TUESDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 1998

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

ASSENT TO BILL

Assent to the following Bill reported by Mr Speaker—

Emergency Services Legislation Amendment Bill.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Tiaro Shire Council

From **Dr Kingston** (448 petitioners) requesting the House to dismiss the entire elected members of the Tiaro Shire Council and call for nominations to conduct new elections within the appropriate time frame.

Student Bus Fare Concessions, Centenary Suburbs

From **Mrs Attwood** (195 petitioners) requesting the House to note the inequitable results of application of the existing system of bus subsidy eligibility rules and call upon the Minister for Education and the Minister for Transport to reconsider the decision not to permit families of students in the Centenary suburbs to receive a concession for travel by these students to those schools outside the Centenary area.

Petitions received.

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—

13 November 1998—

Electrical Workers and Contractors Board—Annual Report 1997-98

North Queensland Electricity Corporation Limited (NORQEB)—Annual Report 1997–98

North Queensland Electricity Corporation Limited (NORQEB)—Statement of Corporate Intent 1997-98

Austa Electric (Queensland Generation Corporation)—Financial Report 1997-98

Austa Energy Corporation Limited—Annual Report 1997-98

Austa Energy Corporation Limited—Statement of Corporate Intent 1997-98

CS Energy Limited—Annual Report 1997–98

CS Energy Limited—Statement of Corporate Intent 1997-98

Wide Bay-Burnett Electricity Corporation Limited (WBBEC)—Annual Report 1997-98

Wide Bay-Burnett Electricity Corporation Limited (WBBEC)—Statement of Corporate Intent 1997-98

Capricornia Electricity Corporation Limited (CAPELEC)—Annual Report 1997-98

Capricornia Electricity Corporation Limited (CAPELEC)—Statement of Corporate Intent 1997-98

Queensland Transitional Power Trading Corporation (QTPTC)—Annual Report 1997-98

Queensland Transitional Power Trading Corporation (QTPTC)—Statement of Corporate Intent 1997-98

Gateway Bridge Company Limited—Annual Report 1997-98

Logan Motorway Company Limited—Annual Report 1997-98

Queensland Motorways Limited and its Controlled Entities—Annual Report 1997–98

Sunshine Motorway Company Limited—Annual Report 1997-98

National Road Transport Commission—Annual Report 1997-98

Board of Senior Secondary Studies—Annual Report 1997-98

Queensland School Curriculum Council—Annual Report 1997-98

Queensland Tertiary Education Foundation—Annual Report 1997-98

Department of Justice—Annual Report 1997-98

District Court of Queensland—Annual Report 1997-98

Supreme Court Library Committee—Annual Report 1997-98

Public Trustee of Queensland—Annual Report 1997-98

Queensland Law Society—Annual Report 1997-98

Queensland Law Reform Commission—Annual Report and Statement of Affairs 1997-98

Director of Public Prosecutions—Annual Report 1997-98

Legal Aid Queensland—Annual Report 1997-98

Anti-Discrimination Queensland—Annual Report 1997-98

Library Board of Queensland—Annual Report 1997-98

Queensland Art Gallery—Annual Report 1997-98

Queensland Performing Arts Trust—Annual Report 1997-98

Department of Emergency Services and Office of Sport and Recreation—Annual Report 1997-98

Queensland Ambulance Service—Annual Report 1997-98

Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority—Annual Report 1997-98

Q Invest Limited—Financial Statements 30 June 1998

Q Invest Retirement Fund—Financial Statements 30 June 1998

Q Super Board of Trustees and the Government Superannuation Office—Annual Report 1997-98

Motor Accident Insurance Commission—Annual Report 1997-98

Mount Isa Water Board—Annual Report 1997-98

South East Queensland Water Board—Annual Report 1997-98

Department of Public Works and Housing—Annual Report 1997-98

Chicken Meat Industry Committee—Annual Report 1997-98

Timber Research and Development Advisory Council of Queensland—Annual Report 1997-98

Queensland Building Services Authority—Annual Report 1997-98

Department of Natural Resources—Annual Report 1997-98

Queensland Nursing Council—Annual Report 1997-98

16 November 1998—

Queensland Abattoir Corporation—Annual Report 1997-98

Queensland Livestock and Meat Authority—Annual Report 1997-98

Queensland Museum—Annual Report 1997-98

Department of Economic Development and Trade—Annual Report 1997-98

Royal Women's Hospital Research and Development Foundation—Annual Report 1997-98

Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations—Annual Report 1997–98

Vocational Education, Training and Employment Commission—Annual Report 1997-98

Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Authority—Annual Report 1997-98

Burdekin Agricultural College Board—Annual Report 1997-98

Dalby Agricultural College Board—Annual Report 1997-98

Emerald Agricultural College Board—Annual Report 1997-98

Longreach Agricultural (Pastoral) College Board—Annual Report 1997-98

Queensland Treasury—Annual Report 1997-98

South East Queensland Electricity Corporation Limited (Energex)—Annual Report 1997-98

South East Queensland Electricity Corporation Limited (Energex)—Statement of Corporate Intent 1997-98

Southern Electricity Retail Corporation Limited (Energex Retail)—Annual Report

1997-98

Queensland Electricity Transmission Corporation (Powerlink Queensland)—Annual Report and Statement of Corporate Intent 1997-98

Far North Queensland Electricity Corporation Limited (FNQEB)—Annual Report

1997-98

Far North Queensland Electricity Corporation Limited (FNQEB)—Statement of Corporate Intent 1997-98

Tarong Energy Corporation—Annual Report 1997-98

Tarong Energy Corporation—Statement of Corporate Intent 1997-98

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by The Clerk—

Dental Act 1971—

Dental Amendment By-law (No. 3) 1998, No. 298

Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists Act 1991—

Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists Amendment By-law (No. 1) 1998, No. 299

Liquor Act 1992—

Liquor Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1998, No. 297

Local Government Act 1993—

Local Government Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 1998, No. 296

Podiatrists Act 1969—

Podiatrists Amendment By-law (No. 2) 1998, No. 300

Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing Act 1926—

Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing (Queensland Cane Growers' Organisation) Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 1998, No. 302

Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994—

Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 1998, No. 301.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Goods and Services Tax

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.35 a.m.), by leave: At last week's Special Premiers Conference in Canberra, Prime Minister John Howard and Treasurer Peter Costello tried to vandalise Queensland's financial position. What Canberra proposed was nothing short of theft—the theft from Queensland taxpayers of $465m. That theft is being aided and abetted by the Leader of the Queensland Opposition.

On Friday, Queensland got the rough end of the pineapple to the tune of $465m. Queensland was told that, in return for the introduction of the GST—a regressive abomination of a tax—Queensland taxpayers would subsidise the removal of taxes in high-tax States such as New South Wales and Victoria. In the first three years of John Howard's and Rob Borbidge's GST, any additional revenue flowing to Queensland will be clawed back by the Commonwealth to fund guaranteed payments to other States and Territories. Every other State will get to keep the extra revenue that they get from the GST, but Queensland has been asked to wait an extra three years and sacrifice $465m in the process. That is money for schools; that is money for the treatment of patients in hospitals. This is grossly unfair, but then the GST is a grossly unfair tax.

I and the Treasurer, David Hamill, have been warning this House for months about the evils of John Howard's and Rob Borbidge's GST. Now this evil tax, this pernicious tax, is coming home to roost. Canberra is asking Queensland to foot the bill for high taxes and wasteful spending in the rest of Australia. Canberra is asking Queenslanders to pay higher taxes via a GST but share in none of the benefits. It is asking us to hand over hard-won competitive advantages to New South Wales and Victoria. The Liberals and Nationals in Canberra are picking Queensland's pocket to pay the Bankcard bills run up by Victoria and New South Wales.

This is the GST that Mr Howard and Mr Costello told us we had to have. This is the GST package that the honourable member for Surfers Paradise told this House just last week would see Queensland "compensated for taxes that we do not have". Not in recent Australian political history has anyone been so naive and so utterly wrong as the Leader of the Opposition, the Queensland sales rep for the GST. The Opposition's toadying connivance with its coalition colleagues in Canberra has demonstrated that, like Canberra, it has absolutely zero regard for Queensland taxpayers. What an unholy alliance: Jeff Kennett, Peter Costello, Bob Carr and Rob Borbidge—the four horsemen of the tax apocalypse!

