TUESDAY, 20 APRIL 2004

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

ACTS OF PARLIAMENT, LOAN TO SUPREME COURT LIBRARY

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have to report that on 25 March 2004, in accordance with standing order 327, I approved the loan of original acts of parliament to the Supreme Court Library.

RULES OF DEBATE

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, as today will likely be the first day of the new parliament where legislation will be debated, I thought it appropriate to remind members about the rules of debate, particularly relevance and tedious repetition. Standing orders 141 and 253 deal with the need for members' speeches to be relevant to the matter under consideration. Standing order 141 makes it clear that arguments should not be tediously repetitive—either a member's own argument or arguments made by other members.

To speak about matters irrelevant to the question under consideration or to be tediously repetitive in argument achieves little but to waste the valuable time and resources of the House. If the workings of this House are to be kept to reasonable hours, it is incumbent upon all members to ensure that contributions are precise and to the point, not meandering, irrelevant or tediously repetitive diatribes. I have asked the Chairman of Committees and all temporary chairs to be fair but vigilant in enforcing the longstanding rules of the House relating to relevance and tedious repetition.

PETITIONS

The following honourable members have lodged paper petitions for presentation—

Rail Line, Millaa Millaa-Tolga

Ms Lee Long from 474 petitioners requesting the House to ensure that the support given by the people of the Atherton Tableland and Cairns region is taken into serious consideration regarding the rail branch line, Millaa Millaa to Tolga currently under government consideration.

Bus Services, Pelican Waters

Mr McArdle from 108 petitioners requesting the House to immediately have the Department of Transport undertake all necessary steps to commence a public bus service operating 7 days per week throughout Pelican Waters that integrates with the existing bus services operating throughout the Caloundra area.

Traffic Signals, Holland Park

Mr Fenlon from 514 petitioners requesting the House to reduce the speed to 40 kilometres per hour, install flashing warning lights, install red light cameras and to mark the road as a school crossing zone at the intersection of Kurts Street and Marshall Road, Holland Park.

Traffic Signals, Wurtulla

Mr Mackenroth, 5 petitions, from 176 petitioners in total, requesting the House to direct the Department of Main Roads to install a right turn arrow at the intersection of Peregrine Drive and Nicklin Way, Wurtulla.

Child Protection

Mr Lingard from 816 petitioners requesting the House call for a review of the current policies and procedures within the Child Protection Act 1999 in an eclectic approach to strengthening the laws, interventions and resources available to provide an unconditional response to the child's need for protection from harm, even in situations of harm where the harm is caused by the child's own actions or by someone outside the home.

Public Liability Insurance

Mr Springborg from 13 petitioners requesting the House to give careful consideration to steps being undertaken by Government to overcome the pending disastrous situation regarding public liability insurance as by present indication, insurance is going to be too expensive or not available at all.

PAPERS

PAPERS TABLED DURING THE RECESS

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

19 March 2004—

- National Environment Protection Council—Annual Report 2002-03
- Queensland Treasury Corporation—Half Yearly Report July-December 2003
- Letter, dated 18 March 2004, from the Premier and Minister for Trade (Mr Beattie) to the Clerk of the Parliament referring to correspondence received by the Premier from the Commonwealth Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Treaties regarding proposed international treaty actions tabled in both Houses of the Commonwealth Parliament on 2 March 2004 including National Interest Analyses for each of the proposed treaty actions listed in the correspondence

22 March 2004—

- Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (Mr Lucas) to Travelsafe Committee Report No. 40 entitled Reducing the Road Toll for Young Queenslanders—Is Education Enough? and Travelsafe Committee Report No. 41 entitled Provisional Driver and Rider Licence Restrictions

24 March 2004—

- Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (Mr Lucas) to a paper petition presented by Miss Roberts from 1146 petitioners regarding a development proposal on land adjoining Snapper Creek Boat Harbour
- Errata to the Summary Annual Report of the Queensland River Improvement Trusts 2002-2003 tabled on 28 November 2003
- Letter, dated 22 March 2004, from the Premier and Minister for Trade (Mr Beattie) to the Clerk of the Parliament referring to correspondence received by the Premier from the Commonwealth Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Treaties regarding the proposed Australia—United States Free Trade Agreement
- Australia—United States Free Trade Agreement—Guide to the Agreement, 1st Edition, March 2004

31 March 2004—

- Treasurer's Tax Equivalents Manual—Version 3, March 2004

1 April 2004—

- Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (Mr Lucas) to a paper petition presented by Mr Pitt from 264 petitioners regarding the level of public transport in the southern suburbs of Cairns

5 April 2004—

- Erratum to the National Environment Protection Council—Annual Report 2002-03 tabled on 19th March, 2004

6 April 2004—

- Auditor-General's Report—No. 6 2003-04—Results of Audits Performed for 2002-03 as at 31 January 2004
- Twenty-Fourth Report by the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal dated 15 December 2003, pursuant to the Judges (Salaries and Allowances) Act 1967
- Judges' Salaries and Allowances Tribunal Determination (No. 2) 2003
- Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (Mr Lucas) to a paper petition presented by Mr Hollis from 1573 petitioners regarding residential or multilevel development and sale of reclaimed land near the Scarborough Boat Harbour

7 April 2004—

- Report of an Audit of the Management, Staffing and Operations of the Maximum Security Units at the Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre, and the Sir David Longland Correctional Centre

14 April 2004—

- Response from the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice (Mr Welford) to Public Works Committee Report No. 83 entitled The Brisbane Magistrates Courts Building
- Review of the Health Practitioner Registration Boards (Administration) Act 1999—Final Report 18 November 2003

15 April 2004—

- Letter, dated 13 April 2004, from the Premier and Minister for Trade (Mr Beattie) to the Clerk of the Parliament enclosing the Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement National Interest Analysis to be considered by the Commonwealth Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
- Response from the Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development (Ms Keech) to a paper petition presented by Mr McArdle from 4 petitioners regarding an application from Mooloolaba Tavern for a detached bottle shop and extended hours permit

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by the Clerk—

Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2001, Education (General Provisions) Act 1989—

- Education Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2004, No. 19

Local Government Act 1993—

- Local Government Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2004, No. 20

Motor Accident Insurance Act 1994—

- Motor Accident Insurance Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2004, No. 21

Fair Trading Act 1989—

- Fair Trading Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2004, No. 22

Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2003—

- Proclamation commencing remaining provision, No. 23

Disaster Management Act 2003—

- Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 24

Nature Conservation Act 1992—

- Nature Conservation (Protected Plants Harvest Period) Notice 2004, No. 25

Superannuation (State Public Sector) Act 1990—

- Superannuation (State Public Sector) Amendment Notice (No. 1) 2004, No. 26

Dental Practitioners Registration Act 2001, Health Act 1937, Radiation Safety Act 1999—

- Dental Practitioners Registration and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2004, No. 27

Police Powers and Responsibilities and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2003—

- Proclamation commencing certain provision, No. 28

Building Act 1975—

- Standard Building Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2004, No. 29

Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995—

- Workplace Health and Safety (Industry Codes of Practice) Amendment Notice (No. 1) 2004, No. 30

Wagering Act 1998—

- Wagering Amendment Rule (No. 1) 2004, No. 31

Health Legislation Amendment Act 2003—

- Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 32

Plant Protection Act 1989—

- Plant Protection (Lettuce Aphid) Notice 2004, No. 33

Chiropractors Registration Act 2001, Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists Registration Act 2001, Health Act 1937, Hospitals Foundations Act 1982, Medical Practitioners Registration Act 2001, Occupational Therapists Registration Act 2001, Optometrists Registration Act 2001, Osteopaths Registration Act 2001, Pharmacists Registration Act 2001, Physiotherapists Registration Act 2001, Podiatrists Registration Act 2001, Psychologists Registration Act 2001, Radiation Safety Act 1999, Speech Pathologists Registration Act 2001—

- Health Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2004, No. 34

Community Services (Aborigines) Act 1984—

- Community Services (Aborigines) Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2004, No. 35

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003—

- Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 36

Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Act 2003—

- Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 37

MINISTERIAL PAPER TABLED BY THE CLERK

The following ministerial paper was tabled by The Clerk—

Acting Premier and Minister for Trade (Mr Mackenroth)

- Non-conforming petition requesting the installation of a right turn arrow at the intersection of Peregrine Drive and Nicklin Way, Wurtulla

MINISTERIAL PAPER

The following ministerial paper was tabled—

Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy (Mr Robertson)—

- Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill—Erratum to Explanatory Notes

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Daniel Morcombe, Red Ribbon Day

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.35 a.m.): Today is Red Ribbon Day. It is Red Ribbon Day in parliament as we demonstrate our support for

the family of Daniel Morcombe, who disappeared 136 days ago today. A team of 30 police officers are continuing to diligently investigate the disappearance of this young teenager, who went missing while waiting for a bus at the Kiel Mountain Road overpass at Palmwoods.

Red ribbons have become a symbol of the Sunshine Coast community's resolve to continue the search for Daniel and to continue supporting his family. We are wearing red ribbons today, and I want to thank honourable members for doing that because we have not forgotten Daniel or his family.

The significance of the colour red, Mr Speaker, as you know, is that Daniel was wearing a red T-shirt on the day he went missing. While there have been more than 3,500 calls to Crimestoppers so far about Daniel's disappearance, it is important to maintain a high level of awareness about this case. That is why the community has supported the printing and widespread distribution of posters and other promotional material, and that is why the ABC's *Australian Story* last night was dedicated to a report on the case. I want to congratulate the ABC for what I thought was an excellent production and also the Queensland Police Service, who have been supporting the family in a very sensitive and caring way. I think, having seen that, all of us should be very proud of the service and the work they are doing to assist this family.

It is also why the Morcombe family is planning a national advertising campaign for next Tuesday, and we wish them well in that. It is also why a Sunshine Coast singer has written and released a special music CD called *Daniel* and that is why members on all sides of parliament today are united in their support for the Morcombe family. While it is hard to imagine what this family is experiencing, I am sure I speak for every parent in Australia in saying to Denise and Bruce, to the family, that our thoughts and prayers are with you. Chris Cummins and I had an opportunity to have a quick morning tea with Denise and Bruce and their two sons Bradley and Dean, and I have to say that they are a lovely, lovely family. I am sure all members would agree that our hearts go out to them.

I could not imagine anything worse than to lose one of my three children and to simply not know where that child had gone. My wife, Heather, and I join all members in expressing our strongest support for the Morcombe family. They are in the gallery today, and I want to wish them all the best on behalf of all members of this parliament. I would urge all Queenslanders and all Australians: if you have any information of any kind, no matter how small or how insignificant you may think it is, come forward to Crimestoppers because it could be the key that could unlock the mystery of what has happened here. I would urge everybody to think about it and to think seriously. If anyone knows the people involved in this matter, I would urge them to search their conscience and to come clean and go to the police. As I said, I urge anyone anywhere who has information that might assist this investigation to call Crimestoppers on 1800 333 000.

Daniel's classmates have made a CD as part of their support for their mate. Mr Speaker, I want to thank you because I know that you have provided facilities to play this CD, and I seek leave to have that CD played in the House now.

Leave granted.

A CD was then played in the Chamber.

Mr SPEAKER: It certainly brings home the problems.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Daniel Morcombe, Red Ribbon Day

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (9.44 a.m.): As we wear red ribbons today in support of Daniel Morcombe's family, we also recognise the tireless efforts of police to solve the mystery surrounding the Sunshine Coast teenager's abduction. Up to 100 police were involved in the initial search for Daniel and, as the Premier mentioned, a core group of 30 police remain dedicated to this investigation. I recently visited the major incident room at Maroochydore, where Homicide Squad detectives have joined local police in following leads, interviewing witnesses and people of interest. I met the team, including North Coast Region Crime Co-ordinator, Detective Inspector John Maloney, and Detective Sergeant Dave Wilkinson, who has been in charge of the major incident room. It has been a hard slog for the team. However, their determination to find Daniel, and those responsible for his disappearance, has been spurred on by the unprecedented public response.

Right across the Sunshine Coast, and indeed Brisbane, today people are wearing red ribbons and tying ribbons to cars and letterboxes in support of Bruce and Denise Morcombe, sons

Dean and Bradley, and the investigating police. The Sunshine Coast community continues to raise money for a public campaign to assist in the search for Daniel. From the young girl who made $12 at a sausage sizzle to Coates Hire, which donated the use of 70 electronic flashing signs for roadside messages throughout the state at a cost to the company of $60,000, the public's generosity and support for the Morcombes has been incredible and I join with the Morcombes in thanking them for that.

So far more than $100,000 has been raised. About $80,000 of this money will go towards television, radio and newspaper advertising in the form of an appeal for information, as well as a videotaped re-enactment of Daniel's last known movements. That campaign will start next Tuesday and run for two weeks across the state and into northern New South Wales. I would like to thank the media for keeping the investigation in the public spotlight and for heavily subsidising the advertising. We hope last night's *Australian Story* will also increase interstate interest in this case and perhaps prick someone's conscience or jog their memory.

I understand Bruce and Denise Morcombe will travel to New South Wales at the end of the month with Queensland police to seek further media attention, and hopefully generate some new leads for what is a very intensive operation. I thank all members of parliament, and the community, for wearing a red ribbon today. I particularly thank the police officers who remain committed and positive and determined to solve this case.

I have previously met with Bruce and Denise Morcombe, and they are here, as the Premier said, today, along with their sons Dean and Bradley. They are a wonderful and loving family and I would say to them to please stay strong. Our thoughts are with you.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Daniel Morcombe, Red Ribbon Day

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.45 a.m.): Just before we move on to other parliamentary business, could I thank Chris Cummins and Peter Wellington, the member for Nambour, for keeping my office informed. I know both of them are committed to providing whatever assistance they can to the family. The family did in particular mention Peter this morning and I want to put that on the parliamentary record. I know other people through the day will be making contributions in relation to this issue and I know the family will appreciate that support.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Overseas visit

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.45 a.m.): If I could move on, in relation to trade, with one in four jobs in our regions depending on exports, it is essential for the Queensland government to do everything it can to encourage companies to export and to promote Queensland's Smart State expertise abroad.

I have recently, as you know, undertaken a trade and investment mission. I led it to Israel, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Europe between 22 March and 3 April and highlighted the achievements of Queensland companies already exporting and drew the attention of foreign government and business leaders to the capability of Queensland companies.

I table for the information of the House two copies of the detailed report that I am providing to all members and the community about the trade and investment mission. Can I advise the House that I intend to make 2004 'Export Year' and to try and consolidate not only traditional markets but find new markets as well because of the number of jobs this means for Queenslanders. Because of time, I seek to incorporate the rest of my ministerial statement for the information of all members.

Mr SPEAKER: Leave granted.

In Israel, I met Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, as well as his deputy and Minister for Trade and Industry Ehud Olmert and the Minister for Finance and former Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu.

An agreement I witnessed between that country's Agricultural Research Organisation and the University of Queensland's Centre for Native Floriculture has the potential to increase native flower and foliage exports from $9 million to $60 million a year over the next decade and double the number of jobs in the industry to 400.

I witnessed a joint venture agreement for Queensland-owned company The Cavalier Corporation to build homes in Israel.

The Queensland Corporate Research Centre of worldwide software solutions company, SAP, has made a significant contribution to SAP Portals in Israel—the primary IT solutions provider for the Israeli Government. This is another example of the Smart State in action, delivering not just locally but internationally.

I met Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade and Industry Ehud Olmert; Minister for Finance and former Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu; and the chair of the Knesset's Israel-Australia Parliamentary Friendship League, Isaac Herzog.

In Israel, people went out of their way to thank the trade and investment mission for proceeding, despite a heightened security alert and international warnings against travel to Israel.

In London I held a reception for government and business leaders and helped Queensland companies launch products.

Sunshine Coast sugar technologist Graeme Brewer has developed an innovative range of fruit, vegetable and salad nutritional supplements in handy sachets under the name of Calthapharm.

Medihoney, a subsidiary of Capilano Honey, has released the findings of a hospital study that shows their special honey inhibits the golden staph superbug. It also cites research showing Medihoney helps heal wounds and provides relief from a range of skin conditions.

Water Worldwide launched its bottled water and managing director Perry Grewar joined me on a visit to "super premium" department store Harvey Nichols, of "Ab Fab" fame, which agreed to stock his Outback spring water.

Bundaberg Brewed Drinks launched its brewed soft drinks in Britain's Costco supermarket chain.

I launched a Study Queensland website offering information designed to meet the needs of UK students looking for a destination for their Gap Year break.

In London I also witnessed the signing of a letter of intent between Granada Television and Cutting Edge which has beaten the best of Britain's post-production companies to win a $600,000 contract to compile the raw footage and story-line for the TV giant's latest reality series.

I also attended meetings and functions with Xstrata, Ingeus, HOK Sport, Weathered Howe, MDA and the United Kingdom Sailing Academy.

In Ireland, I visited the Aughinish Alumina refinery, where Worley are employing about 100 Queenslanders in a major expansion and the Luas light rail development where SKM have a contract creating further jobs for Queenslanders.

In Vienna I announced that yet another aviation company, Frequentis, is establishing its Australasian regional headquarters in the Smart State. Frequentis maintains and develops communication and information systems for air traffic control management and public safety and transport.

In France I visited European Aeronautical Defence and Space, already a part of Queensland's aviation hub through Australian Aerospace, to talk about the possibility of new opportunities in Queensland.

In all of the countries, whenever it was appropriate, I publicised AusBiotech 2004 that is being held in Queensland in November and invited people to attend the conference. The British Science Minister is due to lead a British delegation to the conference and the Israeli Government will also be represented.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Blue Cards

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.46 a.m.) There are two issues relating to the protection of children that I want to draw to the attention of the House. Cabinet yesterday approved a significant expansion of the Blue Card system to strengthen the safeguards for Queensland children from sexual predators. Stringent standards for people working and volunteering with children will soon extend to groups including more clergy, more non-teaching school staff and people involved in children's sports programs and camps.

The measures include a web listing of valid Blue Card numbers to enable people to check that a Blue Card remains active. Despite calls from some quarters to scrap the need to renew Blue Cards every two years, we will stick with this requirement. I know the measures will not be universally popular, but the vast majority of people and organisations working with children will welcome any moves that improve the safety of children and young people. This is about putting the safety of children ahead of everything else, and I believe that is what any government should do. I urge anyone who thinks our initiatives are too onerous to put children first.

Our improvements include the screening of clergy employed before 1 May 2001—clergy employed since then have already been screened; many more clergy working with children will need a Blue Card; secondly, requiring providers of recreational activities, such as sporting programs and camps, to have Blue Cards; thirdly, requiring homestay providers who accommodate children and young people to have Blue Cards, and requiring staff of hostels for rural children to have Blue Cards.

Requirements for school staff will begin to take effect at the start of the 2005 school year, and they include screening of non-teaching staff employed before 1 May 2001 so that all non-

teaching staff will need Blue Cards; secondly, a requirement for non-teaching school staff employed before 1 May 2001 to declare a change in criminal history—this already applied to non-teaching staff employed since 1 May 2001; thirdly, enable the Commission for Children and Young People to notify the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board of the status of suitability notices so that a private citizen with a criminal history cannot shield behind a corporation; and finally, enabling universities to verify the identity of student teachers applying for Blue Cards.

The reforms result from a review of the Commission for Children and Young People Act 2001 plus recommendations of a ministerial task force on sex abuse in schools that followed the report of the board of inquiry into past handling of complaints of sexual abuse in the Anglican Diocese. No government can ever guarantee a bulletproof shield for children, but we are doing our best. The Blue Card system is strong but it will never eliminate paedophiles from society. We must be ever vigilant to guard our children from predators.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Child Protection

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.39 a.m.): Reforming state child protection, as members know, is a key priority of the Queensland government. The Child Protection Implementation Unit, initially led by Peter Forster, has delivered the first two phases of the reform process including, in phase 1, the development of a project plan to deliver recommendations and, in phase 2, the development of a blueprint for implementing the recommendations of the January 2004 Crime and Misconduct Commission inquiry into the abuse of children in foster care.

During phase 3 Peter Forster will work collaboratively with the Child Safety Implementation Unit, the Department of Child Safety, the Department of Communities and Disability Services Queensland. He will assist with the development and implementation of the transition arrangements for area office staff, the development of child safety, and finalise advice on the central and regional office structure and resource requirements of both the Department of Child Safety and the Department of Communities. I thank both ministers involved for their cooperation and support in this reform program because that is an important part.

Peter Forster is the right person for this job. He has more than 30 years experience in both the public and private sectors as a manager and consultant and has a reputation for achieving results in complex and difficult assignments. He was the expert chosen by the then National Party to oversee the massive police reforms in 1989 after the Fitzgerald inquiry, together with setting up the Criminal Justice Commission and the Electoral and Administrative Reform Commission.

There is nobody with better credentials for pushing through major reforms to government areas in Queensland. Peter Forster's services have been secured from January 2004 to 30 June 2004 through a contract with the Consultancy Bureau of which he is the director. The Consultancy Bureau has received $391,560 for the completion of phases 1 and 2. The estimated fee for phase 3 is $158,400.

On 22 March 2004, I released in full the 260 page blueprint for implementation. The blueprint is a detailed and comprehensive instruction manual for the government to implement all 110 recommendations of the Crime and Misconduct Commission. It shows how to deliver a radically better deal for children through more staff, better training and resources, more accountability, more money and support for foster carers and more options for finding new homes for abused and troubled young people. It would be clear to anyone who has read the blueprint produced by Peter Forster and the implementation unit that the government appointed the right person to initially spearhead the reforms to Queensland's child protection system and that Peter Forster's fees and money are well spent. I have released that information so everyone knows exactly where we stand and what the cost is.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cruise Ship Industry

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.52 a.m): The provision of cruise ship industry infrastructure has been on our agenda for some time. I am pleased to report to the House today that there have been significant developments in recent weeks that move Queensland closer to becoming one of the best cruise destinations in Australia

and, indeed, the world. I seek leave to incorporate the rest of my ministerial statement in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Mr Speaker I welcome news that New Lord Mayor Campbell Newman has given the green light for Brisbane's Cruise Ship terminal.

His enthusiasm and keenness to get things happening is so refreshing.

In time he will get to know that there are items for local government and others that belong in the State's realm.

That—and the minor point of it having already been announced late last year—aside I admire the new Lord Mayor's preparedness to get in and be seen to be making it happen.

Some might say that this statement is a cynical shot, but yesterday's phoney announcement is a bit like his unfunded $4 billion tunnels plan.

He has the right ideas and, in time, I'm sure—especially for the ratepayer's sake—I hope he learns that adroit public management means a Scotsman's eye when it comes to ratepayers' money and a healthy respect for due process helps avoid damaging embarrassment.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Members Equity

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.52 a.m.): When an established Melbourne based business worth more than $10 billion in assets and affiliations with the 150 superannuation funds and unions decided to open their first customer service centre, they chose to open it in Queensland. Until now it has been a virtual bank. The opening of the shop in Brisbane last Friday was in line with the view expressed by the chairman of their board, Bernie Fraser, who said Members Equity is committed to restoring the priority of customers in banking relationships. I was delighted to be there to do the opening. I provide details of this to the House. I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of my ministerial statement in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Members Equity, or as it is being re-named "the Super Funds Bank," is widely regarded as the fastest growing bank in Australia.

It chose Queensland for its first service centre because ours is the fastest growing economy in Australia.

While overall, the bank's business has been growing at a rate of 30 percent a year, its business in Queensland is growing at a rate of 60 per cent a year.

The decision by Member's Equity provides further evidence that Queensland today is the engine room of the Australian economy.

An important part of being the engine room is generating employment opportunities. Queensland has created more than one-quarter of a million jobs since 1998.

The latest available labour force statistics show that, from March 2003 to March this year, Queensland generated 36 percent of all the new jobs in Australia.

And, significantly, Queensland generated 45 percent of the total number of new full-time jobs in Australia over the past year.

I'm very pleased that Members Equity is providing Queensland with the benefits of more competition, particularly in the area of assisting first home buyers.

One of the commitments I announced during the election campaign was that first home buyers would pay no mortgage duty or stamp duty on a property worth up to $250,000.

This will save the families purchasing their first home up to $3,000.

Over the next three years, first home buyers in Queensland will save $98 million in stamp duty and mortgage duty.

We are obviously on the right track because the New South Wales Government in its recent mini Budget followed our lead in relation to first home buyers.

However, by abolishing the land tax threshold and introducing a new stamp duty of 2.15 percent for sales of investment properties, New South Wales has effectively made real estate in Queensland more attractive for small investors.

Mr Speaker, I'm sure that Queensland and our economy will continue to grow and I welcome the decision by Members Equity to set up shop here and grow with us.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

HOK Sport

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.53 a.m.): I announced last week that the Queensland office of HOK Sport + Venue + Event has secured a

significant contract as sports architect adviser for the main stadium for the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. The contract is with the National Stadium Company, the consortium which is financing construction and operating the $400 million Beijing National stadium. This is great news for a Queensland firm which will do the substantive work from its Queensland office. The contract is also a strategic win for Queensland as this work on the Beijing Olympics will give global exposure to Queensland knowledge-intensive industries. HOK Sport was the firm responsible for our new Suncorp Stadium, which it designed in association with local firm PDT Architects. HOK Sport is also designing the redevelopment of the Wembley Stadium in London, the upgrade of the centre court for Wimbledon, which I inspected on my trade mission last month, and the complete rebuild of the Ascot Racecourse in the United Kingdom. I seek leave to incorporate the rest of my ministerial statement in *Hansard.*

Leave granted.

HOK Sport worked with the National Stadium Company throughout the tender process in 2003, and this success follows four years of planning work in Beijing by a team led by HOK senior principal, Paul Henry.

The contract will involve HOK Sport providing sports specialist architectural advice to the National Stadium Company over the next year to ensure that the stadium design meets world's best practice.

Mr Speaker, the success of Queensland companies like HOK Sport in securing contracts in China, is also a result of hard work by the staff of the Queensland Government Trade and Investment Office in Shanghai and Trade and International Operations, as well as our friends at Austrade.

The Queensland Government Trade and Investment Office Shanghai continues to develop important connections in China so that Queensland companies can benefit from the booming Chinese economy.

My Government has consistently supported companies like HOK to create new business opportunities in China through targeted trade and investment missions and by providing specialists in market support.

Mr Speaker, HOK Sport's success in China is further evidence that Queensland's exporters are continuing to make significant inroads into world markets.

We will continue to work in partnership with Queensland companies to ensure that this success continues.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Aurukun Mineral Deposits; Pechiney

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy) (9.54 a.m.): Honourable members will recall that on 22 October 2003 the Premier and then Minister for State Development, Tom Barton, and I demanded that French mining company, Pechiney, surrender the mining lease it has held over the vast Aurukun mineral deposits on Cape York since 1975. We also announced that the government intended calling for international expressions of interest to develop the globally significant Aurukun deposits, which contain an estimated 500 million tonnes of bauxite. These deposits would be highly attractive to the world aluminium industry. We sought surrender of the lease because Pechiney had failed to commence construction of an alumina refinery by 31 December 1988—which was a key requirement of the Aurukun Associates Agreement 1975 it signed with the Bjelke-Petersen government. In effect, Pechiney has been in breach of the agreement for at least the last 15 years and has been parking this valuable mineral resource to suit itself while it invested in new refining facilities elsewhere in the world.

As a result, Queensland has forgone a significant contribution to the economy from potential export income, new industrial opportunities for downstream processing and jobs flowing from development of this resource. When Pechiney failed to meet the 24 October 2003 deadline to surrender the lease, the Queensland government immediately started legal proceedings in the Supreme Court to enforce surrender. None of this is changed by the recent takeover of Pechiney by Alcan. Unfortunately, the matter still remains unresolved before the Supreme Court. Given the potential for the litigation to become protracted and the increasing legal costs being expended by both the state and Pechiney, state cabinet yesterday approved further action to bring this matter to finalisation.

Later today I will introduce legislation to repeal the Aurukun Associates Agreement 1975. This legislation will rescind the Aurukun Associates Agreement 1975, and cancel mining lease 7032 thereby rendering the Supreme Court litigation futile. It will also provide that the state is not liable for any claim to compensation or payment by Pechiney or any other person arising out of the cancellation of the mining lease. In return, the state will reimburse Aluminium Pechiney Holdings Pty Ltd $518,160 in mining lease rentals paid for the calendar years 1989 to 2003 plus $54,000 interest. The state will also pay an amount of costs, to be assessed on a standard basis

for the proceedings commenced by the state in the Supreme Court, to enforce the surrender of the lease.

I want to stress that the government's action today is in no way indicative of sovereign risk and the mining industry can be assured that this is a special case related only to the Aurukun Associates Agreement 1975. We are taking this action so the state, on behalf of Queensland taxpayers, can optimise the utilisation of the Aurukun resources and pursue the associated multibillion dollar investment opportunities.

The status of the world's alumina market is such that there are currently production restrictions at a global level due to limited alumina supply and significant increases in spot alumina prices. Therefore, within the next three to five years, the state has an opportunity to attract global interest in the Aurukun minerals and, in particular, the bauxite resources. We believe Pechiney has had ample opportunity over the past 28 years to develop the Aurukun resource and its inactivity has been a grave disappointment and concern to the government. That is why we are taking the decisive action today to ensure we can begin to maximise the returns to the people of Queensland from this valuable resource.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

School Funding

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education and the Arts) (9.58 a.m.): The federal government's track record on education is nothing short of abysmal. At the university level reforms introduced by federal Education Minister, Brendan Nelson, are slugging students with direct fees and putting higher education out of the reach of ordinary Australians. At a school level Brendan Nelson is now drafting the next four-year funding agreement, which is shaping up as a further attack on education. Unbelievably, he is threatening to use this agreement to strip funds from children who do not meet literacy and numeracy benchmarks in years 3, 5 and 7 as a condition of the next schools funding agreement. The federal minister is using the big funding stick to threaten and bully states but the real victims of this approach will be the children who need help the most. Instead of turning his back on these children, he should be providing even greater support to help them overcome their literacy problems. That is the approach of the Queensland government.

Schools in the Queensland system with children who are struggling with literacy and numeracy in year 2 are provided with extra funds to bring those students up to expected levels. But the type of behaviour that we are seeing from Brendan Nelson is nothing more than we have come to expect. The next four-year schools funding agreement provided Dr Nelson was the perfect opportunity to rebuild his credentials with the education sector, but sadly he has failed again. Queensland public school students and their families deserve far more than what the Commonwealth is now offering. On Friday, the gloves will come off. I will be taking the fight to Canberra along with my other state colleagues at a meeting of MCEETYA. In short, Dr Nelson is offering Queensland public school students nothing new.

Like all slick sales pitches by the Howard government, the truth is in the fine print. The money for Catholic schools had previously been announced and the money for Queensland state schools amounts to the same as if the current agreement had simply been rolled over for another four years. Despite all efforts by state ministers to talk to the federal minister, the current package further entrenches inequities created by the federal government between targeted and recurrent funding for government and non-government schools. State school students in Queensland and across Australia do not receive even the lowest rate of Commonwealth funding provided to some of the nation's most elite private schools. One would think that those people in this House who represent electorates where many people have no choice but the public sector, whether it is through distance education or their local primary schools, would be standing up for those schools. Those schools do not even receive the lowest rate that is applied to private schools. There is simply no public policy justification for this inequity.

I will be calling on the federal minister to level the playing field and bring funding for more than 440,000 public school students in Queensland up to the same minimum level received by private school students from the Commonwealth government. In dollar terms, this would equate to more than $140 million in extra funds for Queensland public schools above what the federal government is offering next year and more than $600 million over the life of the four-year funding agreement. Imagine what these extra funds could deliver to our classrooms in extra teachers, remedial assistance and teacher aide hours.

I want to stress that the state and territory ministers' proposal does not strip one single dollar from the non-government school sector. This is about ensuring that every Australian child, regardless of what school they attend, receives the same minimum investment from the Australian government in their future. It is time the federal minister started doing the right thing by the majority of hardworking families who send their children to state schools. They do not ask for much, but they do ask for a fair go.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the Minister for Child Safety, I welcome to the public gallery students and teachers from Roma College in the electorate of Warrego.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Child Protection

Hon. M. F. REYNOLDS (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety) (10.02 a.m.): I want to inform the House of progress since the blueprint for the implementation of child safety reforms in Queensland was presented to the state government on 22 March. The handing over of the blueprint compiled by the Chair of the Child Protection Reform Implementation Committee, Peter Forster, indeed marked the beginning of a new era in child protection in this state. The Beattie government immediately responded by committing $201 million in extra funding by the 2006-07 financial year to build a new and radically improved system for Queensland children. It is a system that will be the envy of other jurisdictions because funding levels in per capita terms will be ahead of the national average by the 2006-07 financial year. The blueprint, outlining ways to implement the CMC's recommendations, represents a fresh start and a positive new ethos and culture for everyone involved in child protection in Queensland. Hundreds of copies of the blueprint have been printed for distribution to stakeholders and the public, and the document is accessible on the Premier's departmental web site.

Over the past month the acting director-general and I have personally conducted 38 briefing sessions throughout Queensland and have met with more than 3,500 people, including departmental staff, foster carers, NGOs and child protection advocacy groups. I thank the MPs in the respective areas where I have been for the support they have given me in that regard. I have also specifically consulted with members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and the implementation reference panel, which comprises peak child protection bodies and advocacy groups as well.

Front-line child protection staff are taking part in a new training program aimed at better preparing them to deal with complex cases involving children in care. These family services officers, soon to be called child safety officers, are undertaking courses of eight weeks duration and within 12 months this program will become mandatory for all new permanent CSOs before taking up a an actual caseload in the department. Managers and team leaders are also being prepared for the transition to new work practices and culture with workshops in Pine Rivers, Toowoomba, Mackay, Townsville, Cairns and on the Sunshine Coast.

These two-day workshops, including the one at Pine Rivers for staff from central office in Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Toowoomba, Ipswich and Logan, will ensure senior staff are very much positioned to lead and support their colleagues through this time of transition to a new ethos and a new culture. Leadership is more critical now than at any time in the past, so we are working closely with our managers and team leaders. They are in fact the agents of change. I am determined to ensure that the interests of children in Queensland are absolutely paramount, and so far I am very heartened by the strength of goodwill among people associated with the child protection system. They have supported the changes, and I think it augurs very well for the future.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Child Protection

Hon. F. W. PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (Minister for Communities and Disability Services) (10.05 a.m.): One of the Beattie government's major and most immediate priorities is the new era for child protection and family support in Queensland heralded by the reform blueprint developed by Peter Forster. Whilst much of the public focus so far has been on issues relating to child protection, the new Department of Communities will have a crucial role to play, particularly in relation to early intervention and prevention. As members would know, the blueprint recommended that a Department of Child Safety and a Department of Communities be established after the abolition of the former Department of Families. My department has

established an implementation unit to work with Mr Forster to oversee and coordinate the creation of the new Department of Communities and to ensure that the recommendations of the blueprint are delivered.

Consultation has begun with staff and stakeholders and preparations are under way to develop a project plan to start up the new department and to roll out services across Queensland. The Department of Communities will support the new Department of Child Safety through crucial prevention and early intervention community services. We are committed to continue funding for those trial programs under the Future Directions policy that has proven so successful. The Forster report, which was delivered to the government last month, confirms the crucial and critical importance of effective prevention and early intervention services in reducing the risk of abuse, harm or neglect of children.

I am totally committed to that goal, as is my new department and the government as a whole. I can assure members that my department will have a strong focus on service delivery. I am committed to seizing the opportunities presented by the Forster blueprint to revolutionise the services we provide our children and families. Finally, I want to thank the staff involved in these major changes for their patience and their forbearance. I know these times are particularly challenging for staff, and I give them my commitment that, although the process is a complex one, these changes will herald a new and more positive environment for them while establishing the much-needed new era of protection of Queensland's children.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Alcohol Management Plans

Hon. E. A. CLARK (Clayfield—ALP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy) (10.07 a.m.): Last week the Queensland government introduced new alcohol management plans in seven remote communities, and I am proud to announce that this means alcohol management plans have now been introduced to 17 of the 19 communities at risk identified in Justice Tony Fitzgerald's 2001 Cape York Justice Study. The Beattie government understands the crisis these communities are in. This is why Justice Fitzgerald conducted a comprehensive study into the many problems the people of these communities face. His study found—

Current levels of alcohol consumption and alcohol-associated harm are extreme.

The study found death rates attributed to alcohol in the Cape York indigenous population were more than 21 times the general Queensland rate and homicide and violence rates were 18 times higher. The Beattie government could not stand by and see this continue.

As the Cape York Justice Study recommended, we have now made alcohol management plans our first priority. Early figures show that these plans, delivered in conjunction with the community justice groups, are making a significant difference, as the Premier told parliament last month. People who live and work in the communities have told us that their lives are improving. Gabriel Butcher and Greg Pascoe from the Wulpumu Community Justice Group have informed me that Lockhart River is a significantly better community since the plan was introduced. They said it is now a much quieter place, school attendances are up and the number of women and children seeking access to the women's shelter has decreased significantly, as has the number of people attending the health clinic for alcohol related reasons.

Don Anderson, Director of Western Cape College, says that the plans have delivered a better living environment that better prepares children to access education. Doctor Lara Wieland says that there is much more to be done, but she says a visit to one of the communities she lived in for three years showed a huge change. She tells of diehard drinking patients who have finally given up drinking. 'They told me they were happy,' she says, and that alcohol bans had made it easier for them to finally give up without being a social outcast because of it.

As Dr Wieland points out, this is only the first step. These restrictions are tough, but this is about more than the right to drink; it is about the rights of everyone—of men, women and children—to live longer and to live without fear of the disastrous effects of alcohol abuse.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Anzac Day Trust

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (10.10 p.m.): I take this opportunity to urge Queensland businesses to dig deep for the

annual Anzac Day Trust fundraising appeal to help war veterans and their dependants. In these days of flexible trading hours, it is worth remembering—indeed worth pointing out for the first time to younger members of the community—that the trust was established in 1965 when trading hours were far more regimented, especially on Anzac Day and other public holidays. When the trust was set up it was expected that those businesses given an exemption from laws restricting trading on Anzac Day would donate a portion of their trading to the trust. They were benefiting financially and it was only fair and appropriate that the veterans and their families being honoured on the day, and also battling financially, should receive a little support back from the community.

I hope Queenslanders in 2004 heed this message of nearly 40 years ago, because it is just as relevant today. In the 2003 appeal, businesses donated nearly $26,000 to the Anzac Day Trust, augmenting the $887,000 granted by the Queensland government. The government will be granting even more this year and I hope that private donors can dig a little deeper, too. The trust redirects its funds to organisations supporting ex-service personnel and their dependants. These groups include Legacy, the Incapacitated Servicemen and Women Association, the War Widows Guild, the Vietnam Veterans Association and the Queensland Ex-POW Association.

Legacy alone cares for 24,000 widows and 350 children and disabled dependants of men and women who have served our country in war and in peacekeeping operations around the world. Indicative of those coming under Brisbane Legacy's care are the widows of two veterans of Australia's East Timor operations and, therefore, children aged from one to 10 years as well as hundreds of wives and dependants of veterans from World War I and post-1918 conflicts. The Australian Defence Force's commitments in the Middle East, East Timor, Afghanistan and the Solomon Islands show why Legacy predicts that its task will continue well into the third decade of the 21st century. In fact, those cared for by Legacy represent just a fraction of the vast number of people supported by the 230 Queensland ex-service organisations that seek financial assistance from the Anzac Day Trust each year.

Anzac Day presents a unique opportunity for traders to recognise the special sacrifices of the families of our defence personnel and to act in a tangible way by contributing towards the care of those families. This year's Anzac Day march is also an opportunity for the people of Queensland to say a special thankyou to the dependants of those who have served. The need for assistance increases, as veterans and their families age, becoming more dependent on the community. I commend the appeal.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Courts, Equipment and Facilities

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (10.13 a.m.): I am pleased to advise the House that our government is introducing state-of-the-art technology into more of our courts to provide stronger protection for victims and vulnerable witnesses. Last year, our government accelerated the installation and renewal of these closed-circuit television facilities in courthouses around Queensland. This year, we are continuing this program and spending $1.4 million to install videoconferencing and closed-circuit TV—CCTV—in 12 of our magistrates courts. We are also in the process of assessing our courts to determine how we can improve other facilities for vulnerable witnesses, such as interview rooms.

This is part of our government's policy of court modernisation—not just new bricks and mortar for the sake of it, but specific improvements designed to make the criminal justice system more effective, particularly when dealing with vulnerable witnesses such as children and victims of sexual assault. The magistrates courts earmarked for these new facilities this calendar year are Beenleigh, Cairns, Hervey Bay, Ipswich, Mackay, Maroochydore, Maryborough, Rockhampton, Southport, Toowoomba, Townsville and the Childrens Court in Brisbane. This state-of-the-art technology is also being installed in the new Brisbane Magistrates Court, the new Richlands Courthouse, and in our new courthouses on Thursday Island and Caloundra.

Closed-circuit television equipment within a courtroom enables children and sexual assault victims to give evidence from a protected room without confronting the defendant in the courtroom. Videoconferencing goes a step further and enables witnesses in distant locations to give evidence without travelling to the courtroom. These video links are an important adjunct in the modern courtroom to ensure that matters are not delayed. For example, forensic scientists and specialist police witnesses based in Brisbane can give evidence by video link for trials being held in regional courthouses.

There are over 340 video sites throughout Queensland run by the Department of Health, TAFE and Legal Aid Queensland which can be used for remote witnesses to give evidence at trials in Brisbane and our regions. The installation of this technology in the 12 magistrates courts I have mentioned will further improve our justice system and make our courts more receptive to vulnerable witnesses.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Racing Industry

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing) (10.16 a.m.): As the new Minister for Racing, I am well aware that there are more than a few challenges ahead. I have soon learned that it is an industry that thrives on gossip and personal attacks. However, as I stated at the outset of the meeting convened by the Premier with the racing industry representatives in the first week of this term, I am not interested in personalities or turf wars; I am here to assist the industry and to ensure that a high level of integrity exists. Wagering is up, prize money is up, horse participation is up and all indications suggest that the industry in many quarters is performing strongly.

We do have issues in country racing, and the parliamentary secretary for racing, the member for Bulimba, Pat Purcell, has already hit the ground running—talking and listening to country race clubs across Queensland. However, we will not, as the shadow minister suggests, pluck $8 million out of Health, Education, Police or Child Protection to prop up country racing. We will not rob money out of our hospitals, schools or public housing to put on the trots.

Mr Hopper: I didn't suggest that, you germ.

Mr SCHWARTEN: That would be irresponsible and a misuse of taxpayers' money.

A government member: He called him a germ.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Darling Downs! That was unparliamentary language. I ask you to withdraw.

Mr HOPPER: I withdraw.

An honourable member: You didn't hear him.

Mr SPEAKER: I heard him.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I could not care less what he called me. It would not bother me. I do not care. We will not take taxpayers' dollars off country schools to put into country racetracks.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: The members opposite hate it. They would love to get their hands on taxpayers' money and put it into country racing. They are confirming that here. The opposition lost the recent state election in part on this issue. But that does not mean that we will abandon country racing. I will continue to consult with clubs to find ways in which we can help.

In metropolitan racing, I am yet to find anyone who understands why there are two clubs within spitting distance, except the committee members of those clubs. While we have some options, the bottom line is that the QTC and the BTC are independent clubs and what we want to happen is for commonsense to prevail so that we can try to reach some consensus on amalgamation. However, I have seen little evidence of this today.

Much has been said about supertrack. I certainly have no fixed views about that issue. Queensland Racing recently unveiled a full proposal, and it has agreed to do more work on this proposal. However, the future of any supertrack proposal relies on funding. It has been made clear to the industry that no money will be taken out of essential services to fund this. The industry must accept responsibility for any new venture.

Finally, the issue which most concerns me is that of integrity. If we lose integrity in racing we lose punters. It is as simple as that. I am well aware of the issues regarding the stewards and other complex issues facing the industry, and I am working on ways to address these concerns. This includes, of course, licensing matters, animal cruelty, industrial rights for employees and the whole spectrum of questionable practices which dogged the industry even before Archer won the Melbourne Cup. However, no-one should believe that the government will solve the issues by turning back the clock. I will be pursuing ways to get an even stronger system of integrity enforcement in Queensland racing.

I also confirm that I will listen to anyone on how we might continue to build on the reforms which were already started by my predecessors. I look forward to a bipartisan approach in taking this industry forward, but I will not swing by my tongue waiting for it. However, I must stress that this government, like every other government before it, will not run this industry. We will not take over race date allocations or prize money distribution or set race times or distances. Racing is an industry, just like every other industry, and it must rise and fall on its own merits.

PARLIAMENTARY CRIME AND MISCONDUCT COMMITTEE

Report

Mr WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (10.20 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House, pursuant to section 4.7(4) of the Police Service Administration Act, the following: a certified copy of the register of reports and recommendations made to the Police Minister, ministerial directions and tabled ministerial reasons 2003; a letter from the Commissioner of the Police Service, Mr R. Atkinson, to the chairperson of the Crime and Misconduct Commission, Mr Brendan Butler SC, dated 9 January 2004; and a letter from Mr Butler to the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee dated 20 January 2004.

Section 4.7(4) of the Police Service Administration Act provides that the chairperson of the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee is to table in the Legislative Assembly a certified copy of the Police Commissioner's register and all comments relating thereto within 14 days after the chairperson's receipt of the document. The register records that during 2003 no reports and recommendations, ministerial directions or tabled reasons qualified for inclusion in the register. In his letter to the committee Mr Butler advises that he is furnishing the register without further comment. I advise that the register was received by the committee on 21 January 2004. It is therefore tabled within a period of 14 sitting days after receipt, as prescribed by section 4.7(4) of the act.

SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Report

Hon. K. W. HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (10.22 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's *Alert Digest No. 1 of 2004*.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Health Committee

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (10.22 a.m.): I give notice that I will move—

(1) That this House resolves to establish a new committee to be known as the Health Committee

(2) That the committee initially be a select committee with terms of reference to be responsible for monitoring, reviewing and reporting to the House on the operation of the state's health system including:

  (a) the operation of the state's hospitals, medical facilities and health programs;

  (b) the operation of departments and agencies, both state and local government, responsible for implementing health policies and funding health initiatives;

  (c) the impact of local, state and Commonwealth government policies and arrangements on the delivery of funding and the delivery of services at state and local levels.

(3) That the committee membership consist of four government and three non-government members

(4) That the committee be an authorised committee within the meaning of the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 and be authorised to call for persons, documents and things.

PRIVATE PROPERTY PROTECTION BILL

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10.23 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to provide for the proper consideration of the impact of legislation on private property, and for the payment of compensation for the impact.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Mr Seeney, read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10.24 a.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

This bill is the first of two bills which will enshrine in law a charter of property rights that will be the basis for greater security and fair dealing between successive Queensland governments and private property owners. While fully recognising the power of parliament to make laws, our charter of property rights will ensure that in the future new laws that impact on private property rights will be made on properly tested scientific information rather than the emotive scare campaigns that have become the trademark approach of the current Beattie government. Under our charter of property rights there can be no more blatant dishonesty in this parliament of the likes of which we have seen with the Cubbie Station issue, the salinity scare campaign and the vegetation management debacle. Compensation for property owners will be mandatory.

The first part of this bill aims to ensure that the parliament is properly informed when it considers the introduction of new laws which have the potential to impact on the property rights of individual property owners. It will require the preparation and presentation to parliament of a private property impact study as part of the process of preparing and considering new legislation that is likely to impact on the rights of private property owners. The impact study would be required to fully assess and determine the benefits and costs of the proposed regulation and determine to whom the benefits would accrue and who would bear the costs and suffer the impacts if the parliament made the proposed law.

This bill will also provide a process by which a private property impact statement prepared by a minister as a necessary part of the introduction of new legislation can be challenged and tested before a court. It will allow the claimed scientific basis for the proposed legislation as well as the assessment of the claimed costs and benefits to be tested for completeness and integrity in the light of evidence of expert witnesses given before a court. This will ensure the information being provided to this parliament in the consideration of new legislation is complete and has integrity and will thereby prevent the sort of selective misuse of scientific information we have seen in this parliament in the recent past.

The second element of this bill commits this parliament to a system of fair compensation when through the passage of properly considered legislation the individual property owners suffer substantial loss of their property rights for the benefit of the wider community. Statute law is now failing to protect property owners when the title to a property is not acquired by government, but one or more of the rights to use the property that have normally been associated with that title is either restricted or removed by government acting for the benefit of the broader community.

This bill recognises that the principle of fair compensation is no less applicable to an owner of private property who, while retaining title to property, loses the rights to use that property normally associated with property ownership. It enshrines in law that, where acting in the broader community interest a government imposes new statutory regulations that remove or restrict existing property rights, property owners shall be entitled to compensatory payments at least equal to the loss of value caused by the new regulations. It recognises the reality that this parliament of elected representatives has the undoubted power to make decisions on behalf of the Queensland community, which may be for a wider community benefit, but this parliament also has an undeniable obligation to ensure that individuals are not left to bear the cost alone.

