citytrain agreement has been signed, guaranteeing QR funding for Citytrain services for seven years. CityTrans, an innovative joint venture between QR and Brisbane Transport for integrated public transport, has been announced. QR has successfully won work on overseas contracts generating jobs and export income for Queensland.

Time expired.

Hon. P. J. BRADY (Kedron—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (6.20 p.m.): I rise firstly to second the amendment moved by my colleague the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads and to speak in support of the efficient action being taken by Queensland Rail and the Minister in relation to these matters. It is extraordinary that we have this attack on the industrial relations actions by Queensland Rail, with the strong support of its Minister, in the context of what has occurred in this country over the past couple of years. We have had two contrasting examples.

We have had disputes in Queensland in respect of which the industrial relations laws have been proven to work; we have laws that are worth while and a Government that has the will and intention to implement them. Honourable members should compare that with what occurred in disputes such as the MUA/Patrick dispute and the Gordonstone dispute, which were fought out under the workplace relations laws of the Federal coalition Government. Do honourable members remember those disputes? One of them was wholly within Queensland—the Gordonstone dispute—and the other, the Patrick dispute, was partially in Queensland. Those disputes dragged on, in one case for weeks and in the other case for months. Not once did the Queensland coalition parties call on their colleagues in Canberra to use legislation to solve those disputes.

Honourable members should compare that with what has happened here. The illegal wildcat strike occurred from midnight. My colleague and Queensland Rail were at the commission by 7.30 this morning and the

trains were running again this afternoon. What happened in the earlier rail dispute and wildcat strike? On the second day, the union put up its hands and surrendered because it was wrong. It settled its wage claim for terms that were minus a comma here and a full stop there—the same terms it could have got before it took strike action. So the Queensland laws and the Queensland Government which implements them get these disputes sorted out and people back to work quickly. What happened under Peter Reith's laws? In the MUA/Patrick dispute we saw dogs, balaclavas, demonstrations and picket lines. Not only did the Opposition not do anything about it; the Queensland coalitionists never once criticised the laws or Peter Reith. They were total hypocrites in relation to the MUA dispute.

Mr JOHNSON: I rise to a point of order. In relation to Gordonstone, I was critical of that situation. Many people in the Labor Party were silent at that time.

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

Mr BRADY: Their criticism was not of the failure of the Federal Minister to act or the failure of the Federal laws.

How else has the Opposition been critical today? The member for Clayfield said that his laws would have been better able to sort this out. The laws relating to what happens when people are dragged before the commission in these circumstances today are identical to the laws that were in the Queensland Workplace Relations Act. Mr Santoro's laws did not prevent, and could never have prevented, wildcat strikes. What he could have done under section 351 and section 352 of the Workplace Relations Act, which I table, is exactly the same as what Queensland Rail did. But the difference is that Mr Santoro and his party agreed with Mr Reith that they prefer these disputes to be fought out on the streets. They do not like invoking the Industrial Relations Commission powers, but we do. Not only do we support the laws; we expect people to obey them, be they unions or employers. We will go to the commission. They have worked on two occasions. The people of Queensland can be very grateful that Peter Reith and his shadow, Mr Santoro, are not running industrial relations in this State so that we do not have an MUA or Gordonstone-type dispute dragging on. They can be very grateful that Mr Bredhauer and Queensland Rail used the laws and had the gumption and sense to get in early this morning so as to have the trains running again this afternoon.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (6.25 p.m.): I rise to support the motion moved by the shadow Minister for Transport calling on this Parliament to censure this Government and, more especially, the Minister for Transport for their incompetent handling of industrial relations within Queensland Rail leading to today's rail strike and to oppose vigorously the self-congratulatory amendment that has been moved by the Minister for Transport.

Just how far out of touch is this Minister to come in here tonight, on a day when the State has been gripped by a general rail strike, and move an amendment which seeks to congratulate himself and his Government? The incompetence of the Minister for Transport in this matter is profound. He has no idea of the extent of the problem that he faces. This is the Minister who badly wanted to be the Minister for Education. He was too far out on the loopy Left to be put in charge of the education of our kids so, to keep the factional balance, he got the job of Minister for Transport. He has made an absolute mess of it.

The proof of the Minister's incompetence was there for all to see this morning. Thousands of commuters found themselves stranded waiting for commuter trains that never came. Thousands more were jammed in traffic, gridlocked for hours trying to get to work. That is what this Minister has achieved. He and his colleagues can come into this Parliament and play with words, pat themselves on the back and tell everyone how good they are, but the results speak for themselves. They can put out fancy press releases dreamed up by their super smart spin doctors and they can blame everybody else within reach, but in the end the responsibility rests with the Minister. In the end they have to deliver. Like so many other examples from this Government's performance, the rhetoric is a long way ahead of the actual performance. In the end it is the results that matter and it is the people of Queensland who have to deal with those results today. It does not matter much what the issues were that caused the conflict; there are well-established processes to sort out these industrial relations issues—processes which this Government and the Transport Minister have ignored or failed to use effectively. He can either negotiate a successful outcome or he can use the laws of the State to ensure that the essential services are not disrupted. The processes are there and they are well established.

The Minister has no viable excuses for what has happened today. The Minister is responsible to the people who use our transport systems to ensure that those

transport systems work properly. He will not even recognise or accept that responsibility. He comes in here tonight and congratulates himself.

In keeping with the long-established strategy of the Beattie Labor Government, he has also set out to blame everybody else except himself. The people of Queensland saw that strategy taken to new lows this morning when the Minister for Transport in question time blamed the GST for the rail strike. That is an accurate measure of his desperation and the struggle he has with his own incompetence. That is an accurate measure of both his and the Government's embarrassment. They have sought to blame the GST for the rail strike, just as they have sought to blame the GST for every one of their other failings. Now the GST is to blame for the rail strike of all things. What absolute rubbish!