At the Premiers Conference on Friday, Queensland did not agree to the tax reform package. Treasurer Hamill and I refused to sign any deal which would see Queensland robbed of $465m. We refused to see Queensland penalised for years of sound financial management. Over the past few days, the Treasurer and I have been in discussions with the Democrats. We have been in discussions with Senator Mal Colston and with Senator Brian Harradine. We will be talking to anyone who has an interest in securing a fair deal for the taxpayers of Queensland.

What have we heard from the Leader of the Opposition or the Leader of the Liberal Party? We have heard nothing but cheap politicking. Not once have they stood up for Queensland. On this issue, people are either for Queensland or they are against Queensland. We on this side are for Queensland; those on the other side are against. That is because they are more determined to curry favour with their masters in Canberra than they are to stand up for Queensland. I urge all Queensland representatives in Federal Parliament—no matter what their political colours—to go in to bat for a fair deal for this State. This is because any failure to do so will be hurting their constituents; it will be hurting all Queenslanders.

I am calling for a full Senate inquiry into the GST, and this Government will be lobbying Senator Colston and other senators to ensure that such an inquiry takes place, that Queensland is not short-changed and that the special needs of Queensland—the decentralised needs of Queensland for our schools and hospitals—are considered. It should be noted that, in Victoria, 72% to 73% of the people of Victoria live in Melbourne; the same applies in New South Wales: 62% to

63% of people live in Sydney. In Queensland, only 46% of people live in Brisbane.

If this GST package is so good for Queensland, why does the Prime Minister not campaign in the Mulgrave by-election alongside Mr Borbidge and Dr Watson? If the GST is such a good deal, I challenge the three of them—in particular the Prime Minister—to campaign in Mulgrave and argue Canberra's case for higher taxes in Queensland.

Dr Watson interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I am astounded by the lack of spine of members opposite. They should come to Mulgrave and we can argue about this. Let them tell the people of Mulgrave why they are losing $465m from their schools and the Cairns Base Hospital. Sir Joh would never have kowtowed to Canberra like this. Sir Joh would have put Queensland first. He would never have rolled over like the Opposition is doing. I promise this House now that this is a fight that we are not going to give up on.

I table for the information of the House a Treasury document which highlights the fact that Queensland will be $465m worse off in the first three years. I table that for the information of all members and the people of Queensland. I also table a per capita contribution of revenues impacting on the State Budget comparison between Queensland and New South Wales, which highlights the point. I also table for the information of the House a letter that the Treasurer, David Hamill, and I have written to John Howard and Peter Costello setting out the Queensland Government's opposition. In particular, I draw to the attention of the House a paragraph on page 2 of the letter, which says this—

> "For taxpayers in States such as New South Wales and Victoria, there will be a reduction in their tax burden in respect of taxes impacting on States' Budgets. For Queenslanders who have enjoyed the benefits of the low tax policies of Queensland Governments, there will be an increase in their tax burden. Initial estimates by Queensland Treasury show that average indirect taxes per capita will rise an estimated 24% in Queensland by 2002-03, but decline by an estimated 11% in New South Wales."

I table those documents, both of which have been approved and verified by Queensland Treasury, which highlight the case that the Treasurer and I have been putting. They are tabled for the information of the House.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Expo 2002

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.43 a.m.), by leave: I rise today to inform the House that the Bureau of International Expositions will be meeting in Paris on 27 November 1998. As most members would be aware, the Philippines Government is currently encountering difficulty with its bid to hold Expo 2002 and is presently reviewing the bid with a view to securing private sector involvement. Whilst there have been reports that the Philippines may formally withdraw from Expo 2002, indications are that it is highly unlikely that this will occur before late December 1998.

The Queensland Government has been working closely with the Commonwealth, with Australian embassies and through its own contacts in business and Government to monitor developments. We have been careful to act in full consultation with the Federal Government to ensure that Queensland's interests are not forgotten as the Bureau of International Expositions moves towards resolution. Given the long delays, the process has been somewhat frustrating, but it is important to work within the accepted rules in order to secure Expo 2002 for Queensland, should the opportunity arise. However, to date the Philippines have not withdrawn. While this provides the potential for Queensland to reinstate its bid to host Expo 2002, it would be clearly counterproductive for the Government to try to force the Philippines to withdraw.

There had been suggestions that I could go to Paris for the next meeting of the Bureau of International Expositions on 27 November 1998. In other circumstances, this would be an important opportunity to lobby key Bureau of International Expositions representatives about Queensland's bid. However, as the Philippines have not formally withdrawn, a senior presence by the Queensland Government would be premature. Hence, as I indicated to Parliament last week, I have decided not to go.

We are advised by the Australian Embassy in Paris that the question of Expo 2002 will now not be considered at the November meeting of the Bureau of International Expositions. Should the Philippines withdraw by the end of 1998, we are advised that there may be a special meeting of the Bureau of International Expositions in February 1999. Should this occur, Queensland will be appropriately represented as we make our case to host Expo 2002.

The House will appreciate the disappointment from all sides of politics that this matter remains in limbo—notwithstanding the best efforts of the Queensland Government and the Commonwealth Government. There has been wide support for Queensland to host the Expo bid. However—and the House needs to be aware of this—the longer this issue drags on, the more difficult it will be to meet the time lines contained in the original bid. It will become more difficult for Queensland to host the bid. The Queensland Government is committed to pursuing our bid for Expo, but I must acknowledge the difficulties if, first the Philippines, and then the Bureau of International Expositions, is unable to reach a decision in a reasonable time. That is an obstacle. The Government will continue to monitor the situation through its overseas representatives and in consultation with the Commonwealth Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Should the Philippines formally withdraw, I would anticipate some advice from the Bureau of International Expositions early in the new year. Should this occur, members can be assured that the Government will make every effort to secure the event for Queensland.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Operation Rein; Prison Escape Bids

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (9.46 a.m.), by leave: This morning's Courier-Mail has a story about Operation Rein, a joint police and corrective services operation which has led to 13 people being charged with 35 drug-related offences. A key aspect of this operation was investigation by police of prisoner bank accounts and the transfer of $40,000 for drug sales. Police were able to pinpoint the alleged organisers or key players in this particular drug ring and not just the couriers who are normally the only ones caught. The successful operation also foiled a potential escape bid at Borallon Correctional Centre, involving firearms being smuggled into the prison. The other alarming factor was that it is alleged that this escape plan involved prison officers being taken hostage and killed. Police and correctional officers and management at Borallon are to be congratulated on their success in completing this operation without a hitch.

This latest success comes hot on the heels of the other foiled escape bid out at Woodford Correctional Centre. This bid was centred around a very detailed map of the prison, and prison authorities acted quickly and effectively to nullify any security risks. What has not been reported to date is a third foiled escape bid, this time at Sir David Longland Correctional Centre at Wacol. It involved two inmates faking illnesses in order to be taken to the secure unit at the Princess Alexandra Hospital. At the hospital, the inmates had planned to take a nurse hostage and make their escape. However, their plans came unstuck when diligent prison officers carried out a strip search of the inmates and discovered a concealed razor blade and a sharpened toothbrush. The inmates had planned to use the razor blade and toothbrush to take the nurse hostage. The toothbrush was found in a compartment inside one of the inmates' shoes, and the razor blade was concealed on the other inmate's body.

This incident and the foiled escape bids at Woodford and Borallon are positive proof that the procedures and intelligence gathering networks are working very well in our prisons. Considering that there were major break-outs at Sir David Longland and Borallon late last year, these foiled escapes show a major turnaround in the operations of our prisons. It is amazing what can be achieved if you let police and prison officers get on with their jobs instead of interfering in the day-to-day operations, which was the specialty of the previous Minister, Russell Cooper. Yes, Mr Speaker, the previous Borbidge Government was letting prisoners like Brendon Abbott out while the Beattie Government, through the great work of prison officers, has managed to foil three escapes, and we are only four and half months into our term.

Last week, Corrective Services Minister, Tom Barton, said that there was more good news to come out of the prisons portfolio. This is part of it. But, without trying to sound like the Demtel man, there's more! Doesn't the member for Crows Nest just love it! The recently implemented General Managers Task Force has achieved some amazing results. There have been more than 20 significant drug busts in Queensland's prisons since the task force was established in July—something which is unprecedented in Queensland's prison history. There has been another spin-off from this drug crackdown: there has been a significant drop in positive drug tests. At Sir David Longland, the number of positive drug tests from random urine analysis on prisoners has fallen from 6.9% in August this year to just 2% last month. That is a great result and just a start in our crackdown on drugs in prisons.