If the government, acting on behalf of the community, is not prepared or is unable to bear the cost of new regulations which are being imposed by this parliament for the benefit of the whole community, then there is no valid argument that individual property owners should be expected to suffer the impact alone. This bill will ensure that they will not be expected to do so. It will ensure that the costs and the benefits of new legislation are properly identified and it will ensure that the costs are borne by those of us who enjoy the benefits. That is fair and reasonable. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Robertson, adjourned.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Ministerial Motor Vehicles

Mr SPRINGBORG (10.28 a.m.): My question is directed to the Premier. I refer the Premier to his answer to question on notice No. 44, which was tabled yesterday. In this morning's media the Premier claimed to be committed to accountability and openness—a crown he seems to have

bestowed upon himself. Why, then, did he deliberately not detail, as asked, car crashes involving ministerial electorate vehicles assigned to his ministers from 2001 to the current date when we know that at least two ministers, including the Premier, have cases to answer?

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Why did he cover it up? Why did he not tell the people of Queensland?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! You will ask the question or you will resume your seat.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Will the Premier tell the parliament why he will not release all of the documents he took to cabinet before the last state election, including details of Merri Rose's vehicle expenses, effectively hiding them from Queenslanders for the next 30 years, particularly when there are numerous precedents from both the Premier and other cabinet ministers for the release of cabinet documents?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for his question. I will deal with the question on notice No. 44, but before I do that I want to start by thanking the Leader of the Opposition because on ABC Radio this morning—and I heard only part of this—he accepted, and he was making reference to me, that I had not abused any guidelines. I thank him for that because that is true; nor have any of my ministers. I thank him for that acceptance. Let us deal with question No. 44.

In the question I specifically set out parts 1 to 3, which state—

The attached table outlines accidents to ministerial vehicles—

it is very clear—

for ministers and party leaders from 2001 to date.

In it I have set out ministerial office, date of the accident, driver at the time of the accident and total cost of the repairs, excluding GST. Every single detail in relation to ministerial vehicles is contained in that document.

In relation to electoral vehicles, in the paragraph before it, it states—

The matter of the provision of electoral vehicles to ministers is one that has been discussed by cabinet. As a result of those discussions, provision of electoral vehicles to ministers ceased at the finish of the previous term of the government. As a result, ministers no longer have electoral vehicles. The only exception to this would be if a minister was one of the five members representing large electorates who are entitled to the provision of a four-wheel drive supplied by Parliamentary Services.

If the Leader of the Opposition or some other members want those removed, I am happy to hear a submission from them in relation to that.

I have answered those questions and I have answered them in detail, but I do need to clarify one matter for the record. I have had the information double-checked and the details in relation to ministerial vehicles that I provided in the answer to the question on notice are correct. I have double-checked with Ministerial Services. However, my department has just advised me that we did miss one accident. Because I believe in full accountability and openness, it is absolutely essential that I advise the House. This should have been included in the details that were previously supplied to me. The details are these: the member for Southern Downs had a Caprice vehicle which was damaged to a certain extent in a collision with a kangaroo on 4 October 2003 while Mr Springborg was the driver.

I want to be very clear that MSB has now provided me with that information in relation to the opposition. I do not know why the Leader of the Opposition hid that. He has only revealed that today because he knew that this information was going to be revealed. Why has he tried to cover this up until today? This is the sort of cover-up which I believe the Leader of the Opposition should come clean on. The Leader of the Opposition should explain the cover-up. Why did he cover this up? We now have 'Roo-gate'.

John Tonge Centre

Mr SPRINGBORG: It just goes to show how useless the Premier's information is. Talk about a Smart State—dumb technology!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition! Have you a question or not?

Mr SPRINGBORG: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Health. The forensic biology section of the John Tonge Centre has an estimated backlog exceeding 10,000 crime scene samples. Given that the Queensland Police Service accepts that 40 per cent of crime scene samples result in scene to scene or person to scene matches, does he agree that upwards

of 4,000 crimes remain unsolved because of the chronic underresourcing of the John Tonge Centre by the Beattie government? I table FOI documents which back up what we are saying.

Mr NUTTALL: The honourable member should have been aware that during the election campaign there were a number of commitments made by this government in relation to DNA testing and, in particular, the John Tonge Centre. We have committed an extra $11 million over the next three years to the John Tonge Centre in order for it to meet the demands that are placed upon it. We have also recruited additional scientific and support staff, and purchased new technology and equipment, and that has already commenced.

In recent years we as a government have identified an increase in the demand in forensic science. We have invested an extra $5.13 million on a base of $4.8 million since May 1999. So we have been very committed to increasing the resources and facilities for the John Tonge Centre so that it can address those issues that have been raised in the public domain. This increase in our funding has allowed us to recruit an additional 30 staff, including scientists, technicians, pathologists and counsellors. So, quite clearly, it can be seen that the government is addressing those issues that are important.

Bone Marrow Transplants

Mr REEVES: My question is directed to the Premier. I understand that the Mater Medical Research Institute is developing an alternative to conventional bone marrow transplants. I ask the Premier: what does this do for Queensland's international reputation in medical research?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for the question because I know he has a keen interest in this issue. Queensland's public hospitals are world leaders, as we all know, in many areas of medical research and we have recognised this in the House on numerous occasions. Today I would like to acknowledge a major achievement by the Mater Medical Research Institute and Mater Health Services in relation to developing an alternative to conventional bone marrow transplants. They have accepted an invitation to become a member of the Mini Transplant Clinical Trials Consortium headed by the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Centre in Seattle and Stanford University in California.

This is a real coup for the Mater and it further enhances Queensland's international reputation in medical science and as the Smart State. The clinical trials are aimed at developing a treatment that is less painful and an easier procedure for the donor as well as offering a speedy and long-lasting result for patients. Led by Professor Kerry Atkinson, the new mini transplant team has begun implementing trials in the stem cell based treatment option with five patients this month and will involve a total of 20 patients by next July.

While the first three months are the most critical in relation to complications, it will take two years without any recurrence of the malignancy before it is safe to say that patients have been cured. The work of the Mater researchers will give further hope to patients with haemological malignancies including leukaemia, lymphoma, myeloma and Hodgkin's disease. The treatment programs take the form of cellular therapy and involve the transplantation of stem cells to fight and destroy the patient's cancerous cells. The stem cells are retrieved from the blood stream, which is why it is a less painful procedure than conventional bone marrow transplants. World wide, there are 20,000 to 30,000 donor bone marrow transplants a year, and in Queensland alone the number averages more than 100 donor transplants a year.

The American partnership follows the acceptance in June of the Mater mini transplant program as an associate centre by the European bone marrow transplant organisation. International recognition of the work by the Mater Medical Research Institute and Mater Health Services demonstrates once again that the highly skilled people working on medical research in the Smart State are amongst the best in the world.

I thank the honourable member for asking that question because, as I have indicated in this House on many occasions, medical research is not just about saving lives and prolonging lives, which is important enough in itself; it is also about creating jobs and opportunities. I have said on many occasions in the past that this century will be the century of biotechnology. Queensland has become—and I am proud of this, as I am sure all members are—a centre of excellence when it comes to medical research. It is not just the Mater. There are many others such as the Wesley, QIMR, the science precinct at the University of Queensland, and the list goes on. This is our future.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Cunningham, could I welcome to the public gallery students and teachers of Villanova College in the electorate of South Brisbane. Welcome.

John Tonge Centre

Mr COPELAND: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, given that a progress report on the clearing of the John Tonge Centre's massive backlog recognises the high probability of offenders going undetected, how many rapists, murderers or paedophiles do you think may be walking free because of the Queensland Health Scientific Services incapacity to meet its workload?

Mr NUTTALL: I have just answered in detail a question from the Leader of the Opposition in terms of what this government is doing to address the issues at the John Tonge Centre in terms of forensic science. We have committed an extra $11 million over three years, which is a substantial amount of money, to put in more equipment, more resources, more staff, more scientists and more technology to address the issue. The reality of life is that in any modern investigation of crime, DNA is taken on a regular basis; we accept that and we know that. As a result, this government is strongly committed to ensuring that we have the resources and the facilities to address those issues that are required.

Smart State Research Facilities Fund

Mr FRASER: My question is to the Premier. The private Wesley Research Institute in Brisbane recently completed and opened a new research centre. Can the Premier tell the House how this fits in with the government's Smart State agenda and what the government has done to assist research at the Wesley centre?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for his question, which I understand is his first. I am delighted to see he is part of the Smart State agenda, because this facility is in his electorate.

Mr Cummins: And a red tie.

Mr BEATTIE: Is his tie the same as mine? Not only that, he has got impeccable judgment in ties. Absolutely impeccable judgment! There is a young man with a big future. I was delighted last week to officially open the Wesley Research Institute's new Research Education Training and Administrative Centre. The Wesley Research Institute is well positioned to make a real difference to the lives of Queenslanders and people all over the world. The research has been driven by people at the coalface of health—doctors and nurses who are passionate about seeing an immediate improvement in patient care. In the major areas of research, the Wesley Institute includes work on various forms of cancer, early detection of tumours through functional imaging, magnetic resonance imaging of damaged heart tissue, human infertility, diseases of the nervous system and healing of bone fractures.

While at the Wesley centre I was pleased to hear about the progress being made on Professor Julie Campbell's Grow Your Own Arteries research project. This work is being undertaken by a team at the University of Queensland and involves developing artificial blood vessels which have the potential to replace damaged arteries for patients needing heart bypass surgery or kidney dialysis. Final animal trials are taking place on dogs and it is hoped the first human trials of this world breakthrough procedure will begin at the new centre before the end of this year.

Our government has been vigorously supporting the world-class research and development being done in Queensland, as members know. In 2001 the government set up the Smart State Research Facilities Fund, which on a population basis is Australia's leading research and development infrastructure fund. My government has supported the clinical research centre at the new Wesley centre with $800,000 from the Smart State Research Facilities Fund. To date, two funding rounds from the facilities fund have been completed with $96 million committed by the Queensland Government to 12 projects around the state. Later this year I hope to be able to announce the successful applicants for the third round of the Smart State Research Facilities Fund.

The International Biotechnology Conference this year will be held in San Francisco. Queenslanders will be well represented at that conference. We have been attending this conference for years. We have been major players and we have seen the growth of the

conference over the last five to six years. Queenslanders will be well represented there because that is where a lot of the deals are done, where a lot of the scientists get together and the venture capital deals are done. I mention that because I would hope that all members of this House would be supportive of our development of biotechnology. It is on our agenda and it is going to stay there.

John Tonge Centre

Mr JOHNSON: My question is directed to the Hon. Minister for Police and Corrective Services. Given that a progress report last year estimated more than 80 armed hold-up cases were among the John Tonge Centre's massive backlog of forensic samples, how many of those would the minister estimate could result in convictions?

Ms SPENCE: I understand that the Leader of the Opposition has obtained a copy of an internal police report under FOI, the report that he referred to in his previous question to the Minister for Health. That report was written in January. The Acting Assistant Commissioner of Operations Support Command advised the Opposition Leader's office that much of the information provided in the Queensland Police Service report is either out of date or based on personal unsubstantiated observations.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! We will hear the answer to the question.

Ms SPENCE: One reason the internal police report is out of date is that I have been advised by the Queensland Police Service that issues relating to the backlog have been addressed in light of the additional funding being provided by the government to clear the backlog of crime scene samples.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms SPENCE: As part of the government's election commitment we have allocated an additional $5 million this year and $3 million for each of the following two years to help the John Tonge Centre clear the profiling backlog and cater for future profiling. In line with the CMC report, which came down in October 2002, this funding will allow police to purchase DNA analysis on a fee-for-service basis from commercial providers. This funding will also allow the John Tonge Centre to stay up to date with crime scene samples as they are delivered.

Further, I have been advised that because of the improved training given to scenes of crime investigators, which has improved the quality of samples, the number of police samples going to John Tonge has decreased. Since January last year, police collected approximately 1,000 crime scene samples per month for potential DNA analysis at the John Tonge Centre. This represents a 25 per cent reduction in the collection of potential DNA samples over the quarter.

The government is well aware of the backlog at the John Tonge Centre and that is why we went to the election with a commitment to spend large amounts of money to clear that backlog for the future.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms SPENCE: The Queensland Police Service also has police permanently stationed at the John Tonge Centre to work with the health professionals there to get through this backlog.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT: I direct my question without notice to the Hon. Minister for Health. Minister, I refer to the government's $110 million commitment this term to reduce hospital waiting lists throughout Queensland and I ask: can the minister outline the progress of the first stage, the $20 million for surgery for those patients who have been waiting longer than expected?

Mr NUTTALL: A sensible question. Can I just say it is a great privilege to be the Minister for Health and it is an even greater privilege when you can stand in this chamber and talk about the good things that we are doing in terms of health and looking after people who require elective surgery.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr NUTTALL: You need to listen to this because it is important: in six weeks we have had more than a thousand patients throughout this state who have been waiting longer than normal and who have had their surgery as part of a $20 million commitment to reduce waiting lists before

the end of June this year. Since last month we have an incredible response from both the public and the private hospitals around the state to operate on an additional 4,100 patients over and above the normal workloads.

Last week Logan Hospital applied to carry out an addition 62 hip and joint replacement operations. This is in addition to the 130 operations that Logan Hospital agreed last month to do as part of this commitment. Around the state 930 patients will receive urgent hip and joint replacement operations. Some 1,225 patients will have long-awaited eye operations—1,000 of which will be in partnership with the private sector. Almost 370 people, including 23 children, will receive heart operations that will dramatically change the quality of their lives. There are another 220 patients who will have urgent ear, nose and throat surgery. Surgeons will carry out more than 500 general operations. This is a major program. It is over and above the normal work schedules for our hospital staff. It will mean overtime for many staff and, in some cases, additional temporary staff. I thank them for their extra efforts.

These surgeries that I have spoken about this morning include an urgent cochlear implant for a 13-year-old Aboriginal girl in Gladstone who, for the very first time, will have normal hearing and will be able to stay at a regular school with her friends. It is also includes patients like Mrs Pickersgill in Townsville who was told on Friday that her cataract operation had been bought forward from early 2005 to this week. She is in her early 70s and has told my staff that she is very excited about meeting her specialist this afternoon.

Queensland has among the shortest waiting times in the country, but we continue to look at ways to work even smarter and to work closer in partnership with the private sector to improve services. We are willing, if our patients are, to transport them to nearby facilities so that their surgery can be done faster.

John Tonge Centre

Mr SEENEY: My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. A progress report into the clearing of the John Tonge Centre's massive backlog of crime scene samples stated that Queensland Health Scientific Services 'appear to be only concerned with those matters pending trial and may cause adverse media coverage'. Minister, is this true?

Mr NUTTALL: It is a bit like a broken record. They come in with a series of questions. We answer the first question and give them the details and information. They are like a broken record—they are stuck and cannot get off it. The Hon. Minister for Police and Corrective Services already indicated to those opposite that the information they had was incorrect and out of date. I made it very clear—but I will repeat it for honourable members—

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gregory has the opportunity to ask questions at the correct time. He shall now cease interjecting.

Mr NUTTALL: We have employed an additional 30-odd staff, including scientists, forensic staff and the like, to assist with this program. The government identified this issue a long time ago. We made an election commitment of $11 million. Members heard the Hon. Minister for Police and Corrective Services say that it was made up of $5 million, $3 million and $3 million. That adds up to $11 million. That is to address those issues and to fix the problems. That is exactly what we are doing.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! This is my final warning to the member for Gregory.

Tugun Bypass

Mrs REILLY: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. The Tugun bypass is a constant source of frustration for Gold Coast motorists and, indeed, many thousands of others. Traffic over the Easter weekend gave yet another reminder of just how horrific the congestion in the area can be. Could the minister please advise the House what is happening to get this road built?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for her question. She is one of the members on the Gold Coast who is very proactive about the issue of Tugun. The last place members would want to get information about Tugun is from the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition, in a very clever and interesting media release yesterday, indicated that there was a

$100 million black hole in the Tugun bypass option. Often the opposition talks about the accountability or otherwise of this government. The Leader of the Opposition indicated that he believed the reason Tugun was not being built was a $100 million black hole.

During the election campaign—the member for Currumbin would remember this well because she was on television that night complaining about the eastern route— the Premier went to Adina Avenue, Tugun and announced a doubling of the Queensland contribution to $240 million, making $360 million. I will give members opposite a lesson in mathematics: $120 million from the Commonwealth and $240 million from Queensland makes $360 million. That is how much it will cost.

I remind the Leader of the Opposition that this has been his second intervention into Tugun. Others on both sides of the House are prepared to be positive about it. The first intervention involved the Leader of the Opposition going to Canberra to speak to John Anderson. I have the video in my office—if anyone wants to see it—of John Anderson saying, 'Hurry up, Lawrence,' because there was a photograph opportunity and the Channel 10 cameras were rolling over the top of it. This is the second intervention. 'Thanks very much for your help. Don't call us; we'll call you next, thanks, Lawrence.'

I will table the heads of agreement document. I table the Leader of the Opposition's media release and the Premier's Team Beattie media release. When we signed the agreement with the New South Wales government it was made very clear that they would not contribute towards the financial costs—notwithstanding the fact that the road is in part in New South Wales. We are going to build it. I have that money in my pocket and it is on the table.

I note today that there is a demonstration led by federal member Larry Anthony and Margaret May outside Neville Newell's office. The people of the Tweed very much want to see the western route. Even more, they want to see the bypass built. When they finish their protest there, they might have a protest outside their own offices, and then have a talk about the Commonwealth's total failure to show any leadership on this issue. There are Australians one side of the border and Australians the other side of the border. It is about time the Commonwealth showed some leadership on this issue as well. This is a major environmental issue. I say to Leader of the Opposition: 'In this place, it is much better to have people suspect you are a fool than be convinced of it.'

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Nanango, I welcome to the public gallery a second group of students and teachers from Villanova College in the electorate of South Brisbane.

Police Resources

Mrs PRATT: Many police stations are recognised by this government as requiring a prescribed number of police officers but are in fact understaffed due to many officers being on sick leave, long service leave, maternity leave, light duties or probationary officers. These still remain on the books as full staff members. This results in greater pressures on the remaining staff. No-one begrudges these absent officers the time they need, but what does this deceptive practice as recognising them as full-duty officers do to the real staffing numbers? What action will the minister take to ensure that all stations are at their appropriate, recommended staffing levels?

Ms SPENCE: I thank the member for the question. It is true that people who are on maternity leave, holiday leave or sick leave are still recognised as full staff members in the police, as they are in any other part of the Public Service. That is normal practice. The allocation of staffing is not done at ministerial level; it is done by the assistant commissioners of the regions. They take into account that some officers are going to be on holidays or leave for various periods. The assistant commissioners make decisions about moving staff around to police stations to fill in—like every Public Service office does—when the need arises. Staffing is done on a needs basis and at a regional level. I am very proud of the fact that I represent a government that has increased police numbers by 300 each year for the last few years. We have a target of having 9,100 police by the year 2005. We went to the election with a commitment to keep the police to population ratio above the national average.

We are doing everything we can to recruit and train more police in this state. Last month it was my great privilege to attend a ceremony to welcome new recruits. We inducted 58 new police into the service. Eight of those 58 were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander police officers, and I congratulate them on getting through the course. Almost half of the 58 police officers were women. The profile of our Police Service has changed over the years. These days over 20 per

cent of the Police Service is made up of women, and well over 30 per cent of our new recruits are women.

A government member interjected.

Ms SPENCE: Yes, we might get some work done. We are actively out there recruiting people who are indigenous. We put them through a six-month justice entry level at the academy before they do their six-month Police Service course. I am very proud of the fact that we have a quality Police Service in this state. I am very confident that the assistant commissioners of the regions make appropriate decisions about allocating resources.

Children in Care

Mr O'BRIEN: I ask the Minister for Child Safety: what has the minister's department done recently to improve the number of places available for vulnerable children and young people needing special attention while in the state's care?

Mr REYNOLDS: I thank the member for Cook for the question because he is very committed to work with me in decreasing in particular the overrepresentation of child abuse in indigenous areas. I know that the member for Cook has a very good interest in that regard. I was delighted to announce jointly with the Premier at the community cabinet in Townsville an extra $13.2 million to boost care for troubled children and young people who are not suited to traditional foster care or to be with foster families. This is the first round of funding to begin building a robust Queensland system of alternative care—care that is not in a traditional foster family setting.

Over the next four years we will provide alternative care to 680 young people whose needs are so extreme or indeed unusual that they do not fit into conventional foster families. Regrettably, Queensland has historically had low levels of alternative care when compared to other parts of Australia. That is changing because this government is addressing that issue. About eight per cent of foster care in Queensland is outside the conventional foster family setting, and the foster care audit indicated that we should be lifting this to about 17 per cent. The $13.2 million funding is part of a total package worth $58.5 million over three years to increase the number of alternative care places for Queensland's young people in need. This represents a major early step in line with Peter Forster's blueprint for implementing the recommendations of both the CMC and the Murray audit.

The $13.2 million is on offer to organisations keen to participate in the collaborative delivery of specific alternative care services for Queensland. This funding allocation shows that we are on the way to providing our vulnerable children with the best child protection system in Australia. The funding meets key recommendations of the Forster blueprint as it will create partnerships between government and non-government organisations to deliver better services. It also puts in place strategies to identify options to meet the placement needs of children and of adolescents. This will include the collaborative implementation of a child's needs assessment framework. Demonstrating an ability to achieve these aims will be a priority of the application assessment process. These different options that we are putting forward now are really about targeting the need in different local areas and local communities around Queensland. It is about bringing in progressive, alternative care options. I believe that the public and indeed the non-government organisations which I have discussed it with over the last few weeks will very much welcome these initiatives. There will be sessions provided from this coming Thursday when further information will be provided to potential applicants for funding. We know that these initiatives will be seen to be very progressive in the community.

Tugun Bypass

Mr QUINN: I refer the Premier to Jim Elder's statement made in the lead-up to the 1998 state election in which he said that the special relationship which would exist between a state Labor government in Queensland and the Carr Labor government in New South Wales would ensure that the Tugun bypass would be built. I ask: now that the federal ALP has supported John Howard's stance in refusing the Premier's attempt to buck-pass the responsibility for the Tugun bypass onto the Commonwealth, when will the Premier use this special relationship with the Carr government that has now existed for the past six years and deliver on the commitment he made to the residents of the Gold Coast to finalise a route and commence the construction of the Tugun bypass?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for his question. I want to specifically target the solution. We have had a lot of political nonsense about this. The reality is very clear. There is only one government in Australia—and I am talking about Queensland, New South Wales and Canberra—that has put money on the table and that has got plans. We have $240 million on the table and we have options C4 or B4. Bob, we do not care whether it is C4 or B4. We are happy to build either; we just want to build a Tugun bypass.

The difficulty we have is that the New South Wales government will not put money on the table. We have talked to it. I have spoken to Bob Carr. The Transport Minister, Paul Lucas, has spoken to Mr Scully. His predecessor, Steve Bredhauer, spoke to Mr Scully as well. It will not move. It will not move because it is worried about politics in New South Wales. It is worried about its seat in the Tweed. That is the political reality. It is worried about the environmentalist vote. That is stage 1. So we get no movement from the New South Wales government. Therefore, where do we go? We went to the federal government. What is it worried about? It is worried about Larry Anthony's seat. So it is not going to move anywhere. It is worried about losing his seat in northern New South Wales.

Mr Quinn: Larry Anthony wants it built. He put $120 million on the table.

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, the federal government has put $120 million on the table. But it will not advance C4 or B4. Bob, let me ask you this very simple question.

Mr Quinn interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: No, it is a very simple one. With regard to the airport at the Gold Coast, what does it do? It actually goes from Queensland into New South Wales. It crosses the border. The member opposite knows the Gold Coast. It does, doesn't it? If we can build an airport across the New South Wales-Queensland border, why can't we build a road? It is very simple. The only reason that it will not is that there is no political commitment from the federal government to do it. We have provided legal advice from our Solicitor-General.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Those opposite do not want to hear the other side of this, do they? They do not want the truth on this. Our Solicitor-General—

Mr Johnson: Six years!

Mr BEATTIE: Bob, do you want me to answer this? Vaughan, it is not your question, mate; it is his. So give him a bit of respect and a bit of courtesy. Let us have a bit of respect for parliament. It is his question. I will answer his question. If you want to ask me another one, brother, I will answer yours.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I am always happy to take questions from you, Vaughan. The reality here is that the Solicitor-General gave us legal advice that said that they could use section 51. That legal advice is here. That legal advice is very clear. I am happy to show this to the member opposite and go through it. What you need to do, Bob, is stop trying to play politics here. He needs to get on to the Prime Minister and get him to take some action under section 51. But, you see, they will not do that. And what do we have? We have Margaret May running around today because she is worried about her seat. We have Larry Acton—Larry Acton! I will be talking to him later. Maybe Larry Acton could help us solve this problem. Get Larry in here. I am talking to Larry later today. Maybe he could help. Of course, I meant Larry Anthony. Bob, there is only one government in Australia that can fix this: John Howard's, and he needs to do something to help us. Do not sit there and play Pontius Pilate. Come and help us. We had this nonsense from Lawrence yesterday where he could not add up $120 million and $240 million. We get a lot of excitement here, Bob. Use the same energy to get on to John Howard. I will give you his phone number.

Prickly Acacia

Mr PEARCE: My question is to the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy. Can the minister advise the House whether the government is planning the release of any new biocontrol agent to combat prickly acacia?

Mr ROBERTSON: I thank the member for Fitzroy for the question. Indeed, prickly acacia is one of Queensland's worst weeds, and costs the state an estimated $5 million each year in lost production and control costs. It poses a risk to some 50 million hectares of native grassland ecosystems and is responsible for major infestations across the seven million hectares of valuable

Mitchell grasslands covering an area bordered by Longreach, Cloncurry, Hughenden and Aramac. Unless we can effectively control prickly acacia, it will continue to spread and impact upon biodiversity, agriculture, tourism and land use across large areas of northern and western Queensland.

I am delighted to inform honourable members that a very hungry African caterpillar may hold the key to controlling prickly acacia. Government scientists at the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr ROBERTSON: I would have thought that the National Party members would have been interested in this. Government scientists at the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy's Tropical Weeds Research Centre at Charters Towers are currently preparing to release the caterpillar later in the year. The beauty of this caterpillar is that it is a very large, voracious leaf feeder that is capable of causing complete defoliation of prickly acacia. Over the past few years it has been subjected to extensive testing on a range of 77 plant species. Testing found that this caterpillar does not pose a risk to any Australian native flora or plant of economic importance.

Following independent recommendations by 21 state agencies throughout Australia, the caterpillar's release has been approved by the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service and the federal Department of Environment and Heritage. The Tropical Weeds Research Centre will breed tens of thousands of the caterpillars and plans its mass release in late spring, early summer.

This is another example of the Beattie government's Smart State approach to controlling weeds of national significance, such as prickly acacia. Using biocontrol agents like this caterpillar is a lot more environmentally friendly and cost-effective than using traditional weed control methods such as chemical spraying. Both chemical and mechanical control measures are labour intensive and expensive.

Queensland leads the national effort to combat weeds. The government is proud of its lead role in developing biocontrol mechanisms to eradicate weeds and to protect our environment and rural productivity.

Sunbus

Mr McARDLE: My question is to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. Given the much publicised problems with the government-funded transport provider, Sunbus, especially in Cairns and on the Sunshine Coast, why has the minister's department taken so long to review procedures concerning maintenance schedules, full and late running buses, and the issue of stranded passengers?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for his question. It is very important to understand the nature of bus transport. Cairns has the third highest bus usage of any city in Queensland. As a state government, when it comes to our bus operating companies, we expect the highest standards. I have made it clear to my department that I expect it to enforce the law vigorously and I will accept no excuses for companies that fail to respond to the law.

In the first instance, I will refer to Sunbus in relation to Caloundra and other areas of the Sunshine Coast. I acknowledge the presence of the Morcombe family in the gallery today. I had the opportunity to say hello briefly to Mr Morcombe earlier and I will speak to him in more detail later. A number of issues have been raised about Sunbus on the Sunshine Coast—complaints of late running or missing people. I have made it very clear in the Sunshine Coast newspapers and other media in that area that if there are any complaints, I am very, very keen to hear them. Of course, licensees are required to keep logs of those complaints, but also as a government we monitor those complaints and we monitor compliance.

As far back as January my department was meeting with Sunbus in relation to the procedures that they had for late running and broken down buses. Of course, members must remember that, if a bus has broken down, if another bus bypasses bus stops to meet the schedule—which is what they do currently—then people are being missed. On the other hand, if that bus stops at all the stops, then there is a delay in picking up people who are at later bus stops. It is not an issue that is easy to deal with.

It is very important that, when it comes to Sunbus—or any of our bus services—we ensure that the safety and security of passengers is ultimate. I have made it clear to my department that I expect us to review all procedures in terms of late-running buses. There is a requirement on all licensees in Queensland to have a policy on bus breakdowns. My department monitors the

compliance of that policy. That is what we have done. In relation to Sunbus, recently it has indicated that it has adopted a new policy on bus breakdowns. My department has sought written and other undertakings from Sunbus to ensure that that policy is complied with.

I have been speaking with the Minister for Child Safety, because I think it is very important that we ensure that all of our policies also take into account that children or people might be left at night. I cannot stop buses breaking down. It is a fact of life that, from time to time, buses—like cars or any other conveyance—experience breakdowns. I want to ensure that the system that we have in place is a system that gives the public maximum confidence. I will accept nothing less from my department and my department will accept nothing less from bus operators.

Sugar Industry

Ms JARRATT: My question is directed to the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries. I refer to the ongoing plight of the sugar industry. While I am aware that the minister has introduced a series of proposed reforms into the parliament, could he outline any further measures to be undertaken by his department to support the industry?

Mr PALASZCZUK: Certainly, I will do that. But before I do, I would like to recognise the honourable member's contribution to the sugar industry and also congratulate her on her strong representation to me, as minister, in relation to the problems that are engulfing cane farmers not only in her own electorate but also throughout Queensland.

Today, I can announce that we are going to spend an additional $3 million to assist our Queensland canegrowers. The Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries is contributing this money on top of the $30 million package that we have announced already to implement a new program, which we are calling Future Cane. Future Cane will have total funding of $6.6 million over three years and it is going to commence on 1 July this year. Its emphasis will be to assist canegrowers, primarily at a local level, to improve their businesses. Future Cane will mean a much greater role for the department in the sugar industry. I want to emphasise that—a much greater role for the department in the sugar industry in partnership with the BSES, which, of course, is under industry control.

Teams of DPI&F and BSES officers will work in sugar-producing regions to help growers make business choices and improve the sustainability of their cane farms. This will include expert agronomic support from the department's extension officers on the use of complementary and rotational crops to increase cane yields and improve environmental performance. The department will also be involved in promoting opportunities for value-chain improvements in the sugar industry, particularly in the area of grower/harvester cooperation. The department will also focus on what can be done at the family farm level to respond to the price downturn and improve farm management and planning skills. In addition, through Future Cane, the department will focus on industry wide efforts to improve efficiency and adopt industry restructuring options.

As Future Cane suggests, the Queensland government believes that there is a future for the industry. Of course, there is a lot of concern about the industry's future. A lot of people do not know whether there is going to be a future in growing cane. I read the report from the *Courier-Mail* on the federal government's proposed package. I am waiting to see the finer details, but from what I have seen, it appears to me that the heavy emphasis is on the federal government assisting growers to exit the industry. That is not what we are about here in Queensland. We know that some growers will exit the industry, but I cannot see what the federal government is on about there.

The other point, too, is that I have worked with the sugar industry for a number of years. I have been around cane-growing areas for a long time. I know that there is a passion among our canegrowers for their industry, even though it is in a parlous state. I would like to harness that optimism and enthusiasm held by many of those industry persons for the sake of their survival. To do so, I am going to appoint seven industry champions as part of the Future Cane program.

Department of Education Director-General, Mr F. Peach

Mr HOPPER: I direct a question to the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing. I refer to a statement made by the minister in this House on 30 April 1997 where he said that the then director-general of education, Mr Frank Peach—

... could not lead a choko vine over a fence.

Does the minister have full confidence in Mr Peach as his Director-General of Housing? Was Mr Peach the minister's personal choice to fill that role or was he forced upon him?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I thank the honourable member for the question. The answer to the last bit of it is yes, absolutely. The Premier will confirm that I asked for Frank Peach. Let us go back to 1997, when those opposite were in government and the member for Robina was the minister, and look at what I also said. I said—

Let us look at what we have: a Minister who could not teach a pig to be dirty and a director-general who could not lead a choko vine over a fence.

It was in the context of a Tory government that was hopeless. What was it about? It was about the privatisation of school cleaners. I have absolute confidence in Mr Frank Peach in this context because he has a very, very good minister, unlike the one he had in those times. I am absolutely confident that if there were choko vines to be led over a fence he would now be capable of doing it!

I notice that last year in the *Sunday Mail* the honourable member talked about how he was going to start fighting back, said that I was bullying him and all the rest of it. I notice that this morning he called me a germ. That is very polite compared with what people have called me in the past, so he should feel free. I will not be shrinking away and running down and tattletaling to the *Sunday Mail* about it. Whatever he likes to call me does not bother me because it has all been said before by people much smarter than him.

Inbound Tour Operators

Mrs CROFT: My question is addressed to the Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development. As a former tour guide I have a deep interest in the tourism industry, particularly the activities of inbound tour operators. Queensland has groundbreaking legislation in the Tourism Services Act, which regulates the conduct of operators and guides. Can the minister please advise of new steps being taken to rein in rogue operators?

Ms KEECH: I thank the honourable member for her question and recognise her strong interest in the tourism industry, particularly on the Gold Coast. Tourism is Queensland's second largest export earner. The industry provides jobs for more than 150,000 Queenslanders.

Queensland hosts almost two million international tourists each year, and we plan to increase that this year, with the Premier recently announcing 2004 as Queensland's Year of the International Tourist. To do that we need to ensure that tourists have a memorable experience so that when they return home they can tell their families and friends what a great time they had in Queensland. Unfortunately, rogue inbound tour operators are tarnishing the reputation of our tourism industry. They harass and intimidate tour groups, prevent tourists from shopping in certain shops which do not pay them kickbacks and generally treat tourists poorly.

I met with Surfers Paradise traders within days of being sworn in as the minister to see for myself the extent of the problem. I note the presence in the press gallery of Sue Lappeman from the *Gold Coast Bulletin*. I thank the 'Bully' for its reputation and strong interest in the issue.

The Beattie government introduced the Tourism Services Act last year to address the problem. I am pleased to report that momentum to take on the rogues has spread to the national level with the formation of a national tourism quality task force on which Queensland will be represented. It has been established to ensure the sustainability of the future quality of Australia's tourism product and to address problems in the important and fast-growing north Asia region. We know that there is enormous potential in the north Asia market, and we have to do all we can to nurture and tap this potential. Having a national, cooperative approach to back up our own nation-leading Tourism Services Act is a huge step forward, but we need the support of the federal authorities to ensure we mount a multipronged offensive against the rogue operators.

It was obvious to me after speaking to Surfers Paradise traders that we need the federal government on board so that we can address immigration and taxation issues as well as those to be countered by Queensland legislation. The national task force will include federal tourism, immigration, employment and workplace relations agencies, the tax office, the Federal Police, Customs, the ACCC and tourism and fair trading agencies and police from both Queensland and New South Wales. It has been established to determine the extent of illegal activities and then prosecute the rogues. Evidence has already been gathered on the Gold Coast by federal authorities and from my Office of Fair Trading.

Ensuring international tourists have a magnificent and enjoyable time in Queensland is a key priority of the Beattie government. That is why we are working hard to track down the rogue operators who give the industry a bad name.

Water Conservation

Mr WELLINGTON: My question is addressed to the Premier. Notwithstanding the recent rainfall throughout parts of Queensland, I believe water conservation should continue to be an issue of real importance to us all. I ask: will the government provide incentives to Queenslanders, irrespective of where they live, be it the Sunshine Coast, the Gold Coast or Cairns, to install rainwater tanks and conserve water?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for his question. I am happy to consult with my ministers who are responsible for water management and provide the member with a detailed response of all the government programs we are involved in.

We have run a campaign over the last few years to encourage people to use water wisely. The fact is that from time to time we do have severe drought conditions. The Department of Primary Industries has a program of encouraging and supporting farmers during the drought. Also, through other departments we have a strategy of encouraging people to use water wisely. The fact is that we live in an arid nation. Too often we forget that. One of the big challenges of this century will be to use water wisely and have conservation strategies in place. Of course, that includes people in cities and towns, not just in rural communities.

Rather than give the member a general answer, I will give him a consolidated answer in writing in the next two weeks setting out specifically what each department is doing to conserve water and where our strategy is going. I would then be happy to either meet with the member personally or get one of my ministers, such as the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy or the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries, to sit down and talk those programs through.

The member has a reputation in this place and elsewhere as someone who is positive and constructive. If he has positive and constructive ways in which we can improve our programs, then we are prepared to listen to the ideas that he puts forward.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Mackay, I welcome to the public gallery students and teachers of Landsborough State School in the electorate of Glass House.

Waste Water, Mackay Electorate

Mr MULHERIN: My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment. On his recent visit to Mackay the minister reinforced the Queensland government's commitment to protecting the Great Barrier Reef and encouraging greater reuse of waste water. What support has this project received from other levels of government?

Mr MICKEL: I thank the member for Mackay for the question and also for his invitation to visit his electorate recently, where we discussed plans with the Mackay City Council for the Mackay water reuse project. This is an exciting project. It is a $76 million commitment from the Mackay City Council and the Queensland government. It follows on from a promise by the Premier during the election to contribute $28.7 million to the scheme, which will involve the decommissioning of the Mount Bassett Sewage Treatment Plant and the diversion of sewage to an upgraded facility at Bakers Creek. It is planned that a nearby abattoir will pump into this scheme—it will eliminate discharge into a creek—and that a sugar refinery will also hook up with the plant. The treated waste water will then be distributed to cane farms. The member for Mackay invited us to visit some cane farms in the area. Those farmers were excited about the project.

This is a triple win: a win for the ratepayers of Mackay, a win for the cane farmers of Mackay and a win for the Great Barrier Reef. But the third arm of government—the federal government—is missing. It was very disappointing to hear that the federal member representing Mackay, De-Anne Kelly, has not been involved in this process at all. In fact, she has neglected opportunities to take this matter up with the federal government, according to the Mackay City Council. Today I enjoin the member for Dawson to take this issue up on behalf of the Mackay ratepayers and on behalf of the Mackay cane farmers, because they will benefit from this scheme. It is essential that, in a week when the federal Minister for the Environment was proclaiming protection for the Great Barrier Reef, the federal member for the National Party in that area shows support for this scheme and the reef. I would urge her to change her mind.

We have already seen the damage she caused by holding up sugar reform. Let us not see her repeat this performance by damaging the environment by not taking up this issue in Canberra on behalf of the ratepayers of Mackay and on behalf of the sugarcane farmers in that district.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The time for questions has expired.

PRIVILEGE

Ministerial Motor Vehicles

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (11.29 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege. Earlier today when I was correcting a minor error in the response to question on notice No. 44, I indicated to the House that the Leader of the Opposition had been involved in an accident with a kangaroo on 4 October 2003. At that time I did not indicate the costs to the House. By way of completeness, for the information of honourable members I am advised by my department that the amount of money involved was $1,304.56. I do not know what happened to the kangaroo and I have no information in relation to that.

Because the Leader of the Opposition was aware I was going to correct the record I understand that he made some reference to a second accident. I have been advised by Ministerial Services Branch that it does not have any details of that second accident. MSB advised me that Mr Springborg may have been talking about a vehicle that required $1,300 in end of lease repairs but there was no claim. I invite the Leader of the Opposition to inform the House later today of the details so that we have a complete record for question on notice No. 44.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Ministerial Motor Vehicles; John Tonge Centre

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition (11.31 a.m.): At the outset can I also extend the support of the Queensland opposition to the Morcombe family, who are in the gallery today, on Red Ribbon Day. We hope and sincerely pray that Daniel will be able to return home safely to your family very soon. Please rest assured that all members of this parliament support you and the Sunshine Coast community in what you are seeking to do. As the Premier said this morning, as a parent you can only imagine the pain and the concern which the Morcombe family is going through at this time.

I would like to raise a couple of matters in the parliament. The Premier earlier mentioned a collision between a kangaroo and my motor vehicle. I raised this matter on ABC Radio this morning.

Mr Johnson: You wouldn't want to follow me around!

Mr SPRINGBORG: No, I would not want to follow the member for Gregory around. I suppose if you do not drive outside of Brisbane you do not encounter a kangaroo, but we do that all the time.

It just goes to show how inconclusive, how out of date and how absolutely pathetic the records that this state government provides to this parliament are. Not only are the records inconclusive; we have a whole range of other records that have been taken to cabinet to hide them from public scrutiny for 30 years and beyond. Until the year 2033 they are hidden from public scrutiny.

I told this to ABC Radio this morning as an example of the lack of release of information. If anyone wants it, we have all that information in our office. I asked the office to compile all that information some months ago. It is the same with our fuel card receipts for both Bob Quinn and me. They were tabled last year and given to the media last year, in contrast to this state government, which took its ministerial records, including ministerial car fuel records, into cabinet to hide them from public scrutiny until December 2033.

That is the difference in accountability between us on this side of parliament and Mr Beattie and his government on that side of parliament. What he has to do is stand up and explain what public interest is served by hiding that information. Why did he not come clean at the outset when there was such an ethical question surrounding the use of Merri Rose's ministerial electorate vehicle by her children? Why did he not stand up and say there were similar issues in other areas? Why was he not prepared to come clean? Instead he hid them in cabinet. It was not until the opposition put in an FOI application that we started to get close because Mr Beattie told the media, 'Not a problem, there have been no accidents.' He refused to come clean until one of the

newspapers invited anyone who might be aware of any accidents to come forward and say so. It was only under fear of being flushed out and exposed that Mr Beattie came out and said that he had to correct the record.

Nobody has said that there is any criminal law broken. Nobody has said that there is any breach of guidelines. The issue here is the potential unethical use of a motor vehicle. It is an issue of ethics. That is why the rules were changed following the Merri Rose incident. The ethical concerns that the electorate at large had were what forced it. But Mr Beattie was not prepared to come clean. Instead, he coroneted himself as Mr Accountable, Mr Clean, Mr Open, Mr Honest. There is nothing other than his own words—and his own words targeted at himself—that would indicate that at all. It is about time we had some accountability from this government, not just this government hiding things, as it is increasingly doing, and causing increasing concern in the electorate at large.

This morning we heard in this place from the new Minister for Transport about some comments I made regarding the cost of the Tugun bypass. Once again, we heard more spin than substance from the minister, as we heard also from the Premier. I would say to the Premier and to the Minister for Transport: where do Mr Latham and Mr Ferguson stand on the issue of using Commonwealth powers, which is a particular legal point? Martin Ferguson came out the other day and said, 'We won't be getting involved in this. This is a matter for the states. Why doesn't Mr Beattie sit down with Mr Carr and seek to resolve this issue?' That is what Mr Ferguson said, no doubt on behalf of Mark Latham.

We heard different views again from the Minister for Transport and the Premier this morning. The Minister for Transport said, 'We have Margaret May and Larry Anthony leading a protest on Neville Newell's office in favour of the Tugun bypass.' Then we heard the Premier say, 'The reason the New South Wales government does not want this is the same as the Commonwealth government. They are trying to save Larry Anthony.' Larry Anthony wants it. He is protesting out the front of Neville Newell's office—whoever he is—saying, 'We want this road; we need this road.'

I table for the information of honourable members a briefing note prepared on 7 August 2003 signed by the deputy director-general of the Department of Main Roads in Queensland and the executive director of the Roads Program. It talks about the Tugun bypass and says under 'Comment'—

The main RTA concern—

the RTA being the Roads and Traffic Authority in New South Wales that deals with this road—

is stated to be about the unresolved funding ie, the gap between project estimate of $300-340m and the combined Queensland and Commonwealth funding commitment of $240m. RTA is reluctant to 'allow' the project to proceed further, and be seen to be part of that, until the funding is resolved.

That is nothing to do with the commitment that the Premier made on the eve of the election. That was to do with the eastern route, not the C4 route. This briefing note refers to the C4 route, and that was the reason it was holding it up. It was not until the end of last year that the environmental issue even surfaced, and it is really bizarre how they could decide these environmental issues when a proper EIS has not been done on the Cobaki Lakes C4 option. That briefing note and the lack of funding made available was in relation to the C4 Tugun bypass option. So no more half-truths from Mr Beattie's apprentice spin jockey, the Minister for Transport.

An opposition member: Less than half the truth.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I suppose he is starting off half as well because he is only telling a quarter of the truth. We seem to be getting half-truths from the Minister for Transport and the Premier.

There are other issues where this government is failing the people of Queensland, and I refer to the John Tonge Centre. I raised in this parliament on 12 December 2001 the appalling situation of the lack of appropriate forensic services there because of the underresourcing of the government. No action was taken by Mr Beattie and his government. On 15 May 2002, Wendy Edmond stood up in this place and said, 'We have poured bucketloads of money into it and we are fixing the problem. We are going to address all the historical backlogs. We have brought in a lot of extra scientists, equipment, training, et cetera.' Again, on 18 July 2003 the minister waxed lyrical in the estimates process about all the extra scientists and extra money that is going to fix this—the great silver bullet. We heard the same again from the Premier as an election commitment going into the state election. The simple reality is that it has not fixed the problem. We have more spin from this government and less substance. What about the families out there who are waiting to find out the cause of death? They are waiting for closure on a particular

incident that has affected them. What about those who are waiting on a whole range of other potential criminal matters, including rape, robbery and bashings? They have been waiting for years and years and years, five and six years in some cases, and even more.

Let us look at some of the references here on this FOI document that the minister said was out of date—19 January this year. We have again got a case of shooting the messenger. We have the minister shooting the messenger but she has not been able to put up any contradictory or up-to-date information with regard to the John Tonge Centre. This special project officer goes on to report that there are 13,200 unexamined cases and they have monthly receipts of cases between 450 and 600. They also have difficulties with regard to addressing the backlog. He goes on to say, 'I was shocked to find so many drawers of unexamined case files being held at the John Tonge Centre.' He goes on to say a whole range of things such as, 'To date the prioritised database has 7,704 entries.' How many has it got now? I would suspect not many less than that. We also have issues such as that officer saying, 'Considering the current inability of the QHSS to clear the backlog because of their resource and staffing issues, it is not expected that they will be examined for several years.' Several years! More spin and more disappointment from the government.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member's time has expired.

Multiculturalism

Ms STRUTHERS (Algester—ALP) (11.42 a.m.): Australians and all of us as Queenslanders are facing unprecedented exposure to terrorism and fear of terrorism. One effect of this locally is that far too many people are fearing and are being wary of people, particularly people from Middle Eastern backgrounds and refugees fleeing war-torn countries. My concern is that there is a grave risk of heightened racism. Now more than ever we need to value our racial diversity. Now more than ever we must work to achieve tolerance and unity throughout our communities. Now, as ever, refugees and migrants need our humanity and support.

I am taking this responsibility very seriously in my new role as parliamentary secretary to the Premier with special responsibility for multicultural affairs. Every day I am learning more about cultures and customs and new nationalities. I am seeing the invaluable contribution people from diverse cultures are making to our economic and community life. I am also seeing the challenges and issues facing migrants and people from non-English speaking backgrounds. I am hearing from people about their difficulty finding jobs, their difficulty getting child care. I am hearing about the difficulty they are having in paying the high and escalating rents and about access to health care. Many refugees are not eligible for Medicare and are having great difficulty paying health care costs.

Multiculturalism is not only about festivals, parties and tokens of acceptance. In Queensland multiculturalism is a way of life. Queensland has a rich diversity of people from over 160 different cultural backgrounds and many religious beliefs. In 2001 the ABS census reported that 22.3 per cent of the Queensland population was born overseas, and almost seven per cent of Queenslanders speak a language other than English at home.

This government is making a determined effort to advance multicultural Queensland. This determination is evident in the multicultural Queensland policy and the great work being done through Multicultural Affairs Queensland. On an economic front we are doing this through productive diversity. Productive diversity is about maximising our multicultural advantage to assist business, using language skills, know-how, networks experience and cultural knowledge to our advantage.