The Minister has sought to blame everyone and everything else. He blames everything else but does not take responsibility himself. The thousands of commuters out there still struggling to get home and the thousands of small businesses that have been disrupted today—all of those people—are not interested in excuses. They do not want to hear excuses from the Minister. They do not want to hear fanciful desperate concoctions from a desperately incompetent Minister. They want the transport system to work. They deserve no less than 100% reliability from the public transport system. They want the Minister to do his job and it has been painfully demonstrated today that he is just not up to it.

The Minister for Transport is an absolute dud. He has been falling over himself to take credit for the achievements of the previous Transport Minister, the member for Gregory. The incompetent Minister has been only too keen to turn up to the opening of every project initiated by the member for Gregory and take the credit. The greatest achievement of this Minister has been presiding over two general rail strikes in two months. There were none at all when the member for Gregory was Minister for Transport and that is the difference. There have been two unnecessary strikes in quick succession as this Minister drifts off with the fairies pursuing his Socialist Left ideology. It is time he put his overinflated ego aside. It is time he stopped preening himself. It is time he stopped coming in here congratulating himself and got involved in some meaningful way with the important issues of the Department of Transport. It is time that he and his Government realised that they have a responsibility to deliver results.

Time expired.

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (6.30 p.m.): I rise to support the amendment moved by the Minister. The coalition has a hide coming into this place tonight attacking the industrial relations record of the Beattie Government. When it comes to industrial relations, members opposite are nothing but wolves in sheep's clothing. Just as the Melbourne Age said about Peter Reith recently, the coalition's approach to industrial relations is like throwing petrol on a fire.

What an awful industrial relations record the coalition has both in Queensland and on the national scene—a confrontationist, winner-take-all approach which divides rather than unites employers and employees, particularly on those rare occasions when they find themselves in dispute. Who can forget the disgraceful actions of the Prime Minister and Peter Reith during the recent waterfront dispute, a dispute wholeheartedly supported by the coalition and, in particular, the member for Clayfield? Who can forget the thugs in the balaclavas who arrived at midnight on the docks at Hamilton and at Fisherman Islands? Who will ever forget the dogs—the Dobermans and the Alsatians—that threatened workers for days on end? That is the type of industrial relations approach that the coalition wants to see in Queensland, and we should not think that we are immune from further attempts to implement this style of industrial relations in Queensland.

The coalition's industrial relations spokesman, the member for Clayfield, Santo Santoro, is on record as saying that he wants to dismantle the current system. And what will he do if he ever resumes the position of Industrial Relations Minister? He will hand it over to the Federal Government! During last year's debate on the new Industrial Relations Bill, the member for Clayfield stated—

"I will give Government members one guarantee: we will fix the industrial relations system of this State again, but next time permanently, when the people give us a chance to fix it."

Fixing it permanently can mean only one thing. The permanent solution that the member for Clayfield is talking about is one where control of industrial relations in Queensland is taken out of the hands of the Queensland Government and handed over to the Federal Government, just as happened in Victoria. That is exactly what the member for Clayfield is proposing when he says that he will fix it permanently. If we handed the system over to the Federal Government, what changes would we see? The principal change would be that

we would lose the ability of the independent umpire to resolve disputes, as is happening in the current rail dispute. Under the coalition's laws there was little, if any, opportunity to bring the parties before the industrial commission to gain a speedy resolution such as we have seen today.

This is the world of Howard and Reith and the coalition of Queensland: the law of the jungle where the winner takes all and the community and the workers lose. Honourable members should look at the chaos taking place in Victoria. The Government is standing by almost helpless to take a direct role in resolving disputes because of the weak structure that has been imposed on it by the Federal industrial relations system, a system that the Queensland coalition wants to introduce here if it ever returns to Government.

Let us look at some of the other features of the coalition's appalling industrial relations record, and they are worth recording for workers to see again tonight. What about the coalition's exclusion of thousands of workers from the protection of unfair dismissal laws simply on the basis of the number of people employed at their particular workplace? What about its endeavours to goad workers into accepting individual contracts under the Queensland workplace agreement system? What an absolute failure that has been both in Queensland and nationally! Queensland workplace agreements have delivered little, if anything, in terms of genuine workplace reform and have reduced workplace conditions and wages for employees.

Under the coalition's industrial relations laws, the current industrial dispute would have dragged on for days or weeks without any real chance of resolution. The Labor Government's laws have enabled the parties to reach a conclusion to events either by conciliation or, if necessary, by orders issued by the commission. But in this case the commission has issued orders with respect to a return to work, and that occurred—in the city at least—at 3 o'clock this afternoon to enable workers to get home. It also recommended that the safety concerns of the union should be addressed. Despite the fact that there will obviously be a number of issues that the parties will need to resolve between themselves and their members, what happened today demonstrates the practical nature of our industrial relations laws as opposed to the law of the jungle that would apply under a coalition Government.

It is worth noting some of the positive changes that have been made under Labor's

industrial relations laws. We have, of course, rectified the unjust restrictions on access to unfair dismissal laws that were put in place by the coalition. We have extended carers' leave to all employees, who can now access sick leave to legitimately take care of their kids or their loved ones when they are sick. We have reinstated the role of the independent umpire in resolving disputes.

Time expired.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (6.35 p.m.): It is a pleasure to take part in this debate and to support our shadow Minister in his condemnation and censure of the Transport Minister and the Premier for the industrial relations mess that they have got this State into and the mess that they have brought to so many people over the length and breadth of Queensland today. Those people are the people who woke up this morning and went to their railway stations only to find that there was no service—people who were loading cattle, people who were sending mangoes and other freight away to markets, people who are trying to make an ordinary, decent living—people trying to run a business and trying to pay their staff. All those people were thrown into chaos as a result of an incompetent Minister who is simply not up to the task.

When we interjected this morning and called the Minister a dud, we were spot on; we were right on target. I do not think this House has ever seen such a dud as this Minister that we have at the moment in charge of such an important portfolio as the Department of Transport, which carries a heavy responsibility. He is just simply not up to the job. That is the reason behind this trouble today; that is the reason behind the inconvenience to all those commuters; that is the reason behind the loss of profits for so many businesses who rely upon this service.