There will be more good news about these results in weeks to come. The bottom

line of these successful operations is that they send a clear signal to anyone smuggling or thinking about smuggling drugs into our prisons. The warning is: sooner or later you will get caught.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Goods and Services Tax

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (9.50 a.m.), by leave: As the Premier has made abundantly clear, the Commonwealth has conspired with other Australian States and Territories to rob Queensland of $465m. This is fiscal larceny on a grand scale. Not only does Queensland end up short-changed to the tune of $465m; all Queenslanders will end up paying higher taxes as a result of the tax reform package, a package championed in Queensland by the members for Moggill and Surfers Paradise. Let me make it very, very clear at this point that this higher tax burden is not—I stress "is not"—because this Government has any plans to increase State taxes and charges; we do not. Rather, all Queenslanders will be burdened with a higher level of tax because Queensland gets the GST but Queensland does not receive adequate compensation for its introduction.

Ironically, all Queenslanders will pay a penalty for years of responsible fiscal management in this State. All Queenslanders are being asked to bail out the profligate spenders in New South Wales and Victoria to fund John Howard's and Rob Borbidge's GST. Our money will go to funding the removal of financial institutions duty in Victoria and bed taxes in New South Wales. For high-tax States such as New South Wales and Victoria there will be a massive reduction in State taxes as taxes such as FID are removed. But in Queensland—which does not even levy financial institutions duty—overall tax burdens are likely to rise. This is because Queenslanders will pay exactly the same GST that other Australians will pay, but we do not get the same level of compensation for its introduction. We simply do not have the same level of taxes to remove in the first place. It is like levying everyone $10,000 a year to abolish their Bankcard bills but failing to recognise that some—that is, Queenslanders—have been responsible spenders and owe only $2,000 on their Bankcard and are funding the reduction of a $16,000 a head Bankcard debt in New South Wales. It is grossly unfair.

Different tax efforts in different States are going to be replaced by a uniform GST. Initial estimates show that the average tax per person in Queensland as a result of the GST package will rise 24% by 2002-2003; however, average tax per person will decline by an estimated 11% in New South Wales. It is only fair and reasonable that Queenslanders should see an additional return to the State Budget in line with the extra taxes that they will be required to pay through the GST. In the first three years of the coalition's proposed GST arrangements, it is proposed that Queensland would have received an estimated $465m as a result of the higher taxes levied on Queenslanders. But under the proposed guarantee arrangements—the arrangements which Mr Borbidge naively assured this House last week would see Queensland adequately compensated—the Commonwealth will claw back all the extra GST revenue raised in Queensland to assist in funding guarantee payments to other States and Territories.

In the first three years of the Howard/Borbidge GST, it is estimated that some $1.6 billion in guarantee payments will be required to meet the shortfall in State Budgets. Queensland will not only receive absolutely nothing from these guarantee payments but in fact will be required to contribute some $465m or almost 30% of the payments. Queenslanders are being asked to fund a substantial part of the guarantee offered by the coalition Government as an inducement for the States to support its national tax reform package.

It is an iniquitous situation, and what should gall every member of this House is the support shown by the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Liberal Party for this attempt to maim Queensland's financial position. Unless Mr Borbidge and Dr Watson come out in support of this Government's efforts to extract a fair deal for Queensland, unless they condemn the proposal put forward by their coalition cronies in Canberra, then they should stand condemned by every Queenslander as having tried to sell this State and all their constituents down the river.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Goods and Services Tax

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (9.55 a.m.), by leave: I wish to draw to the attention of this House the fact that the GST is an attack on Queensland's writing and publishing industries. I point to the 1997 edition of the OECD's Consumption Tax Trends, which describes the disaster of Canada, where the introduction of a 7% tax

led to an immediate fall of more than 25% in educational and academic textbook sales and to a long-term 10% to 20% cut in demand for books across all sectors. The Australian Publishers Association notes in its position paper of 27 July 1998—

> "The GST remains ... the subject of hot debate in Canada. The campaign continues for a zero rating and observers believe that there is a strong likelihood of success. The Canadian Government is being forced to recognise the damage that the original tax imposed."

The APA position paper went on to observe—

> "The principle that books should not be taxed has attracted wide international support. The UK"—

and the US—

> "has rejected a GST after public debate."

A number of respected authorities argue that the GST would be an attack on literacy levels. This view is shared by author Bryce Courtenay, by the Australian Publishers Association, and by the respected accountant Brian Tucker, all of whom condemn the introduction of a goods and services tax as an attack on basic literacy levels. Mr Courtenay is unequivocal on page 23 of the October edition of the Queensland Writers Centre News that a sales tax on books, which until now have been tax exempt, is a tax on literacy.

The 1998 annual general meeting of the Australian Publishers Association passed the following motion—

> "This AGM of the APA opposes the imposition of a tax on books which are the key to knowledge, reading and literacy ..."

In its position paper, the APA pointed out—

> "In Australia books have never been subject to sales tax."

Opposition members interjected.

Mr FOLEY: It is about time that lot opposite took a stand against the GST and the deleterious effects that it will have and rallied against its imposition by Howard and his Government.

The APA pointed out further—

> "... books remain the most effective tool for providing a lifetime of education. ... Books are the major means by which individuals acquire education—both specialist and general, formal and informal. Books build and transmit the culture, science and history of our society."

A GST would, for the first time, impose a tax on books.

As to the Howard Government's spurious claims that it will somehow exempt education from a GST, I again quote the Australian Publishers Association—

> "It is quite misleading to think of education only in terms of the formal education system. Much education goes on outside this system in the form of self-education. Books are indispensable for this process. No tax on books is a means of encouraging individuals to choose to acquire education.
>
> ...
>
> It has been suggested that it might be possible to impose GST only on books without educational value or cultural value ... In practice such a system would require individual rulings to be made about many thousands of books."

Mr Brian Tucker, the respected arts accountant, points out that even for individual writers, the GST will be an administrative and financial nightmare—

> "For most writers ... the exemption status does not apply ... so the price of a computer now drops by 22% (that's the theory) to be replaced by a 10% GST. At the same time, your telephone bills, rent, stationery and computer supplies, travelling costs, membership subscriptions, also go up by 10%."

Mr Tucker continues—

> "What effect the GST will have on the number of books sold is anybody's guess, given that they will be 10% more expensive than before. My view is that sales would drop as after-tax income is diverted into previously sales tax exempt items like food and clothing, which will also have to be increased by 10%."

The coalition parties in Queensland should be taking a stand against the GST and not going along meekly with the Howard Government's new tax slug on Queensland writers and publishers.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Integrated Regional Transport Plan

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (9.59 a.m.), by leave: State Cabinet last week endorsed one of the largest transport infrastructure packages seen in this State. This program involves a $470m

integrated transit system for Brisbane and represents one of the largest investments in transport infrastructure in the history of this State.

This commitment is also clear evidence of the progress being made in implementing the Integrated Regional Transport Plan for south-east Queensland, the IRTP. Last week, I publicly released the three-year rolling program for the IRTP. The package I announce today forms a critical part of meeting the targets set by the IRTP. The three components of the State Government package involve—

> the inner northern busway at $135m, comprising $120m State Government funding and $15m in a Brisbane City Council contribution;
>
> the Brisbane light rail project at $235m, comprising a contribution of funding from all three levels of Government and a possible private sector involvement; and,
>
> a contribution to the value of $100m towards the Brisbane City Council's recently released transport plan.

In doing so, the State Government has demonstrated its commitment to funding and developing sustainable transport solutions for Brisbane and south-east Queensland.

Public transport is a key priority for this Government and this package demonstrates the Government's commitment to this priority. The first part of the package is the inner northern busway, which links the Brisbane central business district to the Royal Brisbane Hospital. The inner northern busway is a critical link in an overall regional busway network, which will free buses from congestion and improve the efficiency and reliability of bus operations. Busways will provide an incentive for people to get out of their cars and onto public transport, thus reducing traffic congestion and enhancing air quality. When combined with the $520m South East Transit Project, Brisbane will have the spine of a busway network in place by the end of 2001.

The second project endorsed by Cabinet is the Brisbane light rail project, which will be a modern and integrated system to move people efficiently around the inner city. It will be fully integrated with bus, rail and ferry systems, including integrated ticketing across all modes. The State Government is committed to getting the first stage of this network in place by 2001 and we will be starting an inclusive consultation process soon to ensure that planning meets local community needs.