At the community cabinet in Townsville on the weekend I had the opportunity to meet many groups who are doing great work to promote diversity and unity in Townsville. Lindy Nelson-Carr, the member for Mundingburra, Mike Reynolds, the member for Townsville, and Craig Wallace, the member for Thuringowa, all introduced me to great multicultural groups who are doing wonderful things. I would like to pay tribute to the members of the Baha'i community of Townsville and some other people and groups I met. For instance, the Townsville Multicultural Support Group, running on the smell of an oily rag, as many non-government groups do, have great volunteers and great staff doing very compassionate work. When I arrived there I sat and talked with a group of Sudanese families. There are only six Sudanese families in Townsville, all who have arrived in the last couple of years. You can imagine the isolation and the difficulties they have endured to arrive in a place like Townsville, which is a wonderful city, although a very far place from Sudan. They spoke of the great support they were getting from the Townsville Multicultural Support Group.

They also spoke of the great difficulty they are having getting work, and they urged me to impress upon both our state and federal government the need to continue employment support and child care. The women I spoke to wanted to be nurses. We have a shortage of nurses. We have to use the talents and skills of the migrants arriving in Townsville and other parts of the state.

The Townsville Migrant Resource Centre, what a great vibrant centre that one is! There I was in the middle of an English language class and I met people from all sorts of cultures. The wonderful festival, the Culture Fest, that Farvardin Daliri and his staff organise each year is a great event that promotes diversity in North Queensland. Mr Pino Giandomenico represented the Ingham Australian-Italian Festival and Mr Bill Malandris represented the Townsville Greek Festival—there is a lot happening in Townsville. I also met Sandra Soto and others from the Ethnic Community Care Links who are promoting the needs of ethnic people with disabilities. This is wonderful compassionate work with many hours of work done by volunteers.

In all corners of this state there is wonderful work being done to support harmony and unity and I urge all members to support not only their local groups but to value diversity, to value unity. Let us make this a much more peaceful world, a much more peaceful state.

Logan Police

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (11.46 a.m.): Firstly, on behalf of the people of Springwood I would like to say to the Morcombe family that you are in our prayers and thoughts. None of us can imagine the pain and suffering that you are going through, but I do want you to know that the Queensland Police and the community are thinking of you and that we will be doing whatever we can to assist you.

I recently had the pleasure of attending the South Eastern Region Police Medals and Awards Ceremony at the Ashmore PCYC. The awards were presented by Commissioner Bob Atkinson, the Minister for Police, the Honourable Judy Spence and the Assistant Commissioner David Melville. Superintendents Brett Pointing from the Gold Coast District and Paul Taylor from the Logan District not only did a fabulous job on the day as masters of ceremonies; I also acknowledge the great work they are doing in their districts. The good work our police officers do in our communities is well known, yet it is often a thankless task. That is why I am pleased that those dedicated and hardworking officers who have sometimes gone beyond the call of duty are recognised through these awards. In particular, I want to concentrate my remarks on those officers from the Logan district.

In the Logan district five officers received the national medal. They are Sergeant Scott Knowles, Sergeant Andrew Lake, Senior Sergeant Ian Quinn, Senior Constable Paul Biggin and Senior Constable John Morrisey. Receiving a first clasp to the national medal was Sergeant Richard Kennish from Slacks Creek station, which is in my electorate. Queensland Police Service medals were also received by Senior Constable Jane Grant and Senior Constable Andrea Ladner. The Queensland Police Service Medal 20 year clasp was presented to Senior Constable Donald Campbell and Sergeant Roland McCartney. Assistant Commissioner special mention award was given to AO3 Donna Wright, and Detective Sergeant Gary Watts received the officer-in-charge award of the year. The Assistant Commissioner constable of the year was presented to Senior Constable Steven Ordynski and Assistant Commissioner certificates went to Constable Terry Postlethwaite and Senior Constable Mark Emmett.

Logan JAB, I am very pleased to say, received the Assistant Commissioner's section or unit of the year award and in my electorate I often hear of the great work that Logan JAB is doing. While I am sure most of the officers find this work very rewarding, I really must thank them for working with our young people of Logan. I want to congratulate all the officers who received awards on the day because without enthusiastic and committed police officers such as those I have mentioned, our relaxed and safe lifestyle would not be possible.

I also recently attended the swearing in of our newest police officers, which we heard the minister speak about today. I am pleased to say that nearly 50 per cent of those officers were female, as the minister reported, and this displays a commitment by the Queensland Police Service to attract high-quality recruits regardless of gender. Four police dogs were inducted. I have had the privilege of seeing the Dog Squad in action and I note that these dogs and their officers are very important to fighting crime in our state.

I am very pleased to inform the House that Constable Lynette Baldwin received the commissioner's award, and this award is presented to the recruit who has achieved the highest standard of professionalism based on academic and skills performance, service integrity,

diligence, industry and ethical attitudes. Constable Graham Parkinson received the physical skills education award. The award is presented by the Scout Association of Australia for the best effort in physical skills education. I congratulate both these officers for receiving these prestigious awards. This is a wonderful achievement. I am sure they did many hours of dedicated hard work to achieve them. These officers will join with following constables Mark Bakker, Margaret Green, Jaclyn Stone and Melissa Winger in coming to Logan. I welcome them to Logan. I am sure they will gain experience in a wide range of policing environments and will benefit greatly from being placed with experienced officers. I wish all the new officers a safe and rewarding career.

The Beattie Labor government's commitment to policing in Logan with the opening in February of the new Loganholme Police Station is a concrete example of the Beattie government delivering additional policing resources. This new station is the hub of a new police division which services Shailer Park, Loganholme, Cornubia, Tanah Merah and Carbrook. The extra division and new station has reduced the size of Slacks Creek and Logan Central divisions. This means that we have more police resources in our area. The maintenance of local law and order in this growing area is certainly important and I know the community has welcomed the establishment of this $3 million facility.

I welcome all officers and staff at the station and I particularly want to thank Senior Sergeant Scott Lacey, the officer-in-charge of Loganholme, for the fine work that he and his officers are doing in the area. I started receiving praise about the officers at Loganholme Police Station and their work from day one. I must say that I am very happy to be still receiving these positive comments regularly. The wonderful award medals, the recognition of our wonderful police officers and the recruitment we are doing shows the Beattie Labor government's commitment to being tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime and to ensuring that we have a professional and a highly regarded police service in Queensland maintaining law and order and keeping all of us safe.

Beef Industry

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (11.51 a.m.): The electronic national livestock identification system is to be introduced into Queensland on a mandatory basis from 1 July 2005. The system has already been introduced in most of the other southern states of Australia and will be introduced in our neighbouring state of New South Wales in July this year.

There have been a number of producer meetings held around the state where serious concern has been voiced by experienced large and small cattle producers about some aspects of the scheme. At the same time, there have been a number workshops conducted by Agforce and by the Meat and Livestock Authority of Australia. They have demonstrated some of the potential benefits and reasons for the implementation of this scheme.

Importantly, throughout the world there has been a gradual move to a whole-of-life identification system. We have had a good system of branding, which identifies the property of birth, and tail tags, which identifies the last property from which the animal came when sent to saleyards or abattoirs. A whole-of-life system is now being imposed by the likes of the European Union. It has done it for some time. People have to be EU accredited to be involved in that system. It is being used by Saudi Arabia. Our competitors, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, New Zealand, the USA and Canada are looking at a whole-of-life trace back and recording systems. Likewise, our major customers, Canada, the USA, Korea and Japan may, in the future, look for whole of life trace back identification system. That may also occur on the domestic scene with some of the major buyers in Queensland.

It is important that we look very carefully at this process of identification while still maintaining our cutting edge in the marketing and processing of one of our major export income producers—the beef cattle industry. There has been a number of concerns put forward by the producers. At one of the meetings in central Queensland hundreds attended. Six of those producers combined had more cattle than all the cattle in Victoria. These concerns are being brought forward by experienced people who make a major contribution to our domestic and export industry and who create jobs all along the chain of beef production and beef processing.

We need to have state government involvement in this through the DPI. We need financial commitment and staff commitment to overcome these problems and ensure that, when the mandatory application of these NLIS tags is introduced in about 18 months time, problems will not exist. Most of the major producers said to me that they can see the reason for a trace back system, but they do not want it put in place unless they have a guarantee that the tags work and

that the systems work. DPI, through the Beattie government, should be putting money, staff and resources into this project.

In other southern states a total of $30 million has been applied by the state governments to provide software technology into the saleyards, processing plants and abattoirs. Some state governments have assisted by subsidising the cost of the tags. They are somewhere in the order of $3.80 per electronic tag. That is an extra cost for every beast that leaves the property.

The Queensland government has so far offered absolutely nothing. We have the biggest beef industry in Australia. It is a major exporting industry. About 85 per cent of our beef is exported. This government does not give priority to this industry. They provide $12 million for the Indy, and they provide $84 million annually in grants to all sorts of businesses to grow or enhance their businesses. Here is a chance to protect and enhance our beef industry and this government, through the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries, Mr Palaszczuk, has given absolutely nothing to this scheme. It needs decent support.

The problems that have been identified include the purchasing of cattle. Those property owners who purchase cattle privately, those that have not come from saleyards, will have to have the software system to read the tags as those cattle come onto their properties. There is so much interproperty transfer within the same company or different family companies in Queensland. There will be problems there. The reliability of tags and software is another problem. There will be problems with non-read tags in abattoirs or saleyards. Imagine in Roma where there are up to 10,000 head. If they have a certain percentage of non-reading there will be big problems there. The cost of tags, the cost of the software and the alternate pathways of those producers who breed cattle and fatten cattle on their properties and send them direct to works or to live export will have problems. It is about time this government put its weight behind the beef industry in Queensland.

Time expired.

Women's Health

Ms BARRY (Aspley—ALP) (11.56 a.m.): It is a real privilege to rise to speak for the first time in the 51st Queensland Parliament. A second term compels me to speak more often about issues that I believe are critical to the development of good public policy and should be subject to robust debate in this place. One such issue is the need for further development of sound public health policies that support the sexual and reproductive health rights and responsibilities of women and girls in this state and in this country. I have decided to begin this term by raising an issue that I believe is rarely talked about because of a perceived sensitivity in political terms and in part because I wish to respond to the offensive comments about Australian women made in March by the current Commonwealth Minister for Health, Tony Abbott.

Reproductive health is, according to the World Health Organisation Cairo program, defined as the state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity in all matters relating to the reproductive system, its functions and processes. It defines reproductive health for women as the right to have a satisfying and safe sex life, the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often they do so. The World Health Organisation defines as a human right of women and girls to have the control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health that is free of coercion, discrimination and violence.

It compels us as democratic governments that are accountable to our electorate to bear responsibility to formulate and advance laws that serve our populations' reproductive health. It compels us to review the impact and practical effect that our laws in relation to sexual and reproductive health have upon women in particular. Good public health policy requires that as a society and governments we examine the whole of the debate in relation to sexual and reproductive health, not just limit it to selective discussions on non-controversial or controversial issues. To do this we must talk more about sex education and our children—when should we start to teach our children about sex, self-esteem, body image, safe touching and at what age it is best and who will deliver the education.

How do we care for our youth as they journey to find themselves and their own pace in a world that promotes ever younger sexual images in everyday advertising and popular culture? Should we examine laws that place boundaries on advertising and music clips? Who should decide how young is too young and when is too risque too much? We must talk about sex that involves violence, coercion, disadvantage and discrimination. We should talk about sex and

sexual health as we get older, the sex industry and how it affects its workers' and its consumers' sexual and reproductive health outcomes.

We must talk about unwanted pregnancies, terminations, fertilisations, contraception, and declining fertility rates. Do the laws that exist in relation to sexual and reproductive health support good public health policies? Are those laws based on human rights or moral and/or religious impositions? Are they clear? In what way do they contribute to achieving reproductive and sexual health wellbeing?

Let us talk about the proper funding of organisations that provide education, counselling and services in sexual and reproductive health. Are they able to provide services on a fair and equitable basis regardless of where one lives? We must talk about the quality of care of services and find out whether we in actual fact have good sexual reproductive health services. Do we fund their work appropriately? Do we know if their funding and programs achieve good outcomes in terms of good public health policy? We should ask if reduced access to the local doctor through the decline in bulk-billing has negatively impacted on the health of women and girls in the matter of sexual and reproductive health. We should ask if our parenting and maternity funding packages reach to the heart of why so many women do not choose to have children in this country and why they choose in some circumstances to terminate their unwanted pregnancies. We should also ask ourselves why it appears that the only politicians who seem to publicly speak on this issue on a regular basis are those who are keen to criticise our women and girls for their struggles to achieve appropriate sexual and reproductive health outcomes and why the rest of us are so uncharacteristically silent on such matters.

Politicians like Tony Abbott do little to promote the development of good public health policy in this area. In fact, so audacious in his public comments and unrestrained has he become that in March he added to his already offensive comments about the morality of women in this country by saying that he believes that the abortion rate contributes to the peril of a declining Western civilisation in the face of a serious threat from militant Islamic forces. Far from being a responsible comment from a Health Minister, it is a disgraceful abrogation of his responsibility to lead the sexual and reproductive health debate in terms defined so clearly by the World Health Organisation. In fact, instead of opening the debate, as he claims to want to do, he drives the debate into the arena of morality, religion, politics of division and political taboo. Silence once more becomes the enemy of women and girls and good public health policy. He should not be unchallenged in his views. Good sexual and reproductive health policy is an issue that is worthy of debate in the context of developing good and sound public health policy, not in the context of Tony Abbott's selective moral view and a wedge politics agenda. I intend to speak often on it.

Coolangatta Bowls Club

Ms STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (12.01 p.m.): I draw the attention of the House to the plight of the Coolangatta Bowls Club. It is located only metres from the New South Wales border and is in an absolutely beautiful location. The Coolangatta Bowls Club has major problems with the decision by the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy to increase the rent payable on their Crown lease by 150 per cent. For example, in 2002 its rent was $11,258. In 2003 it was $28,160. In effect, it is an increase of $16,902. This is, of course, unsustainable, but that is the case for many Gold Coast clubs whose sole aim is to provide cost-effective sporting facilities to their members. This club has only 10 poker machines.

We congratulate the club on its healthy lifestyle initiatives and its raising of funds through an activity called barefoot bowls. The Liberal Party of Currumbin actually took part in a barefoot bowls day recently. Whilst we were able to raise significant funds, it was nowhere near enough to be able to sustain this club. We have also urged members of the public to support all of their bowls clubs in this healthy initiative of barefoot bowls.

The Coolangatta Bowls Club was established on Crown leases in 1950. The club has two leases: the Crown lease of 5,074 square metres, including the clubhouse, and the Gold Coast City Council lease of the same amount—that is, 5,074 square metres—including the former railway land. The Gold Coast City Council offers the rent at a very nominal rate as it is recreational and open space. The Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy also offers this space at a nominal rent of $2,500 per annum. However, the huge stumbling block is the increase in the charges on the clubhouse, which is 1,050 square metres.

The club owns this outright but has a lease demand of five per cent of the improved capital valuation, which is five per cent of $513,000. With those leases and rates, it is now costing close

to $1,000 per week in council and state government charges before the club looks at wages and other costs such as maintenance. The club has spoken to Terry Fox from the Gold Coast Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy on a number of occasions during 2003. It has found him to be helpful, but he says that his hands are tied by the minister. His initial advice was that the minister was looking at the problem and it would be resolved by September or October 2003. It was not.

Terry Fox's recent advice was that the department was trying to hand over Crown leases on the Gold Coast to the council for its administration and that small sports clubs—those with fewer than 20 poker machines—would be reduced back to a land rent conditional upon being a genuine sport or recreational organisation and not a commercial poker machine palace. This decision, he advised, would be made no later than December 2003. It was not. After recent discussions with the council, it seems that it is less than keen to take over the Crown leases. The Coolangatta Bowls Club's concerns are twofold: that the government has stalled the issue until after the state election and may well claim it was policy and that no reduction will be made. As a small nonprofit club with no ambition to be in the big poker machine league and simply providing a venue for our players and many visitors, these government charges will put the club out of business within a couple of years. I remind the House that this club was formed in 1950.

December came and went with no decision from the government. It is now the full intention of the Coolangatta Bowls Club to put up a fight. In the meantime, though, the members of this bowls club would ask the minister and this government to offer special consideration and reductions in rents for themselves and sporting clubs in similar situations. Lawn bowls clubs are worth nurturing. They are an important part of our way of life. They offer recreational, social and health benefits. I again draw this situation to the attention of the House.

Antismoking Campaigns

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (12.06 p.m.): No fair-minded person would dispute that this government has done more than any other to reduce the incidence of smoking and smoking related diseases in Queensland. The previous Minister for Health is to be congratulated on her many initiatives to help smokers quit and protect nonsmokers from second-hand tobacco smoke, and I have no doubt that the new minister will continue these valuable initiatives. The Marshall Menthol campaign in particular was a great success. In fact, Queensland Health reported an immediate and dramatic increase in calls to the Quitline—an increase of over 300 per cent. This is just phenomenal and shows what can be done.

The Marshall Menthol campaign has helped hundreds of smokers to quit, and there is no doubt it will prevent many more smoking related deaths in the future. I must say that it was incredibly sobering, though, to see the latest figures from the department showing that smoking is now killing more than 60 Queenslanders a week. Despite our best efforts, the number of people dying from smoking related illnesses in this state increased to 3,377 in 2001, up 340 from 1999. To put that into some sort of perspective, it is approximately 10 times the annual road toll.

I am particularly concerned by the number of young women taking up smoking, and I am sure that other members have similar concerns. In fact, the number of female teenagers smoking is now substantially higher than the number of male teenagers—33,000 compared to 22,000. I recently received information from the Queensland Cancer Fund and Australian Medical Association predicting that lung cancer would overtake breast cancer next year as the leading cause of cancer death in Queensland women. Smoking already kills more than 1,000 women in this state every year, and that number is increasing. On current trends, it is likely to kill more than 15,000 Queensland women over the next 10 years. It is almost impossible to imagine how much grief and hardship it is going to cause for families, partners, friends and children. Smoking related illnesses in women already account for nearly half their years of healthy life lost due to premature death, disease and disability. Prevention is certainly better than cure.

We are winning the war on male addiction, however, and we can also win the war on female addiction. Again, the previous minister is to be congratulated on her efforts to address this problem, including a three-year project to research the causes and possible solutions with a budget of $750,000. This information will be absolutely critical in shaping our future campaigns, but my fear is that it may come too late for the thousands of young women who are planting the seeds of their future cancers and other smoking related diseases right now.

Other states have already done a lot of good work in this area and produced some excellent commercials that could be rebadged for Queensland at minimal cost. I was particularly impressed

with a recent campaign called Jenny's Story, developed in Western Australia. This series of commercials features a 42-year-old-woman with terminal lung cancer speaking about her smoking, her disease and her coming death. In one advertisement she makes the point that photographs are very important to her these days because they are all her boys will have to remember her by. It is an incredibly moving story and has already rated very highly in formal evaluations. The Cancer Fund has kindly provided me with a copy of the ads and I would be happy to arrange a short screening or share it with any other members depending on the numbers.

Smoking is killing Queensland women at an unprecedented scale. That is the bottom line. We need to beam that message into every home in the state. Every day that we delay simply adds to the enormous toll of human misery that is caused by smoking. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge a nonprofit group called Busy Fingers on Bribie Island, who recently contributed an extraordinary donation of $25,000 to an organisation called the Caboolture Drug Awareness Team, which provides life education programs to the primary schoolchildren of the Caboolture shire and of which I have been the honorary president for over a dozen years. As Carolyn Male just said, she is also an honorary member.

Life education programs, which have been running for 10 years, concentrate on educating children on the dangers of legal drugs: alcohol, nicotine and prescription drugs, which are the three biggest killers in the Western World. With this substantial and very welcome donation, we can continue to help our local kids say no to these drugs. On behalf of my committee, I sincerely thank Busy Fingers for its generosity—not only to the drug awareness prevention program that we run but to all the community groups that it has assisted in past years. I say: well done and keep up the good work. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of those other individuals, community and corporate members who sponsor the program year after year. We hope to continue the service for many years to come and for as long as the schools want us.

Time expired.

Moogerah Dam

Hon. K. R. LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (12.11 p.m.): At a meeting of the Warrill Valley Irrigation Area on Wednesday night, 31 March, which was hosted and chaired by both Mr Ian Rickuss, the member for Lockyer, and me, the following motion was moved and passed unanimously—

That this meeting of the water users of the Warrill Valley irrigation area requests the State Government to recognise its social responsibilities and community service obligations and make water supply from Wivenhoe Dam available to Swanbank at the same price per megalitre as it is from Moogerah Dam so that limited capacity of Moogerah Dam may be best utilised in serving the immediate needs of the urban and rural users reliant on this source of water for their livelihood. Unlike Swanbank, which has pipeline access to Wivenhoe Dam, the Warrill Valley Irrigation area has no alternative water supply to Moogerah Dam.

The history of the Moogerah Dam is that it was built in the 1960s. Most people believed that it was built for agricultural viability. Whenever such dams are built, we have to accept that people on the river who have riparian rights are concerned that, in the future, their rights will be resumed. Most people believe that when a dam such as the Moogerah Dam is built and with such a storage capacity, those people would have a massive storage of water that they could use for irrigation in the future. Moogerah Dam also supplied water to Boonah and Ipswich, which not many people realise. When the Swanbank Power Station was built, water was made available for Swanbank. Swanbank built its own dam. Of course, Swanbank pays a massive amount of money for its water—probably over $1.1 million—which is very necessary, especially now when we come to the stage that all water must be paid for. That is a relevant point, because if it is that Swanbank is to seek water from the Wivenhoe Dam, quite obviously someone must increase the cost to those people who are on the Moogerah Dam system. That is the difficulty.

The other big difficulty is that it seems as though the catchment area for the Moogerah Dam is not as good as it was thought that it possibly would be. Even now, with the amount of rain that we have received, Moogerah Dam is only at 10 per cent capacity, or probably just a little bit lower. So, of course, with a poor catchment area and in times of drought, people who rely on this water for irrigation come to the fact that SunWater, which is making the decisions on the water allocation, will say to the irrigation users, 'No, you can't use the water. We need this water for Swanbank, we need the water for Boonah and we need the water for Ipswich.'

Similarly, in relation to the Maroon Dam in the Beaudesert area, the people who are first denied the use of that water storage are the farmers. Of course, in good times when water is

available, farmers make their own decisions about what crops will be viable. During dry times, the first people to lose access to water are the farmers. Of course, they are the ones who have extreme concerns.

The people's other concern is the cost of maintenance. When Moogerah Dam went down to two per cent capacity recently—and all pumping of water has been banned since last year—it was heartless of SunWater to raise the cost of the water, yet farmers were faced with an increase of 50 per cent on their maintenance cost—from $8.22 to $12.24 per megalitre of allocation. Naturally, these people were saying, 'We have not had water for 18 months. You are now increasing our maintenance costs, yet we are receiving no water.' But, of course, the main thing was that Swanbank, which has the ability to go to the Wivenhoe Dam for water, was kept on the Moogerah Dam system. It was switched over for a short time when the Moogerah Dam was down to two per cent capacity, but now that the Moogerah Dam is down to 10 per cent capacity the decision has been made to switch Swanbank's ability to access water back to the Moogerah Dam.

These people are saying to the government that surely the government has a social responsibility for this. If it was over the last 12 months that $16 million was made by SunWater on the sale of water, surely at a bad time the government has a social responsibility for it to commit some finance so that Swanbank can go back to the Wivenhoe Dam for water so that the Moogerah Dam water can be made available as storage water for irrigators and for people who live in places such as Boonah and Ipswich.

A secondary worry is the use of the Moogerah Dam by skiers. If the capacity of the Moogerah Dam falls below 10 per cent, then those people cannot use the water. So at this special meeting of the water users of the Warrill Valley irrigation area, chaired by Mr Rickuss and me, they have asked that the government recognise that it has a special social responsibility and a social commitment to assist Swanbank to access water from the Wivenhoe Dam.

Time expired.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Shine): Order! Before calling the honourable member for Kurwongbah, may I welcome to the gallery students and teachers from Landsborough State School in the electorate of Glass House.

Women in Technology 2004

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (12.16 p.m.): It is hard to believe that 40-odd years ago, Rosalind Franklin, whose X-ray photos were a key to the discovery of DNA structure, was not even considered to be part of the team that won the 1962 Nobel Prize. What is even further hard to believe is that, although she was a very talented scientist and a pioneer in molecular biology, she was treated like a laboratory assistant, isolated from the scientific team, and not even allowed to eat in the university dining room, as was the norm for women in universities at that time.

Thankfully, we have come a long way in the last 40 years, but there is still a long way to go. That is why in my new role as parliamentary secretary to the Minister for State Development and Innovation, the Hon. Tony McGrady, I was delighted to launch the Women in Technology 2004 Pathways to Technology project. This project involved a workshop designed to increase the interest of young women in careers in science, engineering and information and communication technology. This workshop was staged by Women in Technology—known as WIT—which is a group of dedicated women who work in science, engineering and IT, who volunteer their time to support women engaged in the technology sector and who also promote the sector as a career choice for women.

The workshop was well attended by young people from years 9 to 12 from many high schools in south-east Queensland. Through their workshops, WIT has succeeded in making sure that young women throughout Queensland are aware of the excellent opportunities and the diversity of pathways available to them in technology industries. They have been offering great programs for women in the past seven years and the Pathways to Technology project is no exception. The Beattie government is a big supporter of WIT. For example, in four rounds of i-StAR funding, we have provided them with more than $120,000 to stage programs for women, including regional programs for pathways to technology.

The Beattie government is also a big believer in equal opportunities for women in the Smart State, and we are actively encouraging women to expand their career choices. By encouraging young women into technology careers, we are working to address the statistical gender imbalance

that these industries generally suffer. In fact, recent figures show that women make up an average of only 35 per cent of full-time positions across ICT industries—perhaps not unlike women in politics. According to the *Women in the Smart State Directions Statement 2003-2008*, women represent only 20 per cent of Queensland computing professionals, 36 per cent of professionals in natural and physical sciences and only seven per cent of building and engineering professionals. There is no reason for these low numbers. There is no reason women should not be better represented in these professions.

The Pathways to Technology workshop represented only one part of the government's overarching strategy to attract more young people into science and technology careers. In the strategy to encourage more young people into science and technology careers we are targeting many different age groups through many different programs. For example, the Science on Saturday program gives six- to 14-year-olds throughout Queensland the chance to do hands-on science experiments in a fun way. Also, by 2005 we aim to have a Science in Society elective subject for senior school students that will provide relative learning experiences about science and its real-world application for students who do not wish to study a specific science subject. We are also supporting initiatives run by other organisations, such as QUT's first Bachelor of Biotechnology Innovation degree that has congratulated its first graduates.

The Beattie government is also working hard to ensure that there are plenty of jobs in the science and technology sector. For example, in the science biotechnology area we are putting a lot of money into setting up world-class institutes such as the Institute for Molecular Bioscience, the Australian Institute for Bioengineering and Nanotechnology and the Australian Brain Research Institute. It is anticipated that these centres will provide up to 1,000 jobs for scientists. According to our Chief Scientist, Professor Peter Andrews, there will be 7,500 biotechnology jobs up for grabs by 2010. In the area of ICT we are putting our money into backing key areas of expertise and new areas of research.

Time expired.

Public Liability Insurance; Electricity Supply

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (12.22 p.m.): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to stand in this chamber and speak on a number of matters of public importance to the Sunshine Coast and in particular to my constituents in the electorate of Nicklin. The first matter I raise is one that many members in this House have spoken about in the past. It involves the spiralling public liability insurance premiums that many not-for-profit groups, community organisations and volunteers are having to fundraise to meet, simply so their community organisations can continue to provide that very important service that we sometimes take for granted in Queensland.

I urge the Premier and Treasurer to consider in this year's budget setting aside a special allocation of funds so that not-for-profit associations and community groups can apply to the state government for a subsidy. I am not suggesting a 100 per cent subsidy or even a 75 per cent subsidy. What I am saying to the Premier, the Treasurer and all government members is: what is wrong with asking the government to allocate some funds so that our not-for-profit groups can apply for a 10 per cent, 20 per cent or 25 per cent subsidy to offset the burden of the spiralling insurance premiums they are now required to pay?

Over the last three years we have seen talkfests around this state. We have heard many comments in this House and outside about what people should do. As an Independent member in this House I challenge the government to respond to my suggestion to set aside in this year's budget a specific amount of funds and invite not-for-profit groups and community associations to apply to the state government for a subsidy and support. This would be a real example of the state government working in partnership with our volunteers in Queensland. At the end of the day, actions speak louder than words.

Another issue I wish to raise—I am certain it is not unique to the Sunshine Coast and the Nicklin electorate—is the unfortunate regular breakdown in the supply of electricity in various regions. This occurred during the early months of this year. I will read a letter dated 23 February that I received from one of my constituents. It states—

Recently we have been losing supply on a regular basis—four times in 10 days, always around 7 p.m., duration usually for one and a half hours. On contacting Energex this morning, I was not able to receive any plausible explanation for our inconvenience from the operator.

Honourable members should listen to this—

I was told, however, that for a fee of $33.50—

yes, for a fee of $33.50!—

I could access some explanation via freedom of information, which I declined.

Can members imagine constituents in Queensland being required to apply under the Freedom of Information Act and spend $33.50 to get information? I think that is a disgrace. The letter goes on—

We believe our power interruptions and treatment upon inquiry to be most unacceptable and would appreciate some help in getting to the bottom of this problem.

I have here a non-conforming petition signed by 107 residents of the Eudlo and Mooloolah community. It states—

The undersigned residents share the concerns expressed in this letter and urge Mr Peter Wellington MP to lobby to have Energex improve the service it currently supplies to the Eudlo area.

I seek leave to table this non-conforming petition.

Leave granted.

Mr WELLINGTON: I will quote from another letter, dated 2 March, that I received from one of my constituents. They followed up some of the comments made by Energex staff when they pursued the issue of the breakdown in their electricity supply. It states—

On the issue of whether I could expect an improvement in the supply of electrical power, I was advised that it would stay the same unless at least $7 million was spent and the staff member said he couldn't see this happening for only 500 customers.

I have tabled a non-conforming petition from 107 residents of the Eudlo and Mooloolah area. We certainly want to see reliable and regular electricity supply. We cannot believe that bureaucrats are now saying, 'Sorry, we can't. You just have to put up with it.' It seems that gone are the days in Queensland that we can take for granted that 24 hours a day, seven days a week, week in, week out we will have regular, reliable electricity.

Time expired.

Community Cabinet, Townsville-Thuringowa

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (12.27 p.m.): This weekend we held a community cabinet in Paradise. Of course, everybody in this room knows where Paradise is. It is in Townsville. The community cabinet was held on Sunday and Monday. It was very, very well received. It is a very popular concept. We had over 170 deputations.

The night before in Townsville the Cowboys played the Broncos. That was a mighty game. Despite the fact that the Broncos won, the Cowboys did put in a very good effort, for which we are very thankful considering their past record. We were already on a high and then we entered into the community cabinet.

This was the third time that a community cabinet has been held in Townsville. That is a sure sign from the Premier of his commitment and support to Townsville-Thuringowa in particular and the regions in general. A number of announcements were made. Why would one not make announcements in Townsville? It is one of the fastest growing regions in Queensland and probably in Australia.

Last weekend we had the opportunity to showcase our great city. We in Townsville-Thuringowa have a lifestyle that surpasses anything I know in Australia. How good is it to get the entire cabinet, the Premier and their entourages into Townsville to see just how we live? We have really clean air. We have really low crime rates. We have innovation and technology that is world class. We have a world-class hospital. Our university, James Cook University, is a mighty university. The member for Kurwongbah visited it while she was in Townsville. We have really competitive sport and recreation, not to mention our education system. Research at the university is world class. What a place Townsville is!

While the Premier was making some of the announcements, people were able to take part in some of the natural and picturesque opportunities that are available in Townsville. We started with The Strand some years ago. The state government contributed a lot of money to make The Strand what it is today. That Strand development was the start of heaps of development in Townsville-Thuringowa.

Mrs Lavarch: Innovation and community design.

Ms NELSON-CARR: Innovation and community design. It is a perfect example of how the state government and local government can work together. The federal government certainly did

not give us zip for The Strand. Some cities have the Big Banana or the Big Pineapple. I think there is even a place with the Big Pavlova. But Townsville has The Strand, and The Strand is incredible.

The Premier made several announcements. One that is very exciting is the QR land that will be developed into residential areas, walkways and bikeways. It will be all about revitalising the CBD. As all honourable members would know, the CBD in any city needs to be revitalised if we are to have a thriving centre, a thriving hub.

The Premier announced $4.5 million for the riverway project, which is right on my doorstep in Mundingburra, but is in Thuringowa. This riverway project—$4.5 million from the state government—will get things started. I walk along the river every morning. I will be able to extend my walk.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Ms NELSON-CARR: I thank the minister. I walk along one end of the riverway, and now I will be able to keep walking right into Thuringowa and enjoy the lagoon that will be built thanks to the Thuringowa council in partnership with the state government.

And there is more! The ocean terminal is something that will be critical and crucial to Townsville development. The Premier has put his weight behind support for the ocean terminal in Townsville. I know as a garrison city we have many, many ships that pull in there. Once we have this extra facility we will see tourism at an unprecedented level. This facility is not just for our soldiers and our military personnel. It will bring a berthing facility to Townsville that will be a reality and it will be a real goldmine for our city.

Time expired.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Shine): Order! The time allotted for matters of public interest has expired.

TRANSPORT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. P. T. LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (12.32 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend legislation administered by the Minister for Transport and Main Roads, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Mr Lucas, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. P. T. LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (12.33 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The objective of this bill is to amend a number of acts and to particularly enact legislation to facilitate integrated ticketing in south-east Queensland. Queensland Transport is responsible for developing and managing the land, air and sea transport environment in Queensland. Queensland Transport provides transport leadership through developing and ensuring implementation of a strategic transport policy agenda, transport planning and stewardship of Queensland's Transport system.

Queensland Transport works closely with the community, industry and government agencies to ensure a coordinated, consultative and integrated approach to addressing and resolving transport challenges. Our products are delivered through an extensive statewide service delivery network, including customer service centres, Queensland government agencies, marine operation bases, and regional and divisional offices. Queensland Transport aims to create and manage a world-class transport system for all our communities and industries, to prosper locally and internationally and to enhance the quality of transport for this and future generations.

Main Roads looks after Queensland's 34,000 kilometre state controlled road network—the highways and other main connecting roads in Queensland. This task involves planning,

designing, building and maintaining the roads and associated infrastructure, such as bridges, on these roads. Main Roads works close in partnership with local governments, industries and communities to determine priorities for work on the state controlled network. This network carries 80 per cent of Queensland's traffic. It is the lifeblood of the state's economy and regional development. The network helps all Queenslanders' quality of life by giving them access to jobs, health, education, recreation and other services.

I seek leave to have the remainder of my second reading speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The minor amendments in this Bill affect legislation administered by my portfolio as well as the Land Act 1994 and Land Title Act 1994 administered by the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy.

The Land Act 1994 is to be amended to allow Building Management Statements to be registered between freehold and leasehold lots where the leasehold lot is a transport corridor.

Queensland property management often involves the registration of a Building Management Statement. However, it is not currently possible to register a Building Management Statement between leasehold and freehold lots.

This means that currently where a commercial development is built above a rail corridor and a Building Management Statement is the most practical way of proceeding, both the development and the corridor must be in freehold. Commercial developments are often freehold, while the State's rail corridor is leasehold. A proposed amendment to the Land Act 1994 will specifically allow Building Management Statements to be registered in this situation.

A consequential amendment is to be made to the Land Title Act 1994 to ensure that Building Management Statements will be included in the appropriate land title registers.

The Land Act 1994 is also to be amended to allow the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy to delegate the administration of certain statutory provisions relating to rail corridor land to Queensland Transport. This reflects what was intended in the original legislation when it was introduced in 1994.

The next Act to be amended, the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994, encourages effective integrated planning and efficient management of transport infrastructure systems. It is also to be amended to deal with issues concerning rail corridor land.

The current legislation places an obligation on Queensland Rail to maintain fencing, drainage and in some cases access between parcels of land adjoining the corridor where the land has been severed by the railway. However, the legislation does not provide for when corridors change ownership. An amendment will mean that if Queensland Rail surrenders its interest in the land, and a new railway manager takes over that interest, these obligations will be transferred to the new railway manager.

The other proposed amendment will permit the immediate construction of railway infrastructure on newly acquired leasehold land without the need to change the status of the land.

At present, leasehold land that is compulsorily acquired by Queensland Transport to build a railway retains the original tenure and permitted use status it held before being acquired. For example, if the land was a pastoral lease before it was acquired, it keeps that status.

As a railway cannot be built on a pastoral lease, the land's permitted use must be changed, or a permit issued by the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy. A permit is not satisfactory given the high cost of rail construction and the need for certainty in contractual arrangements, while the current process for changing the land's status may cause unacceptable delays.

The amendment proposed in this Bill will allow the land to be used for its railway purposes immediately upon its resumption being notified in the Queensland Government Gazette. This will not exempt the land from the requirements of the Integrated Planning Act 1997, and does not affect the way in which native title is dealt with. When the railway is constructed, Queensland Transport will undertake the necessary surveys, title amendments and documentation.

The next Act to be amended is the Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994. It provides for the implementation of various international and national standards and agreements for marine safety. It currently provides for a regulation to be made about the Uniform Shipping Laws Code. This Code is being phased out at a national level and is being replaced by the National Standard for Commercial Vessels.

An amendment will allow for the replacement of the Uniform Shipping Laws Code by the National Standard for Commercial Vessels and for any approved future standards, documents or agreements about ships and marine safety.

This amendment aligns Queensland with other Australian States and territories for the implementation of current and future standards for marine safety.

Also to be amended is the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994. It regulates public passenger transport to promote efficiency, equity and safety. There are a number of minor amendments to this Act, not counting the integrated ticketing amendments dealt with later.

An amendment will clarify that a railway operator needs to comply with the operator accreditation and driver authorisation requirements if they operate road-based public passenger services. These requirements do not apply to passenger rail services. As the Act is currently worded, it may be construed that they do not apply to bus services provided by a railway operator either.

In a related amendment, it is proposed to clarify that the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Standard 2000 does not apply to railway managers or railway operators providing public passenger services using fixed-track

vehicles. It is intended to apply only to those who hold driver authorisation or operator accreditation, and these are not needed to operate fixed-track services.

Another amendment will remove any doubt that it is an offence to make any false representation when applying for an accreditation, authorisation, contract or licence under this Act. Currently, the offence provisions only refer to false representation made in attaining such a benefit, and are silent on the subject of unsuccessful applications.

The definition of a 'ferry' in this Act will be amended to remove any doubt that a barge can be used as a ferry. The current definition of a 'ferry' includes a 'ship, boat and hovercraft.' Some vehicular barges carry walk-on passengers for fares, and are considered to be public passenger services as defined in the Act.

It is also proposed to clarify powers for authorised persons. The Transport Legislation Amendment Act 2001 introduced new powers for 'authorised persons' when dealing with the transport of dangerous goods by rail. This introduced some minor duplication between new and existing powers which will be removed in this Bill.

The next Act to be amended is the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 which promotes the safe and efficient use of roads. A number of minor amendments are proposed, including three related to local government administration.

Currently, local governments are able to regulate for the use of bicycles and wheeled recreational devices on 'footpaths'. The Australian Road Rules have been adopted nationally, and have recently introduced the concept of 'shared paths'. An amendment will adopt this change in Queensland's legislation.

It is also proposed to allow local governments to regulate parking by the installation of traffic signs, and to enforce parking regulations by issuing infringement notices. This will promote greater efficiency and remove the enforcement burden from police and the subsequent impact on court resources.

Local governments will also be allowed to specify parking fees and parking permit application fees by resolution. This will be less cumbersome than the current process of setting such fees in local laws.

The next amendment concerns the way the Act currently administers approvals that allow a person to operate outside of existing regulations. An example is where a permit to exceed regulated mass limits allows the movement of large amounts of grain during harvests. An amendment is proposed to provide greater flexibility when cancelling such approvals.

To maintain public safety and protect infrastructure it is vital that an approval can be amended, suspended or cancelled. Under the existing legislation the chief executive of Queensland Transport must notify an approval holder, and give an opportunity to respond, when suspending or cancelling an approval.

The time taken for each of these processes does not encourage the chief executive to suspend a permit to allow compliance, with the option of cancellation if conditions are not met. Therefore the proposed amendment will allow for a conditional suspension, with a cancellation option, as part of the same notification process.

One final amendment to this Act is needed to extend the definition of 'official' to include any person authorised to receive information under the Act, including persons employed by an external agency. This will remove any doubt that anyone who supplies false or misleading documents or information can be prosecuted.

The Transport Planning and Coordination Act 1994 is also to be amended. The objectives of this Act are, within the Government's overall policy agenda, to improve the economic, trade and regional development performance of Queensland, and the quality of life of Queenslanders.

This Act details the power of Queensland Transport and the Department of Main Roads to compulsorily acquire land, including leasehold land. At present, the Registrar of Titles must be notified and a notation placed on land titles if freehold land is to be resumed, but not when leasehold land is resumed.

The proposed amendment will protect the public interest by creating a statutory requirement for the Registrar of Titles to be notified, and a notation placed on land titles, when leasehold land is compulsorily acquired by either Queensland Transport or the Department of Main Roads.

Perhaps the most significant area of change sought by this Bill concerns the introduction of integrated ticketing for public transport in South East Queensland by TransLink.

At the moment, there are many different public transport options to choose from in South East Queensland. Bus, train and ferry services are all run by different operations often with their own individual fares, zones and concessions.

From July 2004, TransLink will provide one single public transport network covering South East Queensland from Noosa to Coolangatta and west to Helidon.

Just one ticket will take you wherever you want to go on buses, trains and ferries within the new system. Zones, fares and concessions will be standardised across the system, providing one set of rules for everyone.

TransLink is working together with the Queensland Government, Brisbane City Council, Queensland Rail and private operators to improve the integration of services—making it easier for you to get where you want to go.

TransLink is all about getting you where you want to go quickly and conveniently. Over time the TransLink system will ensure that buses, trains and ferries work together to help you reach your destination quickly and efficiently.

To introduce integrated ticketing in South East Queensland will require several changes to the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994. These changes will generally apply only to those services in South East Queensland that will be subject to integration.

The first of these amendments relates to the offence of providing services without a contract in circumstances where such a contract is needed. This is to allow a maximum penalty of 160 penalty units to apply where operators are not contracted for an area or route on an exclusive basis. This will be the norm under TransLink's model of integration where operators will no longer have market rights to an area. Instead they will be paid to operate the required type and number of services, and the State will keep any revenue.

Another amendment relating to TransLink services will remove the requirements for its operators to conduct a market-based needs assessment. Since they will not take the fare revenue and will have limited opportunity to affect market outcomes it is not appropriate to hold them responsible for meeting patronage targets as currently specified in the Act.

The next amendment, also prompted by the fee-for-service nature of the TransLink contracts, is to remove operator's entitlements to State reimbursement of concession revenue. Since the State will retain fare box revenue and operators will be paid a fixed amount to provide services there will be no revenue shortfall to operators when concession fares are offered.

This Bill will also create new provisions in this Act to facilitate the administration of TransLink contracts. Where it is proposed to declare or amend a TransLink service contract area or route, the chief executive will have a discretion to invite offers from any affected operator, any TransLink service contract holder, or from the public. Compensation may be payable to any affected existing operator who then does not submit an offer or is not awarded a TransLink service contract.

The next amendment is designed to consolidate the existing powers for authorised persons and authorised persons for rail. With the new integrated ticketing system it is expected that the enforcement duties for all three transport modes—buses, ferries and trains—will be performed by one body or group. An officer performing these duties will need to go between transport modes to monitor ticketing and other offences, and should have one set of powers to do so.

In a related amendment the fare evasion and other offence provisions will be consolidated so that the same provisions will apply to all segments of an integrated bus, ferry and train journey.

Another amendment will allow local governments to impose additional requirements to protect their transport property from damage such as graffiti. The Act will continue to provide for a minimum standard of compliance. However, a local government may require, through a local law, a higher standard of compliance in relation to property or infrastructure owned or operated by the local government.

This Bill will also introduce provisions to clarify the process to be followed by Queensland Transport if a TransLink service contract is surrendered, cancelled or terminated. In this situation the chief executive of Queensland Transport will have the discretion to invite any or all TransLink service contract holders to offer for the affected services, or to invite public offers.

Finally, a power is needed to terminate the now existing service contracts held by operators within a declared TransLink area in South East Queensland. This is to allow a new contractual scheme to be implemented which will transform the public transport network into one system that allows passengers to travel easily by bus, train and ferry. The existing service contracts currently include a right of termination in the public interest. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

AURUKUN ASSOCIATES AGREEMENT REPEAL BILL

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy) (12.35 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to repeal the Aurukun Associates Agreement Act 1975, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Mr Robertson, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy) (12.36 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Aurukun Associates Agreement Repeal Bill 2004 proposes to repeal the Aurukun Associates Agreement Act 1975. That act has a long and complicated history. The Aurukun area on the western side of Cape York is home to a bauxite deposit of potentially world-class standards. It is a resource that, if developed effectively, will mean jobs for regional Queensland, a boost to our regional economy, particular benefits for indigenous Queenslanders and wider advantages for the taxpayers of Queensland.

In 1975 the Bjelke-Petersen government passed the Aurukun Associates Agreement Act to authorise an agreement to be made between the state of Queensland and a consortium known as the 'Aurukun Associates', which then consisted of Tipperary Corporation, Billiton Aluminium Australia BV and Aluminium Pechiney Holdings. The terms of the agreement granted a special bauxite mining lease to the associates for a term of 42 years and required them to start

construction on a greenfield aluminium refinery, either within the lease or elsewhere in Queensland, by the end of 1983.

In May 1981, after Tipperary's interests were transferred to the other two companies, the consortium asked for more time to build the refinery, and a five-year extension was granted to the end of 1988. Pechiney became the sole lessee in 1985, and in March 1988 it sought another five-year extension to build the refinery, but the government of the day granted them one year until the end of 1989. Even if we leave aside the fact that this extension was invalid, because the Bjelke-Petersen government granted it after the original extension had expired, we are left with one critical issue. Pechiney did not start building its refinery in accordance with the terms of the agreement. We are not talking about a lapse of a year or two years or five years. It is now almost 15 years since they were due to start building that refinery, and the site sits idle.

Section 3 of the original act gives the agreement the force of law, which essentially means the framers intended the agreement to be considered a statute rather than a contract. Therefore, no contractual rights are affected by this legislation. Pechiney's failure to start work on a refinery by the end of 1988 rendered the agreement of no force or effect, and the company has since had a statutory obligation to surrender the lease. Even so, the Queensland government has been more than patient over the intervening years in our attempts to see the Aurukun bauxite resource developed.

Despite our expectation that Pechiney would develop the resource and build a refinery, the company has never given a firm commitment, despite being the sole lessee for nearly twenty years.

Far from convinced that Pechiney was ready, willing or able to immediately start work on a refinery, the Queensland Government called on Pechiney to surrender the mining lease last October. Despite their statutory obligation, Pechiney, which has since been the subject of a successful hostile takeover bid by Alcan, refused to surrender the lease, and the state was forced to commence legal proceedings in the Brisbane Supreme Court, where proceedings are ongoing.

Without this legislation this matter will not be finally determined until all legal avenues are exhausted, at great expense of time, money, and lost opportunity. The potential legal costs to the Queensland taxpayer of a lengthy Supreme Court trial are enormous and, whatever the outcome, there are likely to be appeals, perhaps all the way to the High Court. These costs and delays, particularly given that the company has been in breach of their agreement for some fifteen years, and that their lease only exists for the purpose of surrender, are simply unjustifiable.

In the meantime, the people of Queensland would be sacrificing the opportunities presented by the bauxite deposit at Aurukun. The medium-term outlook predicts a global shortage of alumina, and as producers scramble to secure increased bauxite supplies, the high-quality Aurukun deposit should not be allowed to sit idle as we wade through the courts. The people of Queensland have already forgone nearly three decades' worth of economic and financial benefits from the Aurukun deposit because of Pechiney's inactivity. As I announced last year, this government now intends to prevent more wasted opportunities by calling for expressions of interest and securing development and investment in the Aurukun deposit as soon as possible once the mining lease is cancelled.

The current climate means that an expression of interest will attract significant international attention, and the long-term results are anticipated to include a new refinery, a key role for the area's local indigenous communities, and billions of dollars of investment in Queensland.

As China rapidly develops as a producer and consumer of aluminium, as Russia's holdings take on more significance, and the landscape of the large European and American corporations shifts, Queensland cannot afford to be left behind. The mineral resources at Aurukun present a unique opportunity to optimise our mineral investment and development and, as a responsible government, we must serve the best interests of Queensland and Queenslanders.

Under this legislation the company will be reimbursed for the mining lease rental, plus interest, they paid between 1989 and 2003— that is, after the agreement was no longer in effect. The state will also pay the company an amount for costs incurred in Supreme Court proceedings to date. Those, however, are the only amounts that will be paid to the company.