We have seen a wildcat strike—the second strike this year. The Premier cunningly staved off a strike during the Woodridge and Bundamba by-elections back in February. He held it off and held it off, made a few more promises and then the railway unions realised that once again they had been led up the garden path, just as this Labor Government does all the time. It takes their money; it takes their donations; it accepts all the staff and everything else that they provide to help them, but when it comes to giving them something real and decent, acting truthfully with them and playing straight up the middle—playing a straight bat—it just leads them up the garden

path. It is no wonder that this wildcat strike took place today.

Most of us have a lot of mates and friends who are railway engine drivers throughout the State. I know that they are decent people and I can tell honourable members that they would have to have been pushed to the limit to do something like this. They would have had to have been desperate to call a strike such as this—and they were desperate because they will do anything they can to get rid of such a dud Minister. That is what we are seeing today. The responsible position of Minister for Transport should be undertaken by somebody with a bit of ability, a bit of organisation and a bit of management, someone who will front up to the staff organisation—and it is a big staff organisation. They need someone who has the ability to talk to the people and to set in train decent, proper systems so that they can handle situations and not let them progress to this stage.

There is more to this than meets the eye because all this is about is a simple stopping device for these single drivers who are operating on one of the longest and heaviest freight hauls in the world—from Mount Isa through to Townsville. All they want is a stopping device on these trains as part of the trial system, and the Minister cannot grant them even that. This is a Government that can build a footbridge over the river and a \$300m stadium, a Government that is going to save millions and millions of dollars when the GST takes effect because of the cheaper diesel costs for the trains, yet it cannot put aside even a tiny little bit of that money to put in place this stopping device.

There have been two strikes in two months this year—a great indictment of this Minister and this Government and a great indication of the way that they are simply failing Queenslanders over and over again. What do we get? The Premier going out once again and saying he is angry! I think he said the same thing last time. It is all part of the theatrics and the media stunts that we get from the Premier over and over again. Queenslanders are waking up to the fact that what we need is some proper and responsible management by Ministers—some proper person management so that they meet with people, so that they do not let these situations progress to this stage.

This week up at Beef 2000 there was a demonstration by Cattlecare of what they can do—the wagons and the services they provide. How disheartening it must be for those people trying to manage that Cattlecare section of

Queensland Rail to see these strikes. Every time they promote the good aspects of their business, they have this incompetent Minister dragging down their attempts to market their operation through the way in which he runs his department and pitiful public relations.

If anyone wants to know about the incompetence of this Minister, they should just have a look at his display here in Parliament this morning: standing up and grandstanding to the people in the gallery when he should have been talking to the Opposition and to the Parliament. He did not even have the courage to look us in the eye. He was giving excuses for the strike such as the GST. It is just part of the hypocrisy of the Labor Government. Members opposite promote themselves as friends of the unions. They take their money and they give them nothing.

Time expired.

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (6.40 p.m.): I am delighted to speak in this debate to support the amendment moved to the motion by the Honourable Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads and to correct some of the rubbish that has poured forth from the mouth of the honourable member for Gregory. The louder and the more agitated the member for Gregory gets, the more confused and irrational he sounds. But he has one big monkey on his back: the industrial relations policy Liberal/National Parties, the GST parties, the parties that gutted the industrial relations system, the parties that do not accept the role of an independent umpire in dispute resolution.

The Minister for Transport in the Borbidge Government—the present shadow Minister—was acknowledged as having one of the best minds of the nineties. The problem for the people of Queensland and the future of Queensland Rail was that it was the 1890s, not the 1990s. The 1890s was the period he wanted to take us to, aided and abetted by the member for Clayfield, when industrial relations were conducted in an atmosphere of distrust and aggression. Those opposite were in Government when the MUA dispute occurred, and nothing was being done in the ports in my electorate, when industrial relations were sorted out by lawyers in the High Court.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr LUCAS: Yes, that is right. There were liars in the High Court: your mates at Patrick Stevedoring. They are the sorts of people those opposite supported in the High Court. One thing about Minister Bredhauer and the Beattie Government is that they realise the fantastic future that rail has in this State. But if

we want a future for the rail industry, we need to work at it and we need to have a vision—not the Vaughan Johnson/Bob Menzies style of sit on your hands; not the intellectual bankruptcy of the Johnson ministerial approach of let her rip, bury your head in the sand. How can it be in the best interests of workers and their families and the rail industry in this State if we sit by—

Mr JOHNSON: I rise to a point of order. That is one thing I did not do. I find that remark from the member for Lytton offensive. I stood up for the rail workers and their families. I ask him to withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: We are not debating the issue. I ask the member for Lytton to withdraw.

Mr LUCAS: I withdraw. The member for Gregory, "Mr Anti-Economic Rationalist", was the man who opened up third-party access on Queensland Rail, and then he complains about Freightcorp! What does he think this dispute is about? Freightcorp has driver-only operations. Those opposite want to give them a competitive advantage; they want them to stop Queensland Rail from competing. That is what they are all about. That is the sort of hypocrite the shadow Minister is. What do we say to those hardworking Queensland Rail employees when his sort of policies put them back in the 1890s, when his sort of policies give them no future? This Minister is about having a vision for the future.

I want to make some comments about the wildcat-type industrial relations atmosphere we have as a result of this dispute. I am the last person in this Chamber to decry the rights of the union movement to take legitimate industrial action. But for what purpose is a strike called at 11 p.m. to start at midnight to close down QR operations throughout Queensland? The member for Gregory, the clairvoyant, the Uri Geller of Longreach, comes in here and says that the Government should have foreseen it. The Rail Tram and Bus Union signed off on the agreement for driver-only operation. They signed off on it. The member says that we should have known about the strike an hour before it happened. That is the sort of clairvoyant the member is. I tell you now, brother: if you could see it coming, why didn't you move this motion the day before?

The fact is that the union gave as the reason for the industrial action a concern for safety. No-one here would argue about the issue of safety, but the fact is that the Industrial Relations Commission, the independent umpire—we know those opposite do not like them; we know they are into rorting it—did not accept their reasons. If the union

wished to convince the community on the safety issue, then putting the case to the community rather than holding a wildcat strike would have been the way to proceed.