It is essential that the Commonwealth's commitment of $65m towards the former Government's Briztram proposal is available for the Brisbane light rail project. To date, there have been positive indications from Federal officers regarding this contribution. The Premier handed a further letter to the Prime Minister last week seeking a firm commitment.

We will be working closely with the Brisbane City Council on both the inner northern busway and the Brisbane light rail project. The Brisbane light rail project is a good example of how essential the active and coordinated involvement of the three levels of Government is to properly address the major transport challenges facing Brisbane and other major growth centres in south-east Queensland.

The Brisbane City Council transport plan is the third element of the package. A key initiative of the IRTP is the development of local transport plans by local governments. It is encouraging to see local governments in south-east Queensland, and particularly the Brisbane City Council, taking the lead from the IRTP and working cooperatively with the State to manage the major travel growth challenges facing the region.

The Brisbane City Council transport plan contains a package of measures and the State Government's contribution to the value of $100m, including $60m in direct funding and $40m worth of land, is a significant start to the funding and implementation of this transport plan, which will put into place much-needed local transport improvements across Brisbane. The bulk of the land contribution is to be used for urban renewal projects, including public housing around public transport nodes.

The State's contribution will enable the Brisbane City Council to direct funds towards the following types of projects which are detailed within the transport plan: busways or light rail, public transport interchanges, park and ride facilities, bus priority measures, transit lanes, road network improvements, public transit supportive development, bikeways and the elimination of open level rail crossings. The State Government recognises that the Brisbane City Council regards the City/Valley bypass as a high priority under the transport plan, but, as a council project, funding for the bypass project is its responsibility.

The package I have described represents the type of commitment to infrastructure and jobs that this State needs. The State Government is clearly living up to its responsibilities in funding transport system

improvements to face the major growth challenges in Brisbane and south-east Queensland. We recognise these challenges and have a clear vision for a world-class integrated transit system. The State Government will continue to provide the commitment and the solutions to achieve this vision.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Education Queensland, Report

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Education) (10.05 a.m.), by leave: The tabling of Education Queensland's annual report for 1997-98 today would mean that it would be one day late. The report was received by me on the afternoon of Thursday, 12 November. I believed that it was inappropriate to seek an interruption of the business of the House to table it at that stage. I also thought that it would be more appropriate to table it in the presence of honourable members than to use the out of session tabling provisions to table it on Friday or Monday. I now table the annual report.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Common Youth Allowance

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Education) (10.05 a.m.), by leave: The education system will shortly need to adapt to a new and severe stress. The Commonwealth Government has decided it will coerce a massive number of young people into attending school when they no longer wish to do so. From next year, the Common Youth Allowance will force young Queenslanders under 18 years of age who have not completed Year 12 or equivalent to be engaged in full-time education or training unless specifically exempt. If they do not do this, the Commonwealth will cut off the youth allowances, leaving some with no income.

The stated intention is to encourage students to remain at school until the completion of Year 12, thereby enhancing their ability to compete in the employment market. The real objective of the changes is to reduce the numbers on the unemployment list without actually effecting an increase in jobs. While improvement of the retention rate of young people who are interested in getting an education is highly desirable, this scheme will put unnecessary pressure and stress on young people, their families and school communities throughout Queensland.

Education is not something that can be forced down the throats of young people. It must be made attractive. You do not do that by making young people go unwillingly to school when they have no wish to do so. Civil conscription will not work; rather, school programs need to be broadened to appeal to students and provide realistic qualifications for employment. We should not be forcing young people to stay in school; we should be providing programs within schools that will encourage them to stay. While the department is making some moves in this direction, those efforts have shown how expensive it is to provide relevant vocational education for these students.

Recently, I visited Woree High School, where my department is funding the building of a construction court sufficiently large to enable manual arts students to actually build mini houses. But for such imaginative vocational education, we need funds—a call which seems to fall on deaf ears in Canberra. My colleague the member for Merrimac, when Minister, criticised the Federal Government for failing to provide adequate resources to make this move successful in Queensland. I take the opportunity to be bipartisan and repeat his call.

Education Queensland has estimated the cost to Queensland at $7,000 per student at an overall cost to the State Budget of $23m. The Federal Government has allocated $42m over three years towards funding these extra enrolments. However, it has been suggested that DEETYA has sought funding of $140m in its Cabinet submission. That would mean that the Commonwealth has provided only 31% of the required funding.

What is needed is a major boost in the funds provided by the Commonwealth or at least an easing in the way the ANTA funds are used. Schools need funds to provide adequate counselling, resources and relevant and appropriate curriculum. My department has advised me that 2,500 to 3,000 young people are likely to remain or return to secondary education in Queensland as a result of this civil conscription. Given the profile of these returning students, most are expected to enrol in resource-intensive vocational courses which require specialist staff. They may also require extra help with literacy and numeracy, vocational guidance and behaviour management.

The cost to Queensland, even with the paltry help being offered by the Commonwealth, is expected to be enormous. I am advised the Commonwealth will give Queensland $4m over three years as a pay-off

for forcing these kids back into school. But this can be applied only to certain target areas through a program called the Full Service Schools for Students at Risk. This program may help those young people in target areas, but many more will not get any benefit from these funds—a particular problem in a State as decentralised as Queensland.

My department advises me that there is another problem with the proposal from the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs. They have not provided final guidelines on what kind of program qualifies as education and/or training. Many of these youngsters may have been alienated by traditional schooling but could develop their literacy and numeracy skills through alternative education programs. I have written to my colleague Dr David Kemp, the Federal Minister for Education, to set up a dialogue between the States and the Commonwealth to try to ensure that all children in Queensland have a chance to improve their ability to compete in the employment market and to be positive participants in society.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Mr K. Lawson

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries) (10.10 a.m.), by leave: It is with great sadness that I inform the House today of the untimely death of Keith Edward Lawson, executive chairman of Australia Meat Holdings Proprietary Limited. Keith Lawson would be well known to many members of this place and our thoughts are with his family.

From May 1991, Keith Lawson served as executive chairman of Australia Meat Holdings, the country's biggest meat processor. His contribution to the meat processing industry in this country has been very significant. A beef producer himself, Mr Lawson's involvement in the meat processing sector began in the 1970s. He served as deputy general manager of the South Australian Meat Corporation from 1973 to 1980. He worked for a time as manufacturing manager of Riverland Fruit Products. Later, Keith Lawson was to link up with Elders, and it was from the position of executive director of the Pastoral House's Meat Division that Keith became the architect of the formation of AMH. Keith then served as Elders Brewing Group executive director, then managing director of Elders Pastoral, before rising to the post of chief executive of Elders Agribusiness.

In any field of endeavour, whether it be business, sport or in public life, it is a triumph to attain the respect of your peers. Keith Lawson commanded the respect of his peers. He commanded that respect because he was a gentleman and because he was committed to our primary industries sector.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Fire Safety Report

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.12 a.m.), by leave: Last week, I officially launched a fire research report which, I am certain, will save countless lives. Fire Fatalities: Who's at Risk is a world first in that it draws from the results of coronial inquiries into fire deaths to help fire authorities plot a course of preventive action. It is a sad report in many ways, particularly for those who have suffered as a result of fire. However, it was produced in the hope that the findings would lead to safer communities in Queensland.

The final report unearths some tragic, but extremely useful, information about fire death trends, and who and what we should be targeting in terms of fire safety awareness campaigns. It confirms firefighters' long-held beliefs that many fire fatalities occur before fire services are notified. The report also tells us that the majority of fatal home fires happen when residents are asleep and are unlikely to notice the initial stages of a fire. Even if they do wake, the smoke and poisonous gases that emanate from a fire cause people to become confused and disoriented, making it difficult for them to escape.

The report provides statistical proof of who faces the most threat from structural fires. It tells us that those most at risk of dying in fires are people aged over 65, children under five years old, people not in the work force, people living in private rental properties and those affected by alcohol. Another finding, and one which the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority has been pushing for years, is that most fire deaths are accidental and therefore preventable. In the five years between 1 July 1991 and 30 June 1996, the years covered in the report, 101 people perished in 79 structural fires in Queensland. Over the past two years there has been a total of nine fire fatalities.

The importance of smoke alarms in saving lives cannot be underestimated, but still more than one million Queenslanders are living in homes without that protection. Many of those are living in private rental properties. One in three Queenslanders lives in rented

accommodation. In all, around 57% of Queensland homes have smoke alarms. This year we aim to boost that figure to 65%. Then we must strive to have all Queensland buildings fitted with smoke alarms.