I want to make it very clear to this House that this legislation sets no precedent. Twenty-eight years of sovereign patience does not equate to significant sovereign risk.

No valid leases are being cancelled. No contracts are being broken. This is a clear case of a company that has failed to meet its side of an agreement, despite ample opportunity. The Queensland government has been patient, but that patience has come to an end.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

GEOTHERMAL EXPLORATION BILL

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy) (12.47 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to enable and facilitate exploration for geothermal energy, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Mr Robertson, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy) (12.47 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Queensland is rightly recognised as one of the world's top destinations for mineral and coal exploration. We are the world's largest seaborne exporter of coal, and we supply a sizeable amount of the world's aluminium, copper, and zinc.

What has not been so readily recognised until recently, however, is Queensland's vast potential reserves of geothermal energy. We have the potential to become the hot rock capital of Australia. Between five and 10 per cent of Queensland may be lying on top of rocks that are over 200 degrees Celsius.

Queensland is no stranger to geothermal energy. Already, we have the nation's only operational geothermal power plant at Birdsville where bore water is the heat source. Queensland is believed to have more geothermal material than any other state, with 5 to 10 per cent of the state underlain by rocks heated to more than 200 degrees Celsius less than 5,000 metres deep. If water already exists, or can be injected into these rocks, this heat has the potential to be extracted and used to produce electricity, or for other industrial purposes.

One cubic kilometre of rock at a temperature of 250 degrees Celsius contains about as much energy as 40 million barrels of oil. That is more than the combined energy content of Queensland's identified oil and condensate resources. In fact, energy equivalent to Queensland's entire estimated natural gas resources—some 27,500 petajoules—could be contained in less than 120 cubic metres of hot rock, and energy equal to our immense and rich black coal reserves—all 32.7 billion tonnes—could be contained within an area only slightly larger than Beaudesert Shire. It is estimated that Queensland has at least 90,000 cubic metres of hot rocks.

This legislation aims to establish a legal regime for geothermal exploration which will put the Smart State in the box seat of an exciting new industry.

Because of time, I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of my second reading speech in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

It will give industry the certainty it needs to invest in exploration, as well as providing a form of tenure and regulatory structure that will allow geothermal exploration to start as soon as possible.

This is a vital new industry when it comes to fighting the effects of global warming and the greenhouse effect.

Worldwide, the five hottest years on record have all fallen in the past decade. And the ten hottest have all happened since 1990.

We are the owners of a vast source of greenhouse-friendly energy, and we have a moral obligation to use it effectively.

This Bill forms part of the Beattie Government's Cleaner Energy Policy, to reduce greenhouse gases by diversifying our energy mix towards increased usage of gas and renewable resources.

Paralleling the existing arrangements with other resources, under this Bill the State will assert its ownership and control of all geothermal energy in Queensland, and its right to regulate geothermal exploration.

It also provides a form of tenure, the geothermal exploration permit, and a regulatory structure to support it and allow exploration to start.

These tenures will be made available through a competitive tendering process, and the successful tenderers will be required to achieve specified objectives for each year of the permit. This objective-based exploration model is favoured over one based on expenditure for the simple reason that it better achieves the objectives of this legislation.

While this Bill asserts State ownership and control of our geothermal energy, this should not and must not be seen as the resumption of anyone's rights—it is simply a reassertion of the status quo.

The Bill aligns with the Commonwealth's Native Title Act 1993 by extending to native title holders the same rights as ordinary title holders but as geothermal exploration does not fall within that Act's definition of "mining", the right to negotiate provisions will not apply.

The Bill does create certain restricted rights of access to private land for exploration purposes. Naturally, numerous checks and balances have been included to minimise and control any negative effects.

It is important to note that this is only interim legislation, to allow geothermal exploration to go ahead unhindered as we work towards a comprehensive framework to deal with the production of geothermal energy. Production tenure, and the complex issue attending it, will be the subject of future legislation before this House.

Mr Speaker, this Bill is vital to kick-start geothermal exploration in Queensland, an industry with the potential to deliver big returns to Queensland—through millions of dollars in investment, through regional development, through new jobs, and by developing a vast, clean, smart energy source.

Mr Speaker, I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

RESIDENTIAL SERVICES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. M. M. KEECH (Albert—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development) (12.48 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Residential Services (Accommodation) Act 2002, the Residential Services (Accreditation) Act 2002 and other legislation.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Ms Keech, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. M. M. KEECH (Albert—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development) (12.48 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The objective of this bill is to exempt independently operated student accommodation from the Residential Services (Accreditation) Act 2002.

On 23 August 2002, the government introduced a new regulatory regime for the private residential services sector. This sector includes three accommodation types: boarding houses, supported accommodation hostels and aged rental complexes.

The residents of this sector include some of the most vulnerable people in the Queensland community. As such, they are more susceptible to exploitation than most other groups in the community and often are unable to exercise the consumer choices that might otherwise allow them to avoid situations of long-term exploitation or abuse.

The Accreditation Act establishes minimum standards for buildings and services and includes an operator registration and accreditation process. Exemptions from the regulatory regime already exist for student accommodation such as university colleges and school boarding houses. Room-only student accommodation, operated by industry independently from either educational institutions or funding from the Department of Education and the Arts, does not fall within these exemptions, and has been inadvertently caught by the generic definition of a 'residential service' in the Accreditation Act.

Such accommodation was never intended to be captured under the Accreditation Act, as student accommodation is generally of a reasonable standard. In addition, students are not considered part of the same vulnerable consumer group which the Accreditation Act targets.

Without this exemption, the application of the Accreditation Act would result in industry incurring costs and an administrative burden in having to meet legislative compliance requirements.

Government resources would also be diverted from focusing on the vulnerable target group of the legislation. It is therefore important for independently operated student accommodation to be exempt from the Accreditation Act. Independently operated student accommodation is also covered by the tenancy rights and obligations established in the Residential Services (Accommodation) Act 2002. Such accommodation is not regulated by the Residential Tenancies Act 1994.

Exemption of this student accommodation from the Accreditation Act, however, will also mean automatic exemption from the Accommodation Act because the Accommodation Act uses the Accreditation Act's definition of a 'residential service'. Whilst it is not considered necessary for student accommodation to be covered by registration and accreditation requirements, it is considered important to retain tenancy rights for students in this type of accommodation so that this sector is not left without basic legislated tenancy protections.

This bill therefore amends the Accommodation Act to ensure tenancy rights and obligations are preserved for residents of independently operated student accommodation. I have had the opportunity recently of visiting one such facility in Brisbane to gain a first hand understanding of the problems that are faced by providers as a result of their inclusion in the Residential Services (Accreditation) Act.

In summary, the bill benefits industry by removing the imposition of unintended regulatory requirements, ensures more efficient use of government resources in regulating the residential services sector and preserves tenancy rights for students in room-only independently operated student accommodation. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

NATURE CONSERVATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. R. J. MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (Minister for the Environment) (12.51 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Nature Conservation Act 1992.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Mr Mickel, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. R. J. MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (Minister for the Environment) (12.51 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Currently under Queensland's Nature Conservation Act 1992 wildlife may be classified in one of five categories: presumed extinct, endangered, vulnerable, rare, or common. These categories were developed in the early 1990s to assist the management of Queensland's wildlife. The categories were based on either the degree of threat to, or the abundance of, a particular species. Within Australia and globally a range of systems for classifying the conservation status of plants and animals is employed. One of the most widely accepted systems is that developed by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature or IUCN. This is the system used by the federal government.

In 1998 an election commitment was made to introduce additional categories of protected wildlife to the Nature Conservation Act, consistent with those recognised by the IUCN. This bill will meet that commitment. The bill will also facilitate managing wildlife in Queensland by providing a consistent, explicit, objective framework for the classification of species according to their extinction risk. Extensive consultation was conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency to determine which IUCN wildlife categories should be incorporated into the Nature Conservation Act.

The Queensland Conservation Council, the Wildlife Preservation Society, Agforce, the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, the Department of Primary Industries, and the Queensland Scientific Advisory Committee were consulted on this matter. As a result of this consultation the following IUCN wildlife categories are being proposed for the Nature Conservation

Act: extinct in the wild; endangered; vulnerable; near threatened; and least concern. Five of the nine IUCN wildlife categories have been included in this bill. To include the other categories would make the Nature Conservation Act unnecessarily complex and would not provide any additional advantages for the conservation or management of wildlife in Queensland.

The establishment of a new conservation category to be known as near threatened will enable us to be more proactive about conservation. Animals may be classified as near threatened if their population size or distribution is small and may become smaller, if their population has declined or is likely to decline at a faster than usual rate for that species, or if it is in danger of becoming vulnerable in the wild. By introducing a near threatened category, we will be able to identify species which are in decline earlier. This will allow us to act before the wildlife becomes vulnerable to extinction.

It is proposed that the existing Nature Conservation Act category of rare remain for the time being. Although this category is inconsistent with the IUCN categories, it will take time to reassess the 843 species currently listed as rare and assign them to one of the other categories. It is likely that this review will result in many species currently listed as rare being reclassified as near threatened, which will highlight species that could be under threat in the future.

Apart from introducing a near threatened category the other obvious amendment to the existing Nature Conservation Act wildlife categories is changing the name of the common category to that of least concern—this being consistent with IUCN terminology. This is simply a name change. It does not reduce the protection imperative for these species. This name change is desirable. It will mean that the wildlife categories under the Nature Conservation Act will form part of a logical set of wildlife categories that are based on level of threat or extinction risk, as opposed to using a term that implies a level of abundance.

It has also long been recognised that the use of the term 'common' does not reflect the true conservation status of species allocated to this class of wildlife and in many cases can be misleading. The term 'common' also causes needless controversy in assigning species conservation status, as it attracts pressure from interest groups to list species at a higher level than may be warranted simply because the term implies that no threat is present. I seek the leave of the House to incorporate the remainder of my second reading speech into *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Overall, the Bill provides for amendments to the Nature Conservation Act that will make the hierarchy of categories for protected wildlife logical and more consistent with those used by the IUCN. It will do this by:

- Introducing a 'Near threatened' category of protected wildlife to the Nature Conservation Act; and
- Changing the names of two existing categories in the Nature Conservation Act. In particular, the 'Common' category will change to 'Least concern' and the 'Presumed extinct' category will change to 'Extinct in the wild'.

A further amendment proposed in this Bill is the revision of prescriptions for all wildlife categories in the Nature Conservation Act so that they are consistent with the IUCN criteria. In this regard Sections 76 to 80 of the Nature Conservation Act have been revised to incorporate the three broad factors on which the IUCN base their conservation categories, which are:

- population size;
- extent of distribution; and
- rate of change in population size (or surrogates for this such as the rate of loss of habitat.)

Mr Speaker, no species will change conservation status directly because of this Bill.

Species will be reclassified or placed in the new category of 'Near threatened' through the existing statutory processes set out in the Nature Conservation Act.

The Bill will not affect the recent reclassification of the koala population in the southeast Queensland bioregion as 'Vulnerable'.

'Vulnerable' is both an existing Nature Conservation Act category and an IUCN category.

Mr Speaker, while the proposed amendments in the Nature Conservation Amendment Bill 2004 do not constitute major changes to the legislation, they will more closely align wildlife categories in the Nature Conservation Act with the internationally recognised and respected IUCN wildlife classification system that has been designed to give a comprehensive and scientific overview of the status of wildlife.

Adopting IUCN categories that are most useful in the Queensland context for the Nature Conservation Act will give us uniformity at a national and an international level with respect to species conservation.

Mr Speaker, I commend this Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 12.58 p.m. to 2 p.m.

PARLIAMENT OF QUEENSLAND AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (2.00 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Mr Beattie, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (2.00 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Parliament of Queensland Amendment Bill 2004. The bill amends the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 to reinstate a previously applicable exemption in respect of land transactions from the prohibition on members of this assembly transacting business with the state. On 27 November 2003 the CMC and the Auditor-General tabled their reports into matters relating to the Hon. Ken Hayward MP. In response to the tabling of the reports, the previous parliament referred to the former Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee an examination of section 71 of the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 and the procedural amendments recommended by the CMC and Auditor-General in their reports. In addition, I instructed my department to examine the scope of section 71 of the act.

It has been confirmed that, during the drafting stage of the consolidation process in 2001, the specific exemption with respect to land transactions with the state provided for in the Constitution Act 1867 was inadvertently excluded from the consolidated Parliament of Queensland Act 2001. This omission has had the effect of increasing the scope of section 71 beyond that of the previously applicable provisions. Section 71 now applies to cases which were specifically and intentionally excluded by the earlier provisions. The scope of the provision has been extended at least as far as to disqualify members from entering into agreements with the state that involve transactions in land. That would include quite a number of people in this House who have involvement in leasehold land, many of whom sit on the other side of the parliament.

While it is anticipated that the new committee will look at this issue in greater depth, I have requested the preparation of a bill to reinstate the exemption with respect to land transactions as an interim measure. It is proposed that the amendment to section 70 of the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 will, if passed, operate as a transitional provision. The practical effect of the proposed transitional provision will be the same as if the proposed amendment was to apply retrospectively from 6 June 2002, the date upon which the act commenced. The transitional period will ensure that all transactions in land since 6 June 2002 that would have been covered under the previously applicable provisions will be exempted under the amended section 70.

I now turn to the bill. Clause 3 of the bill amends section 70(2) of the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 to specifically exclude certain circumstances from the definition of the term 'transacts business'. Agreements between a member and an entity of the state for the sale or purchase of an interest in land are excluded from the definition, provided that the terms of the agreement for sale or purchase are not more favourable to the member than they would be to a member of the public. Clause 4 of the bill inserts a new section 163 as a transitional provision. The new section provides that, during the transitional period, the prohibition on members transacting business with the state under section 71(2) is taken always to have applied in relation to a contract as if the amendment of section 70(2) had commenced on 6 June 2002, the date of commencement of the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001.

This provision will ensure that contracts that would be excluded from the definition of 'transacts business' under the amended section 70(2) that were entered into between 6 June 2002 and the date of commencement of this amendment will not be invalidated under section 71(2). Similarly, the new section 163 also provides that, in deciding whether a member has contravened section 71(1) during the transitional period, section 72(1)(h) is taken to apply as if the amendment of section 70(2) had commenced on 6 June 2002. This provision will ensure that contracts that would be excluded from the definition of 'transacts business' under the new section

70(2) that were entered into between 6 June 2002 and the date of commencement of the amendment will not be grounds for a resolution by the assembly that a member who entered into such a contract has contravened section 71(1) and, as a consequence, could have their seat declared vacant. I think that is all pretty clear, and I hope it is to everyone else.

The effect of the transitional provision will be to ensure that there is no period of time in which the exemption in respect of land transactions will not have application. It is appropriate that no member be penalised by the previous inadvertent and unpublicised removal of the exemption. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Seeney, adjourned.

TERRORISM (COMMUNITY SAFETY) AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (2.06 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend particular acts to increase community safety, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Mr Beattie, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (2.07 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The events of 11 September 2001, and 12 October 2002 in Bali, fundamentally redefined our lives, as indeed did the recent terrorism bombings in Madrid. In the wake of those tragic events, Australia, like many nations world wide, began a process of assessing and fortifying our capability to prevent and respond to such a catastrophic event on home soil. On 5 April 2002 the Prime Minister and state and territory leaders struck an agreement on a national response to terrorism. On behalf of Queensland, I signed up to this capability development strategy. Since then, Queensland has signed the intergovernmental agreement on Australia's national counterterrorism arrangements. Queensland has also been keenly involved in the drafting of the new national counterterrorism plan and supporting handbook. The intergovernmental agreement, plan and handbook set out arrangements for responding to terrorist incidents in Australian states and territories.

Under the plan, the Commonwealth government declares a 'national terrorist situation' in circumstances including multijurisdictional attacks, threats against civil aviation and those involving chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials. The Commonwealth does this with the agreement of the affected states and territories and the Commonwealth takes overall responsibility for policy and broad strategy. However, the affected states or territories have the primary responsibility for responding to the incident and determining their operational and emergency services response.

The commissioners of police determine the command and resourcing of the national police response. Criminal investigations into a terrorist incident will be undertaken cooperatively through joint task forces with police commissioners determining investigative arrangements.

Terrorist activity can be prosecuted under a range of Commonwealth and state and territory legislation. Indeed, it is difficult to conceive of a terrorist act which is not an offence under Queensland law. From the perspective of prevention, the Commonwealth has the major role in gathering intelligence, which is augmented by state and territory intelligence gathering.

Since 11 September 2001, the Commonwealth has introduced several pieces of legislation significantly enhancing the powers of federal agencies to prevent and respond to acts of terrorism. Further increases in the powers of ASIO agents are mooted. Some of this legislation has been controversial, sparking much debate on the appropriate balance required to enable the protection of our freedom without eroding the rights on which our democratic system is built.

In April 2002 I and other Australian leaders also agreed to review our jurisdictions' legislation to make sure it is sufficiently strong from a counterterrorism perspective. Accordingly, in 2002 Queensland began a process of reviewing our statute book to assess its adequacy and to consider where the legislation needed to be strengthened. This bill is the culmination of that process.

Before I turn to the bill, I am pleased to say that this bill follows other pieces of legislation that have already been introduced in Queensland in response to the new terrorism threat. Those laws include:

- the Terrorism (Commonwealth Powers) Act 2002, which referred state legislative power to the Commonwealth for terrorism offences;
- the Chemical, Biological and Radiological Emergency Powers Amendment Act 2003, which ensures police and other emergency responders have adequate public safety powers to respond to incidents involving chemical, biological or radiological substances;
- amendments to the Director of Public Prosecutions Act 1984, contained in the Evidence (Protection of Children) Amendment Act 2003, which clarify that the Queensland Director of Public Prosecutions can conduct criminal proceedings for Commonwealth offences, including terrorism offences;
- the Australian Crime Commission (Queensland) Act 2003, providing for the operation of the new commission in Queensland; and
- the Disaster Management Act 2003, providing a comprehensive and modern framework for planning for and responding to disasters, including terrorist incidents.

This Terrorism (Community Safety) Amendment Bill continues the process of strengthening our statute book and particularly seeks to ensure that our law enforcement agencies have the necessary powers to protect Queenslanders at home. A key initiative of the bill is to give the Crime and Misconduct Commission—the CMC—legislative responsibility for the investigation of terrorism related major crime. In effect, this means that the CMC will be able to use its full range of coercive powers to prevent or respond to possible terrorist activity, particularly in emergent or rapidly developing circumstances. The CMC had administratively taken on this function, but this bill makes the function more comprehensive and makes it more transparent because parliament itself will be conferring the terrorism function.

The bill also allows the CMC, when investigating terrorism matters, to inspect and seize financial records, seize passports and to compel a person to provide information on movements of money or assets. The bill enables the Queensland Police Commissioner to enlist the help of police from other jurisdictions seamlessly in the event of an actual or imminent threat of a terrorist act in Queensland. It allows police to seek court approval to conduct secret searches of premises for evidence of terrorism.

In increasing these powers the government has taken care to ensure that an appropriate balance is struck between empowering law enforcement agencies to combat terrorism while maintaining sufficient protection of civil liberties. That balance is an important one and we believe that we have achieved it. Some increases in power have therefore been limited to terrorism related activity. They have also been subjected to additional safeguards. For example, interstate police called in to prevent or respond to a terrorist act in Queensland will be named, subject to the direction of Queensland police officers, and the Queensland Commissioner of Police will include in the police annual report information about these powers being exercised.

In other circumstances, however, a more general increase in the power of law enforcement agencies has been considered justified. For example, if police know that evidence of organised crime or terrorism is not yet at a place but expect it to arrive within the next 72 hours, the bill allows the Supreme Court to grant police a warrant to conduct an undercover search for evidence within that time. This is a power already available to the CMC.

Another extension of law enforcement powers concerns surveillance warrants. Currently, the CMC and police can get warrants from the Supreme Court to conduct surveillance but must generally identify a person to be surveilled. This bill recognises that it is not always possible to identify a person involved in the commission of an offence or terrorist act before surveillance is conducted. It therefore allows surveillance of a place if evidence of an offence is likely to be at that place.

The new offence of sabotage introduces heavy criminal sanctions for offenders who intend to cause major damage or disruption to a public facility even if they only succeed in causing lesser

damage. The bill also introduces a new offence of threatening sabotage. These offences would cover, but are not limited to, acts or threatened acts of terrorism. As a safeguard against inappropriate use of these offences—for example, against legitimate protesters or those taking strike action—a person can only be prosecuted with the consent of a Crown Law officer.

Finally, the bill introduces a new exemption to the Freedom of Information Act 1992 to protect matter which, if disclosed, could cause damage to the security of the Commonwealth or a state or territory. The provision is based—with necessary modification—on a security exemption that has always been contained in the Commonwealth FOI legislation and has also recently been incorporated into Victorian FOI legislation.

In March of this year the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee—the PCMC—tabled its three-year review of the Crime and Misconduct Commission. That report made a number of recommendations for additional powers for terrorism related investigations, in part based on submissions received from the CMC. The CMC made similar submissions to the government during its review of Queensland legislation. This bill therefore contains the government's response to recommendations 21 to 27 of the PCMC report, and I accordingly report to the parliament.

In two areas the bill and the PCMC are similar in providing extended powers to the CMC for terrorism investigations. However, there are variations in respect of the extent of the enlargement of these powers. The bill also adopts the PCMC recommendation for the extension of powers dealing with assumed identities in the witness protection area.

In some other areas the PCMC made recommendations that the government will consider in the context of national discussions directed towards maximising national uniformity and consistency. There is one PCMC recommendation about emergency covert search powers without a warrant that the government has not adopted on the balance of competing considerations with respect to civil liberties concerns. I have today written to the committee providing further rationale for the government's responses to those recommendations. The government's full response to the PCMC's three-year review will be tabled at a later date.

This bill is part of the government's commitment to enhance community safety in the current environment of threatened security. Following the tragedy of the bombings in Madrid recently, reviews are being conducted of legislation affecting our transport systems in Queensland and nationally to ensure that we are continually vigilant and as prepared as possible for the unthinkable.

One of the difficulties in the current climate is that it is impossible for any government or leader to give an absolute guarantee of safety to the community against acts of terrorism. It is simply impossible. But what we can do is to ensure that the appropriate laws are in place and the appropriate measures are in place to as much as is humanly possible guarantee public safety. That is what we are doing. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Seeney, adjourned.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 18 March (see p. 66).

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition (2.19 p.m.): The opposition will not be supporting the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I am sure that will come as no surprise to members of this House. This is the fourth major debate I have participated in in this House on moves by this government to control land development in Queensland. It is the fourth such piece of legislation that has been introduced since 1999.

It deeply saddens me to see this issue continuing to be used as a political football by a government that just does not care about the people who are most affected by the regulations it continues to introduce to this parliament. There is no commitment in this government to a sensible resolution of this issue. There is no commitment to the type of sustainable management that natural resource managers and land managers throughout Queensland have been striving for for many years, and striving for quite successfully.

For this government, this piece of legislation and the three pieces of legislation that preceded it are simply about politics. They are simply about political opportunities and about opportunities to gain preference votes from minority groups. This is a bill that is based on deceit. It is a bill that has

relied on misinformation and deliberate untruths to engender support. It is a bill that has been protected from scrutiny by government cover-ups and a systematic suppression of the truth.

It is fitting that this is the first bill introduced to the new parliament by the re-elected Beattie government, because this bill typifies the Beattie Labor government. The Beattie Labor government is, as this bill is, based on deceit, promoted by misinformation and protected by cover-ups. This bill is a clear reflection of the government itself and its approach to this issue. At its core, this bill is dishonest as the government is dishonest. It divides Queenslanders one against the other, just as this government has divided Queenslanders. It would not survive honest scrutiny of all of the facts and thus depends on elaborate government-engineered cover-ups of those facts to protect its false integrity. It is a bill that is based on emotive political slogans cynically aimed at securing preference votes. There is no commitment to sustainable management of our natural resources, there is no commitment to fairness or justice for the people affected and there is no real concern for the environment of Queensland. This bill is about politics. It is an accurate reflection of the dishonest, deceitful and divisive approach of the Beattie Labor government.

The bill we are debating today has been described as an assault on the future of rural Queensland. It will end sustainable agricultural development opportunities for land-holders and it will stifle economic growth in regional communities. It formalises in legislation an emotive, populist agenda to end the clearing of native vegetation in Queensland by December 2006. It imposes the economic cost of that emotive, populist agenda squarely on a relatively small number of land-holders who have been deliberately demonised and vilified as part of an inflammatory approach to the issue of native vegetation management by this government in this parliament since 1999.

This bill contains nothing regarding compensation. We have only promises from the minister and the Premier about compensation that would be offered to land-holders that are most affected. Like just about everything else about this legislation, the compensation being offered to those land-holders is misleading and it will prove to be cruelly disappointing. The government's approach to compensation is in keeping with its approach to the whole legislation. It is more about creating the right impression in the urban media than any real attempt to be fair to the land-holders who will bear the burden of this legislation.

Since 1998 under the Beattie Labor government the issue of vegetation management has been turned into a political football, characterised by a series of emotive, divisive scare campaigns and political preference deals instead of solutions based on trust, fairness and properly tested science that the land-holding community has been asking for. It is all about politics. Under the Beattie Labor government the vegetation management debate has been shrouded in deceit and secrecy, with important information prepared by the government's own departments—the Department of Primary Industries and the Department of Natural Resources—taken to cabinet simply to hide it. Departmental reports were taken to cabinet to hide them from public scrutiny simply because they did not suit Labor's divisive political agenda.

The Beattie government's determination to portray farmers as environmental vandals in this debate is one of the saddest, most unjust and unfair things that I have seen in this parliament or anywhere else for that matter. That determination to portray farmers as environmental vandals was clearly evident during the election campaign. Labor released a glossy brochure in city seats talking up its policy to ban broadscale tree clearing by 2006. It was emotive, inflammatory stuff. Messages from the Premier in the brochure ended with lines such as, 'Only Labor will stop the bulldozers and save Queensland's trees.' These brochures, along with land clearing advertisements run on Brisbane radio during the campaign, were the clearest evidence yet that Labor's land clearing ban was all about a grubby grab for Greens preferences rather than any interest at all in securing sustainable agricultural development or sustainable management of our agricultural lands and our natural resources into the future.

The Beattie government's ads and brochures were eerily similar to the advertisements that were run by other irresponsible organisations such as the Wilderness Society, which claimed in its ad that land clearing was turning Queensland into a wasteland. The whole debate has come to be encapsulated in a series of cheap, slogan-like claims that have no basis in fact and cannot be substantiated by any sort of science. The claim by the Wilderness Society that land clearing was turning Queensland into a wasteland is a good example. The government's continual claim that land clearing is causing massive salinity outbreaks is another good example. Neither the wasteland claimed by the Wilderness Society or the massive salinity outbreaks claimed by the government can be found if those parties are challenged to leave their comfortable urban existence and point them out in reality.

I remind the House and the minister of the salinity tour the minister challenged me to undertake to find the 48,000 hectares of Queensland that was affected by salinity. The minister stood up in here and told the House that he had a travel pack for me. He was going to come out and show me where those 48,000 hectares of salinity were and he would report to the House when he got back about how he had embarrassed me and made a fool of me. He came out, all right, and we spent all day in a convoy of departmental Toyotas, driving around my electorate and around a big area of central Queensland. It was just as I told the minister it would be. We found a small number of isolated, distinct outbreaks of salinity that would have totalled five hectares. One of my favourite memories is the absolutely dishevelled, frustrated look on the faces of the minister and his staff as we very politely put them back on the plane at Thangool after their day in the bush when they realised that their 48,000 hectares of salinity was as I had been telling them—a figment of their own imagination.

The minister then said that he would welcome the opportunity to show me the rest of it. I am still waiting! I extend the invitation to the minister again today. I am still waiting for the opportunity to travel with him to find the 47,995 hectares that we could not find when the minister came to central Queensland that day. It was a great exercise in cutting through to the reality of the issue. When members of the government are confronted with the reality of the issue, all of the emotive hype and inflammatory rhetoric that sounds so wonderful here in this urban environment suddenly becomes so clearly ridiculous, as it did that day in central Queensland.

We have not heard quite so much in this parliament about the great salinity threat since that salinity tour. The most extravagant claim of all has been that land development in Queensland has been the cause of climate change and that those terrible farmers—who have been demonised and vilified—should be blamed for every abnormal weather event, whether it be a drought, a flood, a cyclone or a heatwave.

In keeping with the deceit and the secrecy, the Beattie government has not been interested in properly testing the science surrounding this issue. The state government refused to assist with trials conducted by the Australian Greenhouse Office and Agforce to examine the greenhouse gas impacts of tree clearing for fears its blanket ban would not stand that scientific scrutiny. Instead of engaging constructively with land-holders, the Premier preferred to play his silly political games—just as the government has played silly political games with this issue and with land-holders' lives since 1998.

Agforce tried to arrange meetings with the Premier last November to discuss its alternative proposals that would have attempted at least to attain the same greenhouse gas benefits without the draconian blanket bans. The Premier then went on ABC Radio in early December last year professing he would do all he could to help with these trials. Then two weeks later the *Courier-Mail* reported that the Premier's office had vetoed any state contribution or any assistance or any cooperation with the Australian Greenhouse Office and Agforce in their assessment of the greenhouse benefits or otherwise of this approach. The Premier either did a spectacular backflip by deciding not to help with these trials after initially saying he would or he just does not have a clue what is going on in his office. It seems that this agenda has been driven from the Premier's office, and we have seen a number of examples where the minister who has the responsibility for this legislation in the House today has been overruled by the faceless people within the Premier's office.

According to the *Courier-Mail*, Natural Resources Minister Stephen Robertson said that he believed the concept of the greenhouse trials was worth consideration but he was obviously overruled by the Premier's office or by the Premier himself. Perhaps the minister in summing up on this debate might like to give us the real story about why this state government was not prepared to cooperate with the Australian Greenhouse Office in looking at the real situation with regard to the Kyoto compliance or otherwise of the woodlands that are involved in the land clearing debate in Queensland. All too often I think there is a perception sold that somehow or other the land being cleared is native rainforest—lush rainforest that has huge environmental benefits—when in fact much of the land being cleared, especially in western Queensland, has no resemblance at all to the type of rainforest that is currently used in television footage. We are talking about very sparsely scattered woodland with stunted woodland species that can be managed only by the type of land clearing that land-holders have been responsibly using for some time.

Of course these claims of waste lands, saline deserts and catastrophic weather events are hysterical and clearly ridiculous to the people involved directly in land management. Unfortunately, however, the claims make great television advertisements and the images are manipulated to

create and reinforce a completely false impression by those who are not interested in the truth, who are not interested in the reality, who are interested simply in the political opportunity that can be generated from this issue.

The reality, as those of us who live with and manage the natural ecosystems of Queensland know only too well, is far different. I will use again today the government's own figures, as I have done a number of times in the last three debates. I will use the government's own figures again today to clearly demonstrate the dishonesty and the deceit that have been used to drive a campaign to inflame this issue and turn it into an emotive political campaign. I will go through those figures again today in the House without any real hope that members opposite will take any notice because they are not interested in the figures, they are not interested in the facts; they are interested in the politics. But it is appropriate to put on record again just what the figures are, and they are the government's own figures. They are not open for debate; they are the government's own figures, and they clearly set out the level of dishonesty and deceit that has been involved in this issue.

Let us take a look at those figures. For the benefit of the members who have not heard this debate before, the figures are taken from this document—a document commonly referred to as the SLATS document. SLATS stands for the Statewide Land and Tree Study and it is produced by the Queensland government's Natural Resources and Mines Department. It is that document, in conjunction with the Queensland Herbarium's other documents, upon which all of the statistics relating to land management in Queensland are based. The Queensland Herbarium recently released analysis of the 2001 data showed that 81.3 per cent of Queensland is covered with what is classified as remnant vegetation—81.3 per cent. The figure for 1997 was 82.3 per cent—a one per cent difference since 1997 and hardly a wasteland by any definition when we have in excess of 80 per cent of the state covered by remnant vegetation.

The figure most often quoted by the Premier and the minister when they get in front of the television cameras is that 378,000 hectare figure for total land clearing in Queensland which is taken from the SLATS document. It sounds like a heck of a lot to somebody who does not understand the size and the scale of Queensland. In the document—and I had to look hard to find it—are the figures which give that clearing figure some perspective, and that is the figure for the total woody vegetation cover for Queensland. So what is the total area of woody vegetation cover for Queensland out of which this 378,000 hectares is being cleared? The total from the SLATS document is 81 million hectares. So 378,000 hectares is being cleared out of a total of 81 million hectares. That means 0.46 per cent of the woody vegetation in Queensland was cleared according to that SLATS document in the year that it reports on—2001.

We have to remember that that figure itself—that 387,000 hectare figure—was considerably inflated because of the political hype that has been injected into this argument. There was a degree of abnormal clearing in that figure, and I have spoken about that at length in this House before. Even if we take that 378,000 hectare figure, it represents 0.46 per cent of the woody vegetation in Queensland.

To put it in some perspective, it would take almost 220 years at the current clearing rate to achieve anything like the wasteland situation that is so often referred to in the emotive television advertising. Of course no-one wants that to happen and it would not happen. I am not suggesting that it should happen, but it puts into perspective how ridiculous the claims are. It puts into perspective the issue of land development in Queensland in terms of the size and the scale of the state.

It is interesting to note—and I have spoken about this again and again in the House and we never get an acceptance of this figure, even though the figure is taken from the government's own documents—that that 81 million hectares of total woody vegetation in Queensland has increased since these figures have been recorded. It has increased from 76 million hectares. There are five million hectares more of woody vegetation in Queensland today than there was when these SLATS documents started to take these measurements and record these figures.

Those of us who are involved with the management of these natural ecosystems know that that is happening. We know that is happening. The departmental officers know that is happening. It is happening because of thickening of native vegetation and it is happening because of the encroachment of that vegetation into areas that were previously grasslands. Yet that is totally denied by the minister and the people in the Premier's office who drive this political agenda.

There is ample evidence in a wide range of ecosystems across Queensland where the removal of the annual burning or the biannual burning that used to occur in its natural state has

resulted in quite extraordinary thickening of vegetation and quite worrying encroachment of vegetation into what was previously grasslands. That is an issue that really has to be addressed. I will return to that later during this contribution. However, I do accept that to some small extent some provisions have been made to address that thickening and encroachment.

The government's dishonesty and deceit has extended far beyond just misusing or ignoring these figures in the SLATS report. A key example of its deceit and secrecy in this debate has been its propensity to cover up information on vegetation management produced by the highly respected departmental scientists in both the minister's own department and in the Department of Primary Industries. The government's initial tactic has been to deny the existence of reports that did not suit its purpose in the first place. Then when freedom of information or other means confirms the existence of the information, the Beattie government has reverted to the well used, tried and true cabinet cover-up tactic—that is, it claims the information cannot be released because it has taken it to cabinet.

There have been a number of examples during the public debate of the suppression of information that I believe has no place in our democratic system. Despite whatever opinions any of us hold about this or any other legislation—about this or any other issue—we should all support full and honest debate with all of the available information accessible to the participants in that public debate. That is a basic tenet for democracy to work: for information to be available so that people can make up their own minds about the credibility of that information or otherwise.

The legislation can have no credibility when a government and a minister have to resort to suppressing their own departmental officers, when a government has to resort—as it has done in the case of this issue—to ordering those people it employs on our behalf to destroy their own work and to resort to hiding documents from scrutiny by misusing cabinet exemptions from freedom of information laws. That is what has happened in the preparation of this legislation.

The work of the government's own officers, who supported the widespread thickening of the native vegetation and the encroachment of woody vegetation into grasslands about which I spoke before and which was reinforced by the figures from the SLATS document—about why that is happening and the extent to which that is happening—has been harshly suppressed. Those officers involved in that work have been severely curtailed in their activities simply because it did not suit the government's political agenda. The government, the minister, the Premier and the Premier's office were not interested in the facts of the matter. They were not interested in the scientific work that has been done by the departmental officers whom they themselves employed; they were simply interested in the politics.

Let me give honourable members another example. In the *Queensland Country Life* newspaper last year Property Rights Australia revealed that the DPI had produced a report that estimated the economic impact to land-holders of uncontrolled woodland thickening would be about $900 million, blowing out of the water forever the idea that this $150 million in assistance payments that was being flouted around was even close to adequate. Attempts to access the report through freedom of information were stymied and drawn out over five months instead of the 45 days that the legislation requires. The request was ultimately denied because the Beattie government had taken the report and the other relevant politically sensitive information to cabinet simply to keep it away from public scrutiny. You can bet that none of the cabinet ministers actually read those documents but that it was taken there simply to deny access to the people who were involved in the public debate about this issue.

On the basis of what was revealed through the FOI request it is believed the report was originally prepared for the Productivity Commission inquiry into the impacts of native vegetation regulations, but it was not used. *Queensland Country Life* reported that information available to it was that staff were ordered to destroy their research due to its political sensitivity simply because it did not fit the government's political agenda.

A number of mixed messages have been coming from the Beattie government about this report and it got itself into all sorts of trouble, which normally happens when people try to cover up and tell lies about a situation such as this. The Primary Industries Minister and the Premier denied the report even existed when they spoke to the media on 15 and 16 January this year. On the ABC's *Country Hour*, Premier Beattie said—

I don't know anything about a report like that. There's no Government report that I'm aware of. It's never been to Cabinet, it was never drawn to my attention.

In the *Courier-Mail* on 16 January a spokesman for the Primary Industries Minister, Henry Palaszczuk, denied the minister's office was aware of the report. He, too, denied its existence. But

then on 29 January, Natural Resources Minister Stephen Robertson, speaking on 4BC Radio, confirmed the existence of the report and said it was up to Henry Palaszczuk and Peter Beattie to determine whether or not to release it to the public.

So who is telling the truth? Who actually knew what was going on and who was controlling this agenda? Was it the Natural Resources Minister, the Premier, the Primary Industries Minister or some faceless people driving this political agenda that is all about politics and has nothing to do with sustainable management?

In addition to hiding reports, the Beattie government has also conveniently chosen to ignore any reports that do not suit its political agenda. The most obvious example of this is the independent Productivity Commission draft report into the impacts of native vegetation regulations. The report basically echoes the position that the Nationals and other rural based groups have been maintaining and blasts the Beattie government's vegetation management laws, stating that inflexible rules have imposed significant costs on land-holders, sometimes for little environmental benefit and sometimes causing more harm than good. The Productivity Commission report stated that the effectiveness of tree clearing laws had been compromised by a lack of clear objectives, negative incentives for land-holders to keep trees—the type of thing that we have been saying in this House since 1999—particularly due to inadequate compensation and financial assistance, and the lack of flexibility towards the concept of developing regional solutions to regional problems.

I hope that sounds familiar to people in this parliament. It should sound familiar to people in this parliament because it has been repeated over and over again by members on this side of the House, and it was reinforced and supported by the independent Productivity Commission. The Productivity Commission's report highlighted that blanket bans on clearing can have an adverse environmental outcome and often in reality do more harm than good. The commission found that vegetation management laws can prevent land-holders from developing properties and introducing cost-saving innovations such as more efficient irrigation systems that improve environmental sustainability—not create wastelands or huge salinity outbreaks, but improve environmental sustainability and sustainable management.

Significantly, preliminary estimates of impacts on the Murweh shire in south-west Queensland found tree clearing restrictions combined with woodland thickening would strip $180 million from that shire alone over the next 30 to 40 years. This information would certainly correlate with the hidden DPI report which found that woodland thickening state wide could have a $900 million adverse effect on land-holders. However, the Beattie government has hidden this report in cabinet. So we have no way of comparing the DPI and the Productivity Commission's reports. Overall, the Productivity Commission's report is an indictment of the Beattie government's attempts to subvert the regional planning process and seek a simplistic political solution to what is a complex land management issue that should be resolved fairly and in the best interests of Queensland's future.

The Beattie government's cover-up of the $900 million DPI report and the dismissal of the Productivity Commission report are merely a continuation of the Beattie government's deceit and secrecy over the vegetation management regime that began as soon as Labor came to power and has been debated in this House since 1998. A secret report taken to cabinet by Premier Beattie in 1999 estimated that $500 million would be needed to compensate Queensland land-holders for lost value and lost production as a result of a total ban on tree clearing. In my view, the Premier reached an all-time low in public administration last year when he vilified and rubbished 20 of the Department of Primary Industries' officers who put that report together, simply because it did not suit the political agenda. Those people—public servants—were subjected to vilification and rubbishing by a Premier who did not want to recognise the work that they had done.

Those DPI officers were simply doing their jobs and they were hung out to dry by a government that did not want to listen to the results of the work they had done. Under the Beattie Labor government there has been an equal lack of cooperation with land-holders who too have a wealth of knowledge about sustainable property management. Those people's private property rights have been ignored and their alternative proposals to a blanket ban on land clearing have been dismissed out of hand. Not only have their proposals been dismissed out of hand but they have been vilified and demonised purely because their proposals fail to conform with Labor's political agenda.

They have been vilified and demonised in the most profoundly unfair way as part of the government's emotive campaign. As I said in my introduction to this speech, it is one of the most

unfair and unreasonable attacks that I can ever remember—that is, the way the Labor government has vilified and demonised those people who have been involved in the sustainable land management of Queensland's natural resources for generations in many cases. The unfair way that they have been portrayed as part of a political campaign that has nothing to do with reality or the delivery of real outcomes quite rightly still engenders a huge amount of anger in me and those communities.

In contrast, the Nationals believe that a responsible state government has an obligation to work with land-holders to sustainably develop our natural resource base for future generations just as governments have done in the past. The Nationals believe that the sustainable management of our land, water and vegetation underpins the quality of life of all Queenslanders and the success of our vital primary industries. We know that land-holders in rural communities have made huge progress towards achieving sustainable management across the wide range of Queensland landscapes.

We recognise and respect the vast store of local knowledge and accumulated wisdom that exists within that community. We recognise and respect the willingness of those people to be involved. That was demonstrated and has been demonstrated with the formation of the regional vegetation management committees and the work that they were prepared to put in on a voluntary basis.

It is a tragedy that that great asset of wisdom, knowledge and goodwill has not just been ignored but belittled and derided by the Beattie Labor government. We know only too well the investment that has been made by land-holders in their futures, the futures of their families and the futures of their communities in responsibly developing their land at a huge cost to them. We are deeply disappointed that the Beattie Labor government has refused to work with land-holders to develop a legislative approach that would ensure both sustainable agricultural development and the protection of the environment. It is a monumental injustice to destroy their future plans and it is even worse to denigrate their great progress and vilify and demonise them in the process.

Let us look at the bill before the House. The reality is that this bill and regime that it will put in place is going to be imposed on the people involved with the natural resource management in Queensland. The bill introduces a ban on broadscale clearing of remnant vegetation by 2006. It provides a transitional clearing cap of 500,000 hectares during the next two years. With clearing applications already in the system being counted, it is expected that they will account for half of this transitional cap. The remainder, somewhere around 200,000 hectares, is expected to be decided through a ballot.

This ballot is an interesting concept. The ballot is supposedly going to happen in September with the government then taking a year to assess the applications with all the clearing to occur before 31 December 2006. It is going to be very interesting to see how those time frames are achieved in reality and how realistic they are. A whole range of issues are involved with the issuing of permits and permits being issued at various times. I will be pursuing these details in the committee stage of this debate. There are a number of issues involving the time the permits are being issued and how long those permits are current. As I understand it, the process is at aimed at ending clearing on 31 December 2006.

The minister said in his second reading speech that a one-size statute cannot fit all, but this total ban on remnant clearing is essentially a one-size-fits-all approach. The bill provides for the development of regional codes to be used to assess applications for clearing under the ballot and to provide guidance for vegetation management activities like thinning and encroachment. These codes have to fall into line with the overarching policy of a total ban on the clearing of remnant vegetation.

These codes are to be based on the work of the regional vegetation management committees. A huge amount of work has been done by people in a voluntary capacity as part of the regional vegetation management committee process. Some 350 people were working in a voluntary capacity to put in place some 24 plans dealing with remnant vegetation for the different regions across the state. All of that work is now supposedly going to be compressed into the development of these codes. All of that work will become totally redundant in 2006.

I turn now to the issue of compensation to land-holders because it is an issue that certainly is an essential part of the debate. I note that the government is being very careful not to refer to it as compensation but instead refer to it as structural based assistance or some other term. But nowhere in the bill was there any mention of this assistance to adversely affected land-

holders—irrespective of how it is being termed. It is not mentioned in the bill. I am informed that there is no intention to introduce a regulation to cover this particular issue.

There is no legislative requirement for the Beattie government, under this piece of legislation, to pay any money to anybody or to provide any assistance to any of the affected land-holders. What we are being asked to do and what those people are being asked to do is take the government on trust—to trust the government to pay them some form of compensation or assistance that will perhaps or perhaps not compensate them for their loss. There is no attempt to make a payment of financial assistance or compensation part of this legislation and there is absolutely no mention of it in the legislation.

It is absolutely incredulous that the Beattie government is saying to Queensland land-holders, 'Just trust us. Just trust us to treat you fairly with compensation.' After all that has happened with regard to vegetation management since 1998, the Beattie government is now saying to Queensland land-holders, 'Just trust us to do the right thing by you.' After all the deceit and dishonesty that land-holders have been subject to in the last five years—only a small portion of which I have reminded the minister present in the House about this afternoon—with regard to vegetation management they are being asked to trust the whole compensation regime.

The state government has destroyed the trust that has existed between land-holders and government in Queensland. The Beattie Labor government has no right to ask the land-holders to trust it with this issue of compensation. The moral argument for the inclusion of a compensation provision cannot be denied. It has been recognised by the government and the minister. It has been recognised in media reporting and assurances in public debate. It has not been recognised in reality by its inclusion in this legislation.

Here we have a situation where particular individuals are being asked to bear the costs of a provision that is designed to promote a community benefit. Individuals are being asked to accept a restriction on their financial situation for the benefit of the rest of us, the broad community. It follows indisputably that if the community requires a benefit then the community should be prepared to bear the costs associated with that benefit. If we as a community, if we as a group of people, decide that this is worth doing—whatever 'this' is—then we should be prepared to bear the costs of that and we should not ask for those costs to be borne by particular individuals. We should not inflict that cost upon particular individuals for our benefit. That is immoral.

The minister and other members of this House—the member for Toowoomba North was a great contributor to this sort of argument in previous debates—have put forward the argument a number of times that somehow or other the government cannot afford compensation. It would cost too much. The minister said at a meeting in Cairns which I attended that it would 'break the state'. The state could not afford to do it. It is absurd to argue that we as a community cannot afford to do something, yet we expect a group of individuals to bear that cost. How can we possibly assume that if we cannot afford it a small group of individuals can afford the cost that we collectively cannot or that we collectively will not bear?

The other side of course is that a small group of people somehow can afford it. Somehow a small group of people—whether it is 3,000 or 5,000 or whatever the number is of those who are affected by a particular statute—can afford the cost of this legislation being imposed upon them, but as a state, as a community, as some three and a half or four million people we cannot afford it. It is an absurd argument. There are benefits being sought, and in many cases those benefits are worth while and those benefits are certainly worth attaining and the community certainly is prepared to meet the cost of attaining those benefits. But those benefits are for the whole community, and the whole community should pay.

The whole community should accept the cost, and that is an argument that has been put forward in this House since 1999 when the legislation was first introduced. It should have been accepted on that occasion. It should have been part of the original legislation back in 1999. It has been rejected by the government when it has been put forward in a number of amendments since then, and it should have been part of this legislation. If the government was serious about meeting its moral obligation to share the cost of this legislation across the whole community, then that compensation regime should have been part of this legislation.

The compensation provisions should be clearly spelt out as part of this bill. There should be no room for the government to wriggle and squirm out of its commitment to pay that compensation to land-holders. But just how useful will this assistance be to land-holders? The Beattie government, as I said, is at pains to point out that it is not compensation to be paid for the land that will be locked up forever—never to be used and never to be accessed again—and it

will not be compensation for the loss of productivity and the viability of rural businesses. Rather, it is said to be some sort of project based assistance to help land-holders to build up existing businesses on their land.

How land-holders are going to build up their existing businesses when large chunks of their land are locked up is not explained by the government, and we have no idea what land-holders will have to do to be eligible for this help. Many land-holders I have spoken to have no other option but to continue to develop their land. What they will be eligible for and how they will become eligible is a mystery. The government is asking them to take it on trust. I well remember the day that a question was asked here in the parliament of the Premier. The Premier was struggling to answer it and turned to the Minister for Primary Industries and said, 'We're going to help them build one of those things where they keep all the cattle—a feedlot.' How absurdly ridiculous to suggest to property holders in the broad pastoral areas of western Queensland that somehow the only assistance they will be able to access is assistance for the development of intensive livestock industries, which are totally unsuited for that environment and totally unsuited for that geographic location.