Then we heard from the member for Merrimac, the friend of the cleaner, "Mr Industrial Relations Settler". He got in there and kicked the hell out of the cleaners and then had the gall to come into the House and tell us what a great industrial relations climate they had under their Government. I do not want to emulate him, and neither does this Government. They offered no solution to the Maritime Union.

Those opposite have spoken about what this Government did when we heard about the strike. At 12.30 this morning Queensland Rail was on the phone to the Brisbane City Council and Brisbane Transport notifying them of the need for the extra capacity. In relation to this Government's record in the rail industry, we need to look at the facts when workers voted. Some 75% of workers voted to support the enterprise bargaining agreement settled between QR and its workers. In contrast, "she'll be right" Vaughan, the Minister in the 1890s—

Time expired.

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—LP) (6.45 p.m.): We know that the Labor Party is in trouble when all they do is spend their time comparing this Government's industrial relations record with that of Mr Reith and the Federal Government, which is producing record levels of employment and record low levels of industrial disputation. We certainly know that this Government is in trouble when it is led by this Premier, a former general secretary of the railway union, a Premier who is supposed to have an affinity and a special relationship with the railway unions. But in two months we have seen the second and the third rail strikes under Labor Governments in a decade. All we have heard from honourable members opposite is a litany of mistruths and misrepresentations about the Federal coalition laws that are working very well for the people of this State and Australia.

What we saw today was another industrial relations disaster visited upon the public of Queensland by this Labor Government. This has been the second rail strike—the second illegal strike, as the Honourable Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations described it before—in two months, the second illegal strike by the friends of the Government, the union movement. The strike is the result of the unions' contempt for the Labor Party's industrial relations legislation, of the unions' belief that they can break any

industrial law with impunity, a clear dominance over a weak, vacillating, union-dominated Beattie Labor Government, and a belief that they can thumb their noses at the Government and the public and get away with it. As my colleagues have said, it is the result of a Government that is run by lazy Ministers. It is the result of Ministers not talking to the unions, not meeting with the unions, having no affinity with the unions and losing their way.

Today John Thompson let it all out of the bag again when he said—

"I think the Labor government's probably more likely to come in danger over decisions that they take in relation to policy on matters more so than the one industrial dispute, although"—

and this is the crunch, and I will come back to the full quote in a minute—

"I would say personally, that I think the Labor government's travelling very well at the moment and from a union perspective."

That says it all, because Mr Thompson and the union movement were very happy to break the law two months ago and thumb their nose at the Industrial Relations Commission orders and then go to the Minister and say, "Let's get into a cosy deal. Let's get the commission to alter their orders and let's not have the penalties imposed", which, as the Minister quite correctly stated this morning, automatically came into play. What the Industrial Relations Commission did on the urgings of the Government and on the urgings of the union was to change the initial order. It rewrote the law, and the unions got away with it. No wonder they went on strike again today!

A member opposite spoke about what needed to be done. I will tell members what needs to be done. We did not have strikes under our Government because we enforced the law, and the unions knew that we would. Under this legislation, they are getting away with blue murder. Today the Premier indicated that there may be a need for a change in the law. I will tell members what the change should be: someone needs to bring a law into this place—either the Premier or the Minister—that will outlaw wildcat strikes, make provision for adequate notification of industrial disputes and provide tough sanctions and real disincentives to calling a wildcat strike. That is what the Government should do, but it does not have the guts. We had the guts to back up our laws in the commission, and the Government did not. The Government's amendment states that QR should remain a viable, efficient and publicly-owned railway into the 21st century.

"Remains efficient" means standing still and on strike! "Secure and rewarding employment" means another 5,000 jobs going over the next year or so! That is secure employment for the rail workers!

Under the coalition Government there were no strikes in Queensland Rail. There were successful enterprise bargaining agreements, there were record profits and there was job security for all QR workers. As the honourable member for Gregory said, under the coalition in Government only 220 jobs were lost, as a result of natural attrition. The Beattie Government will get rid of 5,000 jobs in the next year or so. That is the despicable record of the Beattie Government and the public of Queensland is awake to it.

Time expired.

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (6.50 p.m.): Rail travel in Queensland is going through a renaissance under the Beattie Labor Government. I am proud to be part of a Government which recognises the importance of public transport, particularly rail. This amendment, which I totally support, accurately reflects what is actually occurring. The motion of political expediency by those opposite does not.

I wonder when those opposite are finally going to wake up to the fact that people are sick to death of their hypocrisy. One only has to look at the result of the latest poll to see that people are listening to them all right, but they are turning off in droves.

Mr Lucas: Thirteen per cent!

Mr REEVES: People want positive plans and action. They do not want to have the continuing drone of negatives and hypocrisy of those opposite—night after night, day after day, second after second. As the member for Lytton said, the support for those opposite is running at 13%.

An Opposition member: You won't be back.

Mr REEVES: Like the MUA, mate, I am here to stay. Let us look at some of the great work that has been happening in Queensland Rail which illustrates quite clearly the Beattie Labor Government's commitment to public transport, driven by Minister Steve Bredhauer. The Queensland Government signed the Citytrain rail service agreement with QR in September 1999 for the provision of suburban and interurban passenger rail services.

Mr Lucas: He didn't even fund CSOs.

Mr REEVES: That is exactly right. This seven-year agreement, worth \$283m per

annum, will improve public transport, reduce congestion, improve safety on roads and deliver the Government's integrated regional transport plan outcomes.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr REEVES: Those opposite should listen and learn. This agreement provides QR with a fully agreed annuity cash flow to provide public transport services and allows QR greater certainty for future planning and service delivery. Through this agreement, new suburban rolling stock worth \$250m has allowed QR to eliminate non-airconditioned diesel-hauled carriages and introduce additional services and more express services in order to meet public demand. There are incentive payments for QR if it improves its on-time running performance.