Fire is one of the most destructive forces in our society. Each year in Australia, dozens of people die in structural blazes and many more suffer horrific burns and injuries. The financial, social and emotional costs of fire are very high. In the past financial year in Queensland, the total cost of fire damage to property was more than $100m. Of that, close to half was the cost of damage to structures including domestic, commercial and industrial buildings. The value of property saved by our fire services would be many times that figure.

For the past five years the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority has placed an increasing emphasis on preventive strategies as a means of further reducing the loss of life, level of injury and loss of property resulting from fire. Those public education programs have undoubtedly contributed to the reduction in fire deaths. We all have a role to play in helping the QFRA educate the public about fire safety. We all need to work with the fire services to minimise fire fatalities. Business, industry, insurance organisations, community welfare groups, tertiary institutions and Government agencies can all make a difference by influencing and educating those people in the community most at risk from fatal fires.

One fire death is one too many. I pose this question to every Queenslander: are you prepared for fire in your home, on your boat, in your rental premises, and in your workplace? If the answer is no, help is as close as a phone call to your nearest fire station. Firefighters are ready, willing and able to help. The advice may save your life or that of a loved one.

SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Report

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (10.16 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's Alert Digest No. 10 of 1998 and move that it be printed.

Ordered to be printed.

SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Commissions of Inquiry (Forde Inquiry—Evidence) Regulation 1998

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (10.16 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House a report of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee on the Commissions of Inquiry (Forde Inquiry—Evidence) Regulation 1998. A private member's disallowance motion with respect to this regulation is anticipated to be debated this week. The committee's report is tabled in performance of its statutory functions and is independent of the motion to disallow the regulation. The committee, however, tables this report to assist members in the debate of the motion to disallow. I commend this report to Parliament.

LEGAL, CONSTITUTIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Submissions

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (10.17 a.m.): On behalf of the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee, I lay upon the table of the House those submissions that the committee has authorised for publication in relation to its inquiry into the consolidation of the Queensland Constitution. On behalf of the committee, I take this opportunity to thank those people and organisations who have made submissions to our inquiry.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Training for Mature-age Workers

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—LP) (10.17 a.m.): I give notice that I will move—

> "That this House calls upon the Government to reverse its intention to discriminate against mature Queensland workers in employment who seek to enhance their vocational skills through accessing traineeships."

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Goods and Services Tax

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (10.18 a.m.): In the past few days, the Premier has made much political mileage out of supposedly standing up for Queensland by continuing the fight against the GST. However, the reality is this: if he continues to oppose the GST, he is not standing up for Queensland, he is selling out future generations of Queenslanders. The facts are that in just a few years Queensland will benefit massively from the GST and Queensland will benefit sooner than any other State. In fact, after full implementation of the arrangement, Queensland stands to gain

$1 billion over the subsequent three years. Mr Beattie is calling the final score at half time.

Let us examine what Queensland gained from last week's Premiers Conference. Horizontal fiscal equalisation, the formula that takes into account that it costs more to provide Government services at Wondai than Bondi, was under threat. Thankfully, but no thanks to the Premier, the States voted to retain horizontal fiscal equalisation. Another huge plus that came out of the conference was confirmation that during the changeover to a GST the Queensland Budget would be protected. Not one teacher, one nurse or one dollar would be lost from the State Budget. Our Budget position is protected and our position as a less populous, decentralised State is protected. Even better, our future generations are protected because the GST, being a growth tax, will return more money to a growth State such as Queensland.

If there is a problem for Queensland that emerged out of the Premiers Conference, it is of Mr Beattie's own making. Instead of building alliances with other Premiers and with Mr Howard, he spent all the lead-up fighting Beasley's lost battle. In continuing to fight that lost battle, Mr Beattie risked sacrificing Queensland's long-term future on the Beasley altar. I call on the Premier to put Queensland's long-term interests ahead of his short-term political image.

Time expired.

Bus Subsidy Eligibility, Mount Ommaney Electorate

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (10.19 a.m.): I reply to the comments of the member for Gregory to honourable members on Thursday, 12 November, in relation to bus subsidy eligibility. Contrary to the statements of the member, I have supported the constituents of the Mount Ommaney electorate in relation to the retention of bus subsidies for sending their children outside the Centenary area to continue their schooling.

Prior to the State election, I sent out a survey to all residents of the Centenary suburbs to get an idea of the number of people affected and the cost disadvantage. When elected on 13 June, I sent a letter to the Minister for Transport, Steve Bredhauer, requesting consideration of the continuation of bus subsidies and spoke to his staff frequently about the subject, asking for some concession to be granted. I approached the Minister personally in Parliament on several occasions and at the Ipswich Community Cabinet meeting. I convened a meeting with the members of the affected P & C associations from Toowong, Corinda, Kenmore and Centenary to ask what further assistance I could provide. On many occasions I spoke to Transport officials and called Education officials into my office at Parliament House to ask whether some relief could be provided and whether any precedents of this type had been set. The Transport Department officials said that they were not notified of the former member for Mount Ommaney's promise and said that it could not be achieved. The Minister recently advised me that he has again clarified that fact.

Transport officials advise me that a concession is available for people who are in receipt of a Federal Government pension or benefit. They said that people in neighbouring Sinnamon Park have never been able to receive a subsidy. I have not stopped pursuing the issue and have tabled a petition in Parliament today. Written submissions are forwarded regularly, with my support, to the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Education. The Minister for Transport and the people in Mount Ommaney will attest to my persistence in lobbying on this issue.

Darling Downs Vision 2000; Water Supply

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10.21 a.m.): A wonderful opportunity exists in Queensland to provide real jobs and real economic growth, particularly in south-east Queensland, by piping recycled water from Brisbane to the Lockyer Valley and the Darling Downs.

A window of opportunity exists at present because major local government organisations, such as the Brisbane City Council, the Ipswich City Council and the councils of the Lockyer Valley are at this stage facing a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars to upgrade their sewage treatment plants in order to conform with environmental standards. That opportunity exists now because a working party in the Lockyer Valley has had a study completed by the Kinhill Group which shows how practical and realistic the proposal is. A working party on the Darling Downs Under Vision 2000 will have a completed working study finished in February of next year. When those two studies are completed, that is the opportune time to move immediately to a feasibility study so that this project can go ahead.

What it needs now is the will, determination, leadership and drive to make

this happen, otherwise local governments will be left with the problem of having to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on upgrading their plants. Part of this money could go into this very important project, the end result of which will be a guaranteed water supply in the Lockyer Valley and the Darling Downs, which will generate new contracts, jobs, processing plants and light engineering and manufacturing work. In other words, it will lead to hundreds of new jobs, hundreds of millions of dollars more in farm income and probably hundreds of millions of dollars in extra economic growth and development. This is a great project for Queensland. Someone with drive is needed to make this project happen. The Opposition calls on the Government to gather together the drive to make this project happen. The window of opportunity will only be here once. It will be here early next year. We have provided the funding for the original study. Let us see it happen.

Time expired.

Boondall/Zillmere Community/Police Advisory Group

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (10.23 p.m.): I wish to pay tribute to the people involved in the Boondall/Zillmere Community/Police Advisory Group, or CPAG. Recently, the group was awarded a Regional Silver Certificate in the Police Commissioner's Lantern Awards, which gives recognition to successful community policing projects.

The Boondall/Zillmere CPAG has been established for almost two years. Its main aim is to foster a genuine partnership between the community and police to address local law and order issues. Police records show that the suburbs encompassed within the CPAG have experienced a drop in reported crime since the formation of the group. The CPAG takes a proactive approach to addressing law and order issues.

In addition to holding bimonthly public meetings with local police and residents, it lends support to initiatives designed to address the causes of crime. For instance, the group recently participated in the staging of a blue light disco and is currently planning for a safety audit to commence early in the new year. It also works in close association with local groups focused on youth, such as the North East Community Support Group.

The CPAG model is one which should be adopted in other areas of the State. It relies heavily on the voluntary involvement of local residents and other community and business interests. It is less structured than a Neighbourhood Watch and covers a much larger area. The concept of the CPAG has been supported strongly by local and senior police officers and elected members at all three levels of Government. The group also receives strong support from the North Star Sports Club in Zillmere, which allows it to use the club's premises for meetings and group activities. I congratulate all of those involved on the management committee on their success to date and wish the group well in the State finals of the Commissioner's Lantern Awards.