But what assistance will be offered and what eligibility criteria there will be is something that has not been made clear. It is something that the minister has not spoken about in his second reading speech. It is something that I will certainly be attempting to establish during the committee stages of this debate even though there is nothing in this legislation that puts in place that compensation regime. We just have to wait and see according to the government. We have to take the government on trust. I believe that that is simply not good enough. It is simply not good enough in any circumstances. It is even less acceptable now in the current climate given the history of this issue since 1998.

The figure of $150 million is the one that the minister likes to talk about. It sounds like a heck of a lot to an urban television audience, and that is what it is designed for. We are told that there is $130 million to help land-holders build up existing enterprises or establish new businesses on their land. In its overview of the new vegetation management regime, the government states that 'part of the $130 million may be used to buy properties that are no longer viable'. This, too, poses numerous questions, such as how much of the $130 million will be set aside to buy those properties and how many properties does the government intend buying out? How badly affected will those land-holders have to be before the government agrees to buy them out? We do not know the answer to all of those questions. We do not know any of that detail because it is not in the legislation. There is no regulation. There is no indication at all besides a semicontinual stream of press releases singing its praises and showing that the government cares. But being expected to trust a government in this situation when it has been shown to be so unworthy is entirely unreasonable.

There is also $12 million which is apparently aimed at encouraging land-holders not to clear regrowth, and that is fair enough. There are particular situations where there are areas of regrowth that should be conserved, that should be left to regenerate. They are particularly sensitive areas. It is right and proper that an amount of money be set aside to compensate people who own those areas, to encourage them to allow those areas to regenerate and to encourage them to look after those special areas. Then there is another $8 million which the government says is for the development of best practice management systems. That is apparently being allocated to interest groups or people who are involved in this area. I will certainly be seeking the detail of that, because once again we do not have any detail. We are being told that there is an $8 million figure. Once again, that sounds very good to the urban media audience, and that is what it is designed to do. There is simply no detail as to how that money should be used.

All in all, it is pretty clear that land-holders adversely affected by these laws should not expect the state government's cheque in the mail any time soon. Like other state government assistance schemes, like other compensation schemes, the people who are going to be affected by this legislation will be cruelly disappointed on the basis of previous government assistance that was never fully developed or proved inaccessible for fishermen, canefarmers and drought-affected farmers to name but a few. Queensland land-holders should not have a high expectation of the compensation regime or the assistance regime that is being offered as part of this legislation.

It is interesting to also record that the Liberal-National federal government has refused to have any part in the Beattie government's flawed land clearing legislation because it recognises the unfairness to land-holders. It recognises the lack of science at the base of this legislation and the extent to which this is about politics rather than sustainable management and fact. In federal parliament on 3 May the Agriculture Minister, Warren Truss, made it quite clear that if the

Queensland government insists on taking unilateral decisions then it must accept the responsibility and the final consequence of those decisions. Mr Truss said that the federal government was keen to ensure that land clearing in Queensland was better managed and better controlled but that the Beattie government had refused to cooperate with the federal government and refused to cooperate with industry groups.

Mr Truss noted that the New South Wales government was able to negotiate with conservationists and land-holders to achieve an acceptable land clearing agreement and the Queensland government did not even try. Mr Truss summarised the position of the federal Liberal-National government by saying—

... the decision on land clearing has been taken without regard to science, without properly considering the needs of land-holders and without proper consultation with the Australian government—and it will not therefore have our financial support.

This was backed up by the Liberal federal Environment Minister, Dr David Kemp, who told *Queensland Country Life* on 8 April that the Commonwealth would not reward the lack of consultation, autocratic approach and poor policy of the Queensland government by providing financial support. I congratulate Dr David Kemp, the Liberal federal Environment Minister, on his accurate summation of the situation.

I reiterate that the Nationals believe that the state government has a responsibility to work with land-holders and the wider community to sustainably develop our natural resource base for future generations. We believe that a joint Commonwealth-state government agreement on land clearing based on trust, fairness and sound science is the only approach that will stand the test of time. It is the only approach that will achieve the support of the stakeholders. A long-term solution to the land clearing issue must ensure that land-holders have resource security and security of tenure and must ensure that the land-holders have confidence in and involvement in the process.

The Nationals support the regional vegetation management planning process as different solutions are undoubtedly necessary for different areas. With its blanket ban, the Beattie government will effectively kneecap the regional vegetation management planning process and thumb its nose at the hundreds of people who have been working to develop local solutions and the thousands more people who have been working on their own properties to develop sustainable management for many years.

The Nationals believe that a realistic, fully funded assistance scheme to reduce the levels of land clearing across Queensland is necessary. This scheme should compensate for the loss of viability and productivity and the loss of property value. Above all, the scheme must be based on science. Above all, it must be based on fact. Above all, it must be about achieving sustainable management, not achieving Green preferences. Above all, it must be about science, not politics. It must encompass local knowledge and it must be based on fact, not political slogans.

While we are steadfastly opposed to this bill, I welcome the Beattie government's belated acceptance of the need to address concerns relating to regrowth and encroachment and the need for a property based mapping system. That acceptance is long overdue and I welcome the inclusion of that in this legislation. These are issues that other members of the Nationals and I have been raising in this House and in public debate for more than five years. We are pleased that the government and the minister have finally recognised the validity of those arguments.

As the minister noted correctly in his second reading speech, the contentious issue of regrowth has created a lot of anxiety among land-holders. I appreciate the minister's honesty in acknowledging the inaccuracy of the department's regional ecosystem maps and the need for change. Those ecosystem maps should in time be superseded by the property maps of assessable vegetation. That will be a huge improvement—if those property maps of assessable vegetation are in reality as the minister has indicated in his rhetoric. Those maps will show assessable and non-assessable vegetation at a property scale. They will identify the remnant and non-remnant boundary at a property scale with ongoing management of those non-assessable areas guaranteed for the long term to provide security for the land-holder. They will also show areas approved for weed control, thinning, fodder harvesting and areas that have been notified for forest practices to ensure that they stay assessable. They will go a long way, if they are done properly, to ensuring that the type of security that is necessary is part of the whole administrative system.

Likewise, the redefinition of 'regrowth' will go a long way towards putting aside a lot of the uncertainty that has existed about the administration of this legislation since 1990. There has been a huge amount of insecurity, simply because the Department of Natural Resources has

been clearly unprepared for the administration of this legislation. There has been a huge difference between what we have heard at a political level, what we have heard in this parliament, and what actually happens on the ground. The minister has given us assurances—or given the community at large assurances— about the treatment of regrowth under those property maps of assessable vegetation, and I hope that those assurances are carried through at a local level by departmental officers.

When we get down to areas identified as category X—the legislation calls it category X—on a property map, then there will be a lot more security. However, I am somewhat concerned about an amendment that has just been circulated—and I have not really had time to examine it in detail—that seeks to redefine the definition of that category X area from the original legislation that was introduced into the House a few weeks ago. The minister already has an amendment in the House to redefine the category X area which, on a first reading at least, seems to be the opposite of what the minister has been telling the Queensland community for the past four weeks—that the issue of regrowth is going to be addressed by recognising that land that was formerly cleared would forever be recognised as regrowth.

This amendment that has been introduced seems to me, at first reading, to perpetuate the nonsense that we have seen since the introduction of the original Vegetation Management Act 1999 where areas of vegetation are able to be regrowth one day and turned into remnant vegetation the next day because they are suddenly assessed as being more than a certain percentage higher, or of a certain percentage canopy density. That is a nonsense and it is very disturbing to see that, even in the short period between when the legislation was introduced into the House and when we get to debate it, the minister's assurances are shown to be for nothing. It is more dishonesty and more deceit. Unless we get those things defined clearly in the legislation, unless we get those definitions spelt out clearly in the legislation, then the land-holders of Queensland are going to continue to get ripped off. They are going to continue to be treated badly under this legislation.

So it is with issues such as encroachment. Again, we have received all sorts of assurances from the minister that he recognises the need to be able to address the issue of encroachment and that he recognises now—as he should have recognised five years ago—the issue of thinning. He has been saying in the briefings that he has been giving to interest groups across the state that applications for thinning of thickened vegetation and encroachment will be accepted and that those applications are going to be assessed against regional codes for thinning that have been based on the work done by the regional vegetation management committees.

But we really do not have in this legislation any guarantees that the minister's words are going to be worth anything. So we will be pursuing those issues in the committee stage of the passage of this legislation to get on the public record in this parliament, at least, the government's intention. There is a huge difference between what the minister has been saying and what is actually in the legislation. That has been a characteristic of vegetation management legislation over the last four pieces of legislation. It has been a characteristic of every piece of legislation that the Minister for Natural Resources has brought into this House since he has had the job. He comes in here and says one thing, he goes out to the press conference and says one thing, he goes to the meetings around the state and says one thing, but the reality in the legislation is very different. So it is with this legislation. There is no guarantee in this legislation that the reassuring messages that the minister has been sending out over the past four weeks will, in fact, be delivered to the land-holders of Queensland. If nothing else can be achieved by this parliamentary process, we will get on the parliamentary record the minister's clear intent.

As my time is almost expired, can I say that I am deeply disappointed that this legislation continues to be a political football. I am deeply disappointed that the responsible, caring land-holders of Queensland have been treated as badly as they have and as unfairly as they have by this Beattie Labor government. During the consideration of this legislation, my colleagues and I will be here to represent those people's interests as best we can to ensure that, even with the passage of this legislation, they get a fair go.

Time expired.

Mr FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (3.19 p.m.): We live in a time when we understand more than ever the impact we have on our environment. To this point humanity has a record of conquest over the environment, not of living in a sustainable manner within our environment.

We sometimes figure our environment only in terms of cute animals or the majestic Wet Tropics rainforest. When we talk of ecological destruction, some operate under the misconception

that the trouble we face is merely aesthetic, that the worst case scenario is that what we destroy we will never see again and the splendour of it will be lost to the eyes of future generations. While this might be a valid reason in itself to take steps to protect our environment, the fact is that today we face the challenge of a bill that presents us with the long-term protection and sustainability of our global ecosystem.

The dangers of doing nothing are very real. The challenge of our generation is to fight this degradation and turn back the tides of ecological destruction that we have brought upon our world. This fight will be tough and not without its compromises, but it is a fight we cannot dodge and a battle we must win. Sometimes, though, the problems we have caused loom large and appear insurmountable. But we have a great privilege. We, more than anyone else in our community, have the opportunity and the authority to take meaningful steps to arrest the environmental decline we have caused.

Honourable members should make no mistake: the bill before this House will make a difference to our environment. It is a bill based on science. To see this, members need look no further than the 400 pre-eminent scientists who signed the Brigalow Declaration or the recently released report from the respected Rainforest CRC at James Cook University, *Environmental crisis: climate change and terrestrial biodiversity in Queensland*.

At this point I would also like to make mention of the work of some other people involved intricately with this bill; that is, the workers at the Queensland Herbarium, located at Toowong in my electorate of Mount Coot-tha. Last Tuesday I had the opportunity to visit the Herbarium with Gordon Guymer and Don Butler from the Herbarium and look first-hand at the important work they are doing in supporting the central administrative tool of the legislation, the property maps of assessable vegetation. The work of these dedicated people should be acknowledged by all members of the parliament.

Ending land clearing here in Queensland is an important way to limit the tragic loss of biodiversity. Ending broadscale tree clearing of remnant vegetation will also remove 25 million tonnes of greenhouse gases from our atmosphere each year. That is 6.84 tonnes for every man, woman and child in Queensland, or the equivalent of two cars for everyone in Queensland. This commitment makes the Queensland people world-beaters in greenhouse gas reduction, significantly ahead of traditional world leaders Canada and Europe. This is a contribution we make on behalf of Queensland but of benefit to Australia and indeed the global community. So where was the Prime Minister on this one? Well, the Prime Minister did not hold up his end of the bargain. He has once again walked away from his responsibilities and abandoned Queensland's farmers and our environment is in peril.

In contrast, today's bill is the culmination of leadership and vision—the courage to govern over the horizon. This bill delivers on an election commitment central to the platform we presented and the population of Queensland endorsed. This bill forms a central part of our election commitments, along with the $5 million to kick-start the Trust for Nature to help protect open space, the new Open Space Secretariat and the extra $5 million to buy strategic parcels of land of high conservation value to add to our protected estate.

We should be wary of the attempts of members opposite who spin a story that they offer a fresh, energetic approach and a new generation of courageous leadership when it turns out that it is merely a political tactic and their play on a new generation is as flimsy as the cardboard cut-out that waved on election day. The Queensland people deserve more than that. They deserve a vision for our future and the leadership to deliver it. Peter Beattie has shown this leadership. That is why Labor was returned by the Queensland people so convincingly.

In the coming years we here in this place will face many challenges, but few challenges loom as large as the future for our environment and the changes we must make to ensure its future. This is the great challenge of our generation. The solutions we provide and the policies we offer will determine the way we live for generations to come. This bill is a big step in the right direction. Future generations will judge these efforts kindly. I hope they will look back and consider this the first of many steps towards our restoring the environmental balance here in Queensland.

Last month I spoke in this House about the need to govern over the horizon for the long-term benefit, to configure equity not just in immediate senses but also intertemporally and intergenerationally. This is a bill that does that. This is a bill based on science. This is a bill to end broadscale tree clearing. This is a bill that is the act of a government committed to the future. This bill was presented as central in our election commitments. The people voted for it, and so will I. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (3.25 p.m.): The Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004 has become a very emotional issue. The debate has been filled with nothing but emotion—emotions that divide communities through unfounded comment. The truth is paramount in whatever we do. There has not been too much truth bandied about in relation to this piece of legislation.

The vegetation clearing issue has been characterised by an agenda of constant deceit. Many city people have not been told the facts and have not been told what this debate is really all about. The member for Mount Coot-tha just made reference to environmental issues. I remind the member for Mount Coot-tha that if the people of the land—there are many people from both sides in this House who have families on the land or are a part of the land themselves—were not good environmental managers they would not have survived on the land in this country for the last 200 years. I think that is a part of the debate that has not been treated with the respect it deserves by the minister, other members of this government and the wider community.

There are many people who now live in Brisbane, south-east Queensland and right along the coast who have spent part of their lives in the inland or other regions—in electorates such as Warrego, Callide, Gregory and Charters Towers to name four. I also mention the electorate of Fitzroy, which is represented by my good friend and colleague. I know what his belief is in relation to some of this. No doubt he will speak about that later. Going further north, I mention electorates such as Mount Isa and Charters Towers. These are all very important areas of this state.

Today the member for Callide touched on the fact that we are often confronted by the old TV footage of bulldozers and the antiquated systems in use in those days of the ball and chain and so on. Those tree pulling and land clearing contractors would have gone broke a long time ago because they would not have been able to pull enough timber in one day to pay for the fuel, let alone make a quid on the side.

The real issue is that landowners and all country people have been branded as environmental vandals. This could not be further from the truth. Many of us, and our families before us, have been the custodians for the past 200 years in inland Queensland. I believe they have been responsible operators. We live in one of the driest continents in the world. That fact should be brought to the attention of the people of this state so that everyone knows the truth.

I refer to the productivity of the brigalow scheme in Queensland. In the early 1960s a lot of brigalow country in the Burnett and Callide regions and back into the western part of the central highlands was pulled. It is now some of the best farming and cattle country in not just Australia but also the world. If those vast tracts of brigalow scrub had been left in their virgin state, we would not have the productivity coming out of that country that we do today. That is because of people who had vision, foresight and the grit and determination to progress the cause. That has created jobs and wealth in those regions. We can see the dams that have been built as a result of those farming lands, especially in the central highlands area and further north.

It all comes back to a responsible and professional approach to putting in place management practices that will create an environment for jobs, growth and structure for the future. If a dentist used unsanitised equipment, a professional of that calibre would go broke quickly because his patients would soon leave his practice and they would spread the word that this fellow is not up to scratch. A transport operator with shoddy, unroadworthy plant would suffer the same demise because his clients would not last five minutes as they would not want to see their product carted on the back of unroadworthy vehicles.

The same applies to land-holders. If they are good, reliable operators and cannot progress their cause through the development of modern technology, they too will go broke. They are good, reliable operators, because in this modern day and age if we are not successful in the work environment we are in and we do not run the proper plant and move upmarket with modern technology then we are not going to make it.

Despite what both the Minister for Natural Resources and the Premier have said in press releases in the past about land-holders proving that land was cleared in the past, that does not appear in this legislation. It is a complete fabrication. The current rule is that 70 per cent of the height and 50 per cent of the canopy cannot be touched. There has been much hype in the past about the definition of 'regrowth'. The Premier said that any area that has been previously cleared by manual, mechanical or chemical means shall be deemed to be regrowth. Where is this in the legislation? The minister is not even in the House now, so I do not know what the set-up is.

Mr Reynolds: I am representing the minister.

Mr JOHNSON: Well, the Hon. Minister for Child Safety might ask him that question. The point I am making is that these are very contentious issues. They are very relevant questions to the legislation, and I believe they should be asked and answered here today. It is all very well introducing legislation into the place, but we have to derive from that legislation the true meaning of terms like 'regrowth', 'remnant vegetation' and the like.

The second point I want to touch on is thinning. The policy should be that it is consistent with tree density at European settlement. There has been an explosion of timber and vegetation growth in the past 200 years since first settlement, and the first explorer's records prove this. Lands Department records prove this. Dr Bill Burrows, a renowned vegetation scientist, said there is a way to distinguish between woodland or grassland or open woodland or pastoral grassland. I have to say again that scientific tools and techniques have proven this. We all know what this government did to Dr Burrows and how Dr Burrows was treated by this government. He is one man who knows more about vegetation management, tree clearing and the scientific study of vegetation in this state probably than anybody else. But we know how he was treated. He was treated as a second-rate citizen because he explained what the facts were and he was pushed out sideways.

Another aspect of this piece of legislation that I want to make reference to is subclause (3) of the bill. How can this clause not now be interpreted by a departmental officer as applying to old regrowth or encroachment or thickening vegetation? The issue here is the purpose of subclause (3)(d) of the bill—page 9—'prevents the loss of biodiversity'. The minister might like to explain that because that is an aspect of this piece of legislation that is very important to the ongoing management of this very contentious issue we are talking about here—encroachment or thickening vegetation or old regrowth.

The other factor I want to touch on today is the compensation factor. The compensation factor is the real deceit in the whole debate. Landowners do not want compensation; they want to be able to develop their properties in a responsible, sustainable way. A sustainable way is the way that everybody in Queensland wants them to do it, as I have said before and as the member for Callide and Deputy Leader of the Opposition has touched on this afternoon. The $150 million earmarked by this government for compensation would have been better spent on roads, schools or hospitals within this state and letting these people manage the environment the way they know best. That is not environmental destruction. It is about developing properties, the creation of productivity, the creation of jobs, the creation of wealth and seeing those communities in rural and regional Queensland progress and develop.

That $150 million would not cover the compensation in the Gregory electorate alone. The member for Callide touched on it this afternoon when he said that it would be more like $900 million to $1 billion. Wendy Choice-Brooks, the former mayor of the Murweh shire in my electorate in the south-west of the state, has spoken on numerous occasions about what the cost will be to that region to the mulga lands. The member for Callide touched on it here again this afternoon, saying there would be $180 million over the next few years. I think that is only a drop in the ocean of what the real cost will be.

I had an argument with a departmental officer in Roma about 12 months ago about the clearing of mulga lands. He said, 'It will never grow back.' I said, 'I can take you to Quilpie and show you where my next-door neighbour in 1965 pulled every mulga tree in one paddock adjoining me.' I can take you back there today, Madam Deputy Speaker, and show you that paddock and the mulga is growing there as thick as it ever grew before and probably a darned sight thicker.

There is a lot of untruth being told about this legislation. The facts do not stack up. The other side of the equation is that the truth is going to hurt somebody. I have spoken about the compensation factor. The financial institutions will not be entertaining them. They will have to find that money somewhere. If they purchased a property for a million dollars to develop it and make it a $5 million property, now with this legislation that property will not even be worth a million dollars. They will not be able to put it on the open market and get their million dollars for it. They will probably have to take a fire sale value of something like $300,000 or $400,000. The compensation issue will not address the agenda. It will drive people into bankruptcy. It will drive a wedge between people in rural communities who are trying to have a fair go and people on the eastern coast who do not understand what is happening.

There are a lot of people who do understand but at the same time they are not being listened to. The DPI report cover-up is typical of this government's fabrication of the real facts. We know what the Minister for Primary Industries said in this House last year when questioned by the

then shadow primary industries minister, Marc Rowell. He said, 'I would not even bother reading it. I would throw it in the bin.' What an insult to those departmental officers who compiled that report, because it is fact. It would have had some substantial evidence in it, and those people should have been given the courtesy of having it tabled in this parliament and have issues derive from it. But, no, because it was probably going to be something that this government did not want to see interfere with its agenda to appease the Green vote here in Brisbane so as to push the Labor vote up in town, it was thrown in the bin. Sometimes the truth hurts.

What about the Greens? What do we get from the Greens in this state—the non-productive sector, I call them. If they had anything that was constructive or positive to say, I think they would expose the truth of what we are trying to achieve.

I believe we are all greens; we are all conservationists. If we were not, we would not survive on the driest continent in the world today. We have done that because we have managed it properly. Our sustainable management practices have proved that.

A lot of these organisations such as Property Rights Australia and Agforce have good, level-headed and sensible people who have made proper and responsible representation to this government and they have been treated with absolute contempt. I have heard Larry Acton on the radio saying he has been sold out. He has been sold out. When you negotiate with somebody on something, you shake their hand. In the country we come from, your word is your bond. Apparently with this government your word is not your bond anymore. I do not even know if it is any good if it is in writing.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: As the member for Warrego says, no, it is not. He shook his head and walked away. Why would he not shake his head, because he is one who has fought long and hard too, along with many other members on this side of the House, to try to get some sanity and credibility back into this debate.

The majority of Queensland thought this legislation was going to be debated next Thursday. That would have been the appropriate time because I know other people outside of this parliament still want to have input into this debate and make comment. My colleague the member for Charters Towers has not even made his first speech in this place yet. The address-in-reply debate has been postponed until such time as this piece of legislation is passed. His electorate of Charters Towers is one of those areas that falls into the category I am talking about.

Mr Reeves interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: When? He had a full sheet. He knows that, too.

Mr Terry Sullivan: We did not.

Mr JOHNSON: The member makes any excuse for himself. I will give him what he wants. He can have no worries about that. There is only one thing wrong with him; he backs the wrong football team. We will talk about that later. The point I do make is that the Charters Towers electorate—

Mr Reeves interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: Just listen for a moment, you clown! For God's sake, give him strength.

The point I am making is that the Charters Towers electorate is one of those areas where the farming lands have copped the drought more than any other part of Queensland over the past 12 years. Some of those people in the southern part of that electorate have not had a crop in 12 years. Those people who have developed those places are now finding themselves in the situation where they are getting the double whammy. Here is a government that is going to shut them down on the tree clearing and they have copped drought on top of that. Where is the fairness in the equation? There is no fairness whatsoever. I can assure honourable members that we will not be stifled by the agenda of this government.

This legislation is a continued victimisation of the honest, decent citizens—people like Ashley and Doris McKay from Torres Park at Augathella. We could not talk about two more honourable, more scrupulously decent people of integrity in this state. Honourable members should visit western Queensland and the McKays and they will find out what great people they are. They have been treated like dirty dishcloths, like doormats, by this department and by departmental officers, who have treated them as criminals.

All that this legislation that we are debating today is going to do is further create an environment in which departmental people will be shunned by country people and will not be

treated with the respect and the courtesy that they deserve. In the past when many of those people did go to visit those country properties, they were treated to a cup of tea, a meal or a bed overnight so they could enjoy their company, but not anymore. This minister and this government are driving a wedge of monumental proportions between those departmental people and the industry. People like Ashley McKay—and you would not get a better man on God's earth—are being treated as environmental vandals because they upheld the law in the right way.

I have been out to Torres Park. I travelled around with Ashley McKay and saw the property first-hand. He showed me areas where he pulled the bulldozers up because the maps were not right. He said, 'Stop the dozers. We'll move around here.' Because there were a couple of old pine trees there, which would not have had any commercial value whatsoever, the government is now dragging him through the courts. I pray to the good Lord that honesty will prevail at the end of the day, and I know who will be the winner. It will be Ashley McKay.

This legislation will only create further division. I say to the minister and the Premier today that it is about time we took stock of the whole situation and thought about this for a while. In all common decency this is about trying to preserve people's properties that they rightfully own, about being able to develop those properties and about being able to progress in a vein that is going to create productivity not only for those individuals themselves but this whole state. We are at the forefront of being the best farmers and graziers in the world. We do have the best livestock and farming practices in the world. We can only do that with the support of government, not by antagonistic policy that is going to be detrimental to the progression, the development and the productivity of these people in question.

I urge the minister today in his reply and as he goes through the clauses to listen more to what some of those people are saying. We are not in opposition to say that we do not agree on everything. I know that there are aspects of the legislation where people have done the wrong thing, but 99.9 per cent of people are good, honest, fair dinkum people doing the right thing.

Time expired.

Hon. K. W. HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (3.45 p.m.): The people of Queensland re-elected this Labor government last February with a commitment to end broadscale clearing of remnant vegetation and ensure that affected landowners were given a fair adjustment package. Of course, this legislation follows on as amendments to the Vegetation Management Act 1999. The Beattie government is committed to the long-term future of our rural industries. That is why from the first day that work started on developing these new vegetation management laws the Queensland government pledged to provide financial support for landowners adversely affected.

I have to make some observations about the humbug that we heard from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. He talked about our government appealing to some sort of emotional populist agenda. That is incredibly disappointing because what comes through and what he should have been talking about is how they have been let down by the Commonwealth government because it has reneged on its promise to contribute half of the $150 million financial assistance package. The Commonwealth government has absolutely gone missing in action and of course so has the Deputy Leader of the National Party. He pretends that this is a problem for the Queensland government when, in fact, it is a commitment for the whole of Australia.

Because of the lack of support from the Commonwealth government there have been many months of uncertainty and delays created by their time wasting. The strange thing is that the Commonwealth benefits as we all benefit in a second way, although they are making no financial contribution, because this package delivers what the Commonwealth needed—and more than what they needed—and that is a reduction in carbon emissions of between 20 and 25 megatons per year for the whole of Australia. So there is a role there for the Commonwealth, but they have reneged on it.

Then we had the member for Callide talking about some kind of emotional populist propaganda. When it comes to issues to do with wedge politics there is no better person than the federal coalition government. By ducking out of this issue they have effectively put this Labor government in a position in which we are potentially at odds with many country folk and landowners. But, of course, they see the ultimate benefit out of it as well and they are making no financial contribution at all.

What is important and what needs to be recognised—and we will see it eventually when the vote is taken on this—is that the Beattie government has stood firm on its commitment to financial assistance. That is why the full original package is part of this legislation—$150 million. Of course, I come back again to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition when I spoke of the

humbug he was going on with when he pretended that there was no warning, no support—nothing at all for it.

Before the last state election the coalition costed $150 million for this area in its election commitments. That is the simple fact. They cannot now say that they did not know this or that. How come $150 million was costed into their pre-election estimates? They cannot run away from the fact that they knew what the commitment was going to be. That money was shown as part of the formal estimates. It was not removed from those formal estimates when they put out their costing before the last state election.

Some $150 million will be available over five years to landowners and contractors across Queensland through, importantly, a mix of structural adjustment, incentives and support for best management practices on farms. The Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics has confirmed that the figure of $150 million is extremely fair. The determination of that figure is based on a study commissioned by the Commonwealth government. ABARE concluded that the overall impact on farm viability was likely to be small. It said that landowners who have borrowed heavily to purchase undeveloped properties or undertake serious clearing would be seriously affected. In the end, ABARE's report concluded that $150 million is similar to the estimated opportunity costs.

I turn now to the three elements of the funding package. Firstly, the Beattie government will put aside $130 million in financial assistance to landowners who will be adversely affected by these laws. This money will support specific projects to build up or develop those farm businesses whose performance has been affected by the new vegetation management arrangements and who can achieve long-term economic viability and sustainable resource use with the assistance provided. The kind of projects that we are talking about here are ones such as introducing new farming systems or property developments for improved productivity. The government will also enable primary producers to exit a property or to relocate their farm business in the rare case where there is no longer any prospect of long-term viability due to these arrangements.

The government will buy out the landowner at the value of the land prior to the legislative changes. The member for Gregory was talking about how the price of the land will drop and people will be disadvantaged. The simple fact is that the commitment of the government is to buy out the landowner at the value of the land prior to the legislative changes. So within this $130 million, clearing contractors adversely affected by the new clearing laws will also be able to apply for financial assistance. The Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority, which has a proven track record in administering structural adjustment packages, will deal with this process.

Secondly, there will be $12 million provided in incentives to protect native vegetation that is not protected under this legislation through voluntary partnerships with landowners. Landowners will be encouraged to tender for funds to undertake vegetation projects that will deliver positive results providing ongoing protection. Landowners might fence off an area of non-remnant native vegetation to preserve a nature corridor, for example, or rehabilitate and protect a steep riparian area suffering from land degradation. They are the sorts of opportunities that will be available and there will be funding to support them. Tenders will be assessed according to their value for money and the value of their contribution to the environment.

This is not something that is unique to Queensland. This process has been achieved with great success in Victoria where it is known as the bush tender. They have achieved better results with less money because the landowners themselves are involved in tendering for the funds and administering the projects themselves. They have absolute ownership of those projects. I am pleased to see that the government is ensuring that this money will go to the community and not to the bureaucracy through a commitment to seek tenders from businesses like non-government organisations, regional bodies and industry groups to administer this program on a regional basis.

The third element of the $150 million package is $8 million to encourage best land management practices on farms. The government is asking the rural industry groups to design, to administer this money and to deliver farm management practices that reflect improved vegetation management. Landowners will receive assistance through extension services to draw up forestry management plans and farm management systems and support from industry bodies to adopt these best management practices. Rural industry groups may also consider research and development spending on good farming systems.

These three elements constitute a comprehensive package—a package worth $150 million—to help those affected and encourage all landowners to further protect valuable vegetation. It is a fair package. It is one that the Queensland government is proud of and is proud

to be providing to the land-holders of Queensland. I urge all members of this parliament to support the bill.

Mr QUINN (Robina—Lib) (3.55 p.m.): In rising to speak in the debate on the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill let me place on the record at the outset that the Liberal Party will be supporting this legislation in the House today. I will do this and the Liberal Party will do this because it is consistent with our approach over the past three years. I have consistently said that we need to reduce the amount of tree clearing across the state in order to protect our biodiversity, our endangered species and our species of concern.

We have also had to recognise the salinity problem and ensure that water quality is improved and maintained at the highest level. I have also said consistently that we need to adequately compensate landowners for financial loss due to tree clearing restrictions imposed upon them for the benefit of the whole community. Because everyone in Queensland will benefit from that action everyone in the community should pay something to the landowners so affected. It is only fair from both the landowners' and the general public's point of view. I have also said consistently that governments need to consult with landowners and stakeholder groups to ensure that everyone understands the problem so we can find a common solution that everyone can accommodate.

To show members that I have been consistent over the past three years, I will take them back to the very first time that I raised this particular issue. It was in the context of the Surfers Paradise by-election campaign almost three years ago to the day. In a press release put out during that campaign I indicated a number of principles relating to this issue that we would stick to through thick and thin—and we have done this over the past three years. Regardless of the scepticism and cynicism from a particular minister on the other side of the chamber, these are the guiding principles that we have stood behind all the way through.

Let me go back to the press release that I issued at that stage and indicate the four principles that I outlined at that time. Firstly, there ought to be regional mapping to determine areas at risk and determine proper compensation. That was undertaken during the last couple of years. Secondly, caps on land clearing should be introduced following consultations with affected landowners. Thirdly, measures to control panic tree clearing must be formulated. That principle was put in place over the past three years. Finally, funding should be provided by both federal and state governments, and if the state government does not want to negotiate with the federal government it should put in place its own scheme and fund it as other states have done. The four principles I outlined three years ago are the four principles that we have stuck by whenever the issue has been debated in this House. Again today we will stick to those four principles.

I will address the issue in chronological order, address the issue of the election campaign and indicate my approach to all of this. I am happy to put all the doubting Thomases at ease as to why we have made statements along the way. I indicated our principles during the Surfers Paradise by-election. That is why we were pleased to see the state and Commonwealth government take a bipartisan approach to finding an acceptable solution to this issue last year, the year before and the year before that. We supported that approach because we thought that was the way to go forward and that all stakeholders groups could be accommodated and that there was money from the Commonwealth as well as the state government. We thought that was the way to go. That is why we also supported the moratorium that was put in place.

Again, if members in this House recall, we supported the government's position on that. We are no stranger to this sort of controversy. As I said, we have been consistent. We supported the moratorium because we wanted to stop the panic tree clearing, as outlined in one of the principles I put in place during the Surfers Paradise by-election campaign. Then we came to the election campaign itself. The government took it upon itself unilaterally to determine that it would introduce legislation as part of its election commitments during the campaign. I made the statement that it was simply a grab for Green preferences—which it was at the time—and criticised it accordingly.

But the reality is that the government has won the election. It is now time to put the politics aside—the shenanigans aside—and look at the legislation on its merits. We need to come back to the fundamental principles that I outlined three years ago and judge the legislation from that approach, and that is what we are doing. As I have said before, we have looked at the legislation. We understand the need to ensure that we protect our biodiversity, species of concern and endangered species. We will be, as I said, supporting the legislation. We have some concerns about the level of compensation. Initially we thought that the $150 million put forward by both the state and the Commonwealth was adequate given that the Commonwealth had its own reports.

Other reports have come out since. If there are question marks over this, it is in regard to the level of compensation and how the compensation will be applied.

Let me go back to one of my fundamental principles that I outlined three years ago. I said that if the state wanted to do this by itself it should supply all of the compensation. When the federal government got involved, it was a fifty-fifty deal. The Labor Party made the decision to walk away from the Commonwealth's offer—to walk away from the bipartisan approach that was in place from both the Commonwealth and the state—and do it by itself. Therefore, it should pick up the whole tab. That is only fair. If it wants to put the legislation through by itself and ignores the Commonwealth, then it should pick up the tab. That is what it has done. We will support the legislation in that respect.

But I do have some concerns as to whether or not $150 million is adequate and, as other speakers have said, about the process. Only time will tell whether in fact $150 million is enough. But the most important thing out of this legislation is that it gives landowners some certainty. This has been going on for far too long—at least three years now. It is time to give some certainty, and that certainty can only be delivered by a consistent approach, and the legislation provides that consistent approach. That is why we will be supporting the legislation. As I said before, it has been a consistent approach by us despite the sceptics on the other side. Again today we will be consistent with that approach and support the legislation.

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (4.03 p.m.): It is a pleasure to rise to support the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill which deals with the emotional issue from a National Party point of view of tree clearing. It was a key part of our election commitment, and the people of Queensland endorsed our stand and the government was returned. Queensland is fortunate to enjoy a high level of biodiversity ranging from our unique coral reefs to our pristine rainforests to our vast outback. But we know that it is also threatened. There is irrefutable science to prove that broadscale tree clearing hurts our natural environment: salinity increases, water quality decreases; habitat for native fauna is lost and their numbers decline; pests and animals thrive. By taking away what are truly the lungs of the earth, clearing contributes to global warming in the form of increased greenhouse gas emissions. Two weeks ago the minister stood in this place and called this legislation historic. I would go one step further and call it momentous. This is the beginning of a new era in the story of Queensland.

Broadscale clearing is a threat to the future of Queensland's natural resources and a threat to the future of Queensland, and that is why the Beattie government has introduced the new laws we are debating today. Currently, clearing has been regulated under a complex framework that applies inconsistently to freehold and state lands. The bill simplifies our tree clearing laws into a single piece of legislation for both leasehold and freehold land. It provides certainty to land-holders and protects our irreplaceable biodiversity for our children, our grandchildren and the countless generations ahead. It will see broadscale clearing of remnant vegetation phased out by the end of 2006.

The aim of the legislation is to conserve remnant endangered and of concern regional ecosystems, prevent land degradation and the loss of biodiversity, manage the environmental effects of clearing, and reduce greenhouse emissions. To help land-holders and contractors who are disadvantaged by these new changes in law, the Beattie government is providing a total of $150 million over five years to ease the adjustment. As the member for Kallangur said in his contribution to this debate, there is hypocrisy from National Party members in this chamber who said that this package was not funded. The member for Kallangur rightfully pointed out that in the lead-up to the election the coalition had $150 million in its budget costings and forward estimates. That demonstrates that there was a bit of a hoax being portrayed in the Queensland election. On the one hand the National Party campaigned against tree clearing while on the other hand the Liberal Party, while it was the tail on the National Party dog, was silent in the suburbs around the south-east corner. It was great to hear the Leader of the Liberal Party, Bob Quinn—who in opposition or out of coalition seems to be a man of conviction—say here a short time ago that he would be supporting the legislation.

The member for Kallangur made reference to the federal coalition, in particular the Liberal Party and the fact that the Prime Minister, John Howard, is probably the greatest exponent of wedge politics. I remember some time ago when Mr Howard and Mr Anderson travelled out west to meet a group of property owners about our intention to bring in legislation on tree clearing. Mr Howard told the Premier, Mr Beattie, that Queensland should have a rethink and take a cold shower and consult more. That was on the Wednesday. On the Saturday night I was watching *Burke's Backyard*, as one does on a Saturday night. On that program the then federal

Environment Minister, Senator Hill, was interviewed from his beautiful 19th century Adelaide mansion. He was asked about tree clearing and, in particular, the effects that unfettered tree clearing would have on the environment and in particular what the Queensland experience was. He said that Mr Beattie and the Queensland government were a bunch of environmental vandals.

On the one hand Mr Howard and John Anderson were pitching to the rural constituency on the Wednesday saying that we should take a cold shower while on the other hand Senator Hill from the leafy suburbs was trying to suck up to the marginal seat voters in federal seats in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne saying that Premier Beattie and co were a bunch of environmental vandals. They were playing wedge politics very cleverly. That was also highlighted in the last state election campaign in that there was a big con job going on with the coalition in that, as I said earlier, the Nats were out there bashing tree clearing while the Libs were silently supporting it.

As I said earlier, the Beattie government is providing a total of $150 million in assistance over five years to ease the adjustment. So that contradicts the position of the Deputy Leader of the National Party, the member for Callide, who went on at some length to say that there was no compensation. In the meantime, a balance of 500,000 hectares of trees is still able to be cleared. The broadscale tree clearing approvals that were issued since a halt on applications was introduced on 16 May last year will be subtracted and the remainder will be issued through a ballot process. That ballot will be held in September. I think that is the only possible fair way. After the ballot is drawn, no more broadscale permits will be issued. All approvals that are successful under the ballot process will be valid until December 2006. There will be exemptions for basic management activities, but the exemptions have now changed slightly. I strongly urge anyone wishing to clear under those exemptions, as I urge my own constituents, to contact their local office of the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy for advice.

From what I have heard from my own constituents, from others and from media comments by the members of the National Party, among others, the major concern of land-holders is the ability to thin the thickened vegetation. Land-holders will be able to make ongoing applications to clear vegetation for particular purposes, including thinning. Applications for fodder harvesting, encroaching woody vegetation in grasslands and weed control involving clearing native vegetation will all be permitted. They will be assessed against regional codes based on regional vegetation management plans.

Many of the concerns about regrowth revolve around the central issue of when regrowth returns to remnant status. Under the new framework, land-holders will be able to develop a property scale map that identifies regrowth at the property scale. Once that map has been certified by the department, the non-remnant vegetation remains permanently non-assessable, even if the vegetation returns to remnant status. This gives land-holders the details that they require to manage regrowth without breaking the law and provide them with the certainty that they have been seeking.

As the Leader of the Liberal Party said, this whole debate has been raging now for three years and we need certainty. I think that this legislation will certainly bring about that aim. Land-holders will be responsible for preparing the information necessary for the maps in these circumstances.

In conclusion, let me say that this legislation is one of the most significant bills in our history. It is certainly one of the most important bills to cross the table during my time in this place. Future generations will thank this government for its courage and vision. Through this legislation, it has achieved what other governments have failed to secure and it will, without a doubt, make a difference to not only the state of Queensland and the Commonwealth of Australia but, indeed, the world.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (4.13 p.m.): I am pleased to speak to the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004. At the outset, I want to say that I support the words of the shadow minister in his summation of the situation—the way we see it from this side of the House.

Mr Robertson: Is that wise?

Mr HOBBS: It is very wise indeed. The minister would also be quite wise to heed most of the stuff that the shadow minister said. If the minister did that, we would probably have quite a good bill before the House today. However, unfortunately, we have been dealt a very harsh blow by the state government in this matter.

It has been said today by nearly every member opposite that the government had a clear mandate to do this. In one sense, yes, because Labor won the election, maybe they could say that—with all the other mandates they had—but Labor lost significantly in all the seats where vegetation management is a major issue. In fact, Labor was bowled over in all of those seats where this legislation will impact. It was one of the major issues in those areas. So Labor did not have a mandate, does not have a mandate, and will not have a mandate to bring in this sort of legislation, which impacts upon those people. As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said—and he said it quite clearly—there are two Queenslands. The government is dividing Queensland in two. The people in those areas who are affected by this legislation absolutely hate the minister. There is no doubt about that. The minister needs to go for a drive to find out—although I know that those people have already told him. Until the minister realises that, I cannot help him much more.

Vegetation management is an important part of managing our rural land. The member for Kallangur and others have mentioned that the Prime Minister did not deliver on the funding. Let me explain to members why the Prime Minister did not deliver the funding. He came out to the areas and had a look. When the issue first broke, the Prime Minister's Department was involved. We issued very quickly an invitation for the Prime Minister to have a look at vegetation management in the west. The Prime Minister came, he looked and he listened. To his amazement, the Prime Minister found out that all of the information that had been provided to him by the Beattie government was simply lies. That is the situation. It is as straight as that. That is why the Prime Minister is not supporting it.

We took the Prime Minister out and showed him two paddocks side by side. One was cleared about 15 years ago and one was cleared about five years ago. One had very high timber in it and was quite thick. The one beside it basically had some very low regrowth, but it was nicely grassed and it was a good looking paddock. We said to him, 'That nice paddock there now will be same as that—virtually unproductive—in another 10 years time.' The Prime Minister was absolutely amazed at that.

We also showed the Prime Minister some other land. The Premier has been to these areas as well and has seen the same thing. He knows about this, but, of course, it is a waste of time even talking to him about it. We showed the Prime Minister a stock route that had never been cleared. On that stock route was timber that had regrown, regrown again and regrown again. There was not a stalk of grass growing. There was not anything in there at all. There were not even any birds—the birds could not even fly through it it was so thick. All there was was erosion: the topsoil was running away, the nutrients were just being eroded away and the country was degraded.

People have to understand that, in some instances, if country is locked up, it will only further degrade. There is more degradation in some locked-up areas that are just total timber—wall to wall—than there is if there is bad erosion and excessive clearing. Nobody wants excessive clearing. I believe that over the past 10 years there has been a magnificent change in attitude in the rural industry. There is a lot more recognition of what is right and what is wrong. Some great advances have been made there. One thing can happen in Queensland. If the country is overcleared, all we have to do is wait for a while and the timber will grow again.

About 81 per cent of Queensland's timber is still remnant timber. If one listened to the members opposite today and during the election campaign, one would think that it was all gone, it was all destroyed. The official figures from the Herbarium show that 81 per cent of our timber in Queensland is still remnant. That is quite a significant amount. Sure, we do not want indiscriminate clearing. Nobody wants that. We want good guidelines. Members must realise that, in many cases, more trees can mean more degradation.

The government is using science in a discriminatory way. I remind members of this chamber of Cubbie Station. Do they remember the salinity? Do they remember the lies? Do they remember the Lower Balonne? Do they remember the lies? The matter eventually went to court.

Eventually it went to the court. That is where the government's scientists were absolutely destroyed. The court found that the government was using only the information that was detrimental to the river. How far will the government go to perpetuate a lie? It was making its scientists do the same thing for it. What did it do? It brought in the independent panel, which found that the river was healthy. More work has to be done in the future. We all recognise that. In fact, the Premier said that St George and Dirranbandi would rust away. He said that the railway lines to St George would rust. There is no railway line to St George anyway! He was also going to put water into the Narran Lakes and make a new channel. He was on the wrong river! What

happened was just incredible. The tree clearing issue is no different from the other cases. It is the same thing.

I refer to the Productivity Commission report. It is set out quite clearly for people to read. It states—

Restrictions on clearing of native vegetation has been ineffective. They have been compromised by lack of clear objectives, negative incentives and inflexible application of targets. In some situations they have been counter productive and been detrimental to environmental goals. They are often inconsistent.

It goes on—

The Report considers that while it is reasonable to expect landholders to bear the cost of conservation that primarily benefits them individually or as a group (eg salinity control), it is the community that should pay for those environment services (such as biodiversity conservation, threatened species and greenhouse objectives) that benefits the wider community.

Why is it that Queensland land-holders have to be the conscience of all of Australia? It is a bit unreasonable. Only a handful of silver has been bandied about as something along the lines of a compensation package.

The ban by 2006 is wrong in science, it is wrong in land management and it is wrong in sustainability. Everybody agrees that we have to have good guidelines and even reduce the amount of clearing—we have no problem with that—but putting a total cap on clearing is just not going to solve the problem. In fact, it will make it worse. There will be further degradation as a result of that. Any reasonable person accepts good guidelines and codes of practice to manage the land.

The Labor Party seems to think the Aboriginals had the best land management practices. In fact, they burnt the hell out of the country. That is what they did. We cannot use fire alone today to effectively control regrowth and thickening of timber. The next best thing we can use is machinery. It can be used exactly where you want it—to the guidelines, to the satellite maps or to whatever you want. Fire was indiscriminate; it burnt the lot from wall to wall. With machinery people can go out and stop at certain GPS points and they have to manage and control only that particular area. So there is absolute control. It is the next best thing to what they had in the past—that is, fire. In the past, fire burnt the lot. Today, in the lock-up mentality, fire also burns the lot.

The government is determined to introduce this legislation come hell or high water—whether good science is against it or not. It is going to come in. We know about the lies. That is just the way it is. One day it will come back to bite the government, but that is the way it is at present. The Beattie government is starting off this parliamentary term with lies. It is a government based on lies. This whole legislation is based on lies.

I mention the case of Ashley McKay. The government has spent probably $800,000 now. He has spent maybe $400,000. The government is determined to get him. Then there is the case of Ray White, one other person in my electorate. They were out taping him when he didn't know, sneaking around corners. I had a case the other day of an elderly chap—he is probably in his late 60s—who bought a block of land. He wanted to learn to fly. He had wanted to fly all of his life and could not do it. He finally did.

Mr Purcell: I hope he did not take lessons from you, brother.

Mr HOBBS: I could teach him a few things. Anyway, he learned to fly an ultralight. He made an airstrip on his property so he could fly. Finally, the dream of all his life came true and he was able to fly. Guess who rang him up a few weeks ago? DNR rang him up. He has tossed in his licence and his ultralight because the department was going to throw the book at him for clearing a few trees for an airstrip on a property.

Mr Robertson: Did he have a permit?

Mr HOBBS: It is a management thing, the same as a road or a fence. It is as simple as that.

Mr Robertson: An airstrip is a management thing? That is an interesting interpretation.

Mr HOBBS: It is. What is the difference between that and a road or anything else? Here we have a little airstrip, for God's sake. This particular chap is not out there trying to clear a lot of country to make it productive or whatever—the things those opposite hate. He is out there doing something very basic and DNR is ringing him up. What sort of people are they?

I mention the situation of regrowth. Improvement has been made in legislation in relation to thinning. As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said, it also is based on lies. The impression the government was giving the people out there was that regrowth will be regrowth. Regrowth is not

regrowth. It is more lies. That is what this government is based on. Why do you do it? I just cannot understand why you have to tell lies. Why can you not just go out and say what the story is and do it? It is just unreasonable.

Mr ROBERTSON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I find the remarks offensive and unparliamentary and I seek for them to be immediately withdrawn.

Mr HOBBS: I withdraw, but if the cap fits you wear it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Poole): Order! You are either going to withdraw or not going to withdraw.

Mr HOBBS: I withdraw. I will give another example. The minister has said in relation to thinning that a chain cannot be used between two machines. Aramac provides a good example. The other day Johnny Jones told me that in his area there are probably 10,000 acres of needlewood that has encroached on the open downs country in the Aramac region. Does the minister expect him to go around with a chainsaw or maybe a single tractor? It is just not reasonable. Why can those sorts of situations not be planned in with the codes of practice put together by the regional groups? The codes can fix that sort of thing.