Also through the Citytrain agreement, access to rail services for the disabled and the elderly has been enhanced through the installation of passenger lifts and footbridges at a number of stations, the upgrading of the existing ramps and modifications to the rolling stock.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr REEVES: I ask the member for Gregory to listen for a change instead of mouthing off all the time. In the next couple of minutes I will mention the achievements of Queensland Rail over many months. In September 1998, QR and Walkers signed an agreement for the design of a diesel tilt train between Brisbane and Cairns. QR announced a \$730m capital works program. In Townsville it converted 72 fixed-term workers to permanent employment.

Mr JOHNSON: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. That is not true. I think the member should revisit the Townsville railway workshops—

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

Mr REEVES: In October 1998, QR provided \$40m in coal freight rate charges relief. In November 1998, the Brisbane-Rockhampton tilt train was launched. In December 1998, we announced a \$240m rail track upgrade between Rockhampton and Townsville. In March 1999, we announced the conversion of a further 150 fixed-term workers at QR to permanent employment, bringing the total number of fixed termers converting to permanency under the Beattie Government to 730. The Redbank workshops won a \$40m QR contract, becoming the biggest wagon manufacture facility in Australia.

In April 1999, we launched the Great South Pacific Express. In June 1999, QR set an Australian coal haulage record. In July 1999, the Brisbane-Bundaberg tilt train service was launched. In August 1999, Queensland Rail set a national freight record. The list of achievements goes on and on. Those opposite should listen and learn.

The September 1999 Budget provides full funding for rail community service obligations. In February 2000, services to the Nambour-Caboolture rail/bus service were improved. This just proves that this Government is on track, delivering and working for the best in rail travel and putting public transport where it should be—right at the forefront. We should not be hearing the continual whingeing from those opposite.

Time expired.

Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 42—Attwood, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, J. Cunningham, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Kaiser, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Miller, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Reeves, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

NOES, 35—Beanland, Connor, Cooper, Dalglish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Goss, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Malone, Nelson, Paff, Prenzler, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Turner, Veivers. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Mr SPEAKER: Any future divisions on this motion will be of two minutes' duration.

Question—That the motion, as amended, be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 42—Attwood, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, J. Cunningham, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Kaiser, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Miller, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Reeves, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

NOES, 35—Beanland, Connor, Cooper, Dalglish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Goss, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Malone, Nelson, Paff, Prenzler, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Turner, Veivers. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

GRIEVANCES

Tannum Sands High School

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (7.04 p.m.): The Tannum Sands High School is developing as a state-of-the-art high school. Planning and construction commenced under the previous Minister for Education, Mr Quinn, and it continues under the current Minister, Mr Wells.

Due to unforeseen delays, the school commenced with Years 8 and 9 and, in the same manner as all high schools, has rolled through to Year 10 and on. The school is held in high esteem not only in Boyne Island/Tannum Sands but in Calliope and Gladstone as well. I commend the principal, Mr Ray Johnson, and all his staff for the standard of education that they have provided.

A student, Josh Waters, instigated a petition which is worded as follows—

"The student council of Tannum Sands State High School calls on the Government to provide us with an adequate area in which to hold our full school assemblies. These are currently held under a covered shelter. This is cramped and uncomfortable. We need a bigger and more suitable place."

The petition contains 416 signatures. As it is a non-conforming petition, I seek leave to table the petition and two attached photographs.

Leave granted.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: The photographs show how cramped the rotunda is when school assemblies are held. I commend Josh's initiative and ask the Minister for Education to look at the timing of construction proposed for the student centre and bring it forward, if necessary, to address this current problem.

I have attended assemblies in both summer and winter. It is a very exposed position. In winter it is very cold; in summer it is very hot. This petition has not been done maliciously, but is a statement from the student body to indicate that they see the need of the student centre as a priority for the school's development. They would like to see the construction brought forward.

Volunteers

Hon. K. W. HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (7.06 p.m.): I want to take this opportunity to recognise people who serve as volunteers in Queensland, particularly in the electorate of Kallangur, which I represent. As I go about the electorate, I never cease to be amazed at the

commitment and determination that people put into voluntary tasks in the local area.

Last weekend I had the opportunity to attend the presentation of trophies at the Narangba Demons Junior Baseball Club. This is a club which, during the season, fielded nine teams. As honourable members would be aware, there is nothing like a trophy presentation to bring home to someone the level of voluntary commitment needed to run any club.

In the case of any sporting club—whether it be a netball, Rugby League or soccer club—we have coaches, assistant coaches, team managers, scorers, referees or umpires, people to staff the canteen on match days, fundraisers to ensure that the club operates viably and the club executive and management committee. These people are all volunteers and they all play a role in the successful operation of the club.

From my observation, most of the volunteers have a child involved in the particular sport, but often people are working voluntarily for a club because they have a commitment to a particular sport, club or area. Many remain involved long after their child may have moved on to some other pursuit.

Whilst I think that the strength of volunteers in clubs is strong, I want to take the opportunity to sound a note of caution when it comes to some more traditional voluntary organisations. This matter was highlighted today by the member for Caboolture when he mentioned volunteers in a different context in a different debate in this Parliament. Many of these voluntary organisations struggle because of a lack of younger people.

Time expired.

WorkCover

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (7.09 p.m.): I rise in this grievance debate to bring to the attention of the Parliament what is undoubtedly one of the many reasons the premiums paid by employers to the WorkCover insurance scheme are so expensive. This matter was brought to my attention by an engineering firm in Biloela which had an employee suffer a very minor workplace injury. Rather than go through the processes and make a claim to WorkCover, the employer decided to pay the consultation fee for the local doctor. That fee was \$32.96, but a facility fee of \$73.20 was added because it was assumed that it was a WorkCover claim, bringing the total cost of the initial consultation to \$106.16. Several days later, a dressing

change was required, and this time the consultation fee was again \$32.96 and again the facility fee was added to make a total for the injury of \$212.32. If it had not been a workplace injury, the cost of treatment would have been just \$65.92.