Gambling Statistics, Redland Bay

Mr HEGARTY (Redlands—NPA) (10.25 a.m.): Last Tuesday's Courier-Mail splash lead story on the State's gambling statistics has the residents of Redland Bay in my electorate confused and bemused at being labelled resident high rollers in one of Queensland's top 10 gambling capitals. Based on the Queensland Office of Gaming Regulation's newsletter, the good citizens of Redland Bay, or at least the 73,860 over 18s found by the statisticians to be living there, turned over $1,848 per head on 105 gaming machines in the period studied. This is quite an accomplishment even by the standards of the most dedicated gamblers. But considering the area boasts only a single pub and one club, with only 50 gaming machines between them, this is an improbable result.

Before Gamblers Anonymous descends on our quiet community, I am happy to report to the House that Redland Bay made it into the list only by error—by default, so to speak. It was, in fact, the fault of the QOGR, which apparently confuses the small seaside community with the entire Shire of Redland. For the record, on the basis of the postcodes used by the QOGR to commit this statistical stitch-up, they included suburbs such as Capalaba and Cleveland, which are not in my constituency. In fact, they are in adjoining Labor electorates, ironically represented by the party that likes to promote itself as the real high roller of Queensland politics.

There is a serious point. It is that people and organisations that want to be taken seriously need to make sure that they are seriously on the mark when they publish their results. The issue of gaming is one that we need to take very seriously. The studies conducted by the QOGR are very valuable—give or take a postcode or a name change or two—and deserve to be commended. However, I request the responsible Minister,

the Honourable the Treasurer, to ensure the accuracy of future QOGR newsletters.

Freight Rail Services

Ms STRUTHERS (Archerfield—ALP) (10.27 p.m.): I could not end the parliamentary session this year without speaking on the topic of trains—the pet love of my predecessor, Len Ardill; a tribute to Len.

Recently, the Regional Manager of National Rail, John McNamara, gave me a tour of the freight terminal at Acacia Ridge in the Archerfield electorate. Many residents in my area are employed at the terminal and some of them fear that they will get the Christmas gift from hell, that is, job loss. Rail is not attracting enough freight and not shifting it cheaply and efficiently enough.

John McNamara spoke with enthusiasm about the great potential that exists for the expansion of freight rail services in Australia. He also expressed concern about the poor quality of rail infrastructure in Australia. This is a major factor inhibiting the expansion and efficiency of freight rail services.

Fifteen hundred metre long freight trains have now been introduced on the east coast corridor. In order to avoid long delays, new crossing loops need to be constructed. National Rail has argued that investment in the national road highway system continues to be more than 10 times the investment in the national rail highway. Many local people have sought my support to hold their jobs. Action may not be swift enough to avoid current job losses.

However, it is critical that the Federal Government works cooperatively with State Governments to secure a much-needed boost in rail infrastructure Australiawide. The National Rail employees in my area want trains, trains and more trains in order to hold their jobs. I will continue to do my bit to make it possible for these carriages to keep rolling in and out of Queensland.

Coral Trout Spawning Closure

Mr TURNER (Thuringowa—ONP) (10.29 a.m.): Having been a professional fisherman for 20 years, I have witnessed the need for a spawning closure for coral trout. Some time ago, at a meeting with the Townsville branch of the Queensland Commercial Fishermen's Organisation, I pointed out the urgent need for a closure, and it agreed unanimously. I also had discussions with the Minister for Primary Industries, the Australian Institute of Marine Science and the Department of Primary Industries on this matter. I wish to compliment the Minister, the Honourable Henry Palaszczuk, for the decision to implement this spawning closure. This is so important to the preservation of coral trout stocks on the Great Barrier Reef. Again, I congratulate the Minister on a very important decision.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The time for private members' statements has expired.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Kimberley College

Mr QUINN (10.30 a.m.)**:** I ask the Minister for Education: why has he directed the new schools planning assessment committee to review its own recommendation against the approval of a new school called Kimberley College when the applicants were given every opportunity in 1997 to satisfy the relevant criteria; a formal appeal was considered and rejected by the committee of review for new non-State schools just this year in accordance with the due process; and Kimberley College was not even listed in the 1998 round of new school applications, as documented by the Office of Non-State Schooling in September?

Mr WELLS: Following expressions of concern from proponents of the Kimberley College and one other prior application for non-State school planning approval, my office undertook a thorough review of the documentation relating to both these applications. That review identified some anomalies in the process for handling the applications arising from the change in responsibilities from the Commonwealth to the State for approval of non-State schools sufficient to warrant a reassessment. I was also concerned to ensure that applicants had not been unfairly disadvantaged in any way by processes surrounding their failure to make an application within the normal time frame.

I subsequently decided that proposals for both these schools were disadvantaged by the existing time frame for applications, which would have seen their reassessment delayed until 1999. Accordingly, I referred the Kimberley College application and one other to the planning assessment committee for reassessment. I also instructed that, in other respects, the normal processes of assessment should be followed.

My office has now received a set of detailed recommendations from the planning assessment committee, which I will shortly be considering. It is important for all those with an

interest in this proposal that the recommendations of the planning assessment committee remain confidential at this stage. I have not yet had sufficient time to consider the recommendations in full. The Government will be dealing with this in the usual way with the usual processes.

Freedom of Information Request by Leader of the Opposition

Mr SULLIVAN: I refer the Premier to a freedom of information request made by the Leader of the Opposition, and I ask: what was the nature of the documents that the Opposition Leader requested and what is the normal procedure for such a request?

Mr BEATTIE: Members would be aware that the Leader of the Opposition has made a great deal of hoo-ha about some claim for documents under FOI. I have now had an opportunity to study those documents. Before I get to the documents, let me talk a little bit about the history. On 26 October the appropriate officer in Treasury wrote back to the Leader of the Opposition indicating the normal response to the request. The Leader of the Opposition has not availed himself—and today is 17 November—of any inspection of the documents that were made available. That is the first thing. There has been no inspection.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. I have not lodged an application for the documents.

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

Mr BEATTIE: The office did then. This is the nitpicking nonsense. The Leader of the Opposition has been out in the community saying that this application under FOI has been made and that, as a result——

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Well, his staff did. The Leader of the Opposition has been claiming out there in the community that he or his staff have been denied access. No-one from his staff has sought to inspect any of the documents. These FOI applications cost money and departmental time, but here is a request that went in and yet there has been no inspection of the documents that have been made available. That is point one. Secondly, if he does not like the decision of the FOI officer, there is an appeal period, which expires on 23 November. Has there been an appeal? No! What we have had is the usual political games. I can tell the House that I have now had a look at the documents. There is not one reference to any proposed increases in taxes and charges—not one!

Let the record show that the Leader of the Opposition has gone out there and engaged in the most dishonest, disreputable campaign to try to scaremonger the people of Mulgrave.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. The letter from the department referred to the words that I used. I find the remarks made by the Premier offensive and untrue, and I ask that they be withdrawn. The letter from the FOI officer referred to movements in the State Government tax——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! We do not need to debate the matter.

Mr BEATTIE: I am happy to withdraw the comment. Let me make this offer, and this ends it once and for all. If the Leader of the Opposition is prepared to write to me, I am prepared to make all those documents available for him to inspect them in front of me. I am happy to make them available to him. Let me make this clear: if he continues this dishonest campaign, however, I am also prepared to let a member of the gallery, as a representative, inspect them as well, because not one of those documents talks about a new tax or charge. He has been exposed for being dishonest and untruthful, and the documents speak for themselves. If he wants to write to me, I am happy to provide access.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. I find those remarks offensive. I quoted the letter from Treasury. I ask the Premier to withdraw his remarks.

Mr BEATTIE: I am happy to withdraw. If he wants to see them, he should come and see them—forget the letter.

Time expired.

Kimberley College

Dr WATSON: I ask the Minister for Education: given that Kimberley College was not even listed in the 1998 round of applications and that the approval process was all but finalised more than 10 weeks ago, who paved the way for the proponents of Kimberley College to submit such a belated application for approval after two prior rejections under the same designated process; when, under whose authority and on what basis has this highly dubious invitation been extended in flagrant breach of documented requirements and due process; and why was the new or revised application not scheduled for consideration until two weeks ago on 30 October?

Mr WELLS: With regard to the factual element of the question of the honourable member, I have answered that in my previous response. With regard to the rhetoric, I will just let that go through to the keeper.