There is no need for the minister to go out and do a deal with the conservationists to say, 'We are going to stop this chain business,' because they see them going around on the TV at night. There is no practical reason for the minister to stop people from using a chain to stop thinning. It is not regrowth; it is thinning. It is thinning that encroachment. It has happened. It is making the country totally useless. The minister can do that, but he is putting in place legislation that is just not workable. How on earth will this person be able to manage that country? He will not be able to. He cannot burn it.

Mr Robertson: He could put an airstrip on it.

Mr HOBBS: That is about as dumb as the minister is. A 10,000 acre airstrip! That is the minister's attitude. That is about as good as we are going to get.

Mr Welford: What about a golf course?

An opposition member: That is a good example of their attitude.

Mr HOBBS: Yes, complete contempt. We are trying to be serious about this whole business.

Mr Purcell interjected.

Mr HOBBS: I am deadly serious. How does the minister expect Johnny Jones to go out there and stop this 10,000 acres of needlewood that is just getting bigger? It is like a cancer; it is growing. How can he stop it under what the minister is proposing? Maybe the minister can tell us when he replies to the second reading debate. That will be particularly interesting. We will look forward to that.

The minister stated in his second reading speech that the codes will provide guidance for vital vegetation for activities like thinning, encroachment, fodder harvesting and weed control as well as for forestry practices and the provision of extractive industries. I do not see why we cannot have machines doing that. Do not forget there is a time frame for all this to happen. The codes have to be approved by regional assessment. Then private vegetation management plans have to be put in place. That then has to get ministerial approval and all be finished by December. Then the person who is successful with their application in the ballot has to have their country cleaned up by December 2006.

Again, the government might not realise this, but in many instances we have dry times. We have had situations recently where people should not have developed their country because it was so dry. The timber was cracking off. People wrote to the minister asking for extensions but these were not granted. Therefore, they had to go out and just do the job. It is inefficient. There should be flexibility with these schemes.

The minister said that he wanted to take the opportunity to thank members of the regional committees who have done the work. He has done nothing but kick them in the guts for years and years so I suppose a bit of thanks might help a little, but I think it is insincere. He further said in his second reading speech—

> As a result of the assessment of applications that were already in the system at that time, it is estimated that between 200,000 and 250,000 hectares remain available for allocation through the ballot and assessment process.

What a way to manage tree clearing—through a ballot process! It is incredible what the government comes up with.

There are a number of issues that I want to discuss. Under the new framework, land-holders will now be able to develop property scale maps that identify regrowth at the property scale. I support individual property plans for all development. In fact, we have been saying this for many years—probably six or seven years. We wanted to get this implemented as the main way of doing it. We do not need a property management plan just for regrowth; we need a property management plan that encompasses everything and that is the total permit for the whole lot. It has to have a long life as well. If it has a long life, it gives certainty.

Government members have said today that this legislation will bring certainty. It will not necessarily bring certainty. The only certainty is that there is death at the end of it. The future is uncertain simply because in many instances the country will totally degenerate. I bought a place at one stage which used to run quite a lot of stock and it had some big fires through it. The stocking rate was probably half and it was totally degrading. It was not top country at all in the end. It would have been far better in its natural state than it was after fire had been through it.

The member for Robina mentioned that he wanted to save endangered species. We have always wanted to save endangered species. The legislation that does that has been in place for many years.

Time expired.

Mr HOOLIHAN (Keppel—ALP) (4.33 p.m.): I have pleasure in rising to speak to the Vegetation Management Act. We have heard from the National Party about the legislation that it was secretive and oppressive and from a previous speaker how it has incurred the hatred of land-holders, but the legislation reflects the inclusion of land-holders and local experts in the vegetation management framework. That has been a priority of the Beattie government and that priority is reflected in this bill.

In 2000 the government introduced the concept of regional vegetation management plans. Twenty-three regional vegetation management plans, one for each of the state's bioregions, were developed. They incorporated local knowledge, drew on the expertise of land-holders and utilised the latest scientific information available. These regional vegetation management plans were to assist with the management of Queensland's vegetation. It was a major challenge. The plans were developed by the community to advise the government on regionally appropriate ways to manage vegetation.

The plans also provided communities with a tool to manage native vegetation mindful of local issues, which are probably issues like those around Aramac or places mentioned by the previous speaker. By March 2004, 23 draft regional vegetation management plans were completed which addressed vegetation management issues that are important to each region, involved regional stakeholders in the community in widespread participation, had scientific and technical support, and covered both leasehold and freehold land.

Continuing the commitment to include land-holders and local communities in the vegetation management framework, the information in the draft regional vegetation management plans has been integrated into the new vegetation management framework. Specifically, information from the draft plans has been used to draw up 23 bioregion specific codes which will be the work manual for assessing clearing applications under the new legislation. Each time a land-holder applies to clear vegetation on their property, the application is assessed against the code drawn up for their particular bioregion. The codes address some of the issues that have been raised: broadscale clearing under the ballot, ongoing clearing of certain regrowth on leasehold land, thinning, encroachment, weed control, projects of state significance, minor management activities and extractive industries.

By assessing clearing against those codes, the government can ensure that the approved clearing delivers on the aim of the new laws, which is to conserve remnant, endangered and of concern regional ecosystems; prevent land degradation and the loss of biodiversity; manage the environmental effects of clearing; and reduce greenhouse emissions.

I would like to emphasise that the draft regional vegetation management plans have been instrumental in the development of the codes under the new laws. They have provided invaluable local information on the best and most appropriate approaches to sustainable vegetation management. The government appreciates the efforts of those land-holders and community representatives who gave of their time and their expertise in the drafting of the regional vegetation management plans. I would like to congratulate in particular a group in my own electorate of Keppel—the Capricorn Dawson Planning Group—for its sterling work and tireless effort in crafting its regional vegetation management plan.

All Queenslanders, and particularly those who played such an important part in preparing those regional vegetation management plans, can rest assured that the plans have been fundamental in creating the codes by which all vegetation management will now be assessed and they will give the certainty that was mentioned by the previous speaker.

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (4.38 p.m.): I rise today to participate in this debate on the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004. The purpose of the bill is to phase out broadscale clearing of remnant vegetation in Queensland by 31 December 2006 under a transitional clearing cap and to protect of concern regional ecosystems while allowing clearing for necessary ongoing purposes and management activities.

The bill provides for the amendment of the Vegetation Management Act 1999 to enable assessment of the clearing of vegetation on freehold and state land under one act. The tree clearing provisions in the Land Act 1994 are repealed and amendments to the vegetation clearing provisions in the Integrated Planning Act 1997 are also made.

There have been a number of debates on vegetation management in this parliament since 1999, and I have participated in the debates that have occurred since 2001. The comments I have made before in this House regarding vegetation management unfortunately largely still stand, and what I will say in today's contribution will be of no surprise to the minister because I know he has heard it before both in the parliament and in my electorate. I commend the minister on visiting my electorate to see first-hand some of these issues.

It is unfortunate, though, that those issues are still problems and are not addressed. That is a real disappointment to all of those people who have been involved in what are real, sustainable and good environmental outcomes that are occurring right across my electorate.

The background to this bill is well known. I will not go into too much detail about it. Suffice to say it was simply a political act during an election campaign aimed at metropolitan voters and Green preferences with no regard at all to those Queenslanders who live and work in regional areas, especially outside the south-east corner and some of the coastal cities. Vegetation management is of vital interest to all land-holders who are living and working on the land every day of their lives. Everyone supports sensible guidelines to make sure that vegetation management is actually done in a sustainable way and that the balance is reached. Unfortunately, the legislation that we are debating has thrown all sorts of sensibilities out the window.

We hear a lot of rhetoric about sustainable development, but these people are out there on the ground actually doing it. They are the ones who are implementing real environmental successes and getting real environmental gains out there on the ground in all of our electorates—those people who actually represent some areas where this legislation will have a real effect.

The saddest thing—and the shadow minister pointed this out—is the way this debate has progressed in painting all land-holders and all farmers as environmental vandals. That has been a real disappointment for those people whom I represent. I do not represent the very large areas of agricultural land like the members for Callide, Warrego, Gregory or Charters Towers. I have quite a small electorate, but it is also an agricultural based electorate. This legislation has just as much an effect on my electorate as it does on those big ones. It has just as much an effect on those people who are trying to manage their properties in a responsible way, trying to continue to manage them in a sustainable way so the economic benefits that they can reap for this state are enjoyed by everyone in this state. That is something that has been forgotten. That has been thrown out the window because of a cheap political stunt to paint farmers as environmental vandals. That has been a real disappointment to all of those people who are honest, on-the-ground people who are doing something real for our environment and not performing stunts along the way.

Farmers are being painted as environmental vandals, and it is simply not true. It is not accurate and it certainly is not fair. Land-holders want to do the right thing. Far from being environmental vandals, if they see one of their neighbours doing the wrong thing, if they see someone who is not doing the right thing in developing or managing their property, most of them will be upset and they will actually confront those people. It is a very small minority of people who do the wrong thing. When they do, in most cases they are treated with disdain by those good people out there who actually can and do worry about sustainability on their properties and are trying to improve their practices. They are upset when something goes wrong. To tar them with the same brush is simply irresponsible.

Every member in this House supports responsible clearing and protection of vulnerable species—there is no debate about that—but it has to be done in cooperation with stakeholders and with the encouragement of those people who are actually going to have to implement this legislation. They are those land-holders who are trying to do the right thing.

Regulation and legislation have increased enormously in this area over the past few years. Landowners are trying to get their minds around it, trying to manage it and trying to comply with it. Unfortunately, in lots of cases it is with very little help from DNR because the officers simply are not on the ground to assist those land-holders not only in interpreting the legislation but also actually doing the right thing in a practical way at an on-property level. DNR has taken those officers out of the field and they are not being replaced. What is more, the information that those DNR officers held at an on-property level has been withdrawn as well. Not only do we have the officers being withdrawn, but the technical, on-property support and advice has also been withdrawn from those people who are left. It is a very complex, very difficult area to work in. The legislation and regulation have increased enormously. Having no DNR officers on the ground to help implement them make it incredibly difficult for those land-holders coping with the complex changes.

I will give one example. It is one that the minister knows about. It is actually one that we were able to fix, but the fact that it happened in the first place is the problem. One of my constituents had his property maps and was going to clear an area of his property that had been cleared previously. His map said it was fine—no problems at all. He happened to be in the DNR office regarding a different matter and thought he would check the maps to have a second look at it. Lo and behold, the area of regrowth on his property had actually been changed to remnant vegetation. So if he had gone and cleared that property, which he quite easily could have done, he would have been breaking the law and could have quite easily been pursued by DNR for breaking the law when it would have been, after all, an honest mistake. It was on his map that it was okay to clear. The map had changed because the Herbarium had done an assessment of a neighbouring property and decided that not only should the neighbouring property change to remnant but so should his.

They are the sorts of practical problems that are happening on the ground every day. As I said, the minister on his visit was able to hear first-hand from that constituent of mine and was able to fix it. However, it should not have happened in the first place. That land-holder should not have been placed in the position of breaking the law. Unfortunately, because of the legislation at the time, an honest mistake was not a legal defence and he could have quite easily been prosecuted for what was literally an honest mistake made by someone trying to do the right thing.

One of the real problems that has existed with the vegetation management legislation has been the definition of regrowth. The minister has been making a number of statements in the community about what regrowth will mean from now on. If it is regrowth then it will stay as regrowth. As the shadow minister said, it is not referred to in the legislation that that is actually the case. We are relying on trust that that is actually what is going to happen. The amendment that has been circulated certainly does not clarify in any way what that position is going to be. When we say 'remnant vegetation', most people in the community would believe that that is vegetation that has never been cleared. That that is not the case is simply crazy. If an area has been cleared then obviously it has to be regrowth. As it currently stands, once that vegetation reaches a certain percentage of original cover and height then it can be changed from regrowth to remnant.

It is not clarified in this legislation. We are taking it on trust that that is going to change. The minister has been in the community saying that it is going to change. When we look at past records and compare the original intent of the legislation with the actual in-the-field interpretation of that legislation we find that they have been two very different things. Regrowth has certainly been a particularly difficult area.

In my electorate, for example, we have areas of brigalow, cypress pine and wattle, which are three species that are particularly bad for regrowth. They are very fast-growing species. They come back thicker than ever and it becomes a real management problem. It does not take very long at all to reach that definition of percentage of original cover before it reverts to remnant vegetation. That makes it really difficult for some areas that are incredibly productive areas of our state to continue producing in a good way. Thickening and encroachment are also significant concerns. A number of previous speakers have referred to them, but they are very difficult issues that must be dealt with on a local level.

There is only one DNR officer based permanently in my electorate and that is an officer based at Millmerran. He has an awful lot of knowledge, especially in the vegetation management

area. But the area of ground that he has to cover is enormous and it has particular problems. As I said, they may not be large geographical areas, but a large number of people are operating there and he has to deal with a large number of issues. He ranges from the Southern Downs right around to Crows Nest. He also has to deal with the residential developments that are occurring in Toowoomba. He is stretched unbelievably thinly on the ground trying to advise on a huge range of interpretations from residential applications right through to agricultural. He simply physically cannot be everywhere. That is one of the problems. It is such a complex area and we do not have those people on the ground who are able to actually deal with what is going on.

I have asked the minister before and I continue to urge the minister to replace the officer who was based in Pittsworth. We had an excellent officer there previously. Unfortunately, he has retired. I wish him well in his retirement, but we really do miss him and his expertise. He had a huge knowledge, specifically in the area of soil conservation. We have unfortunately lost that corporate knowledge. We have lost that detailed knowledge of the entire Darling Downs area that comes within my electorate where the real environmental gains have been made.

When I speak to the constituents in my area they, without doubt, say that the real environmental gains made in our area were during the 1970s, the 1980s and the early 1990s when a lot of soil conservation work was done. Most of the technical expertise and support was given by DNR extension officers at an on-property level. That sort of real environmental gain is not even considered. The state government is walking away from providing that on-property level advice, such as soil conservation advice on things such as contouring banking, water course management, vegetation corridors and zero till farming. That is where the real environmental gains have been made in the last two decades. That is where the real achievements have been made.

What has happened? This government has walked away from providing that expertise and has resorted to some cheap political headlining—the sexy headlines that actually sell—and not those brown issues where people on the ground have been doing something tangible to achieve real environmental gains and make sure that agriculture is managed in a sustainable way. That is where we have really lost focus. That is a real problem.

The minister has previously denied that this on-property advice would be withdrawn. Unfortunately, however, it is now being done at a catchment level. The advice is being provided by DNR to the catchment associations. Where does that leave the catchment associations? They have to try to attract staff who can do this at an on-property level. I know that officers of DNR have said, and I think I am right in saying that the minister has even said, that DNR is having problems attracting good people to do this extension work. If DNR is having problems attracting good people, with all of the benefits that go with being a government employee, how on earth would a catchment association be able to attract good people when it can only at best offer a short-term contract because it does not have certainty in funding.

It is a concern for those land-holders. It is a concern for the Landcare groups who are trying to do some real environmental work on the ground. It is a concern to the catchment groups. They know that they are not able to provide that information. The only people who can provide it—what is more, the people who should be providing it—are those in the offices of DNR and DPI. What is happening? This government is walking away from both those departments. Rather than actually trying to make some real environmental gains they are going for some cheap headlines. That is not fair to our state and not fair to our land-holders.

Not only are we seeing DNR officers being withdrawn, we are seeing cost shifting to those catchment groups. That is another issue. It means that the advice is getting worse, the people are getting fewer and fewer, and we are relying on penalising land-holders instead of trying to help them to do the sorts of things that we want them to do.

Much has been said about the vegetation management planning process at a regional level. The people involved with those have put an enormous amount of work in. They are good people but they are absolutely fed up with it, especially now that they know that they are going to be largely ignored anyway. All of their work is going to be thrown out the window. The problem is that those good people who have spent so much time trying to get a good outcome walk away from it. If we now get people who may have a particular barrow to push we will have even worse problems.

There are other anomalies with the previous legislation that will also occur with this legislation. I have talked about this in this House before. Unfortunately, we have no resolution to those problems.

There are all sorts of noxious plants across Queensland that cause problems—the loss of productive areas, the taking over of entire properties in some cases and the strangling of native vegetation that we are trying to preserve. In my electorate one problem is lantana, and particularly the eastern areas of my electorate on the Great Dividing Range. There are some very steep, inaccessible areas that people are trying to manage in terms of lantana. They cannot clear those areas of lantana because they cannot get a permit because of the native vegetation. They have to go in and spray it but that is physically impossible to go in and spray it because of the geographical landscape and the thickness of the vegetation—the noxious weeds, in this case lantana.

Unless they clear it they cannot kill the lantana and if they cannot kill the lantana, they cannot clear it—it is a ridiculous cycle. Instead of making it possible for these people to get rid of that noxious weed, which will promote the growth of native vegetation, the lantana is taking over and native vegetation does not have any chance of surviving. It is really a self-defeating exercise.

That is happening right across the state with different noxious weeds. We heard the minister speak this morning about how difficult it is to control prickly acacia. There is a range of them. Rubber vine is a problem up north. When I was speaking to the member for Burdekin earlier, she was saying how difficult it is going to be to control rubber vine. That is exactly what is going to happen. It will be almost impossible to try to retain native vegetation that is being strangled out by these noxious weeds. This is due to some short-sightedness.

The issue of compensation has been raised. I have spoken about it before and it will continue to be a problem It is even being referred to as compensation in this legislation. But whether $150 million is going to be enough, I have serious doubts, as many people have said. If this legislation is judged to be in the public benefit, then the public should make a contribution. There is no doubt about that. When it is too expensive for the government to wear the bill, how on earth can we expect a number of individuals to wear the bill?

Land-holders have had to try to get their minds around a number of different pieces of legislation since 1999. As the shadow minister has stated, they have had to work in a complex web of ever-changing laws without the public servants on the ground to assist them. Unfortunately, some individuals go out of their way to actually prosecute people rather than help to comply with the legislation. This government has walked away from genuine environmental works. That has been shown on the ground. Unfortunately, they are concentrating on headline grabbing stunts, and that is what we have seen with this legislation.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (4.56 p.m.): 'We're clearing like there's No Tomorrow'. That is the hard-hitting title of a small publication jointing funded by the Queensland Conservation Council and the Wilderness Society. It states:

Two thirds of all land clearing destroys remnant i.e. previously uncleared bushland.

It also points out that land clearing in Australia has resulted in considerable erosion, considerable salinity and the strangling of major river systems. This has resulted in land degradation, worsened the effects of drought and is responsible for the death of millions of native animals and the extinction of specific species.

Australia is recorded as being the sixth highest land clearer in the world. This is a record we should not be proud of. What I am proud of is being part of a government that has taken decisive and coordinated action by introducing the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004 that will go a long way towards improving not only our environment but also our environmental image throughout the rest of the country and the world.

The bill will mark a significant step in this state's tree clearing laws. It amends three current acts—namely, the Vegetation Management Act 1999, the Land Act 1994 and the Integrated Planning Act 1997. This enables assessment of the clearing of remnant vegetation on freehold land and state land to occur under the one act. The primary aim of the bill introduced into the parliament earlier this year by the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, the Hon. Stephen Robertson—and I acknowledge that he is present in the chamber—is to phase out the broadscale clearing of remnant vegetation by the end of December 2006.

There are also a number of other important objectives of the bill. These include: one, for the first time protecting of-concern remnant vegetation on freehold land for the first time in line with existing protections on leasehold land; two, a ballot for broadscale clearing applications to receive an allocation under a transitional cap of 500,000 hectares as part of the phase-out process; three, allowing applications for particular but limited purposes to be considered outside the cap; four, permitting clearing of most regrowth vegetation; five, permitting some selective clearing or

thinning; six, extending the regulation of vegetation clearing to deeds of grant in trust lands for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander purposes; seven, greater certainty for land-holders through new property maps of assessable vegetation which delineate assessable and non-assessable vegetation at the property scale; eight, amendments to the declaration of certain areas under the Vegetation Management Act; and, nine, clarification of the exemptions under IPA from the need for a permit.

The introduction of this bill could see Queensland become a world leader in the battle against global warming. Certainly the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics, a Commonwealth body, says that Queensland's tree clearing package may reduce greenhouse gases by 25 million tonnes per year, which has been estimated to be equivalent to taking two cars off the road for every man, woman and child in Queensland and making it the country's single biggest contribution to greenhouse gas emission.

While expert scientific evidence is growing about the harm caused by global warming to health, lifestyle, the economy and the environment, the Beattie state government is about to make an important contribution to the future of our planet. One scientific report entitled *Environmental crisis: climate change and terrestrial biodiversity in Queensland* sounds a stark warning about the impacts of climate change not only on the rainforests of Queensland but also on our health and safety, primary industries and water quality. It clearly states that the clearing of natural vegetation exacerbates gas build-up and reduces the resilience of the landscape to the effects of climate change.

This bill is a win for all, but not everyone can see it and not everyone will accept it. Take the opposition, for example, whose narrow-minded view is the same as its federal colleagues who refuse to join us in our efforts to contribute to the $150 million package which will be provided to those farmers affected by tree clearing. The member for Callide, who is in the chamber today, said in his contribution to this debate that we do not care. I ask that he contact his federal colleagues and suggest that they contribute to the farmers who are going to be affected by suggesting that they contribute to the scheme.

If we are to have a healthy future, if indeed a future at all, we all need to work together. If not, and land clearing were to be allowed to continue at the alarming rate it has been in the past and unchecked, we have been warned that droughts and floods will be likely to be more prolonged, more severe and more frequent and that the climate change may favour weeds, feral animals and diseases. Who or what would benefit from those outcomes? I cannot think of anyone or anything. I congratulate the minister and his staff for the introduction of this bill and commend it to the House.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (5.01 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. In doing so, I want to acknowledge that there will always be a level of conflict between urban interests, urban realities and urban perceptions versus those of people who live in rural Queensland and rural Australia. However, the wisdom of legislation is to find a middle path that disadvantages both communities the absolute least. I have found people in rural Queensland to be very responsible in the main. Irrespective of where one lives, there will always be one or two people who are extremists and who hold views that are clearly contradictory in terms of general principles of soundness. However, the majority of people in my electorate have been sound land managers, particularly those who live in rural areas.

I want to recognise the work done by the Landcare groups in my electorate, the catchment management groups, the Fitzroy Basin Association which has within its purview under the federal area the two river catchments in my electorate, and the landowners themselves who have done a great deal of work, usually on a voluntary basis, to better understand our environment, our catchments and our biodiversity. This legislation will in some ways exacerbate rural people's uncertainty and lack of trust in terms of legislation—be that state legislation, federal legislation or indeed local government legislation.

This legislation amends and amalgamates legislation that covers tree clearing and rural management plans for our communities. It also provides a historic line in the sand for how we as a community manage our often fragile landscapes and their natural limitations to ensure that they remain economically and ecologically sustainable. The minister made that statement in his second reading speech. It will place a historic line in the sand, but it appears that the vast majority of responsibility will fall to people in rural Queensland rather than those in the cities and the towns. The second reading speech also stated that a 25-megaton reduction in greenhouse gases is equivalent to a 6.84 tonne per person reduction based on the 2001 population or the removal of

two cars from the road for every Queenslander or a total of more than seven million cars per year. The Hon. Peter Beattie went on to say during the election campaign that the tree clearing ban will make Queenslanders top global warriors.

My concern—and I have several in relation to the legislation, and I look forward to the minister's response to these and the other questions that have been raised—which is of equal value to the retention of biodiversity and bioregions is the ability of those agencies empowered and responsible for the husbandry of those areas to be able to manage them in a way that makes them safe. The experience of many people in rural Queensland is that, where large areas are locked up for national parks and forestry, there is usually a great deal of risk, particularly when it comes to protracted dry periods, that very large fires will originate from either the national parks areas or the forestry areas usually as a result of poor management in terms of undergrowth clearing, et cetera. As a result, we end up with hotter, bigger and more impacting fires in the regions which will do nothing to address the 25-megaton reduction in greenhouse gases. If anything, it will exacerbate those problems.

In marriage with this legislation there has to be not only all of the good things that are recited about retaining biodiversity, retaining vegetation of concern and vegetation that is genuine remnant vegetation but also an allocation of significant funds and significant people to manage those areas that are now going to be set aside. There is money within this package for the acquisition of more land for national parks. However, the legislation does not just place the responsibility to manage these areas on the government. It places a significant and onerous responsibility on private landowners to undertake management and husbandry of areas in a way that will be extremely cost sensitive for them as primary producers. I do not believe that the compensation package that has been referred to in the legislation will, to the extent that this legislation will impact on people and for the period of time that it will impact on people, address their needs adequately.

The $150 million over three years, which is effectively $50 million a year, will be made available to landowners affected by the changes. I have a concern and a question in relation to how the compensation will be calculated for each landowner. The legislation being passed—and it obviously will because of the numbers—is one thing. The actual application of the principles of the legislation to the landowners of Queensland will mean that costs will escalate. The government in my area does not have a good reputation—and it is not just the Labor government; it is governments generically—in its treatment, assessment and valuation of private property in terms of compensation.

DSD is currently doing a series of valuations in the electorate for an increase in the area of industrial land. There are a litany of stories where the government valuer has given not just a significantly reduced valuation compared to the landowner's private valuation but a more than significantly reduced valuation. In one incident—and it is only a small example—a farmer had a flat bed truck which could be purchased in the commercial market for $6,000 to $7,000. It was fully registered for on-road use. The valuer valued it at $300. When the owner objected, that value was doubled to $600.

So if those same principles and same values are applied to the impact of this legislation on landowners, the disquiet will increase rather than decrease. I seek the minister's clarification as to how valuations of impact are going to be obtained.

The legislation also deals with the application and ballots for broadscale clearing, at least until 2006. My only question to the minister is: what feedback has he had from rural landowners in terms of their perception of the fairness of this ballot and also their perception of the lack of appeal processes for a person who is unsuccessful in the balloting process, given that the implications for that lack of success are significant?

The bill contains amended definitions for 'essential management' in relation to the clearing of native vegetation. I commend the minister for those changes in terms of the reality, particularly of fire prevention measures, in rural areas. The amendments state that a firebreak can be equivalent to 1.5 times the highest of the tallest vegetation adjacent to infrastructure or 20 metres, whichever is the greater. I commend the minister for that. I had an issue in my electorate—I think it came within the minister's department—where a gentleman wanted to prepare a firebreak. The approval for the firebreak was so small that it would manage only a very slow, cold grassfire. It certainly would not prevent the spread of a fire the nature of which we have not just in central Queensland but across Australia where the flames are very high, the fires are very intense. I think that amendment to the specifications for a firebreak better reflects the reality in rural Queensland in terms of proper fire prevention and maintenance.

The other area that I want to raise with the minister relates to the definition 'routine management'. The legislation talks about establishing fences or roads. It discusses establishing the necessary infrastructure other than contour banks, fences or roads, if the total extent of the infrastructure is on less than two hectares. I understand that previously the area was designated as less than five hectares. In terms of the application of this legislation, that change from five to two will affect a lot of people who have moved from urban Queensland—cities, particularly regional cities—into rural residential areas or the larger rural residential blocks.

So my question to the minister is: what education will be put in place to ensure that those landowners who have gone to small acreage lots—and two hectares is a small acreage lot in many local authority areas—are properly equipped to understand the impact of this legislation on them? Many of the larger land-holders—that is, in the hundreds of acres—are used to dealing with DNR. They are used to dealing with management issues, that is, cattle management as well as natural environment management. But these people on the smaller acreage lots are not. They do not take with them any education in terms of their need to liaise with DNR or to get information in relation to vegetation management. It will be vitally important that information is readily available on a proactive basis to ensure that those landowners are not inadvertently disadvantaged. Most of those people would want to comply with any necessary obligations placed on them.

I listened with some concern to a couple of the National Party speakers who questioned the certainty of the compensation package. I look forward to the minister's response to that matter, because I think it would be the ultimate betrayal of the community if all that has been said about compensation does not come to fruition. I am sure that there will be a response to those comments of uncertainty and I look forward to the minister clarifying those issues. I guess that time will tell whether the quantum will be sufficient. I doubt that it will be. However, it is certainly important that the minister respond to the basic questions about the certainty of the compensation packages.

The other question that I had in relation to the legislation was the ability for people to apply for compensation. That will be made available to those who are unsuccessful in the balloting and are significantly affected by the changes. Who decides on what is significantly affected? What will that process be? According to the amendments that have just been circulated today, I notice that the application will now have a fee attached to it. I would be interested in finding out what is 'significantly affected' because it is subjective unless it is clearly defined.

There was a matter raised under the original tree clearing legislation and the mapping that occurred in relation to that. A lot of areas of the state were mapped but were never groundtruthed because of a lack of resources. Some property owners were quite significantly impacted by that legislation. One landowner in my area had 75 per cent of his property drawn in pink. He could not do anything with it, but he could not be compensated. Nothing could be done. No-one wanted to buy the land, because it was a rural property. The departmental officers, while sympathetic, shrugged their shoulders and said that nothing could be done. This bill at least refers to compensation, but the effectiveness of that compensation will be directly in proportion to the fairness of the decisions that are made and to the objectivity versus subjectivity of the assessment as to what is significant impact and what is not.

I look forward to hearing the minister's comments in his reply. This bill has the potential to be a very positive piece of legislation. However, it also has the potential to be quite devastating to those injuriously affected. I look forward to the minister's response.

Dr LESLEY CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (5.16 p.m.): I am proud to rise to speak in support of this historic legislation that will provide for the most important environmental reform by a Labor government in Queensland. It could be argued that the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill is in fact the most important piece of environmental legislation ever to have been introduced into the Queensland parliament. I commend the conservation movement for the role that it has played in raising community awareness of this issue.

The scientific case for ending broadscale land clearing of remnant vegetation is absolutely compelling and should be recognised by the National Party. The extent of land clearing in Queensland is probably still not appreciated by most people living in urban areas because it occurs far from where they live. Before clearing began in Queensland, 70 per cent of the state was covered in native woodlands and forests of varying density and 23 per cent was native grasslands. In 1999, three-quarters of the original woody vegetation remained as remnant. But in 1999 Australia had the sixth highest rate of land clearing in the world and approximately 85 per cent of that clearing occurred in Queensland.

The latest statewide land cover and tree study—SLATS—report released in January 2003 found that the Queensland average annual clearing rate from 1999 to 2001 was 577,000 hectares a year—an area three times the size of Fraser Island and which represented an area the size of three football fields being cleared every five minutes.

Since the Vegetation Management Act 1999 was proclaimed in September 2000, the Environmental Protection Agency's Queensland Herbarium has warned that continued clearing has resulted in 54 regional ecosystems being at a stage where any further significant clearing will cause a change in their conservation status. The majority of these ecosystems occur in highly cleared and heavily fragmented bioregions of the Brigalow Belt, south-east Queensland and the central Queensland coast. Yet the member for Callide attempted to portray this kind of clearing as insignificant. Obviously, I just cannot share that view, and neither do the majority of Queenslanders.

The impact of this rate of land clearing is creating major environmental problems that also have huge economic costs. Firstly, the loss of habitat is estimated to result in the death of some 100 million native animals every year, with some species of woodland birds facing extinction. Land clearing causes dryland salinity, which threatens our water quality and reduces agricultural productivity, as demonstrated by the salinity hazard maps produced by the Department of Natural Resources. Soil erosion adversely impacts on river ecology and the Great Barrier Reef.

The third major problem is that of greenhouse gas emissions caused by burning and rotting vegetation. Land clearing is responsible for 12 per cent of Australia's total greenhouse gas emissions, amounting to approximately 71 million tonnes of CO_2 gas—almost as much as trucks and cars. Reducing the rate of broadscale land clearing will meet the specific provisions on land use change under the Kyoto protocol. The Australian Greenhouse Office has calculated that placing a cap on land clearing of 500,000 hectares and reducing it to zero by 2006 will in fact reduce CO_2 emissions by between 20 million and 25 million tonnes a year.

The compelling arguments for reducing the rate of land clearing were the basis for the Beattie government's first attempt to act in the form of the 1999 Vegetation Management Act. But then the failure of the Commonwealth to support Queensland in funding assistance to compensate farmers led to its amendment the following year, reducing the restrictions on land clearing to cover only remnant vegetation described as endangered and thereby significantly reducing the value of that legislation, much to my disappointment when I spoke on that in the House at that time.

The current legislation achieves the goals of the 1999 legislation and much more by protecting all remnant vegetation, capping clearing to no more than another 500,000 hectares and totally phasing out clearing by 2006. It was no longer tenable to wait for the Commonwealth, so Queensland is providing the entire $150 million to assist farmers that was determined as appropriate and adequate by the Australian bureau of resource economics report, which was in fact commissioned by the Commonwealth government itself. The immediate imperative of the Howard federal government was to save National Party seats. That imperative won out over the imperative to protect the environment and secure long-term sustainability for the future of the farmers.

Whilst the greatest clearing has occurred in central and western Queensland, the Wet Tropics bioregion has also seen significant clearing of freehold land outside of the world heritage area in, for example, areas such as the Tablelands and Mission Beach. This poses a threat to native animals, particularly tree kangaroos and cassowaries.

One issue on which all members in this debate do agree is the need for accurate vegetation mapping. The current 1:100,000 scale maps do not provide sufficient accuracy and detail for the smaller blocks that are characteristic of much of the freehold in the Wet Tropics. New maps are being prepared at a finer scale of 1:50,000. There is a need for the finalisation of these maps as quickly as possible, particularly for the Cairns region, which is experiencing a development boom with new residential and tourism developments worth in excess of $2 billion under way or on the drawing board. In my electorate of Barron River there are still many areas classified as regional endangered ecosystems in urban areas that can be protected under this legislation, and accurate fine scale maps are essential.

Whilst this legislation is primarily aimed at rural areas, there are important changes that will affect urban areas, such as in my electorate and in the area of Cairns generally. The definition of 'urban land' has been changed. As I have indicated, under the existing legislation the state does not regulate the clearing of freehold land in urban areas other than where the vegetation is

classified as endangered. The current definition of 'urban area' includes all areas identified in local government planning schemes zoned for urban purposes, rural residential purposes and future urban purposes.

Though it removes rural residential zones from the urban area definition, reflecting the reality that local authorities treat them more like rural areas than urban, removing rural residential from the urban area classification means importantly that this land use will be subject to the same provisions as other rural land and all remnant vegetation will be protected. This will help prevent the high rates of clearing linked to land being converted from rural to rural residential.

Under the bill this definition will apply unless a local government has prepared a priority infrastructure plan or the chief executive of the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy has prepared a gazette notice for a particular local government area. Ultimately, the amended definition of 'urban area' will be tied to a local government's priority infrastructure area as identified in its priority infrastructure plan. Under the Integrated Planning Act, local authorities will have to prepare these plans by 2005, which will give us a much more accurate description of future urban land for the next 10 to 15 years of growth for residential, retail, commercial and industrial purposes. The introduction of these plans means that future growth will be much more tightly defined in planning schemes.

Where priority infrastructure plans have not been developed, areas within planning schemes can be defined as urban or non-urban by gazette notice. This option will be used where there is difficulty determining through the planning scheme whether an area is urban or non-urban. The gazettal of areas within a planning scheme as urban will only be done in consultation with local government and will only occur where the current zoning is ambiguous and requires clarification.

The bill also strengthens land clearing provisions relating to urban areas by specifying that the exemption from the need to apply for a permit extends only to clearing in an urban area for an urban purpose. This addresses an existing anomaly where broadscale clearing can occur without a permit in an urban area, even if the clearing is completely unrelated to an urban use. I congratulate the minister on fixing this anomaly, otherwise we would find ourselves in a situation where it would be possible to clear land without a permit for purposes that would require a permit elsewhere.

Importantly, the Department of Natural Resources will also have more power to protect vegetation where land use changes are proposed. Under the IPA the department will become a concurrence agency where applications for a material change of use are lodged with the local authority on land parcels greater than two hectares—a decrease from five hectares in the previous legislation.

In conclusion, this historic legislation presents the best opportunity yet to ensure sustainability of our primary industries into the future and the retention of Queensland's amazing biodiversity and it will assist Australia in playing its part in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

I commend the Liberal Party for its support of this legislation, despite failure during the election campaign to stick to the principles it has always had on this issue, as outlined by the member for Robina. The National Party's opposition to the legislation was predictable given its constituency, but there are in fact many good farmers who understand the need for this legislation. It is a pity that the National Party has not taken on a more constructive role in this debate. History will, I am sure, prove the Beattie government right to take this decisive step in phasing out broadscale land clearing by 2006. I am proud to commend this bill to the House.

Ms JARRATT (Whitsunday—ALP) (5.26 p.m.): It is a pleasure for me to rise in support of the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. During my time this evening I wish to address the exemptions that this bill allows in terms of tree clearing.

This bill delivers the government's promise to phase out broadscale land clearing by the end of 2006 and thereby reduce the future release of greenhouse gas emissions by some 20 to 25 megatons per year. This is just so important, not just for the long-term viability of this planet but also for the short-term protection of things like the ozone layer and its contribution to global warming in terms of something very near and dear to my heart, that is, our Great Barrier Reef.

Although the evidence is probably far from fully developed at this stage, pointers indicate that global warming and greenhouse gas emissions and their contribution to global warming are actually a contributing factor to the bleaching of our corals on the Great Barrier Reef. This is something I think we do not have even years to reverse the impact of. Once the coral dies, it is gone and our tourism industry may as well turn up its toes and just disappear. This is really important stuff.

We know that Queensland is suffering from the effects of inappropriate land clearing. Unless we do something about it, this will continue to happen. Salinity, we know, is a growing concern. We are concerned about the degradation of land and water. Again, this concerns me greatly as I have a coastal electorate right on the Great Barrier Reef. We need to be particularly conscious of the quality of the water we put into the reef lagoon. I think stopping broadscale land clearing is one of the important components in improving our water quality.

This government had to act on vegetation management. We had to rein in the problems of inappropriate land clearing. Indeed, we do this with a mandate from the people of Queensland. I am proud today to be part of a government delivering on a promise made at the election and delivering for the future of this state.

I do acknowledge, however, that this is quite an emotive issue, but I cannot agree with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who stood in this House this afternoon and told us that this was simply the government playing politics. That comment shows a lack of insight and care about the future of our state. I think such comments simply prove it is the opposition which is whipping people up into a frenzy and taking advantage of some vulnerable people by playing politics on the issue of vegetation management.

Among the most important features of this bill are the exemptions that allow some land clearing without the need to obtain an approval. As a general rule, clearing of non-remnant or regrowth vegetation is allowed on freehold land, deed of grant in trust and other trust land, and for some other leases. This bill maintains the existing system where permits are not required on agricultural and grazing leases where the clearing has occurred since December 1989. Land-holders who have completed a property map of assessable vegetation will be able to clear areas identified as category X or non-remnant vegetation without a permit.

The existing exemption for native forest practices on freehold land will continue, which means people can fell and remove trees for ongoing forestry business. These, I am pleased to say, are sensible and quite logical exemptions to the act of clearing our vegetation, but a new exemption in this bill allows for clearing to occur for the construction of a single residence on agricultural and grazing leases where building approval has been given. The exemption does not apply to buildings for commercial purposes and applies regardless of how the vegetation is mapped. I would just like to repeat that point because I think it is a very important one. People will be able to clear land to build a residence regardless of the nature of the vegetation. This is such a sensible provision because land-holders should not be hindered in the fair and reasonable aim of building a house on their properties.

The bill also allows limited clearing without a permit for essential management activities like maintaining fire breaks and managing the risk of bushfires, maintaining existing infrastructure such as fences, stockyards, gardens and orchards, and removing dangerous or damaging vegetation. These are vital and commonsense exemptions. Undertaking clearing for routine rural management activities such as constructing and maintaining fences, roads and facilities will not require a permit. Exemptions will also exist for clearing that is authorised under acts such as the Environmental Protection Act for the mining of petroleum activity, the Fire and Rescue Service Act to reduce hazardous fuel loads, the Transport Infrastructure Act for roadworks and the Electricity Act and Forestry Act.

I am pleased to see that clearing for traditional non-commercial Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural activity is also included in this bill. Changes have also been made to enable clearing to take place under a development approval for what is known as the material change of use for land. For example, a land-holder might decide that he or she wants to convert part of their land to a commercial use such as residential lots. The new legislation will allow the state government to work with local authorities at the planning stage to assess the impact on vegetation and either approve or reject the application or place conditions on the development. It is a much more sensible way to approach clearing for development because those strict processes are already in place. This provision will give both developers and local governments more certainty in their operations.

Vegetation can be cleared on roads. However, this is one area where the exemptions have been reduced because vegetation on and near roads is often part of a valuable wildlife corridor for animals moving in between patches of remnant vegetation, particularly in heavily cleared areas. This bill clarifies the clearing that local governments can do on roads without having to get a permit. It is all set out in black and white, and generally local authorities will be able to clear only for the purpose of building or maintaining a road and associated infrastructure. The exemption to use forest products for road construction purposes remains. Within an urban area, local

governments will be able to clear roads for any purpose as long as remnant vegetation or of concern regional ecosystems are not involved. Finally, local authorities can undertake routine clearing activities that are not listed in this bill's exemption, such as clearing to maintain stock routes.

It is very important that the exemption relating to clearing vegetation in an emergency has been broadened. Unlike the previous laws which restricted clearing to the time the emergency was actually occurring, this bill allows clearing to prevent an emergency. This removes the situation we used to have where you could not clear a tree that was at risk of falling on your house unless it had actually started to fall or you could tell that it was about to fall. That was the only time when the exemption applied. This bill brings some commonsense and a bit of logical thought to the provisions of preparing for emergency situations.

A person who holds a permit under the Fire and Rescue Service Act to undertake a controlled burn to reduce hazardous fuel loads is also able to clear. New exemptions have been added to allow clearing to maintain existing infrastructure that has been placed on or under a road, like electricity cables and sewerage pipes, and to provide access to roads through things such as driveways. Clearing without a permit is allowed to maintain an existing boundary fence as long as the clearing is restricted to a minimum, with a maximum allowable width of 1.5 metres. Clearing can occur inside a property fence without a permit under the essential management exemptions.

These exemptions will provide for appropriate clearing while still protecting the environment, and that is the balance we are seeking in this bill and I think have found in this bill. Of course it is about a balance between the environment and people's rights to manage their land and the vegetation on it. It is going to be emotive and it is going to be difficult, but it is something that had to be faced and I think this bill is the commonsense end result of a very long debate in this area. For all the reasons that I have outlined and the exemptions that are in this bill, I commend it to the House.

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—Lib) (5.37 p.m.): In relation to the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004, I will make it clear at the outset that we support the bill. It is important that, when the government presents legislation that has wide-ranging and far-sighted benefits for Queensland, non-government members are willing to give support and give credit where credit is due.

In assessing this legislation from a Liberal perspective, we have considered the following principles: firstly, protection of the environment. The Liberal members of this House are deeply committed to protecting the environment for future generations. We make it clear that we will support responsible measures that in our view achieve this end. The Liberal Party has a proud history of supporting responsible environmental measures, including bills relating to land clearing. As Liberals, we take a long-term view—a long-term view that will secure the future of Queensland long beyond these short parliamentary terms. Queenslanders want to see vision and leadership that will shape the future of the state beyond short-term gain.

We recognise the rapid growth and movement of people to Queensland. We support measures that will enhance and protect the lifestyle of present and future Queenslanders, and we see preserving the natural environment as a vital part in preserving future lifestyle.

Mr Robertson: What about the $75 million?

Dr FLEGG: You go it alone; you pay the bill. In all of this we have an overriding belief in the rights of individuals to earn their living and to use and enjoy their private property. We acknowledge that, in a rapidly growing and rapidly developing state, as with other areas of life, some restrictions need to be applied for the benefit of the broader community. It is all about individuals.

Whilst as a general principle we prefer less regulation rather than more, we accept the necessity of controls of this nature in vegetation management. In accordance with our assertion that individuals should be free to earn their living and enjoy their property, when such restrictions are placed on them for the benefit of the whole community the community as a whole is obligated to pay fair compensation to those adversely affected. We call on the government to ensure that the promised compensation is paid, and is paid fairly and adequately, to those landowners who are adversely impacted by this legislation.

We support the thrust of the legislation that seeks to protect remnant vegetation in Queensland whilst allowing appropriate management and clearing of regrowth for important farming and other activities in a way that results in minimum disruption to these activities. We

acknowledge a genuine level of concern in the community about the rate and method of land clearing. A recent survey in my electorate of Moggill revealed support for vegetation protection legislation at 67 per cent. We acknowledge the benefits of bringing vegetation protection measures within the auspices of a single bill and we acknowledge the government's mandate on this issue.

We also support the protection afforded to freehold property owners by virtue of this bill's protection in perpetuity of land-holders' right to clear areas of revegetation. We acknowledge that the majority of landowners are responsible, that many seek to protect and improve the environment of their own land. We consider it is an important aspect of this bill that those who do this will not lose their right to clear areas they allow to become revegetated. The certainty given to responsible landowners under the priority map of assessable vegetation is a vital part of the bill whereby responsible property owners who allow land not currently being used for other purposes to revegetate will not lose their right to use this land productively in the future.

I want to direct the remainder of my comments to the impact of this bill on settled areas. Firstly, the definition of an urban area has sustained a significant change, whereby areas designated rural residential or, as these are currently referred to in Brisbane, rural lands or environmental protection area, will be excluded from the classification of urban. This will have a significant impact on substantial areas of rural and environmental protection/rural residential areas throughout the state. We appreciate that owners of such properties in some cases will not be pleased that they have had restrictions placed on their management of the land. However, there is a strong voice, particularly in outer urban acreage areas, to protect the remaining native vegetation and the fauna that it harbours. There is still significant remnant vegetation in Brisbane, for example.

It is my understanding that page 23 of the explanatory notes dealing with paragraph 3AA(g) states that the exemption afforded to urban areas will not apply to category 1 vegetation. We support this measure that would make clearing of category 1 vegetation assessable even in urban areas, but I draw the House's attention to this aspect of the bill which has not been widely discussed.

In case members opposite get too carried away with our support for their measure, a great deal of work still needs to be done subsequent to this bill to achieve the spirit of it—the spirit both to preserve the remnant vegetation of our state as well as maintaining a fair and minimally bureaucratic framework for those who have to work under the act. Their government has the ongoing responsibility of identifying declared areas of high conservation area and lands vulnerable to degradation. These areas are to be included in category 1 lands and protected even within urban areas. They have the responsibility of assessing and fairly adjudicating claims for compensation by landowners who have been adversely affected. They have the responsibility of working with and consulting local authorities in relation to the preparation of their priority infrastructure plans that will ultimately determine which areas are exempt under the urban land exemption. Their government will still have responsibility as a concurrence agency for overseeing future movements in reconfiguration of lots or material change of use where remnant vegetation land is greater than two hectares and block size is less than 25 hectares.

These responsibilities will have far-reaching implications and will affect many people: landowners, local authorities, property developers and local residents. We would like an explanation of what attitude and process the government will follow with local authorities, particularly the impact this will have on large urban councils when they seek to transfer land into the urban classification to provide for the future growth in urban Queensland. We intend to hold the government to its promise to fairly and fully compensate disadvantaged landowners.

In summary, this is a major bill that will impact on the lives of many, if not most, Queenslanders in the years to come. A substantial number of Queenslanders will be disadvantaged, in their own view, by this bill. Because of the importance of preserving the environment of Queensland long into the future, we support the bill. We accept the fact that sometimes people are disadvantaged by various measures when there is a greater good, but we do call on the government to treat these people with compassion and with fairness and to work with them with the minimum of red tape and the minimum of frustration to people's everyday activities and with a maximum of fairness in judging landowners' applications and in applying compensation where people are disadvantaged. We support the bill.

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (5.46 p.m.): I am very pleased to support the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004. In his second reading speech the minister went to some length to describe the aims of the legislation. I want to briefly

refer to a few of them. Firstly, he referred to the fact that this legislation delivers the largest single reduction in greenhouse gas emissions ever in Australia; secondly, that the legislation will go a long way to provide long-term protection of Queensland's unique biodiversity; and he also made reference towards the end of his speech to the fact that this package—this bill—delivers to the Commonwealth exactly what it demanded: 20 to 25 megatons of carbon emission savings and the protection of all of-concern vegetation, all for nil consideration.

I want to refer to the reasons why these preventive measures are contained in the bill, as referred to by the minister. Of the 5.2 billion hectares making up the world's arable drylands, 3.6 billion hectares has, or is continuing to be, affected by erosion and land degradation. Globally, this lost productive capacity is estimated to cost the agricultural sector $US40 billion per year. Should present patterns of consumption continue, it is estimated that two out of three people in the world will be living in water-stressed conditions by 2025. According to the World Wide Fund for Nature, the world lost approximately 30 per cent of its natural wealth between 1970 and 1995.