On checking with WorkCover, I have been advised that the medical practitioner is entitled to charge the facility fee when treating workplace injuries on the assumption that a claim would be made to WorkCover and the cost would be met by the insurance scheme. This is indicative of a huge attitudinal problem in the WorkCover system. The attitude is that if it is a WorkCover claim, then charge three times as much. The extra costs have to be paid eventually by someone, and that someone is undoubtedly the businesses—the employers—who pay the WorkCover premiums. In recent years, those WorkCover premiums have risen dramatically. Is it any wonder, with an attitude like the one illustrated by the example that I have given.

I can do no better than quote the owner of the engineering business, who stated—

"My yearly premiums are very high and I do not have a choice when it comes to deciding which insurance company to insure with. At the end of the day someone has to pay and that is always the person at the end of the line—the consumer. These sorts of costs can only lead to the uncompetitiveness of Australian industry even in its own backyard."

Every member of this Parliament should agree and support that business owner and the Minister should ensure that those WorkCover costs end immediately. They create a cost burden on every business in the State, and that cost burden is either absorbed by the business owner or passed on to the consumer. Either way these costs make it more difficult for businesses to survive and compete with imports.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order! The member's time has expired.

Mr Sullivan: It won't get into Hansard, you idiot.

Mr SEENEY: I rise to a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member for Chermside to withdraw that.

Mr SULLIVAN: I withdraw.

Mr SEENEY: I rise to a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member has withdrawn.

Mr SEENEY: I rise to a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, what is the point of order?

Mr SEENEY: I find the interjection by the member for Chermside offensive.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have already asked him to withdraw. Sit down.

Mr SEENEY: I find it offensive and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Ms N. Carroll

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (7.12 p.m.): I would like to inform the members of the House that the winner of the Cairns International Women's Day Year 2000 Award is Ms Narelle Carroll. She has won the award this year for her devotion to the promotion and development of Cairns hockey over many years. She has worked long and hard in a voluntary capacity as the promotions and marketing director for the Cairns Hockey Association Incorporated.

I must say that this fine organisation has a history of being determined and ambitious, particularly over the past 10 years. It has put considerable effort into developing a leading-edge playing surface and international standard facilities. I would like to place on record my recognition of all of those who have contributed to the strength of this fine sporting organisation.

Narelle Carroll's particular contributions to the Cairns hockey success stories include the choice of Cairns as the venue for the 1999 Australian championships. They also include the pre-Olympic training in Cairns by the Dutch men's hockey team. In May last year, Ms Carroll was convener of the State women's championships. It is interesting that she is not herself a hockey player. Nonetheless, she has tremendous enthusiasm and enjoyment from the sidelines. She has provided a fine example and, indeed, is a fine choice of a leading woman to be celebrated in the year 2000.

I would like to quote the great poet W. B. Yeats and say—

"She is foremost of those that I would hear praised."

Congratulations to Narelle on her award this year.

Epegrout

Mr HEGARTY (Redlands—NPA) (7.14 p.m.): A matter of considerable concern was brought to my attention by a constituent suffering from a serious medical condition resulting from exposure to an industrial

product. My constituent is suffering from poisoning that has attacked his body organs and joints as well causing a total loss of nerve ending to his hands. His exposure to this chemical occurred this time last year, at which time he was hospitalised for a week. However, he now has to endure a wait of a further 12 months to see if he will survive longer because of the uncertainty of whether his organs will recover fully.

My constituent's medical condition is the result of his exposure to tiling grout—a common product used by tiling contractors and handymen alike. The name of this product is Epegrout, and I am advised that it is available from tiling suppliers and outlets. I understand that it is a two-pack mix. Part B contains resins that incorporate tridimethylaminonethyl—a poison that takes as little as 15 grams to kill a person. The fact that it is lethal is heightened by its colourless and odourless nature. This poison is only behind cyanide and arsenic in its potency. I am told that, ironically, this product is not registered at the Royal Brisbane Hospital's poisons clinic.

In the United States, it is illegal to transport a product of this type, yet that is not so here in Australia. I am advised that a drum was dropped from a plane at Eagle Farm. If this product is breaking workplace health and safety regulations, why has action not been taken? I am told that Minister Spence has been advised of the situation and media program Brisbane Extra also highlighted the problem. I understand that the CFMEU is also aware of the situation, but so far it cannot get any action.

I call on the Minister to quickly address this serious situation of unsafe, potentially lethal products being transported and sold to the public without adequate safeguards.

Aunties and Uncles

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (7.15 p.m.): There are many good causes to support in our suburbs, and those that provide for the health and wellbeing of our children rate highly among them. It is important for children of all ages to have a big support network, but it must be one that can guide them along the right path. It must be a network that can set a good example by providing love and care.

There are many families under stress, either because of a breakdown in family relationships, financial hardship, or the marriage falling apart. So what happens to the children when these problems occur?

Sometimes they seek support from their peer group, their grandparents or their relations as a source of comfort, or sometimes they turn to drugs. Last year, I was introduced to a volunteer organisation called Aunties and Uncles. This group was formed as a result of the needs of families in stress situations. Aunties and Uncles is an extended family and non-judgmental friendship network. Children are registered on a waiting list to be linked with a suitable auntie and uncle. The linking process is facilitated by a qualified social worker. The requirement or obligation of the auntie and/or uncle is to spend some time—usually about two days—with the child every month. In times of crisis, it may be possible for a child to stay with the auntie and uncle, thus alleviating the trauma of being taken to foster care or into an institution.

The rewards of aunties and uncles are many when they can see the positive difference that they are making to a child's life. It is of enormous benefit to the children to have someone else who cares. The community benefits from the program's preventive nature. I call on the Government to continue to support this worthwhile program.

Emergency Services Building, Rosewood

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (7.17 p.m.): Tonight, I am calling on the Minister for Emergency Services, Stephen Robertson, to call an immediate halt to the work on the new emergency services building project at Rosewood until a detailed, open and independent investigation is carried out. Some very serious concerns about several aspects of the project have been raised by some local residents but apparently have either been ignored or dismissed totally at a ministerial or departmental level.