Goods and Services Tax

Mr PURCELL: I refer the Treasurer to comments in the Courier-Mail today where the Leader of the Opposition states that the outcome of the Premiers Conference on a GST will not cost Queenslanders "one teacher, one nurse, one school or one policeman", and I ask: is this an accurate assessment of the implications of the outcome of the Premiers Conference and, if not, what are its implications for Queenslanders?

Mr HAMILL: I did see the article referred to by the member for Bulimba. All I can say is that the Leader of the Opposition has been remarkably consistent. Not only were those claims inaccurate but also his remarks in the Parliament last week. All members would recall that the Leader of the Opposition hopped up here a week ago and stated that the GST revenue was going to be distributed on a per capita basis. That may have been his agenda. However, thanks to the Premier and me leading the charge in Canberra, we have ensured that GST revenue will be distributed using the formula devised by the Grants Commission under the principles of horizontal fiscal equalisation.

The other day in the Parliament, the Leader of the Opposition claimed that Queensland would be compensated for taxes we do not have—taxes such as financial institutions duty and bed tax. Again, the claims made by the Leader of the Opposition proved to be false and wrong. In fact, Queensland will pay dearly to remove those taxes in other States without any fair compensation to Queensland whatsoever. Now we see the same Leader of the Opposition claiming in the Courier-Mail that the outcome of the Premiers Conference on the GST will not cost Queensland "one teacher, one nurse, one school or one policeman".

Perhaps here I am prepared to be charitable because for a change there might just be a germ of truth in the claim of the Leader of the Opposition. He is right, it will not cost us one teacher or one policeman or one nurse; it will cost us about 9,300 teachers, nurses and policemen. That is the cost of Queensland's not receiving its fair share of GST revenue under the fiscal equalisation formula. To put it another way, it will cost Queensland about 70 schools, such as the Bentley Park State School which the Premier opened in Edmonton on the weekend. Around 70 schools will go west or, I should say, go south because of the inadequate compensation arrangements which the Leader of the Opposition seems to endorse.

The GST arrangements are costing Queensland and will cost Queensland dearly. No matter how the Leader of the Opposition tries to dress it up, the Federal Government—his colleagues in Canberra—wants to see $465m, which should be coming to Queensland, redistributed to the other States and the Territories. It is not fair; it is unjust; and the Queensland Government will not endorse such an iniquitous outcome for Queensland.

Kimberley College

Mr HORAN: Why has the Minister for Education persisted with his unwelcome and improper intervention in the due process of Kimberley College's application——

Mr WELLS: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I find that remark offensive. I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has asked for those words to be withdrawn.

Mr HORAN: I will, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the honourable member to say that he withdraws.

Mr HORAN: I withdraw those particular words that he objected to. I ask the Minister for Education: why has he persisted with his intervention in the due process of Kimberley College's application, despite the grave reservations of senior staff and the strong objections of key stakeholders; despite the legitimate concerns of existing schools in the area, which are already struggling to attract sufficient students as a result of the stiff competition between them; and despite the fact that any approval for a 1999 opening, at this late stage, would demonstrate wilful disregard for the agreed and documented procedures?

Mr WELLS: If the honourable member would like to have a debate on the recommendations of the planning committee, then let us do that when the planning committee makes its recommendations and those recommendations are announced.

Goods and Services Tax

Ms BOYLE: I draw the attention of the Premier to the attendance of the Leader of the Opposition at the opening of a new school in

Cairns over the weekend, and I ask: what impact would the introduction of Prime Minister John Howard's GST tax package, a package endorsed by the Opposition Leader, have on funding for Queensland schools?

Mr BEATTIE: What an excellent question. I am delighted to have a discussion about schools. If those opposite want to raise spurious questions about schools, we will have a discussion about schools and education. We will lose $465m under the administration of the Liberal Prime Minister and the National Party—the mates of those opposite. Do those opposite know what we could get for $465m? We could get 75 schools similar to Bentley Park in Edmonton, which I opened on the weekend. That money that has been stolen by the Commonwealth represents 75 schools.

The difficulty here is that Leader of the Liberal Party does not understand what is going on. The Liberal Leader claimed this morning that Queensland benefits from the GST package sooner than any other State. That is true, but we should get more revenue for the two years before anyone else. That is the point. Howard is proposing that we take away those two years of extra revenue to prop up the Budgets of other States. What happens to the extra revenue in that time? It goes to New South Wales and Victoria. Who supports that? The Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Liberal Party support that. These are not just my words. An article by Mack Robinson in this morning's Courier-Mail states——

Dr Watson: "Marc".

Mr BEATTIE: Marc Robinson, that is right. I am glad Dr Watson knows who he is. He is a well-known independent academic. He states—

> "In the first three years, Queensland will not receive the extra taxes which its citizens are paying."

He is dead right. He also states—

> "In short, Queensland taxpayers will be disadvantaged because, in the first three years, they will be paying more tax but getting nothing in return ..."

What has the Queensland Treasurer been saying? What have I been saying?

Dr Watson: What does he say at the end? Read the second-last paragraph.

Mr BEATTIE: I will go on and read more. If the honourable member is quiet, I will read more. He states—

> "But with Queenslanders paying significantly more tax than before, Queensland ought by rights to be significantly better off.
>
> This is undoubtedly a real problem, and the Government is right to press Queensland's case."

We cannot get it any better than that. It is black and white. If Sir Joh had been Premier, he would not have sold out Queensland as the current National Party is doing. Sir Joh would have been with us, arguing for a better deal for Queensland. He would not have sold out like those opposite did. What an appalling display!

Time expired.

Kimberley College

Mr BORBIDGE: I ask the Minister for Education: is it not a fact that he has applied growing pressure to the planning assessment committee to approve Kimberley College, contrary to all previous considerations and requirements? Is it not a fact that the Association of Independent Schools has strongly criticised his blatant attempt to corrupt the established approval process for new non-Government schools——

Mr WELLS: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The remark is offensive, and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has asked for those comments to be withdrawn.

Mr BORBIDGE: What is the word that the honourable member finds offensive, Mr Speaker?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! He has found your comments offensive. He has asked that your comments be withdrawn. Please do so.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, you always ask us what words we find offensive. I am asking the Minister what words he finds offensive.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I do not. I ask the Honourable Leader of the Opposition to withdraw.

Mr BORBIDGE: What am I withdrawing?

Mr Wells: "Corrupt".

Mr BORBIDGE: I thank the Minister for advising me. I will start again.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable Leader of the Opposition must withdraw.

Mr BORBIDGE: I withdraw. Is it not a fact that the Minister has applied growing pressure to the planning assessment committee to approve Kimberley College, contrary to all previous considerations and requirements? Is it not a fact that the Association of

Independent Schools has strongly criticised his blatant attempt to interfere in the established approval process for new non-Government schools? Is it not a fact that the reason he is attempting to interfere in due and proper process is a secret preference deal made earlier this year, prior to the recent State election?

Mr WELLS: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. That remark is offensive and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister asks that those comments be withdrawn.

Mr BORBIDGE: Which comments?

Mr Wells interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: I am asking the question; he can answer it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has a right to ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw comments that he finds offensive. He has asked you to do so.

Mr BORBIDGE: The question was simply: is it not a fact that the reason he is attempting to interfere in the proper process is a secret preference deal——

Mr WELLS: Mr Speaker, that remark is offensive, and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has asked for that to be withdrawn.

Mr BORBIDGE: It is just a question, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister finds the words offensive.

Mr BORBIDGE: Can we not ask in this place why a Minister interfered in a particular process?

Government members interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: Do Government members want the word "allegedly" in there? We will have another go, Mr Speaker. Is it not a fact that the reason——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw that first and then come back to his question.

Mr BORBIDGE: Withdraw what?

Mr SPEAKER: That he interfered with the proper process.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, I can table documents that prove that he did.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Irrespective of that, the Minister has asked that the words be withdrawn. You have just put an alternative when you said you would add "allegedly", which is what the Minister will accept. So please withdraw.

Mr BORBIDGE: I withdraw. Is it not a fact that the reason the Minister is attempting allegedly to interfere allegedly in proper and due process is because of a secret preference deal——

Mr WELLS: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. A remark is no less offensive by virtue of the fact that it is dressed up as a quoting of an allegation. I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have just conferred with the Clerk, and the fact that I directed the Leader of the Opposition to say "allegedly" means then the question is correct, so there is no point of order.

Mr WELLS: I am indebted to the Leader of the Opposition and others for giving me the opportunity to address the House on this subject many times. However, it would be more interesting if it was not the same question recast in a variety of different moulds. I refer the honourable member to the first answer that I gave. The bottom line is that my office has received a set of detailed recommendations from the planning assessment committee. I have not given them due consideration at this stage, but I will.