In 1992 more than 100 heads of state met in Rio de Janeiro for the United Nation's Conference on Environment and Development during which agenda 21 was adopted—a 300-page plan for achieving sustainable development in the 21st century. Agenda 21 section 4.5 states—

> Special attention should be paid to the demand for natural resources generated by unsustainable consumption and to the efficient use of those consistent with the goal of minimizing land depletion ...

There is an emerging trend and some economic thought that highlights the importance of appreciating and understanding the true value of natural resource capital and the pursuit of economic goals. It is widely recognised that land degradation is one of, if not the most, significant environmental issues affecting both developed and developing countries.

As a developed country we should take the lead in the quest for sustainable development and consumption patterns. The productive capacity of land needs to be sustainably managed if the needs of human beings are to be met in the future. Article 21 section 12.3 states—

> The priority in combating desertification should be the implementation of preventative measures for lands that are not yet degraded, or which are only slightly degraded.

Preventative measures are important when addressing land degradation as such degradation does not become truly noticeable until the process is well established. That is one of the purposes of this bill.

Vegetation cover promotes the hydrological balance resulting in the maintenance of land quality and enhances the productivity and carrying capacity of land. When poor land use practices affect an ecosystem beyond its natural tolerance limit, land degradation occurs. The combination of drought and poor land use practice exacerbates land degradation. During the 1930s the Great Plains of the United States became what is now known as the Dust Bowl. As a result countless people were forced from the land and livelihood. This impacts not only at individual and local level but rather the ramification and social disruption is widespread as can be evidenced also in the example of West Africa during the droughts of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

With respect to land degradation, there are three key concepts that must be acknowledged: firstly, sustainability and the ability of land to continue to produce; secondly, resilience of land to degradation; and, thirdly, the carrying capacity of the land. In Tunisia and Spain the cost in terms of loss of production because of encroaching deserts amounts to $100 million and $US200 million respectively. Destruction of vegetation in arid regions and poor grazing management are key contributing factors to land degradation. Effective land management is the only realistic macro approach to degradation.

It is not new that poor management leads to the creation of deserts. In an article in the *New Scientist* in February 1990 entitled 'Prehistoric Farming Caused Devastating Soil Erosion', Sarah Bunney refers to archaeological research undertaken near Mexico City. The researchers found that poor land use management caused the collapse of the inhabited settlements there 2,300 years ago. As the farmers only cleared forests on the slopes surrounding the lake, the devastation resulted in massive soil erosion washing into the lake near Mexico City. The severity of the erosion resulted in the area becoming completely unpopulated. The poor land use was continued throughout the succeeding century by other civilisations in the area and evidence suggests soil erosion and land degradation became cyclical. Both from recent history in Australia and throughout the centuries and, indeed, throughout the millenniums, there are many examples of the effect of land degradation as a result of poor land management.

That brings me to the Brigalow declaration—a document issued by several hundred leading scientists in Australia. It was the subject of a media release on 25 November 2003. In that release it says in part—

... The scientists' Declaration explains the environmental costs of continued clearing of native vegetation and calls on Mr Howard and Mr Beattie to urgently implement their May proposal to phase out clearing of mature bushland in Queensland.

It further states—

The Brigalow Declaration explains to our political leaders that the best available science shows that protection of native vegetation is one of the most cost-effective steps to minimising extinctions of species in Australia.

That Brigalow declaration, as I understand it, was the catalyst for the decision of the Premier to decide to go alone in terms of implementing this legislation that we are debating in the House tonight. It was a very important document. What is also of great importance is the fact that that document was signed by several hundred scientists throughout Australia. Therefore, I think it deserves the utmost respect. I seek leave to table that document.

Leave granted.

Mr SHINE: The only other aspect of the legislation that I would like to touch on, and which is very important, relates to thinning. The government's election commitment to phase out broadscale land clearing included a provision to allow Queenslanders to continue to manage vegetation for a range of purposes, excluding broadscale clearing. The bill sets out a number of ongoing purposes where an application can be made to clear which will then be assessed against the regional clearing codes for purposes including, firstly, clearing to control non-native plants or declared pest. It would be nonsensical to prevent a farmer from clearing to control lantana or to expose a rabbit-warren, for example.

Secondly, clearing to ensure public safety by removing trees that are likely to fall in public spaces like parks and roads and endanger human life. The reasons for that should be self-evident. Clearing to establish a necessary fence or fire break, road or other built infrastructure where there is no alternative site is exempt in many circumstances. In cases where people need to do work in excess of the exemption, they may apply.

The clearing code for these applications will ensure that land-holders can continue to make essential improvements on their properties and that where infrastructure must be built the best possible environmental result will be achieved. Clearing, as a natural consequence of development approved under the Integrated Planning Act before 16 May 2003, is another example. That is when the government ceased accepting applications on that date for broadscale clearing. This ongoing purpose gives applicants who received development approvals before the halt the ability to apply to carry out the clearing necessary to complete that development.

Further, clearing for fodder harvesting under a clearing code that will ensure that land cleared for fodder is available to regenerate to its natural state may be allowed. Further clearing of encroachment, which is defined as the invasion of grassland by a woody species, like the invasion of gidgee in the Mitchell grass downs and the clearing for an extractive industry which will allow the continued extraction of gravel and other quarried material in an environmentally responsible way, is another example.

A further example is clearing regrowth on agricultural and grazing leases issued under the Land Act. Existing laws make regrowth on freehold land exempt along with regrowth on leases that has regrown since 31 December 1989. On land held under a lease for agriculture and grazing, a permit will still be required for regrowth that was cleared on or before 31 December 1989.

The final ongoing purpose which the bill allows is thinning, which I mentioned before. Thinning has been an issue that has been greatly clouded by rhetoric and hyperbole until it has become one of the most discussed and most controversial aspects of this legislation. It is widely recognised that in certain areas vegetation cover has thickened to a state which is not natural. This can give terrible effect both economically and environmentally. It is clear that in some circumstances thickened vegetation needs to be thinned, but thinning must be done in an environmentally responsible way. This bill creates certainty in that it defines thinning as selective clearing to restore a regional ecosystem to the range of species and density typical in that area.

I also note that the definition specifically excludes the use of a chain or cable linked between traction vehicles as a method of thinning which means that a land-holder cannot dress up broadscale clearing with a dozer as clearing for thinning purposes, and that is an important safeguard. Thinning will occur when it can be demonstrated that the vegetation has thickened to

an unusual state. Land-holders will be able to clear enough—and only enough—to restore the area to a typical thickness. All of these ongoing applications will be assessed against regional codes which will be based on the work of the regional vegetation management committees to ensure that they are appropriate for the different regions of this state.

There will be specific parts of the code for each of the ongoing purposes. The clearing requirements in these codes will ensure that clearing can continue to occur for various purposes in an environmentally responsible way. These provisions for ongoing clearing applications, particularly in the case of thinning, prove once and for all that the Beattie government is serious about protecting the environment both now and for future generations in a practical, balanced and fair way. For those reasons, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (6.00 p.m.): It is with great pleasure and a lot of disappointment that I rise to speak on the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004. In speaking to this bill there are a number of issues that need to be addressed, and many of those issues which have caused a great deal of concern have already been raised by the opposition spokesperson. Firstly, we need to ask: what does the legislation set out to do? It regulates tree clearing by merging the clearing provisions of the Land Act 1944 with the Vegetation Management Act 1999 into one piece of legislation for both leasehold and freehold land.

The purpose of the legislation is to phase out broadscale land clearing on remnant vegetation in Queensland by 31 December 2006. I think we would all recognise that as a fairly significant date, because within three months of that time we will be due for another election. Of course, the Beattie government can run on the credentials of stopping major land clearing in Queensland. It is significant in that it also reinforces the support that the Labor government has for the green movement and the allocation of preferences. Call me cynical, but I understand that this is a very rushed time scale. Enabling the permits, ballots and all of the issues inherent in this legislation to be completed by 31 December 2006 will be a significant workload on the department. Quite frankly, many of the permits will not be issued until late 2006. Unfortunately, many people who have access to those clearing permits will not be in a position to enable that clearing to be done in time. During this period tree clearing permits will be limited to 500,000 hectares, including those issued since 16 May 2003—that is, the date of the start of the moratorium on tree clearing. The tree clearing applications already in the system will account for almost half of that 500,000 hectares. As I have said, the rest of that will be decided through a ballot system.

One of the issues that has been raised a number of times during this debate is how the financial assistance to support land-holders or those involved in tree clearing such as people operating dozers will be determined. How will the protocols be put in place to ensure that there is a fair and equitable way in which they can access funding? I have listened to the contributions of some backbenchers on the other side of the House during this debate. They spoke about the projects that will be available for farmers who are unable to clear their land, but I cannot help but think about the issues currently facing the sugar industry in that there is a real need to put in place some alternative financial assistance to enable farmers to gain an income from the land. After four or five years of determined investigation, there has not really been any way in which this government has been able to support those farmers. It beats me how over the next couple of years we can get together some projects that will compensate farmers in a real way for the loss of land that will be locked up on their farms which they will no longer get any potential economic benefit from or could be very costly for them to manage.

In terms of the clearing contractors, obviously the equipment that they have will be depreciated very substantially by the fact that they will no longer have work and the market for used equipment will obviously bottom out. There will be substantial amounts of money required to compensate those people to do something else or use their equipment for other work. So there are a huge number of issues that have to be addressed in that area alone. In terms of the ballots, there is no indication as to how the clearing permits will be allocated to each region. Certainly, in the regions throughout Queensland there is a huge difference between one area and another, with the exception of Cape York. However, it has already been announced that there will be no clearing at all available in Cape York.

What criteria will be used for preparing property maps to declare the assessable vegetation? There does not seem to be any criteria for that. As other members have said during this debate, in the department throughout the regions there are very few staff and those few staff are currently flat out doing the work that they have now. There are issues in terms of groundtruthing the

vegetation maps that currently exist, and they are widely out of kilter with the realities on the ground. Almost on a daily basis there have to be some changes in terms of the vegetation maps, as one speaker on this side of the House has indicated already. We need to ensure that the inaccuracies picked up in the groundtruthing of those vegetation maps is not perpetuated throughout this process.

Indeed, will DNR be able to manage this process? If so, what increases in resources will be provided to ensure that these maps as well as other aspects of the legislation can be completed in the short time that is available—that is, before 6 December 2006? There is a real issue in terms of how this all comes together. Obviously there is another issue in terms of the cost to individual land-holders. Currently, most land-holders who apply for a licence sometimes have to pay two or three times for a licence and an inspection fee. It seems that whenever one turns up to DNR they have to pull their chequebook out to pay somebody or other for access to the department. A person virtually cannot get any advice out of the department. They have to pay for a licence before they can get any information at all. I suggest that this is going to go the same way. It will be a money-making exercise somehow for the government to pull more money out of rural communities.

What will be the criteria for assessing categories 1 to 4, particularly X? This will be critical in determining what is considered as an assessable and non-assessable area of regrowth or remnant vegetation in specific terms. I have to say that I have real concerns about regrowth, because regrowth on the east coast of Queensland near Mackay, in terms of the current definition that is in place, can get back to remnant vegetation within about four years, particularly if there is reasonable weather and in particular varieties such as the paperbark eucalypt and tea-tree. There is a real issue there. If there can be some determination in terms of being able to indicate that land that has been previously cleared can continue to be cleared, that very simple equation would make it a lot easier and be a lot of comfort to people on the land.

Obviously, a lot of properties have significant areas of undeveloped country on them. The people who bought those properties—whether it was two, five or 10 years ago—had the expectation that they would engage in some profitable enterprise on that land. As it currently stands, depending on the category that is currently on the vegetation map, they have been excluded or barred from actually doing any work on that land and, following the passing of this legislation tonight, they may never recoup the money that they spent when buying the property or realise the potential that that particular country has.

As a person who has lived on property near Mackay all my life, I know the problems associated with locking land up as a result of fires going through or, basically, not utilising it. We had some 500 or 600 acres of hillside country which included some neighbouring country. Late last year, when the drought was still on, lightning struck high up in the hill country. That land had not been burnt for probably 10 years. A very hot fire went through it, which totally devastated all the vegetation. Some of the trees are just growing back now. Most of the animals that lived in that 500 or 600 acres were probably killed in the fire. I suggest to the minister and others in the House who have very little understanding of what it means to lock country up and walk away from it that they really need to think again. They think that the biodiversity will increase and that we will have a huge increase in the number of animal species that live in the country. That might be true for a period, but all we need is a wildfire and suddenly we have nothing.

My view is that land is better managed. I have seen country that was open grassland become almost useless scrub land simply because there has not been a fire through that country in the last 20 or 30 years and it has become overgrown. Unfortunately, particularly on the coastal plains of Queensland, lantana has got out of hand. It is choking the native vegetation species.

I am concerned when some members on the other side of the House talk about thinning vegetation. People have approached me about problems that have arisen when they have applied to thin their countryside because they have lantana and woody weeds on their land. The department has allowed them to thin that land but has said that they are not allowed to use any equipment. Basically, the department tells them that they can clear the lantana and the woody weeds from their land, but they cannot use any mechanisation to do so. For those who are not up to speed with that, it means that they have to go in there with a mattock or an axe and do it manually. Anybody who wants to thin 500 or 600 acres, or 1,000 acres, under those conditions will think again. The practicalities of that are unbelievable. It has not been thought through properly.

In terms of boundary lines where firebreaks, et cetera, are going to be put in, the legislation allows one and a half metres for a boundary line, yet a dozer blade is three or four metres wide.

The practicalities have not been properly assessed. If a firebreak is only a metre and a half wide, I would not care to be facing a fire in 40 degree heat under those conditions.

Many issues covered in the bill need to be talked through. The basic premise of the bill involves greenhouse gas emissions. It concerns me that we are forcing a small group of people to pay for the conscience of the rest of the community in relation to greenhouse gas emissions under the Kyoto agreement. I wonder about the gas emissions of a city like Brisbane or even some of the urban areas throughout Queensland. Those emissions include car emissions, the use of airconditioning equipment in high-rise buildings, the heat generated from bitumen roads and concrete driveways. One would soon find that vegetation in Queensland is a minor contributor compared to the issues that we have in our cities not only involving the things I have just mentioned but also sewage and all of the other things that are part and parcel of living in a city. It is quite amazing to think that we are imposing all of this guilt on the farming community and demonising farmers and graziers for the sake of our own conscience.

In actual fact, if we are talking about true remnant vegetation where the trees have grown to a mature age, they are not growing anymore and, therefore, they are not locking up any more carbon. The science behind the issue of locking up carbon in remnant vegetation is a very dubious issue. Indeed, the best way of locking up carbon is to have a growing revegetation area or a cropping area where the carbon is actively being taken in by growing plants. I suggest that the scientific base of this legislation is corrupt. Indeed, this is a political issue; it is an attempt to gain some support from the green vote. Quite frankly, it is unbelievable that we are heading down this track. I know that some aspects of the legislation have clarified some of the more difficult areas, but, quite frankly, we need to see more done to reduce greenhouse gas emissions right across Queensland and not just in the areas that are concerned with tree clearing.

A couple of months ago I was approached by a young couple who raised issues concerning vegetation management. In September 2000 they bought 45 acres of land. A few days after they had signed the contract and paid for the land, they visited the property and found that a symbol was tacked to a tree outside the property. That symbol was a possum on a tree branch. Not being aware of what that meant, they contacted their solicitor who then contacted the department. They had bought the land to clear it and run some cattle. They were a young couple just stepping out in life. They were going to build a house on the block and they had a small contracting business. They were going to clear the land, run some cattle and run the contracting operation from there. They paid a considerable amount of money for what was a very picturesque piece of land. They found that because of the tree clearing legislation they were unable to clear any of that land. They have subsequently negotiated with the department to clear a house site and a road into it, but the value of the property has probably halved or even quartered. There is no compensation for them at all. They are struggling on. They cannot sell the land and there is no way that they can recoup their money.

They are among many people who have contacted me over a period about such issues. I think their case is most significant because we all like to try to help young couples who are trying to achieve something. Those people were dudded very substantially within a few days of signing the contract and paying their money. The land that they had bought and based their dreams on was totally devalued and they are stuck with it.

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (6.18 p.m.): In rising to take part in the debate on the bill before the House, the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004, I can say that, unlike many members in this place, the electorate I represent has within its boundaries constituents who will be affected by or at least be able to relate to new laws on vegetation management, whereas people living in this part of the state will only appreciate that the government has delivered on a pre-election promise. That is a good thing. We gave those commitments prior to the election and we have delivered on them. There is no doubt that the outcome of the legislation will deliver significant environmental benefits to the state.

The purpose of this bill is to phase out all broadscale clearing of remnant vegetation in Queensland by 31 December 2006. As set out in the explanatory notes, the bill provides for the amendment of the Vegetation Management Act 1999 in order to enable the assessment of the clearing of remnant vegetation on freehold and state land under the one act. The tree clearing provisions of the Land Act 1994 are repealed. This amendment will also see amendments to the vegetation clearing provisions in the Integrated Planning Act 1997.

I want to touch on some of the history of land clearing in the central Queensland area. While it is a good thing for Queensland that government is bringing to an end the out-of-control clearing of vegetation, it is important that we take a brief look at the tree clearing culture that has been

allowed to develop during Queensland's development over the last 100 years or so. For decades land clearing has been encouraged by governments and until recently supported by the people of Queensland, who have little knowledge or understanding of the consequences of uncontrolled clearing for primary production and urban development. Given the culture—a culture assisted in its development by governments and the apathy of the people—it is unfair and unreasonable for the community of today to expect the land-holders to carry the burden of blame for what has been permitted as acceptable in the past.

Tree clearing was a requirement of government, where our settlers were encouraged to cut down the trees to open up the land for agriculture. Large areas of Queensland have been settled within the context of a living area. Much of these areas of settlement have had tree clearing as a development condition. This meant that land had to be cleared.

Clearing permits show clearly that government continually recommended a 10 per cent retention of vegetation from the early 1900s to the 1980s. Up until just recently, a condition on most permits was that the cleared area had to be maintained free of regrowth. Land-holders endeavoured to do this as the viability of their business depended on it. What I am saying is that the size of the land parcels and the need to maximise the use of the land were impediments to sensible land management at that time. We had this culture that land clearing was acceptable—that it was an expectation of government in the interest of primary production. Wording contained in an application for permission to rebark dated 16 June 1915 states under 'Conclusions'—

Trees to the extent of 10% of the whole shall be preserved in clumps for shade purposes.

Clearly, there was no recognition of the potential impact on local and regional ecosystems or the potential for salt invasion or soil erosion and other things such as that. Permits up to the late 1990s included a responsibility to keep the area clear of all regrowth under the Land Act 1962. A permit to destroy trees included a requirement or condition that 'all sucker regrowth resulting from destruction authorised by this permit shall from time-to-time be thoroughly and effectively destroyed'. So there was a strong emphasis over 100 years, with government involved, and the strong emphasis was on keeping cleared land clear of regrowth.

Much of central Queensland has been developed on country commonly known as the Brigalow Belt. If we take a look at the history of the development of this region, we will see that it was clear at the time that governments fully supported the brigalow scheme as it offered tremendous opportunity for the development of the region. The Brigalow Belt was recognised as one of the largest fertile areas in the country. It was considered that if we took advantage of the development potential primary production would deliver great and lasting benefits to both the state and the Commonwealth. An article produced by the Department of Primary Industries, entitled 'Ecology and Control of Brigalow in Queensland', in talking about the clearing of brigalow country and giving advice to land-holders, stated—

It is advisable to leave some green scrub for shelter. Trees may be left in belts or blocks given that they provide shelter from cold winds in winter and shade in summer.

...

In most circumstances, it is recommended that ten percent of the area being cleared should be left for this purpose.

So it is very clear that there was no understanding of the consequences of the demand on settlers or land-holders to cut trees, to clear the lands, for primary industry development.

Under the Brigalow and Other Lands Development Act 1962—I understand that much of that act has been repealed, with some sections included in the Land Act—an agreement was made between the Commonwealth of Australia of the one part and the state of Queensland of the other part. I do not have time to go into all of the details, but I will take some lines from it so members can gain an understanding of where I am coming from. That agreement states—

it is desirable in the interests of the State of Qld and of the Commonwealth of Australia generally that the area of land described in the First Schedule—

they are talking about the brigalow area—

to this agreement should be further developed for the purpose of increasing the production of beef cattle and other primary products and the supply of beef for export.

Another point states—

The State proposes, subject to the provision to the State of financial assistance from the Commonwealth, to implement a programme of development of that area ...

It goes on to say—

... works in connexion with the clearing of the blocks of timber and undergrowth, maintaining the blocks free of regrowth and suckers and other treatment of the timber and undergrowth on the blocks.

The act also states—

... subject to compliance by the State with the provisions of this agreement, the Commonwealth will in accordance with and subject to the provisions of this agreement provide financial assistance to the State towards meeting expenditure on the works.

I have heard members opposite complaining about people on the land being properly compensated. Our government has put up $150 million to make sure we can do everything to accommodate those compensation demands. I would like to know why those opposite are not prepared to speak to the federal government, which clearly has a responsibility because it was involved in and encouraged the clearing of land. Why is it not prepared to support our minister and our Premier in making sure there is enough money to properly compensate these people? I think those opposite should demonstrate to their constituents in regional Queensland that they are concerned about how they are going to be compensated, get active and start saying to the feds, 'We want that $75 million so that we can look after these people who will suffer some economic loss as a result of this much-needed legislation.'

An article produced by the Land Administration Commission, Department of Lands on 31 December 1968, entitled 'Fitzroy Basin Brigalow Land Development Scheme: The Brigalow Story', in its introduction states—

Australia's national flower is the beautiful Golden Wattle, but like all things beautiful it has ugly sisters, one being the Brigalow.

Words leading into a paragraph on the impact of land clearing flora and fauna read—

It is inevitable that Australia's natural flora and fauna must give way to the march of progress.

However, the Lands Department has wisely set aside several areas as National Parks sanctuaries so that the future generations of Australians will be able to see part of the Brigalow area as nature made it.

What I have highlighted here is the policy of ongoing governments of almost 100 years which, with intent, forced landowners to clear lands. I have made the effort to make members in this place aware of what has happened in the past so that they understand and appreciate the fact that landowners have been caught up in the legislative and regulatory processes forced on them by governments.

In saying that, I acknowledge that there are some land-holders out there who have abused the process, particularly in the last 20 to 30 years, who have simply turned commonsense into environmental vandalism. I have seen it in my electorate. There are some disgusting cases out there where people have gone off their brain, put the bulldozers in and pulled down everything. It breaks your heart to see that, but there are also some darned good farmers out there who have done the right thing. It turns me right off when I hear all those decent men and women on the land being put under the same umbrella as those grubs out there who do not have any fear about putting two bulldozers into a paddock with a great big chain behind them.

What I am asking for here is a fair go for the people who are doing the right thing. Let us start getting stuck into those who are not doing the right thing. The only way we can do that is for industry, land-holders themselves and government to work together to get rid of them, because they are bringing the good name of good farmers into disrepute. I do not have much time for that.

Sitting suspended from 6.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.

Mr PEARCE: I would like to now concentrate on the issue of regrowth, which has been a pretty big issue for me in the Fitzroy electorate given the large rural area that I have in my electorate. Under the current legislation, regrowth is defined as vegetation that is not remnant. The definition of 'regrowth' is that it is not remnant but then one has to move on and have a look at the definition of 'remnant'. The definition of 'remnant' is that, if the vegetation is the original species, covers more than 50 per cent of the original canopy and averages more than 70 per cent of its original height, it is not regrowth. They are some very confusing definitions which were very hard for landowners to understand let alone manage.

The present height/canopy/species formula for describing remnant vegetation can cause financial hardship because of wrong interpretations. I believe it is also open to abuse and it is just too difficult to manage and understand. There has been a lot of game playing and attempts by many, including members opposite, to cloud the issue by claiming that this government would go back on its promise to prevent land-holders clearing regrowth. They can have no more to say on the issues of thinning and regrowth because the legislation delivers on the Beattie government's commitment. I have had a number of discussions with the minister about this, and I have every

confidence in the way that the minister has put this into legislation. I believe we will be able to deliver on that commitment that was given prior to the election.

The issues of what constitutes regrowth vegetation and how to manage it have certainly been contentious. This legislation gives land-holders the certainty they need to manage their properties and their business while protecting the environment. As a general rule, clearing of non-remnant growth vegetation will not be affected by these laws. Land-holders can continue to manage regrowth vegetation as they did before. This legislation carries over from the old act the declaration process to protect regrowth areas of high conservation value or areas vulnerable to land degradation, and that is important.

That declaration process involves proper consultation with all affected parties. In fact, any person can initiate the process to make a declared area. To make a declaration, the minister must still consult the local authorities responsible for the land and the land-holders. Everyone is involved. In addition, the minister must now advertise the proposed declaration and seek submissions on the proposal from the general public.

This legislation brings into being a new framework for better managing vegetation at the level of individual properties and I think this is a very important step forward. Land-holders will now be able to prepare a property map of assessable vegetation or a PMAV that will give them the certainty they need to manage their properties, including managing regrowth vegetation. Everywhere I moved around the electorate over the last 12 months this was the issue. I have said on a number of occasions, if we fix the regrowth issue up, it will take a lot of heat out of the vegetation management debate that has been occurring over the last 12 months or so.

Regrowth is defined as the non-remnant vegetation shown on regional ecosystem maps, but the big problem for land-holders trying to manage their regrowth has been that regrowth is defined through the regional ecosystem. The scale of these maps is generally 1:100,000, which means it can be difficult for land-holders to match what is shown on the map to what actually exists on their properties. I saw numerous examples of this, and the frustration and the concern that it was causing land-holders was a real worry.

The PMAV frameworks will allow a land-holder to apply to refine the mapped boundaries of this regrowth vegetation at a better scale for property management. Additionally, once the PMAV is in place, the defined regrowth will continue to be exempt from the need for a clearing permit no matter how much the regional ecosystem mapping changes. That is so important because land-holders now have that confidence and that certainty. They have to do a little bit of work up front to start off with, but once it is in place forever and ever they will be able to continue to manage those regrowth areas to suit the agenda of their own business. That means so much to them.

When I explained these changes that the minister was proposing before the legislation came into the parliament, I saw looks of relief on the faces of a lot of people. It gave me a great deal of pleasure to be part of a government that had listened and taken into consideration their concerns and had taken action to deliver that certainty that land-holders were looking for. On behalf of my constituents, I express my appreciation to the minister. I know it was not easy. It was a tough battle for the minister to get where he is today with this legislation, but he has certainly delivered what I think is the best outcome for land-holders in my area in particular. It provides land-holders with practical property scale maps and the certainty that they need to manage their properties properly without fear of inadvertently breaking the law, and that is what they were worried about.

With a PMAV in place there is a clear understanding and formal recognition of lands which are subject to regrowth. They will be on record. They will be there and there will never, ever be a concern. As I have said, landowners will be able to make the decisions that are in the best interests of their business and will no longer be forced to clear regrowth through fear of an area being reclassified as remnant.

In closing, let me say that this is good legislation. It has certainly delivered with regard to the regrowth issue a certainty that the land-holders were looking for. As I said before, I know from speaking to landowners in my electorate that there is a lot more comfort in the vegetation management legislation that this government is putting in place. While there are some other issues that have to be addressed, I believe that land-holders, people on the land, feel a lot more confident and a lot more certain about their future.

Mr HOPPER (Darling Downs—NPA) (7.37 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004. This bill is to phase out broadscale clearing of remnant native vegetation by December 2006. It provides a $150 million package for land-holders, primarily compensation for the impact that the tree clearing ban will have on the

viability and productivity of their properties. Farmers do not necessarily want compensation. What they want is security of tenure. They want the right to farm their land. We hear laughs from the members opposite. What farmers want is security and the right to farm their land.

It is believed that compensation will be capped at a maximum of $100,000. How can we possibly come up with this figure? How can we possibly measure what it would cost to compensate a farmer who has productive land that he can clear to grow crops or feed cattle or just work to make a living year after year after year? How can we possibly put a measure on what amount of money he would need for compensation? It is an impossibility.

The transitional clearing cap of 500,000 hectares means that tree clearing permits will be limited to 500,000 hectares, which will include those issued since 16 May 2003, the date of the start of the moratorium on tree clearing. It is expected that the clearing applications already in the system will account for half of the 500,000 hectare cap with the rest to be decided through a ballot system. So half has already gone. So what we have left is 250,000 hectares, and there is a ballot system. What happens if a farmer draws that ballot two months before December 2006? How can they possibly improve their land in that amount of time? That is what is going to happen. There are 250,000 hectares left. That is what we are talking about; 250,000 hectares has already gone.

The land-holders will be able to voluntarily negotiate and confirm boundaries of non-assessable regrowth on their properties through an agreed property scale map of assessable vegetation. We will have to pay for these maps. I went into Dalby the other day to get a map of my property. The people at DNR said, '$27, thank you.' So I paid a cheque for $27 and they spat a map out of their computer. In a tiny piece on that map was my property. The map was so big that I could hardly see my property. I paid $27 and I got the map of my property. That is going to happen all over again.

The property map of assessable vegetation will replace the regional ecosystem for the property and preclude the need for a new approval to clear regrowth. If land-holders can prove country has been previously cleared it will be permanently classified as regrowth. At the moment that is not necessarily so. On the weekend I was at the Goombungee show where I met a farmer and his son. The son recently bought a property which was all regrowth. That property had been totally cleared about 30 years ago. He cannot clear that country now because it is not classed as regrowth.

Region specific thinning, selective clearing of thickened vegetation—these guidelines are to be determined by the regional vegetation management committees over the next two months. Recently I inspected a property at Kumbarilla, just outside of Dalby. There is a state forest out there and I walked into it and had a look. The massive amount of cypress pine in that forest is phenomenal. Within that forest we have one of the greatest plantations in Queensland if only it were managed, if only we could put a hundred men in there and thin those pine trees that are not straight and thin the rubbish vegetation.

We heard the Minister for Primary Industries speaking the other day announcing the exports we have for the cypress industry. For the minister's benefit I point out that cypress is a product that white ants do not eat. Overseas countries are chasing that product immensely at this moment. We have the potential to produce that within our nation on a large scale. That timber grows on land that is of no use to anybody else. It is goanna country. It is country that we cannot graze or crop, but it is country that will produce an article that will create wealth for Queensland. I see this legislation stifling that wealth.

Mr Robertson: How? How does it do that?

Mr HOPPER: The minister has the right to reply at the end of the speech, and I look forward to his reply. If he would show me the decency of listening to my speech he might learn a bit because it is coming from a grassroots member of this House who knows a bit about timber management in this state.

Property Rights Australia and the *Queensland Country Life* revealed earlier this year that the Department of Primary Industries has produced a report that estimates the economic impact on land-holders of uncontrolled woodland thickening would be $900 million. It is hard to put a figure on this, I do agree, but I want to say that I think it is a small figure. I return to what I said before: how can we possibly attempt to address what it may cost a farmer?

Mr Robertson interjected.

Mr HOPPER: The minister should listen to what happened to this report. Attempts to access the report through freedom of information were stifled and drawn out over five months instead of 45 days. That request was ultimately denied because the Beattie government had taken the report and other relevant politically sensitive information to cabinet to keep it away from the public eye. How often have we seen that recently? Lock it up. Take it to cabinet. Hide it from the public. That is the way; we will hide it.

It is believed that the report was originally prepared for the Productivity Commission inquiry into the impacts of native vegetation regulations but was not used. The *Queensland Country Life*—and thank God for the *Queensland Country Life*—reported that staff were ordered to destroy their research due to political activity. There have been mixed messages coming from the Beattie government about this report. The Primary Industries Minister and the Premier denied the report even existed when speaking to the media on 16 January. Then on 29 January the Natural Resources Minister, Mr Stephen Robertson, on 4BC radio confirmed the report existed and said it was up to Henry Palaszczuk and Peter Beattie to determine whether or not to release it to the public.

The independent Productivity Commission conducting an inquiry into the impacts of native vegetation regulations released its draft report in December 2003. This report basically blasted Queensland's vegetation management laws, saying inflexible rules have imposed significant costs on land-holders, sometimes for little environmental benefit. Our farmers have been great managers of the environment. Look what Landcare has done over the years. Look at our contours. Have a look at an aerial photo of the Darling Downs and see how those properties are set up, where the water flows—everything about it. Those farmers are environmental people; they are not environmental vandals. They know that if they do not look after the land that they live on, the land will not produce and they cannot have it.

The report stated that the effectiveness of tree clearing laws has been compromised by the lack of clear objectives, negative incentives for land-holders to keep trees particularly due to inadequate compensation and financial assistance and lack of flexibility towards regional solutions to regional programs. It highlighted that a blanket ban can have adverse environmental outcomes and do more harm than good. The commission found that the vegetation management laws can prevent land-holders from developing properties and introducing cost-saving innovations, such as more effective irrigation systems, that improve environmental sustainability.

Significantly, preliminary estimates of impacts on Murweh shire in south-west Queensland found that tree clearing restrictions combined with woodland thickening could strip $180 million in value from the Murweh shire alone over the next 30 to 40 years. That is what is going to be stripped from that one shire. In the next 30 to 40 years this government will be saying, 'Where did we go wrong?' They will look back at this legislation that has being debated here tonight. Personally, I would like to see this legislation totally reversed.

This would certainly correlate with the hidden DPI report that found that woodland thickening statewide could have a $900 million adverse impact on land-holders. That is quite a figure. The Beattie government's cover-up of its $900 million report and the dismissal of the Productivity Commission's report is just the continuation of this Beattie government's deceit and secrecy over these tree clearing restrictions. A secret report taken to cabinet by the Premier, as we have seen so often lately, in 1999 estimated that $500 million would be needed to compensate Queensland land-holders for the lost value and lost production as a result of a total ban on tree clearing. He admitted it back in 1999.

The Premier reached an all-time low last year when he vilified and rubbished 20 of the Department of Primary Industries' best officers who put that report together. They were some of the best officers that the DPI had ever had, and what did the Premier do? He rubbished them. He tore them to bits because of a brilliant report that they had brought forward to help this legislation here tonight. What has he done? He has turned his back on that report. He said, 'They do not know.' We heard the member for Toowoomba North over here talking about the 700 scientists and all those great things. Look at what our Primary Industries Minister has done to the DPI over the last two terms. Look at what he has ripped out of our DPI—over 300 staff, and now we have a farmer user pays system. We have tick inspection charges.

I now return to the bill. The government refused to assist with trials conducted by the Australian Greenhouse Office and Agforce to examine the greenhouse gas impacts of tree clearing for fears their blanket ban would not withstand the scientific scrutiny. Isn't that interesting! Talk about the environment! Look at what is happening at home. They say our farmers are not

environmental. I drove from Dalby to Bourke the other day and there was African lovegrass from Dalby to Bourke.

Mr Robertson interjected.

Mr HOPPER: The minister might shake his head. I challenge the minister to take a drive on the roads of Queensland and have a look at the African lovegrass on the sides of the road. Does the minister realise that no animal eats that grass? Nothing can eat it and nothing can pull it out. The members opposite might shake their heads and laugh, but that is having a detrimental impact on our primary industries. It is unbelievable. It is growing wild on our main roads.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr HOPPER: We hear our old bully squarking in the corner like he always does.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr HOPPER: Exactly, over white fences that are not painted. Instead of engaging constructively with land-holders the Premier preferred to play silly political games. Agforce tried to arrange meetings with the Premier last November to discuss an alternative proposal but their requests were ignored. The Premier then went on ABC Radio in early December professing that he would do all he could to help Agforce. Then two weeks later the *Courier-Mail* reported that the Premier's office had vetoed any state contribution to the AGO and Agforce assessment.

The Premier either did a spectacular backflip by deciding not to help with these trials or he does not have a clue what is going on in his office. He does not have a clue. According to the *Courier-Mail*, the Natural Resources Minister, Mr Stephen Robertson, said that 'he believed the concept'—that is, the greenhouse trials—'was worth consideration' but he was obviously overruled by the Premier.

The Liberal-National federal government, as has been touched on before, had also refused to have any part in the Beattie government's flawed land clearing legislation because it is not fair on land-holders. That is simply why the feds have pulled out of this deal. It is not fair on our land-holders.

In federal parliament on 3 March the agriculture minister, Warren Truss, made it quite clear that if the Queensland government insists on taking unilateral decisions, then it must accept responsibility for the financial consequences of those decisions. Mr Truss made it clear that the federal government was keen to ensure that land clearing in Queensland was better controlled.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order! The Minister for Housing will cease interjecting or I will warn him shortly.

Mr HOPPER: I cannot even hear myself speak.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Fair enough. I want to hear the member for Darling Downs.

Mr HOPPER: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. You have always been a good Deputy Speaker.

Mr Truss noted that the New South Wales government was able to negotiate with conservationists and land-holders to achieve an acceptable land clearing agreement. The Queensland government did not even try. Mr Truss summarised the position of the federal Liberal-National government by saying that the decision on land clearing has been taken without regard to science, without properly considering the needs of land-holders and without proper consultation with the Australian government and it will not, therefore, have its financial support. How can they support us when the government does what it has done?

The Beattie government's determination to portray farmers as environmental vandals in this tree clearing debate was clearly evident during the last election campaign. Labor released a glossy brochure in city seats talking up its policies to ban broadacre tree clearing by 2006. A message from the Premier in the brochure ended with a line attempting to demonise our primary producers. He said that only Labor will stop bulldozers and save our trees. If Labor truly wanted to govern for all Queenslanders, as the Premier has claimed, rather than divide the state, he could explain why Labor did not release the same brochure in regional areas such as Callide, Warrego and Gregory.

Mr ROBERTSON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I raise a point of order. It concerns me that the member seems to be reading a speech made by the member for Callide earlier in this debate. I seek your ruling as to repetition and the stealing of another member's speech.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order! The minister was here during that speech. I cannot say that I heard the same comments. If the member is repeating another speech it would be out of order.

Mr HOPPER: I go to a part that we can certainly verify. The Nationals believe that the state government has a responsibility to work with land-holders and the wider community to sustainably develop our natural resource base for future generations. We believe that a joint Commonwealth government-state government agreement on land clearing based on trust, fairness and sound science is the only approach that will stand the test of time. A long-term solution to the land clearing issue must ensure that land-holders have resource security and security of tenure. This is all about property rights. This is about having the right to farm one's land.

We have heard members get up and spruik about how they can clear trees to build a house. What the Premier could do is walk into one of those homes in Brisbane and say to the owner of that home, 'I am going to lock up two bedrooms and you can live in the last one.' That is what he is doing to farmers here. That is exactly what is happening to us. We have exactly the same rights as others who live in the city of Brisbane. We have exactly the same rights to buy a piece of dirt, build a home and live there happily. That is all these farmers want to do. They want to have the right to produce and live happily.

Mr McNAMARA (Hervey Bay—ALP) (7.55 p.m.): I am delighted to rise and speak in support of the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004. This bill does deliver on one of the major election commitments of the Beattie government to restore trust and integrity in our political system. It is essential that this legislation be passed and passed soon. I congratulate the minister on bringing this bill forward. I am very proud that this is the first bill which our government is dealing with in this term.

The bill stands in its own right as an extremely important piece of legislation, but I think it also does something else. We come to this place with an agenda, with a mandate, with a series of election commitments which we made when we went to the election. I know from the experiences in Hervey Bay that this vegetation management legislation was very prominent in the minds of many people. It is a significant piece of legislation which people want to see delivered.

Calls tonight to defer the legislation, amend it, hold it, engage in more consultation are furphies. They are attempts to frustrate the will of the people which gave this government an extremely impressive majority to deliver this piece of legislation as much as any other piece of legislation which we will see in the next three years.

The legislation clearly stands in its own right as an extremely important piece of legislation. To my mind it signals a sea change in environmental protection legislation in this country. We have not been good. Tonight, speaker after speaker from the opposition has tried to portray this government and this legislation as somehow demonising land-holders. That is not the case. That is just wedge politics.

This legislation simply recognises that over the last two centuries we have devegetated this country, we have deforested this country, we have simply allowed salination to get out of control. No-one argues that there are undoubtedly good land managers out there. There have always been good land managers out there. Nevertheless, the land has never been in worse shape. We have to accept that that history of management has resulted in where we are today, which is why this legislation must be put in place.

I congratulate the Liberal Party for supporting this legislation and welcome them to the 21st century. I think, unfortunately, the National Party's position on this explains why they are being consigned to the dustbin of history as a political force. They simply fail to recognise that society has moved on, that environmental concern is not a marginal thing. It is not just something for the Greens; it is front and centre of what people want from politicians, from political parties, from broad government in this country.

To fail to confront this, to fail to go with that movement, is to understand why the National Party is hanging on with its 15 seats in this parliament. They cannot see it, but each time they oppose this sort of legislation they paint themselves further into the corner of political oblivion. They talk about environmental vandalism. They say that landowners are somehow being demonised. It is not about that. This is about taking the active steps that we need to take to protect the environment once and for all.

Some people say that there are no differences between political parties. I would suggest that they look very closely at the speeches that have been made in this House tonight. This is a parting of the ways. The parties and members who support this legislation are saying that they

are prepared to listen to the genuine, heartfelt concerns of Queenslanders who want to see their environment protected. This legislation is probably the most important piece of environmental legislation I will ever see passed no matter how long I am lucky enough to stay here. Nevertheless, it represents part of a continuing path. Every time we have taken significant steps to change how we deal with the environment there has been massive opposition.

In my part of the world there have been issues with sandmining, logging on Fraser Island and the hunting of whales. These things are recent history. At the time there were the usual Chicken Little responses that the sky would fall if this ended. But it did not. What happened is that we moved forward. In every case, we have moved forward to a better Australia, a better Queensland, better job outcomes and better protection of the environment. Those who cannot adapt and realise that we live in a changing world should get out of this business, because this is about managing change for the best.

Miss Elisa Roberts interjected.

Mr McNAMARA: I take the interjection from the member for Gympie. This is absolutely about giving constituents what they want. I have absolutely no doubt whatsoever that the great bulk of constituents in my electorate and every electorate want to see the environment protected. They want this legislation. I am very proud to be here tonight to speak to this legislation. Undoubtedly we will have to put up with a few more speeches before we can vote on it. This is a great day and I commend the minister for an excellent piece of legislation. I commend him and the government for bringing it forward at the earliest opportunity. I will be proud to go back to my electorate and say that I was here for this historic sea change in how we deal with the environment in Queensland.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (8.01 p.m.): I am proud to stand here on behalf of the National Party and tell the truth, talk about things with some accuracy and not be a political hypocrite that misleads people and runs misleading advertising programs. Those who play on people by portraying those on the land as economic vandals show the bulldozers with the chains but never show the buffel grass that is left behind. I want to put some of these issues to rest. At the outset, most people on the land, like most people in the cities, want to see the environment protected. They want to see it sustained. They do not want to maintain any of the mistakes of the past.

Let us take south-east Queensland and the previous speaker's electorate of Hervey Bay as an example. Hervey Bay was once pristine beaches and scrub all the way down to the edge of the beach. Now there are massive shopping centres, housing developments, concrete driveways, bitumen roads and all the rest of it. As it is in the cities, as we develop and mature we endeavour to develop botanical gardens and have subdivisions done in a better and more balanced way in order to try to preserve certain corridors or preserve certain tree species. We do all of that to try to do things better, and so it has been on the land.

We heard the member for Fitzroy talk about the history of the land of the Brigalow development, and some of it he did not get right. What happened with many of those blocks in central Queensland was that there were hundreds of thousands of acres originally. They were broken down and people were able to ballot for them. When I was 18 or 19 and living in Brisbane, my mates and I all thought that it would be great to win one of the ballots. However, we could not afford the deposit, which was only $10,000 at the time, and we did not have the experience. But for many young people it was their dream. The people who got those 30,000 acre blocks lived in a shed with their wife and a couple of toddlers for years.

As the member for Fitzroy said, a condition of drawing those ballots was that they had to clear a certain amount each year. They had to put in fences and so forth. Back then one could not ride a horse through that country, but now it is highly productive land with buffel grass and dams. There are certain amounts of vegetation preserved as they have become more modern and more attuned to the environmental needs of the Brigalow area. That has made central Queensland. It has made Rockhampton. It has made electorates like Fitzroy with the massive amount of economic employment through the likes of the Gracemere saleyards. That was repeated all through the central highlands, all down the Wandoan and Taroom area and all down the west. It is still happening in parts of the west at the moment whilst tree clearing is allowed.

Let us talk about the good people, because they make up about 95 per cent of people in all professions—whether it is people on the land, politicians, police or whoever we like to talk about. However, there are always a few people who make a bad name for the rest of them. We have heard about people who panicked during the late 1990s and went through their land with

bulldozers and chains because there was great uncertainty about what was going to happen with government. But let us talk about the good people and the advances that have happened. Yes, people have realised that they have to manage their properties in a sustainable way so that, first of all, it maintains its fertility and makes a profit. The land has to have contours so that the soil does not wash away. They have introduced things such as zero till and minimum till where the ground is hardly disturbed at all and the moisture is retained. When they clear the land now they leave the slopes, the creek banks and nature strips where animals can get from one part of a preserved tree area to another part.

That is happening through the Landcare groups that look after the various watercourses through to the farmers groups. I can give the House an example on the Darling Downs on the blacksoil plains area around Brookstead, probably the best farming country in the world. Generally speaking, it was open blacksoil plains. Trees would not grow and cannot grow there because the heavy black soil cracks open and trees just die. All of the farmers in that area have introduced not only laser levelling, minimum till and ways of maintaining moisture and preserving the land in the absolutely best condition but also magnificent garden areas around their homes. In the big ring tanks covering 60 acres on the blacksoil they have built islands on the middle for bird life. They have made parks in some of the intersections of the roads and planted trees and put bales of barley straw all through those parks so that the black soil does not crack open and kill the trees that they have planted.

They are just some examples of the things that people have done. Some 95 per cent or more of farming communities now are involved in landcare. They want their property to be well developed. They want to do it responsibly. It is the same in the cities. What about the massive industrial estates with acres and acres of galvanised iron roofs radiating heat? We do not complain about that because we know that it is necessary because people have to have jobs. I heard the member for Moggill talking earlier about how the Liberals are going to support this legislation. I heard him before the election on the radio talking about Moggill Road and the fact that it should be widened into a four-lane road. He wants more and more cars to be able to use Moggill Road so more people can drive.

If one looks at south-east Queensland, it is almost wall to wall houses from the border up to Noosa. We have to be environmentally aware of the need to manage those subdivisions better. We have to be environmentally aware of the need to manage our industrial estates better. More and more people are driving cars and demanding four-lane highways, tunnels, bridges, roads and everything else. There was a report in the paper the other day about Ergon Energy and the unprecedented use this last summer of airconditioners. I think the use of airconditioners virtually doubled. There are more and more coal-fired power stations, more and more vehicles on the road and a greater population density in south-east Queensland and in other parts of state with 85,000 people coming through. All of them have to have a house to live in, and every 640 acres is going to be clear felled.

One only has to ask any developer. If they try to sell a block with a gum tree on it, people say that they will buy it if they cut the gum tree down because it is only going to fall on the Colorbond roof. They build a house. They plan a nice little landscape with a few little Italian hedges and a few pot plants, and that replaces the pristine Australian bushland that we had. But we are all realistic and practical enough to realise that people have to have a home. We have to accommodate these things and try to balance it off by having some parklands, some nature strips, some national parks and some greenbelt areas so we can balance the pressures of high density, high population, high industrial living, high transport needs and high energy needs in south-east Queensland or other cities with the needs of the people.

That is what has been happening in rural Queensland where those areas have had to be gradually developed. In many of those places it has taken generations to develop them. If one drew a block of 30,000 acres, they may only have been in a position where they could clear and develop 500 acres about every third, fourth or fifth year. They might have got to the point where the kids have to go to boarding school, so that means there may have been four or five years where they could not afford it or there is a drought and they do not have the money to do the suckers while trying to put the kids through school. Many boarding schools in Toowoomba have given people accounts on credit to help them out because they simply could not afford the school fees due to drought or cattle slumps or other circumstances.

These places had to be done gradually, and clearing is only part of it. The scrub is pulled down and it has to stay there. A year or two later there has to be a roaring hot day in the summer to start a fire to burn it properly. Then it has to be aerially seeded. Then the buffel grass comes

up. This is what I am saying about television: it never shows the result. Then it has to be stocked sensibly to maintain the buffel grass population and the suckers have to be continually treated as they pop up. It is an ongoing thing from generation to generation. It takes a lifetime for one family. Then the next generation takes it on or the place gets sold and it gets developed further on. That is how it happens and it can only happen gradually.

For example, someone might have bought a block in 1992 or whatever thinking it will take 20 years to complete a project because they can only do so much at a time. They develop property plans. They have good management plans for the way they will operate the property, maintain its fertility, its biodiversity and everything else. When we talk to some of those people about the developed country they will say, 'If you put a dam in where it is all treed, you'll end up with dirty muddy water. Put a dam in where it's been properly developed, you've got good buffel grass and good standard grass, and you'll get clean water in your dam. You could almost drink it.' That says something about sustainability and what grass can do for land. Let us look at all the photosynthesis values of grass. We are replacing trees with all their leaves and surface area with a bigger surface area from buffel grass and pasture, of course keeping the shade lines and so forth.