The new building will house an ambulance station and a fire and rescue facility and is due for completion prior to June this year. There are many questions that should be answered by the Minister, and certainly by the department, before the project should be allowed to proceed. Depending on whom one listens to, the planning and management of this project has been either a model of performance or a complete disaster. From where I am sitting, it seems like it might be a disaster.

I am very concerned about some aspects of the site's suitability and design and their impact on the neighbouring properties and families. However, questions have also been raised about public safety, the deliberate exclusion of local authority involvement, the

use of misinformation and the abandonment of QAS policy and practices involving building demolition and site clearing.

The Minister should make sure that no more work is carried out until the community is convinced that no questions about the suitability or implementation of the project remain unanswered. The Minister should look at instances of where the Government is riding roughshod over local people or treating their genuine concerns with disdain. Those instances should certainly be highlighted by this investigation. People are sick of the bureaucratic and governmental whitewash of questionable practices.

Time expired.

St Vincents Centre, Zillmere

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (7.20 p.m.): I recently had the pleasure of attending the official opening of the Mercy Family Services St Vincents Centre in Zillmere Road, Zillmere. We were all very pleased to have Anna Bligh, Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care officiate at the ceremony. Mercy Family Services have been delivering family and youth services across south-east Queensland for over a century. I congratulate and thank the organisation and their many employees and volunteers for the wonderful work they do in supporting families and individuals in need. St Vincents Resource Centre provides young people in care with a safe and supervised place to meet, acquire much-needed work and life skills and receive the emotional support they need. A job track service provides participants with access to skills audits, vocational training and job placement. Its aim is to motivate, assist and support young people in care to find meaningful employment.

One of the crucial services offered at the centre is the Leaving Care and After Care program. Its aim is to provide support to young people who are making the sometimes difficult transition from care to independent living. Thank you to the Minister and the department for their support in making this centre a reality. Young people and families in need will benefit significantly from the work of this wonderful organisation.

Particular thanks to those individuals who have worked so hard to establish the centre: Mick Devlin, Stuart Redshaw, Steven Hines, Allison, Andrew and Brenda. Also a special thanks and mention to members of the Youth Reference Group, who have made significant contributions to making the centre a worthwhile

place in our community: in particular Justin, Kirsty and Tiko.

One of the highlights of and achievements arising out of the operation of the centre is that many of the young people who are leaving care for more independent living are assimilating well into the community. They are finding employment, places to live and are improving their education. In short, they are succeeding in life. Well done to those young people and congratulations to all involved in the St Vincents Centre.

Mr S. Balson

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—CCAQ) (7.22 p.m.): We here on this side of the House have waited patiently and watched the Attorney-General to observe if the laws of this State will be even-handedly applied by him and the Crown Law Office. It appears that it will be a cold day in hell before Scott Balson will see if the same even-handed approach to the application of the law is applied to the Bulletin magazine as it was applied to him with respect to the naming of the alleged child sex offender, Bill D'Arcy, appearing before the court.

Investigation and prosecution commenced immediately with respect to Balson. However, the Bulletin magazine on 18 January 2000 also published the name of Bill D'Arcy. I have a copy here and I will table it. A copy of this magazine was displayed and openly available at any Queensland newsagency and book store clearly publishing these details on page 10 in breach of the law. This breach appears to be more clearly and openly done than having to book in, log on, and keenly surf the Net to find the Australian news of the day on the American web site, which was the case with Balson, but no action has yet been seen to be taken against the Bulletin.

Queensland Council for Civil Liberties spokesman and Bill D'Arcy's legal counsel, Mr Terry O'Gorman, on the ABC on 21 March 2000 raised the very same question about the even-handedness of the law being applied. Perhaps an uppercut to be given to the Attorney-General against the Bulletin magazine in the case of the new book *Enemy of The State*—and I seek the leave of the House to table that new book by Balson—may spur the DPP into action. I also seek leave to table the copy of *The Bulletin*.

Leave granted.

Mr FELDMAN: As I said, we are sitting here waiting to see whether action will be

taken against the Bulletin magazine because the Bulletin magazine appears to be too much of a big gun to be taken on by the DPP and the office of the Attorney-General. Perhaps now the DPP and the Attorney-General may be spurred on to take that action against the national magazine.

Legal Aid Self-help Kit

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (7.24 p.m.): On 22 February this year I had the pleasure of attending the launch of Legal Aid Queensland's self-help kit: What to do when you've been sacked from work: a guide to unfair dismissal laws in Queensland by the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, the Honourable Matt Foley. This is a free publication and available from Legal Aid offices or can be downloaded from the Legal Aid web site. I have already found that this publication has greatly assisted some of my constituents and can highly recommend to all honourable members that they obtain copies of this self-help kit and make it available in their electorate offices. This is Legal Aid's first foray into the area of industrial relations.

Legal Aid Queensland is primarily concerned with family and criminal law matters. It does some general law, mostly to do with victims of crime, compensation matters and consumer issues. However, Legal Aid decided to produce a self-help kit in this area of law because of the large numbers of people approaching the organisation seeking assistance about unfair dismissal. Although the organisation refers people to other appropriate services, such as the Queensland Working Women's Association, which I might add is an excellent service, and to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission, or the relevant union, where applicable, it felt that there was real need to give people something explaining their rights, the processes of the legal system as it pertains to unfair dismissal laws and what recourse is available to people who feel that they have been unfairly or unjustly dismissed from their employment.

This kit is designed to inform users about whether they have a case for unfair dismissal and if they do what they can do to either get reinstated in their jobs or to seek compensation. This kit, in common with all Legal Aid Queensland self-help kits, is not only informative but it is also designed to empower the consumer, providing them with the knowledge to evaluate their legal position so they can determine if their legal rights have been denied; telling them what to do to ensure

justice, where they can go for help and explaining in simple lay people's language the laws and legal processes involved. The people primarily responsible for putting this kit together are to be congratulated.

Time expired.

Tow Truck Operators

Mr BAUMANN (Albert—NPA) (7.26 p.m.): The New South Wales Government has recently introduced a regulation under section 69(2) of the Tow Truck Regulations which requires that any tow truck picking up a vehicle in New South Wales must be operator accredited and licensed in New South Wales, as must any associated staff. What this legislation means, in effect, is that a tow truck operator who is properly licensed and accredited in Queensland is not able to pick up a vehicle in New South Wales and return to Queensland. Queensland has some of the most respected and experienced operators in the nation in this heavy vehicle recovery industry. All members of the House would be aware of Barnes Auto and Knights Heavy Towing operated by Rodney Hill. Companies like these have contracts with major transport companies to recover broken down or wrecked vehicles from all over the country and to repatriate them to Queensland workshops for expert repair.

What the New South Wales Labor Government is trying to do is put an end to reciprocal recognition and to free trade between the States. It would be similar to Queensland introducing a regulation that required a New South Wales registered truck operator picking up a load of potatoes from the Rocklea markets for transport back to Sydney to be registered in Queensland. This is an extremely dangerous precedent that could lead to tit-for-tat action between the States and could escalate to border wars similar to the pre-Federation days.

Consider this scenario: a Queensland operator breaks down while returning from New South Wales, rings a Queensland tow truck operator such as Rodney Hill, has a prime mover towed down there to replace the one that has broken down, but Mr Hill is not able to pick up the broken down vehicle and tow it back to Queensland. This is clearly an unsustainable proposition. I call upon Carl Scully, the New South Wales Minister for Transport, to urgently review this provision before it brings about unintended consequences for his State.

I also ask our Minister for Transport and Main Roads, Mr Steve Bredhauer, to take urgent action to communicate the concerns of Queensland operators to his counterpart and to examine this matter with a view to possible legal action to protect the interests of Queensland-based operators.

Replacement of Liberal Senator Parer

Mr KAISER (Woodridge—ALP) (7.27 p.m.): I rise tonight to express my grave concerns about the undemocratic processes being used by the Liberal Party in this State to choose their replacement for Senator Warwick Parer. This is a matter which concerns me as a member of this Parliament who will eventually, when the Liberal Party finally gets its act together, have to endorse who they put forward. Reluctantly, I pledge my vote for whoever the Liberals put up. I will not be part of any disgraceful exercise of substitution like the Conservatives were when they put Albert Field into the Senate instead of Labor's nominee.

However, I am concerned about how representative of even the Liberals the nominee will be. The other night I understand Liberal Party members who live in Hong Kong got a vote at the Liberal Party meeting in Ryan to choose Queensland's next senator, but Liberal Party members from around the State, like those who live in Mackay, are being denied a vote only because their FEC has fewer than 100 members.

The real reason, of course, is that they cannot be trusted to vote the correct way, the Santoro way. The Liberal Party had fewer than 100 members in the Federal division of Rankin, too, but to maximise votes for Mr Brandis the Liberal Party executive decided to assign an entire branch previously in Moreton to Rankin to get Santoro faction delegates elected. The process used by the Liberals reminds me of the radios one used to get in North Korea. A person could listen to any station they wanted, but there was no dial—State radio only. Likewise, in the Liberal Party a person can hold any view they like, but they only get a vote if they agree with the member for Clayfield.

Mr Mickel: The member for Indooroopilly is nodding his head.

Mr KAISER: The member for Indooroopilly is nodding.

I for one—and I have discussed this with the member for Logan and others—will vote for the Liberal Party's nominee, but we will be approaching the Leader of the House looking

for an opportunity to fully debate the nomination when it finally gets here.

Sugar Industry

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (7.29 p.m.): The last two cane harvesting seasons in north Queensland have been disastrous for the sugar industry due to wet weather conditions.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order! I have discussed this with the member for Hinchinbrook. His time is up, but I will allow his speech to be incorporated in Hansard.

Mr ROWELL: I seek leave for the remainder of my speech to be incorporated in Hansard.

Leave granted.

Since November 1999 the areas north of Townsville have been inundated with wet weather and in recent weeks cyclones Steve, Tessi and Vaughan have resulted in above average rainfall.

High humidity levels north of Mackay have introduced orange rust which will impact on sugar and tonnage levels by approximately 20%.

To compound this loss of production the world price in comparative terms has fallen to an historic low and there are indications that this may worsen.

Cane farming depends on the crop being planted and then a number of ratoons over a period of three to four years.

These ratoons have suffered severely due to wet weather harvesting, water inundation and the unpredictability of the effects of orange rust.

Rat damage has been extremely high in stand over and was carried on to the new crop.

The combination of these factors have led to returns which are below the cost of production.

But many farms are not in the position of being able to carry out the necessary expenditure to maintain productivity. This will not only be detrimental to the farming sector but to the harvesters and to the mills that depend on tonnage throughput for their viabilities.

Towns that depend on sugar will experience a loss of jobs and businesses will collapse.

There is a severe downturn in business confidence with shops closing as the situation deteriorates.

It is necessary for support to be provided to ensure the industry maintains its productivity in the short term.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Leader of the House) (7.30 p.m.): I move—

"That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 2.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 16 May 2000 and that the Order of Business for that day be as follows—

2.30-3.30 p.m.—

Prayers

Messages from the Governor

Matters of Privilege

Speakers Statements

Motions of Condolence

Petitions

Notification and Tabling of Papers by the Clerk

Ministerial Papers

Ministerial Notices of Motion

Government Business Notices of Motion

Ministerial Statements

Any other Government Business

Personal Explanations

Reports

Notices of Motion for Debate from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Private Members' Bills

Private Members' Statements

3.30-4.30 p.m.—

Question Time

4.30-5.30 p.m.—

Matters of Public Interest

5.30-6 p.m.—

Government Business

6-7 p.m.—

Private Members' Motions

7-7.30 p.m.—

Adjournment Debate"

Motion agreed to.

Mr MACKENROTH: I remind members that at 7.35 that night we will have a special sitting for the election of a senator—if the Liberal Party has made up its mind.

The House adjourned at 7.31 p.m.