Mr Robertson interjected.

Mr HORAN: I am just talking generally. I am not a scientist, but I know enough about vegetation and grasses. I know enough about the reflection of the sun off shiny roofs in industrial estates and the fumes and power coming out of air conditioners and trucks, and trees being cleared to build brick houses. I know enough about those things to make proper and accurate comparisons.

As this development has happened in Queensland, it has brought about economic development. It has meant exports. Instead of useless brigalow that one could not walk through, we have well-developed properties that have to be managed. Those properties work in partnership with the warehouses on the coast that provide polypipe, pumps, car parts, machinery parts or other equipment, and that provides an overall economic benefit.

That is sensible and balanced development of rural Queensland in the same way that we are trying to have sensible and balanced development in south-east Queensland. It means recognising and respecting hardworking people. People who live on the coast need homes, they need somewhere to work and they need a way to get to work. We need to be sensible about providing those things while trying to do the best for the environment. On the other hand, in rural Queensland we need to recognise that people want to have balanced, sustainable farms. They should be able to do an amount of development that enables their properties to grow and to be developed to their full potential whilst maintaining environmental aspects of the property, associated national parks and so on. That is the way it should be done. That is fair to all sections of the community.

What we are seeing through this whole process is a vile politicisation and a misleading of people, as evidenced by the very fact that during the election campaign there was targeted advertising of city seats. I am not being critical, but the average person who lives in the suburbs—such as the electorate of Mount Coot-tha, whose member I have heard speak—would not be aware of issues concerning the balanced, sustainable, good development of properties with buffel grass, good stocking rates, portions kept, creeks looked after, national parks and so on looked after, property plans, Landcare groups and so on. The average person would not know about that.

However, someone can show footage of a couple of dozers and the chains between them—and the media is just as culpable as the political parties for this—but the end result of the balanced farm, the buffel grass and the jobs that are created right through the chain are not shown. Then they say, 'Isn't it dreadful what they're doing?' They do not show the dozers clearing hundreds of acres between the Tweed and Noosa. They do not show the big industrial estates, the hundreds of thousands of airconditioners, the four lanes of traffic or the power stations. They just show this one thing, because this group is vulnerable.

There are only a limited number of electorates involved. There are 53 seats out of 89 in south-east Queensland. This is where many people are getting fed up with politicians. I find it frustrating that politicians cannot stand up and be a bit truthful about these matters. They use these things. They grin and they say, 'Yeah, we won the election and this is what we promised, and never mind the people on the land. Don't worry about them. We'll just look after our own patch. Don't be truthful and faithful to the whole of Queensland. Don't be honest.' They just

encourage the perception that there are D9s with ships' chains between them pulling down millions of hectares, that there are deserts being created and salination problems. These are all the lies and propaganda that have been spread about this issue. I reckon this has been one of the most dishonest and shameful periods in Queensland.

I well remember what happened with Cubbie Station and the lies and deceit that went on. It was the common working men and women at Dirranbandi who rose up and packed the hall when they were lied to about running the water to Narran Lakes, when they were lied to about the national competition policy and when they were lied to about all the salinity issues. They did not have the millions of dollars that this government had to put out maps showing red everywhere, trying to say that we have a salt encrusted moonscape when the opposite was the case.

We are not Victoria and we do not have a winter climate. We have different geography and climate altogether. We have a summer rainfall and a different soil topography. Anyway, the country people are aware of these things and they are farming and managing their properties in a more modern way. They are making up for their mistakes of the past in the way that those who live in the cities and in south-east Queensland learn from our mistakes of the past. I grew up in Moorooka, a suburb of Brisbane. All that area was clear-felled. We will not see subdivisions done that way now because we have learned from our mistakes. We try to make developments a little bit more environmentally friendly with a strip here for koalas, parklands et cetera. As city people have learnt by their mistakes, so have rural people. They are entitled to a fair and honest go in this whole process.

Even though the minister is carrying out the bidding of his master strategist, and Mr Beattie is regarded as a smart politician, at the end of the day I do not know whether smartness rules over truth. I bet that the minister has been around and seen some wonderful places for development. He has probably been fulsome in his praise of those properties. He knows that he could continue doing that. He knows that there are 82 million hectares of cover over Queensland. He knows that the balanced sustainable allowable development done to a property plan and a vegetation plan would maintain the balance in the same way that we have kept balance in south-east Queensland. I am sure that he knows that in his heart and he knows that this is not working to true science and doing things in a right way with balance. This is just politics and nothing else, and blow the people.

The government won the election and it thinks that it can do what it likes. Isn't it a shame to think that the government panders to the preferences of minority groups? It is not game to stand up in its own right and say, 'We'll get in on our own votes.' It panders to these groups and it is prepared to do it to the most vulnerable in this state because it finds them an easy target. I think that plenty of people in this House need to examine their consciences.

This legislation is being passed for smart political reasons, not for the right and true reasons and not for the reasons that they would apply in their own electorates. They would not dare. The member for Toowoomba North would not dare stop the developers of Highfields from clearing and developing. Because of population increases there, they need a new tavern and a new shopping centre. It is a beautiful area. He would not dare say, 'No more clearing. You all have to live in high rises in the middle of Toowoomba because we want to maintain a pristine development.' It is about balanced development. We are not seeing balanced thinking and we are not seeing balanced development in this debate tonight.

Queenslanders should start to wake up. They should start to look after their fellow man a little as well as the environment. They should realise that we are all in the same boat. We will not solve the problems of the environment by demonising those people in the few electorates that rely on the land for their income. We are demonising people who live in coastal electorates like Burnett and Fitzroy where there are massive problems with suckers. The gum trees come up in cleared country like hair on a cat's back. They may get to a period when the prices for their produce are down or there has been a dry spell and they cannot afford to treat suckers. Because of the uncertainty in some of this legislation, they will not know what they can do with the suckers if they get to a certain height and they cannot afford to treat them. What on earth will they do?

Mr Robertson: In perpetuity.

Mr HORAN: I will give the minister this: from what I have seen he has addressed the sucker issue—I hope—but the shadow minister will certainly deal with that when it comes to consideration of the clauses. That enormous uncertainty about suckers is driving some rural communities mad. They need certainty about the suckers and no changes in the future.

Mr Robertson: In perpetuity is a long time!

Mr HORAN: I am pleased that the minister has said that it is in perpetuity. Let us hope he will not put in place the 'green police', who drive people mad and frighten the whole community. It does happen. Actually, I suppose that will not happen because the government has gutted the department of staff. I have heard there has not been a land officer at Charleville for the past two months.

A lot of people from the other side have said about this bill that the government is delivering on an election promise. That election promise was based on crass politics and not on truth, not on science and not on respect for people who live in certain parts of this state. It was doing to those people what those on the other side of the House would not be game to do to their own electorate. That is the unfairness and the dishonesty of the whole process. I think it is a shame that the people of rural Queensland could not be treated with respect, that they could not be told the truth and that a system of balanced and sustainable development could not be put in place that would allow them to make a reasonable income from the investment and the hard work they have put into their properties over generations.

Mr LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (8.21 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to support the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This bill is the result of a commitment by the Premier in the last election campaign, announcing the end to broadscale tree clearing in Queensland. This will mean that the bulldozers that currently clear the equivalent of 1,200 football fields a day will be stopped and mothballed forever. Over 20 million hectares will be saved for ours and future generations. The decision was described by the Wilderness Society, Australian Conservation Foundation, Worldwide Fund for Nature and Queensland Conservation Council as the most significant decision for the environment in Queensland's history.

The Queensland government has been in negotiation with the Commonwealth government regarding the regulation of land clearing in Queensland since 1999. Despite the lack of support from the Commonwealth, the Queensland government has continued to take action to address the rate of land clearing in Queensland through the introduction of regulatory controls. In early 2003 the Commonwealth government did agree to the introduction of a moratorium on further tree clearing applications in order to negotiate with stakeholders over a proposal to phase out all broadscale clearing of remnant vegetation and to protect of concern regional ecosystems.

These changes to the existing regulatory framework were to be undertaken in conjunction with the provision of a $150 million joint financial assistance package. With no response from the Commonwealth by early 2004, the implementation of the package to phase out broadscale clearing of remnant vegetation became a key election commitment in the February 2004 campaign. As part of that commitment the Premier indicated that Queensland would fund the entire package of $150 million if the Commonwealth was not prepared to participate in the proposal. The election commitment also stated that the legislation required for the implementation of the package would be the first bill introduced into the new parliament in March 2004, and the Premier has honoured that commitment.

The Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill will give effect to the government's election commitment concerning vegetation clearing. The purpose of the bill is to phase out broadscale clearing of remnant vegetation under a transitional clearing cap by December 2006 and to protect of concern regional ecosystems whilst, of course, allowing clearing for necessary ongoing purposes and management activities.

The financial assistance package will provide $130 million of structural adjustment, $12 million for incentives and $8 million for best management practices. The funding arrangements are not included in the legislation.

It was interesting to hear the member for Robina earlier mention the inadequate funding that apparently concerned him. He mentioned that if we were not going to wait for Canberra to assist with the funding then we should accept the total amount of the cost of this program, which he suggested would be more than $150 million. The simple fact of the matter is that if we were going to wait for Canberra this would never have happened. In fact, to see Canberra's attitude to this legislation you would have to line it up with a post to see if it was even moving. It has been absolutely glacier-like in its attitude to this particular legislation. I commend the legislation to the House.

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (8.25 p.m.): I rise to oppose the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004. From the sounds from across the way it appears that it is no surprise that I will oppose it. We all know that mistakes have been made in the past regarding tree clearing and that the situation needs to be addressed and addressed urgently. There is not a

single person I know of in the rural sector or in the Nanango electorate who would disagree with that, but they do not necessarily agree that this is the only way to go. This legislation has the government heading off in a direction which will impact enormously on individuals on the land and on communities and local governments reliant on rural industries. After all the knocks the rural sector has sustained over the past few years, I cannot support another blow from a government which takes no account of the impact it will have on those communities.

I could bring out a whole heap of clippings, reports and so on, but I think this one in particular is pretty interesting. It shows the effect. This newspaper article refers to ABARE's Outlook conference. Dr Fisher, the executive director of ABARE, visited a property, owned by a Michael Flynn, which is a highly developed cattle property at Valera Vale, and contrasted it with unmanaged mulga scrub nearby. He stated at this conference with regard to Murweh shire that the study prepared for the Productivity Commission by Devine Agribusiness found that stocking rates would fall to nearly zero if thickening went uncontrolled. That finding has been made in so many reports that it is not funny. The article states—

> It was a notable recognition of the study, which found such an outcome would cost the shire more than $180 million in lost production and property values, a finding Premier Beattie has previously argued was irrelevant debate surrounding the $150m compensation ...

That one particular shire will have lost $180 million, yet the government is putting up only $150 million in compensation. That amount will be no more than a drop in the bucket. It is like trying to water the desert with a watering can. It is a ridiculous amount. It has not been thought out logically. The government might be thinking this $150 million might buy a few acres of land that can be shut away, but the impact is far greater than that.

Dr Fisher and a few other people I have spoken to, including Agforce, said that the combined impact of vegetation regulations, uncontrolled thickening, lack of productivity growth and falling commodity prices would make life difficult for agriculturally dependent communities. I have to ask the minister: did he really consider that and the cost to those communities? It will definitely be far above $150 million, because one shire alone is projected to have a $180 million loss. The government may have thought about the peripheral costs to individuals, but the impacts reach so much further afield. I have to ask: did the minister actually think of the communities this is going to hurt?

Before I go any further, I should assure those in this House who might think to the contrary that I do actually support the control of salinity and I do support ensuring that we maintain best quality for our water and encourage the protection of endangered animals and vegetation, but I cannot and do not support this bill as it stands. I have not supported other bills that have been brought before this House simply because they were not fair to the sector that they targeted. I will keep opposing them until the government becomes a bit fairer.

We all know things have to be addressed, but there has to be a fair way of doing it. I do not believe the government is being fair with this legislation. Give a little; take a little. But as far as I can see this government has done nothing but take when it comes to the rural sector. There has been an illusion perpetrated by the government, and it has been perpetrated on all Queensland people, which has been ably abetted by the media in that it is heavily treed areas being devastated left, right and centre. Yes, there is devastation going on but it is not as it is portrayed. We are talking about every type of vegetation—whether it be tropical or forest areas or areas of vast scrub and everything else in between.

My main concern with this bill is the balloting system. I know there are a lot of people who are already asking for permits to clear so they will probably get the primary consideration, but there are probably a lot more out there who want it and they will not get it. The balloting system in itself may seem particularly fair but I would imagine that it would be a bit like going into a camp full of starving people who have been there possibly for a month or more and saying, 'We will ballot who will get a meal today because we can only feed half of you.' That does not take into consideration those who are in prime need and those who are not. So I think that is particularly unfair and unjust.

Although the intent of the bill is to be supported, unlike many in the House I cannot sacrifice the land-holders' and their communities' welfare for the feelgood appeal of this legislation. I have to ask the minister: how will this compensation be calculated per land-holder? What is the formula to be used to ensure it will be fair to all? $150 million over three years is bugger all; it will not go anywhere.

A government member interjected.

Mrs PRATT: It is a good country term; it is bugger all. But that is the truth: it will go absolutely nowhere. How do we calculate the impact of this legislation on the communities? I do not know how the government is going to do it. I think it has made a huge problem for itself. I cannot possibly understand how anybody could think that it is fair.

I know that this government does have a history of miscalculating the cost of its projects, and I believe the true cost of this legislation to communities and individuals alike may very well be incalculable. Winston Churchill used the following words which, although used at the time of war, are no less appropriate when it comes to this bill: 'Never before have so few paid so much for so many.' The truth is only a few people will pay, and they will pay very dearly for the privilege of living where they do.

This legislation impacts heavily on crop producers and graziers, towns and citizens and the shopkeepers in those small rural towns. The incomes for individuals and the resultant impact on those communities have not really been addressed in the legislation. This is not the first time poorly conceived legislation which impacts heavily on individuals will be passed in this House. There have been other bills that have impacted heavily on land-holders. We have the Integrated Planning Act and the Water Act. In those pieces of legislation there has always been a reference to what is loosely described as 'the ecological sustainability and the maintenance of cultural, economic, physical and social wellbeing of people and communities' or a similar phrase. This at least allows for consideration of the local community and the impact of the bill on it.

The Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004 appears not to take the probable impact on the community into consideration at all. I can understand why the federal government and most people in rural areas removed themselves from ever committing to this particular proposal. I will give the House an example of the impact on one particular family. Barry Ogilvie is a prime example. He and his wife own 144 hectares. One hundred and twenty-two hectares of trees he just cannot touch because they were in pink. This area was covered in trees to be harvested during retirement to allow him and his wife to have a reasonable existence in old age. Barry is 64 so he cannot find a job elsewhere and he is left with approximately 22 hectares on which he is expected to make a living.

The reason he has to try to make a living on 22 hectares is simply because he cannot get Centrelink assistance because the property which he cannot work is classed as an asset. His wife's pension is cut because their assets are too high. This asset he has which he cannot utilise which the government will not compensate him for is now effectively his prison. No-one will purchase it because they cannot utilise it either. This government's legislation has made his property almost worthless, unless the government wants to buy it, as I heard the minister say, at the price prior to the legislation came into effect. But it is impossible to sell. This government might as well have confiscated his bank account. It is nothing more than legalised theft, and this government should hang its head in shame as should anyone who supports this bill in its current form because they are aiding and abetting this legalised theft.

I have another letter that might be of some interest, and this comes from a lady in Biloela. She said—

... Consider this: What if you had bought a block of land for your dream home, and then:

The government told you that you couldn't clear one tree off your block?

That you had to pay rates on that block even though you couldn't do anything with it.

Would that be okay with you?

I guess it would, but I am sure it would not. There are a lot of people in these situations and the government seems not to care one little bit. The truth is not only is this government prepared to break these people and many others financially but it simply does not give a dam. It has an agenda, and nothing—not even fairness—is going to slow that agenda down.

I have another case where land was shut up; it was locked away. The rubbish built up in it and, as we know, we have had severe drought. A wildfire went through this particular property. Not only did it kill the understorey; it killed the 40- to 50-year-old trees. It burnt them so badly that they did not spring back to life as most trees do when a quick fire goes through. They were beautiful trees, but the stupidity of the situation is that the gentlemen who owns these trees, which he was not allowed to harvest because it was all under pink, cannot even harvest them when they are dead. They have to be left to fall down in their own good time. If they do not fall down, they get to rot if they are lucky enough, but the chances are another wildfire will come through and another forest will be decimated because the fire will be too hot, too slow and the pods that react and open to a quick fire will open but it will be a slow fire, it will burn the seeds,

they will not regenerate and we might as well say goodbye to that forest because it will not regenerate.

This legislation we are told is for the benefit of all Queenslanders, so why must only a few pay the price? If the aim of introducing this legislation is true, if it is for the welfare of all Queenslanders, the government should ask every single one of the Queensland population to put their hands in their pockets. Nature is a hard taskmaster and she is not a fake. She does not ponce about in front of cameras in an effort to convince people that her course of action is the only way to go. The government, on the other hand, does exactly that—poncing around, ably aided and abetted by the media with its constant rehashing of old footage with the sole intent of convincing those who do not really know what they are talking about that land-holders are environmental vandals. I can tell them that they are not. I do not think I can say that forcefully enough. It does not take nature long to sort out poor land managers whereas society, on the other hand, does not seem to have a clue.

Nature is a pretty blunt lady to deal with. If you do not do the right thing, you will not be on the land for very long. Every generation of land-holders has witnessed it themselves. When land-holders do not do the right thing, they are bought out because they are failures. In this day and age land-holders do not tolerate any failure or mismanagement of their neighbours. Unfortunately, that does not apply to the government because it has proven in the past to be very, very poor neighbours. It also happens in every industry. Those who do not do the right thing suffer the loss of the business and are eventually pushed out. So honourable members can see that this industry overall manages itself and mother nature is cracking the whip.

I have seen many photos of the Kingaroy area in which every single hill had been decimated, every tree had been removed because the government policy of the day said it must be so. Today photos of the same area show beautifully treed areas; the same hills are beautifully treed and that is not because this government passed legislation but because a long time ago people on the land realised that that was the only way they could go. They had to do everything possible to ensure the value of their land, to maintain the integrity of the land.

If this government had any integrity it would buy every bit of country it wants to lock up or limit production on every bit of country it believes will be needed to protect the future of this state. I do not think a single person out there would not say, 'That is fine. If you are prepared to buy it at a just price, to take everything into consideration, to be fair and just, okay.' To do that everybody would need to support it and not just with words but with their hands in their pocket. They should put their hands in very deep and contribute to the total compensation paid to the individuals and communities alike who will suffer a loss of income and/or future development because of this legislation. If this government were serious it would ensure that industries are encouraged and assisted to locate into areas where communities will suffer because of this legislation. It should do everything possible to minimise the impact of this legislation, but I see no intent to encourage any type of industry in the areas that will suffer most.

For almost six years I have listened to the term 'honest and open government' earnestly bandied around by the members of the government while almost holding their hands on their hearts. 'Honest and open' is not a term that I would apply to the government in relation to this legislation. There has been so much deception and intrigue, misrepresentation and misinformation, hide and seek of documents—especially documents delivered by the government's own departments—and investigations which gave a contrary view of the one desired, and reports which reportedly did not support or endorse the government's agenda.

Many people in this House have spoken tonight about the SLATS document. It shows the deception that this government is prepared to commit. This government has sold out the people of rural areas for a few votes. That is how they see it. That is the perception and it is the reality. ABARE states that we still retain 80 per cent remnant vegetation. So where did the lies come from that the rural land-holders are vandals decimating the bush at every turn?

The government members talk about members of the opposition using emotive language but did not condemn themselves for using blatant lies and emotive film footage to win their argument. This government continues to gloat about its community and industry body consultation. Agforce and Property Rights Australia have not been backward in endeavouring to come to a workable and reasonable outcome for all. Their aim was to reduce greenhouse emissions and find the right balance of pasture and trees for a sustainable business and environment, which I thought was exactly what the government was aiming for, but apparently not because this government has turned its back on that particular outcome.

A lot of people have put a lot of time and effort into making this a workable piece of legislation, but all these people have been strung along simply so that this government can claim that it consulted with the appropriate bodies. It has been a con from the start and all are justified in feeling they have been pawns in a government game.

Many government members have stood in this House and stated that the government has a mandate to pass this legislation because it went to the people with it and was returned. I cannot argue with that, but the majority of that vote was city based. In my electorate of Nanango the Labor vote was extremely low compared with the previous election. In fact, it came in well behind the National Party, whereas in the last election it basically flogged the National Party. It was unheard of for the Labor Party to get such a high vote. But this time it was extremely low.

Nanango residents know about and understand the land, and they know and understand that this legislation is not in the best interests of the rural sector. In fact, as we say in the bush, in Nanango the Labor government was creamed. It was creamed in areas that would be affected by this legislation. So government members should not kid themselves that they have a mandate. They are just lucky that the majority of their support is city based. They should not care too much about the rural sector and the legislation's effects on it. Let us be honest: most people do not even consider the effects of legislation until it hurts them in the pocket.

Remnant vegetation was one of the areas with which I had a lot of concern. It was not clear to those on the land, but I can see by the amendment that has been circulated today that the definition has become clearer. I also see problems arising with people who have decided on a sea change or bush change and moved to small allotments in rural areas and the impacts upon them and their lack of knowledge when it comes to interaction between the department and their property.

The ballot generates a lot of questions that have been asked by others in the House and I look forward to the minister's responses. This legislation and the arguments on which it was put to the people were not based on the whole truth but only on the truths that match the government's agenda. This is devious and un-Australian but, unfortunately, it is becoming the norm, the expected, from governments in general.

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (8.45 p.m.): This legislation is having a serious effect on people who have bought land with trees on it with the intention of developing their country. Having this land and having to pay rates and, in many cases, interest on borrowings to acquire the land is now placing them in a very difficult financial position. The irresponsible attitude of the government has been created to impact on their agenda.

First, there was a secret report taken into cabinet in 1999 by this Labor government estimating that $500 million was required to compensate land-holders for the loss in value of production resulting from the total ban on land clearing. I recall Minister Palaszczuk saying about the report, 'It was discredited by the director-general of DPI and it was thrown in the bin where it belonged.' This was followed by the cover-up of the DPI report estimating the economic impact of uncontrolled woodland thickening to land-holders would be $900 million. On top of this it has been alleged that the staff involved in this research were ordered to destroy their research due to its political sensitivity.

Then there was the independent Productivity Commission draft report into impacts of native vegetation regulation, which was disregarded. The report highlighted that a blanket ban on clearing can result in more harm than good. This is the very same report that highlighted that vegetation management laws have the capacity to prevent land-holders from introducing more sustainable practices aimed at improving properties in terms of cost-saving measures and environmental longevity.

These are prime examples of the deception and secrecy of Premier Beattie's government with regard to the topic of tree clearing restrictions. The position taken by the government appears to be that of ignorance. There has been no attempt at transparency, nor has there been an adherence to the science whereby questions might be raised as a result of this Labor government's stance, indicating that the unsubstantiated policy perceptions possess more weight with this government than sound policy formulation and science. This is a far cry from the position of the Nationals whereby there is a belief that the state government has a responsibility to work with stakeholders and the wider community in general to develop a natural resources base for future generations in both practice and sustainability.

Quite frankly, property owners have been left to wither on the vine by this government. They have not been given the opportunity to constructively contribute to this debate, and the likes of

representative bodies such as Agforce have been left in a similar position, even after the Premier professed that he would do all he could to help the organisation.

Prior to the 7 February election the Beattie government did all it could in city seats to push the barrow in terms of labelling land-holders as environmental vandals. That is from a Premier that stands by a Smart State image. One has to wonder why he has to take the line of vilifying so many of the state's primary producers by stating that 'our Labor government will stop the bulldozers and save the trees'. The only smart thing the Premier did in pushing this barrow was to steer clear of rural seats when promoting his policy to ban broadscale tree clearing.

In doing so, however, he broadened the gap between the rural and city areas of our state. This is the last thing we want to see happen. There is enormous pressure on many rural industries. Many are struggling to survive—the sugar, the banana and dairy industries. What Premier Beattie and his government fail to reflect on is reality itself. This reality is that 81.3 per cent of Queensland remains covered in remnant vegetation. This is according to the Queensland Herbarium. Over a four-year period there has only been an increase in land clearing of one per cent. In consideration of this statistic compared with the propaganda being disseminated by the Beattie government Queensland certainly cannot be classified as being bare of vegetation. It is quite evident that a realistic, fully funded assistance scheme to compensate for losses in viability, productivity and property values is necessary if there is to be a sensible outcome for the future of vegetation management in Queensland.

I want to raise a few technical issues because I think they are particularly important.

Ms Nelson-Carr: Have you got a property yourself?

Mr ROWELL: Yes, I have a property.

Ms Nelson-Carr: And do you tree clear?

Mr ROWELL: I have a property and it does not have any trees on it. The principle of inalienable freehold title and full ownership as a sound legal principle would seem to be inextricably connected with the reclamation of lands through native title legislation. Legal debate surrounding this issue has, in the past, demonstrated this principle to be internationally recognised and one which exists beyond the boundaries of state based legislation.

For example, the case of Ben Ward on behalf of the Miriuwung and Gajerrong people versus the state of Western Australia and Ors was heard before the Federal Court of Australia on 24 November 1998. This case cited the principle of the inalienable right to possess, occupy and use and enjoy land. During this case, in support of this principle, the Federal Court ordered and determined that native title is an interest inalienable to third parties and is not an estate capable of being lost to Crown by prescription. The history of the US and Canadian Supreme Court has upheld this principle as in the case of Johnson versus McIntosh in which Chief Justice Marshall declared of the Aboriginal interests—

... they were admitted to be rightful occupants of the soil, with a legal as well as a just claim to retain possession of it, and to use it according to their own discretion.

Such inalienable rights are defined and supported by the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Human Rights. Point 1 of article 1 states—

Nothing in the present Covenant may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person, any right to engage in any activity or perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms recognised herein or ... Provided in the present Covenant.

This clearly delimits the extent of the rights of the state to encroach those of the absolute priority owner who in Queensland is the owner of freehold land.

Therefore, the principle of inalienable rights relevant to freehold land appears to be directly relevant to the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Bill 2004. This is an internationally recognised legal principle endorsed by the UN and supported by Australia to which an ethical and legal obligation to comply exists. One must therefore question the potential impact of this bill upon the rights of freehold property owners as defined by the Queensland Land Title Act 1994, the Queensland Property Law Act 1974 and the current Queensland Vegetation Management Act 1999. It is noteworthy that clause 9 of part 3 of the Queensland Acts Interpretation Act 1954 limits the power of an act in Queensland such that it cannot exceed parliament's legislative powers.

The bill also substantially reduces the current act's previous acknowledgment of freehold landowners, referring to owners of property consistently, avoiding the use of the term freehold to distinguish between the various types of ownerships or occupancy. The Queensland Property Law

Act 1974 is currently in force. The proposed bill does not include any amendment to this act. Were the bill, presently before the parliament, to be enacted it would stand at direct cross-purposes with the provisions of the Property Law Act.

Clause 23(1)(f) of part (4) of the explanatory notes of the Queensland Parliamentary Standards Act 1992 states—

An explanatory note for a Bill must include the following information about the Bill in clear and precise language—

(f) a brief assessment of the consistency of the Bill with fundamental legislative principles and, if it is inconsistent with fundamental principles, the reasons for the inconsistency.

The Queensland Property Law Act 1974 is not mentioned within the bill and therefore the requirements of the Standards Act appear not to be fulfilled.

The bill's failure to address this act has resulted in an overall failure to address the significant issues included within the scope of the Queensland Property Law Act. This act defines as an absolute owner the owner or person capable of disposing by appointment, or otherwise, of the fee simple or whole interest in a holding.

Clause 21 of part 3 of the act holds that land held in the Crown and fee simple may be assured and the person taken under the assurance shall hold the land in the Crown in the same manner as the land was held before the assurance took place. This would seem to imply that the rights of an owner of freehold land are deemed by this act to be at least equivalent to those of the Crown prior to the land becoming freehold.

This has not been addressed by the bill which, in fact, proposes to omit the term 'freehold land' from the Queensland Vegetation Management Act 1999. Clause 21 of part 3 of the Queensland Property Act 1974 clearly defines the unencumbered nature of freehold land, stating that all tenures created by the Crown upon any ground of an estate in fee simple shall be taken to be in free and common socage without any incident of tenure for the benefit of the Crown.

Finally, whilst the bill appears to address the Queensland Land Act 1994 somewhat exhaustively, specific issues addressed by the act do not appear within with the provisions of the bill. For example, division 3 of the act sets out circumstances allowing clearing for routine management and routine rural management purposes.

Debate, on motion of Mr Rowell, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy) (8.59 p.m.): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Electricity Industry

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (8.59 p.m.): Tonight I rise to advise members of the House of an issue that is quite serious in my electorate, and I am sure that many other members are faced with a similar situation. One of the most important services that we can have is a reliable electricity supply. Demand is increasing and, unfortunately, reliability is reducing. Ergon's linesmen have been fantastic. One only has to ring them up and they will try to fix the problem. But the reality is that maintenance has not been kept up on many of our electricity lines and this is causing very serious problems across Queensland.

As members would be aware, the electricity industry has set up an inquiry into the problems relating to the electricity supply in Queensland. One of the main problems with the power source in Queensland is the fact that the government has been taking far too much funding out of the profits of the electricity companies, and this is in fact impacting quite severely on the maintenance that is now not being done throughout the state. The electricity review panel is there to listen to people's complaints and problems. There have been a number of complaints made to my office—in recent times about 20-odd came in—and I have passed them on. That is important.

One of the issues we have found is that there are blackouts occurring and the response times for complaints are an issue. As I said before, the Ergon personnel in my area have been absolutely fantastic, but they just cannot keep up with the workload. There is also deterioration in the supply system or the inability for the supply to cope with the current demand. Whenever there is a new connection, it takes time in some instances to connect it. There is also a huge cost in trying to connect someone to the grid. Even though there may be a powerline going right past

their place or there is a pole or a line nearby, the cost is nearly out of this world. It costs $20,000, $30,000, $40,00 or $50,000 to provide power. The electricity companies look more at the bigger users to try to make money, whereas the smaller users of electricity will not pay the big dollars in the short term but will be there for the long term. We need to have more work—

Time expired.

Centenary Junior Rugby League Football Club

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (9.02 p.m.): Last year the Centenary Junior Rugby League Football Club in my electorate of Mount Ommaney celebrated 15 years of operation in the area. In 1988 there was no Rugby League played in Brisbane's Centenary suburbs. The primary schools at Jindalee, Middle Park and Jamboree Heights played soccer or Aussie Rules.

Mr Reeves: I helped them get established.

Mrs ATTWOOD: Fantastic. Well done. Thank you very much, Phil. I did not realise that. He has some Centenary connections. The nearest junior Rugby League clubs were at Inala, Acacia Ridge and Tennyson. Due to the efforts of a keen player's mother, Robyn King, a sign-on day was set for the 1989 season. Training commenced at the Middle Park State School. A sublease on the ground at Centenary Highway Reserve at the corner of Ipswich Road and the Centenary Highway was negotiated and the club's first games were played there in 1989.

In the first season the club signed 70 players and fielded five teams Under 7 to Under 17. The club adopted the Broncos's colours to attract players and had the backing of Wayne Bennett, still a local resident of Centenary. The 1990 season saw the club grow and prosper with teams in all grades from Under 7 to Under 12 and an Under 14 side with 109 registered players. The club ended 1991 with 11 teams and 158 registered players. At the end of 1992 the club finished the season with 200 players.

In late 1993 the council told the club that the 1994 season would be the last it would allow the club at the Ipswich Road end of the reserve and development of the new grounds had to begin from scratch. The playing surface was uneven and there was a rock-hard cricket pitch in the middle of the playing field. However, despite the enormous task ahead of them, the club and its many supporters managed to install the necessary infrastructure, including an old Army building, on the site. The club committee changed a little over the years. However, local resident Keith Blake continued to have a prominent role as secretary, vice-president and caretaker president. In 2000 Peter McIlwain headed the committee and plans were developed to take the club into the future. The club's strategy was to develop more players and teams to junior A standard, to open electronic communication links and to be a strong continuing force in the Brisbane junior Rugby League.

The club had over 200 junior players and around 20 gentlemen playing in the Queensland Masters. In line with modern technology, the club established its own web site and continues to receive support and sponsorship from many local businesses. Luxury Paints is a major sponsor for the 2003-04 year. I congratulate this fine club for its devotion to the sport of Rugby League and for the efforts it makes in training its young players to perhaps one day make it to the top of the sport in Queensland.

Southern Pacific Petroleum

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (9.05 p.m.): Last year the Labor government funded a health risk assessment for the community at Yarwun and Targinie as a result of alleged health impacts because of emissions from Southern Pacific Petroleum. I thank the government for that funding. The study was auspiced through the Department of State Development and the study was completed after a significant period of time due to the complexity of the issues that needed to be addressed. The health risk assessment documentation was ready for public communication and the election was called. The Department of State Development deferred that public discussion and the public discussion was held several weeks ago. A small number of people attended the health risk assessment explanation sessions.

Subsequent to one of those sessions, Mrs Noonan wrote to me and said—

I attended the Thursday afternoon meeting, for the Health Risk Assessment information, which you also attended.

The claims that the chemical Thiophene was responsible for the 'odours', but that it is totally safe, do not seem to be substantiated by the information provided on the internet by Chemwatch.

Perhaps Dr Drew should have used this information instead of outdated Russian research. I would be interested to hear whether you think this information ... is relevant and also contradictory to what we were told at the meeting.

Indeed, the information is contradictory. The report was stated to say that there were no long-term health impacts from the emissions. However, there was no explanation for the sore eyes, the inflamed mucus membranes and the respiratory problems that people downwind from SPP were suffering.

It was stated at the discussion that the chemical that was identified as responsible for the odours was thiophene but that residents should not be concerned because that chemical in itself was safe. However, Chemwatch states that thiophene is highly flammable, harmful if swallowed, may produce discomfort of the respiratory system, the vapours potentially cause drowsiness and dizziness, and it should be kept away from sources of ignition. It warns not to breathe the gas, fumes and vapour spray, wear protective clothing and use only in well-ventilated areas. It goes on to say that it is found in coal tar, coal gas and technical benzene.

But the telling thing is that thiophene concentrations below the odour threshold level produce light sensitivity of the human eyes, and it goes on to talk about the exposure of animals to thiophene. People in the Yarwun-Targinie area, particularly Targinie, have been exposed to levels that produce considerable odour and have been asked to accept that the health impacts are zero. But chemical information available to anyone on the Internet decries that statement. I believe that the people of Targinie are justified in their concerns, and I seek leave to table this document—

Time expired.

CQ RESQ Helicopter Service

Ms JARRATT (Whitsunday—ALP) (9.09 p.m.): On 2 April this year the Minister for Emergency Services, Chris Cummins, officially commissioned a new rescue helicopter for the CQ RESQ service based in Mackay. The commissioning of the Eurocopter Dauphin helicopter marked a new era for our emergency response capacity in the Mackay-Whitsunday region. With enough lifting capacity and space to carry two intensive care patients, the new helicopter significantly extends the ability of paramedics to treat patients in flight. This is very good news for locals and visitors who require emergency evacuation and treatment, but, as we were reminded during the commissioning ceremony, the replacement helicopter has come at a great cost to the community.

The Dauphin helicopter replaces the former Bell 407 craft that was destroyed in a tragic accident in October last year. However, it is not just the financial cost of the replacement helicopter that continues to challenge the CQ RESQ service. Above all, it is the memory of the three young men who perished in the helicopter accident that weighs heavily on everyone's minds.

On 17 October last year, pilot Andrew Carpenter, crewman Stewart Eva and paramedic Craig Liddington lost their lives when, in responding to a routine emergency call-out, the Bell 407 helicopter crashed into the sea between Mackay and Cape Hillsborough. While the helicopter has been replaced, nothing can ever erase the sadness and despair felt by the families, colleagues and friends at the loss of these three young heroes, but they will be remembered.

Last Saturday, together with my colleague John English, the member for Redlands, community leaders and family and friends of Andy, Craig and Stewy, I was present at the unveiling of a memorial plaque for our CQ RESQ heroes. I table for the benefit of the House a pictorial reproduction of the plaque that will forever commemorate the lives of those we lost. Fittingly, the plaque is located at Turtle Lookout, atop a lonely hillside in the Cape Hillsborough National Park were it looks out across an expanse of ocean marking the location of the helicopter crash. The memorial service that marked the unveiling of the plaque was simple yet poignant. Those gathered reflected upon their great and tragic loss as the new Dauphin helicopter performed a fly-past to the hauntingly beautiful lament of a lone piper.

Inasmuch as we were gathered to mourn the loss of our heroes, we were also gathered to celebrate their lives and contribution to the community. I want to pay a special tribute to local resident Cynthya Popperwell whose quest to find a way to honour the memory of Craig, Stewart and Andrew led to the beautiful ceremony and placement of the plaque. To her I say: Cynthya, I know that your actions were born of grief at the loss of your friends, but they have created a lasting memorial for all to share and on behalf of all who knew Craig, Stewart and Andrew I thank you.

My final plea tonight is for everyone in our community to continue to support the CQ RESQ helicopter service so that it can continue its vital work. That would be the ultimate honour that we could bestow on those we lost.

McEwens Beach

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (9.13 p.m.): In previous parliaments the member for Keppel, Vince Lester, raised the issue of the erosion that was taking place at Kinka Beach. I raise with the parliament a similar situation that is occurring in my electorate at McEwens Beach, where the ocean is continuing to erode the beachfront area. Over 130 metres has been lost in the past 50 years. That erosion is continuing now at a faster rate. Unfortunately, if the ocean breaks through it will have a devastating effect on quite a number of local residents.

In May last year, following a public meeting, I convened a meeting in Parliament House between the then Environment Minister Dean Wells and Mackay City Council with a view to seeking state government assistance in identifying appropriate action to be taken to address this situation and the available funding outcomes. The minister's response was to send an officer of the department to visit McEwens Beach again and to meet with council representatives and local residents on site.

Since that time the Mackay City Council has forwarded a submission to the Environmental Protection Agency for approval to build a 230-metre rock wall and to seek a response. I understand that the new Environment Minister has visited McEwens Beach recently. Currently we have not had a response from the EPA and time is marching on.

It is disgraceful that this situation has been allowed to continue over this period. Quite frankly, if we go another year without some protection being provided, there is no doubt that sea water will break through the frontal dunes and, as I said, have a huge effect on the local residents.

The beachfront land is owned by the council. It is freehold land. The ocean is eroding the only real park that the people of McEwens Beach have. If the erosion continues unabated and the ocean breaks through, about 20 homes will be affected. They will have water at their front doors.

Both the state government and the council need to take action now before it is too late to stop the erosion. I call on the parliament to support me in making sure that the EPA and the council are able to move quickly to make this happen for the sake of the residents of McEwens Beach.

Mature Age Job Awareness Campaign

Mrs REILLY (Mudgeeraba—ALP) (9.16 p.m.): On 22 August last year I launched an initiative that aimed to get 45 people aged over 45 into jobs in 45 weeks. That Mature Age Job Awareness Campaign, which was a Queensland state government Queensland Working Together initiative or a Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative, has seen great success. In just 33 weeks we have actually employed the 45th person, a jobseeker who is aged 50 years. His name is Robert Cherry and he had been out of work for quite a while. He was becoming disheartened, as can be understood by people who are in that age group and who usually have, we must remember, considerable financial and family responsibilities. When they get into a cycle of unemployment and it becomes long term because employers find it difficult to recognise their skills, their experience or their ability because they are in a mindset where they think they should be employing young people, it can become very difficult for jobseekers over the age of 45 to find new employment opportunities.

That was why I was very keen to see a program such as 45-45-45 come to the Gold Coast. It was funded by the Department of Employment and Training. I thank the former Minister for Employment, Matt Foley, the current minister, Tom Barton, and members of the department who are involved. I thank Bernie Carlon, the manager in that area, Roxanne Scott from the Southport office and Paul Westcott who were all involved in securing the funding of $60,000 that was required to have a project manager employed on the Gold Coast. That project manager is John Suttle, who comes from Kings Community Support Agency. We have had great support from Kings Community Support Agency. Gary Nelson and all the staff there are to be congratulated, because they took on a project that was never going to be an easy task. It had a very slow start.

While we had great support from all the Gold Coast members, all my parliamentary colleagues and also chambers of commerce and employer groups, initially it was hard to get the

message across to employers and industry that people aged over 45 have skills, ability and quality experience. They are used to getting up to go to work, they want to work, they are very positive and they have an enormous contribution to make. They are very loyal employees and have a great work ethic. It was hard to get that message across at first but, thanks to the enormous hard work and dedication of the crew at Kings Community Support Agency and the support of employers like Peter Beverland from Australian Timber and Trusses, the 45th employer, we have been able to get that great result.

We are going to continue. The project is funded for 45 weeks. We hope we can get to about 60 or 70 employees and the project will continue on employing people aged over 45 years.

Tripcony-Hibiscus Caravan Park

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—Lib) (9.19 p.m.): Increasingly our green and open space areas are under pressure from development and this pressure can only get worse in south-east Queensland as the influx of people moving into the area will grow. Nowhere is this more evident than on the Sunshine Coast and, in particular, Caloundra.

In Caloundra we have a wonderful opportunity to protect a three-hectare site entitled Tripcony-Hibiscus Caravan Park, located just outside the central business area of Caloundra. This unique site is the last one available on the Sunshine Coast of such size and located so close to a central business area. On one side the caravan park borders Pumicestone Passage and thus offers a special combination of water and a large green area on the doorstep of the modern amenities of the city of Caloundra. This land is currently owned by the state government and operated as a caravan park, but its importance to the people of Caloundra cannot be calculated, certainly insofar as the future generations of the area are concerned.

The lease on these premises expires in about six or seven years, at which point the future of the land is in the unknown basket. The city of Caloundra and its council have requested in the city plan that this parcel of land be designated open space. I know this area can become the gateway to Caloundra with the opportunity for it to hold concerts, family gatherings and events that will envelop the community as a whole.

I can envisage this area in years to come being one of the centres of social activity and an icon known throughout the coast. With our population increase, a sense of community and togetherness is critical. Venues such as this provide an unparalleled opportunity. What we—that is, the residents of Caloundra—do not want to see is a row of roofs as far as the eye can see, and this caravan park is an opportunity that cannot be allowed to slip through our fingers.

The Sunshine Coast tourism region domestic overnight visits to June 2003 increased 12 per cent on the prior year to 2,691,000 persons while the number of domestic daytrippers increased two per cent to 3,634,000 persons for the same period. It is undoubtedly the environment that draws many of these people, and it is incumbent upon us to ensure the environment is protected, as tourism and its offshoots are critical to the economy of Caloundra.

I therefore request the government to consider the long-term benefits of returning ownership of Tripcony-Hibiscus Caravan Park to the people of Caloundra and to do so as soon as possible. Importantly, this action provides the residents with an opportunity to determine how to utilise this important property, and it provides for their children and generations ahead a unique area forever protected.

Local Government Elections, Gold Coast

Mr POOLE (Gaven—ALP) (9.20 p.m.): As everyone is well aware, or should be, we recently had the local government elections in Queensland. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all councillors who were successful throughout the state, in particular a colleague of ours from the previous parliament, Mr Trevor Strong, who is the former hardworking member for Burnett. The federal government's deceit in not releasing the facts about the free trade agreement with the United States gave sugarcane farmers false hope in an alternative representative in Burnett. However, I am not really here tonight to speak about what happened in Burnett but about what is happening on the local government front on the Gold Coast.

I was made aware of the situation of developers' slush funds becoming available for certain candidates with allegiances to Councillor David Power some time ago. To be fair to the candidates I did not name any person or developer in this House prior to the Gold Coast council election. But I wish I had. I was led to believe that it was due to bad blood between David Power

and Councillor Peter Young. Peter has the ongoing audacity to challenge shonky deals and question hastily tabled applications for approval and was regarded as a nuisance to the former chairman of Planning North and his cronies.

Thankfully we have on the Gold Coast a young female journalist with the *Gold Coast Bulletin* named Alice Jones. She did what I failed to do in this House by running the gutsiest piece of investigative and accurate reporting of secret backroom deals with a barrow full of developers' funds and cash for the purpose of getting like-minded candidates suitable to Power's agenda, now widely known as the 'Power Bloc'. Members should have seen those involved squirm and deny such a slush fund existed. Nobody seemed to know each other. A Mr Lionel Bardon, a president of a chamber of commerce on the Gold Coast, denied knowledge of the fund or contributors to it. However, he was the person found out later to be dishing out the cash that had been held in trust in a law firm's trust account for like-minded candidates.

I must say that I am happy to tell this House that Councillor Peter Young was re-elected with a massive majority. That only goes to show that hard work and commitment to the division will overcome all obstacles—slander and slush funds. When Alice Jones identified what was happening, especially in division 5, which is mainly in my electorate, it hit home to all voters what could happen with the alternative. I know it is going to be tough for the next four years for those not aligned to Power, like councillors Dawn Critchlow, Peter Young and Eddie Sarrof. But let me assure the others that the eyes of the Gold Coast are watching and I am as well.

Mobile Phones

Hon. K. R. LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (9.23 p.m.): I am sure that everyone who drives into a service station and sees the sign to turn off a mobile phone is concerned about whether there is a real concern about the safety of mobile phones, whether the phone be in the car or on your person. Most of us probably find it hard to believe that there is a genuine danger and probably believe that it is just the petrol company trying to cover itself if anything does occur.

When I wrote to State Development and Innovation I was advised that one recent study from the University of Oklahoma found that there had never been a confirmed incident implicating mobile phones in petrol station fires anywhere in the world. The study concluded that there is no need to support further research into the topic. However, the department then covered itself by saying that, notwithstanding the above, expert opinion seems to be that there is at least the potential for an incident, though more through a call distracting the attention of a motorist during the fuelling process than from any possibility of a spark from the phone igniting vapour.

Therefore, I was interested when Mr Laurie Wright from Warwick contacted me saying that he has a device that can rectify the problem but no-one is ready to listen. The device is not just a warning system but also an active relay device that can be in operation with other external devices. Mr Wright claims that if the device were in operation it would be impossible for the motorist to receive petrol if the phone was turned on. It appears to me that such a device also has great potential in the area of preventing motorists driving a car whilst using a mobile without a hands-free car kit and many other hazardous situations.

Regardless of the success or otherwise of this invention, I am sure that all members recognise the need for us to promote people who have the ability to come up with these inventions. We need to promote and support short courses and innovation forums in the Department of State Development. Innovation start-up schemes need to be funded generously and every assistance given to people like Mr Wright to continue this research in research centres.

YMCA Youth Parliament

Mrs SMITH (Burleigh—ALP) (9.26 p.m.): The YMCA Queensland Youth Parliament places young people in the role of a member of parliament—representing an electorate, developing and amending legislation, debating and speaking in parliament and lobbying for the implementation of policy on a statewide and local level. All this occurs through a nine-month program organised by a volunteer Youth Parliament Executive of young people.

It is a program by young people for young people that aims to enrich both individuals and their communities. Members of parliament are selected from nominees by the executive according to criteria including their enthusiasm to participate fully in the program, eagerness to learn about the political process, commitment to youth issues and a willingness to use the skills

learned to positively impact the community. Consideration is also given to ensuring that the group as a whole is reflective and representative of the youth of Queensland.

Earlier this month I attended the launch of this program and the swearing-in of the 89 young people chosen to represent their electorates. The youth parliamentarian for Burleigh is Elizabeth Kath. She is a 16-year-old student from Marymount College in Burleigh Waters. Marymount College opened in 1968 with just 16 students and two teachers. Today it has more than 2,000 students and, under the stewardship of principal Mr Bob Peacock, has become a college of excellence on the Gold Coast.

Lizzie has been a student at Marymount for just one year, her family having relocated from Rockhampton, but in that time she has become a valuable member of the school community. Lizzie is a young woman of extraordinary talent and enthusiasm, and support from teachers and staff at Marymount has encouraged her and given her the opportunity to shine.

While we sometimes hear criticism of our young people and their lack of interest in anything political, the youth parliamentarians make that observation invalid. I have never met a group of such motivated individuals, and I believe our future is in good hands. I know that Lizzie's school friends are proud of her achievement, and I wish her all the best in her role as the youth member for Burleigh.

The House adjourned at 9.28 p.m.