Labor Party Preferences, Springwood Electorate

Mr BORBIDGE: I direct a further question to the Premier, and I ask: is it not a fact that Labor cut a secret preference deal with the Democrats marked by, and coinciding with, a sequence of interrelated events, including: formal advice on 10 March that the review committee had rejected the appeal regarding Kimberley College; the unexpected resignation a week or so later of Democrat leader Hetty Johnston, the endorsed candidate for Springwood; a formal meeting between the Kimberley College steering committee, the then Deputy Opposition Leader and the then shadow Education Minister in early April; and the Democrats' endorsement of their replacement candidate for Springwood, Kimberley Park State School principal, Paul Thomson, who was formally disciplined by Education Queensland because he was promoting Kimberley College within his own State school to the extent of taking enrolments?

Mr Elder: Elvis has left the building.

Mr BEATTIE: Elvis is leaving the building. This is a little like an Alfred Hitchcock movie; one is never quite sure where the plot started, where it thickened and where it ended. None

of us has a clue what the member is talking about. None of us has a clue what this is all about. The only shonky preference deal that I know anything about is the one that the National Party did in Mundingburra. That is the only shonky deal I know about. However, because I promised the highest possible standards in this place——

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. The National Party never traded off approvals for new schools in return for preferences.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. I call the Premier.

Mr Foley: They just traded off the CJC.

Mr BEATTIE: The learned Attorney-General is right, of course; all they wanted to do was destroy the CJC, the Police Service, honest government, integrity and good management. When one looks at the National Party's track record, one finds that it considered these things just mere insignificance—crumbs off the side of the table.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: We are trying to lift the standards here. I say to Opposition members: please behave!

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is as bad as the Leader of the Opposition. Would they give it a break and let me answer the question, for heaven's sake?

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Toowoomba South!

Mr BEATTIE: Good heavens! He is a nice boy from Toowoomba, too. I thought he had more manners.

Bearing in mind that I have promised the highest possible standards, if the Leader of the Opposition is prepared to provide either to this Parliament or to me by way of correspondence any detailed material he has to substantiate this extraordinary nonsense, then I am prepared to examine it. I am indicating to him that I have never heard of this nonsense in my life. There is no such deal. I look forward, however, to the Opposition putting forward any material to substantiate it. As I said, I have never heard of such nonsense in my life.

State Taxes

Mr ROBERTS: I refer the Treasurer to Opposition claims in the last few days that the Queensland Government has a secret tax agenda, and I ask: what evidence is there to support these claims, and is this the first time these allegations have been raised?

Mr HAMILL: In the last few days, I have had the feeling of deja vu. The Leader of the Opposition has been running around talking about alleged secret tax agendas, and I thought: where have I heard this before? Then I remembered that, in the Gold Coast Bulletin on Friday, 17 July, the member for Moggill was saying—

> "I think you can look forward to an increase in taxes and charges on September 15."

Then I remembered a bit more. In this Parliament on 25 August, Dr Watson said—

> "I say again that Budget day will be a black day because that will be the day when Labor raises taxes and charges."

This is a bit like the last question. The Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Liberal Party will become known as the "Brothers Grimm", because it is just one big fairy story that they are living and breathing in this place. When Budget day came around, of course there was no basis whatsoever to the claims being made by the member for Moggill. And here we go again. The Budget has been passed and the Premiers Conference has been held. Now we have the allegation about secret tax agendas. Let me assure members that there is no secret tax agenda. The only agenda which the Queensland Government has is the agenda to ensure that Queensland gets its fair share of any new GST which the Federal Government seeks to impose on the people of Australia and the people of this State.

While I am speaking about remarks by the member for Moggill, the Leader of the Liberal Party, I remind him of his own comments relating to the imposition of a GST. In August, and in the Parliament, the Leader of the Liberal Party was stating that, in his view, the only way that Queensland could possibly lose its low-tax status was if the Premier and the Treasurer failed to pass on to Queensland the benefits of the new tax reform package. He went on to say—

> "The Prime Minister has stated clearly that Queensland's unique position will be taken into account."

On that score, the Leader of the Liberal Party was quite right; the Prime Minister has taken Queensland's position into account. He is accounting for Queensland's position in topping up the financial arrangements for New South Wales, Victoria and other States. Yes,

he has taken into account our unique position. He is denying Queensland the additional revenues that we would expect must flow to Queensland because the tax burden on Queenslanders is increased because of the GST, which the member for Moggill supports so fulsomely. Let us have a bit of honesty in this. Let us have the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Liberal Party out there supporting Queenslanders whom they recognise will pay more tax but will not receive any benefit from the GST for at least three years.

Dr Watson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Moggill!

Mr HAMILL: That is what the document shows.

Time expired.

Labor Party Preferences, Mulgrave By–election

Mr NELSON: I ask the Premier: if he is so much against the GST and the coalition's show of support for a GST, why is the Labor Party in Queensland directing preferences to the coalition in Mulgrave ahead of One Nation, a party which has made a stand against the GST? Is this hypocrisy at its worst?

Mr BEATTIE: Patience, patience, patience. This is so good, I want members to wait for it. I want them to savour every second of this. We have not yet made a decision about preferences. The administrative committee has not yet made a decision. When do nominations close? Nominations close at midday today. I inform the member for Tablelands that we do not make decisions about preferences until the nominations close, because instead of there being three candidates, there might be four, or there could be five. It is like having five fingers—you have to count the lot: one, two, three, four, five. If there are five candidates, we have to make sure to work out where our preferences are directed. So not only have nominations not closed, the administrative committee of the party has not met.

Mr NELSON: I rise to a point of order. It is common knowledge that the Premier has said that he will be putting One Nation last on his how-to-vote cards, which means that automatically he will be directing preferences to the National Party ahead of us. I ask the Premier to answer the question.

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

Mr BEATTIE: The member has that youthful enthusiasm, and he rushes in. I wish he would be patient.

Mr Nelson interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The member will have a heart attack by the time he is 35 if he keeps this up. I am interested only in his health when I say that, and I say it with the best possible intentions.

I will run through it again. Not only have nominations not closed but the administrative committee has not met. Decisions have not been made. One does not make preference decisions on an individual basis until those things have occurred. However, unlike the Leader of the National Party, I am prepared to say to my party that One Nation must go last. I am not interested in doing backroom deals like the Leader of the National Party, who will be walking through One Nation's door, trying to get its preferences. The Leader of the One Nation Party knows exactly where we stand: we are not going to knife him in the back like that lot opposite. He will know exactly where we stand, because One Nation will be last. If I have to go to the administrative committee to insist on it, then I will.

Goods and Services Tax

Ms NELSON-CARR: I refer the Premier to displays of bipartisan support shown by this House in recent weeks on issues that are of vital concern to all Queenslanders, such as competition reform. I ask: has similar bipartisan support been displayed in relation to Queensland's fight for a fair deal under national tax reform proposals?

Mr BEATTIE: Very simply, the answer to that is: no, there has not. The Leader of the Opposition, the Nationals and the Liberal Party have sold out Queensland in terms of the GST. That is the bottom line. The Leader of the Opposition should be getting on the phone to Bill O'Chee and Senator Ron Boswell and insisting that, when this issue is considered by the Senate inquiry, they demand that Queensland's case be given special consideration. That is what I have asked Senator Colston, Senator Harradine and the Democrats to do, so that our special needs in this State are considered, so that the $465m does not go south when we need it for the Cairns Base Hospital, for schools in Mulgrave and for schools and hospitals across this State.

The difficulty we have is this: the Government is fighting for Queensland; the Opposition is fighting for John Howard. The

Opposition has become nothing more than a post-office box in Queensland for the Liberal Party. That is why, when one considers their history, one finds that last time they were in Government the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Caloundra, the then Treasurer, went down to Canberra to argue Queensland's case in relation to petrol issues. They negotiated a deal on fuel taxes that is costing us $60m a year. In the true tradition of the Leader of the Opposition, who asked that fateful question—"What is your answer—yes or no?"—the real question to the Leader of the Opposition is this: is he in favour of the $465m going to New South Wales and Victoria—yes or no? Is he going to fight for Queensland—yes or no? Is he going to ring Bill O'Chee and Senator Ron Boswell and ask them to do something in the Senate about this matter for Queensland—yes or no? Those are very simple questions.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. By his own documentation, he will be $1.8 billion better off.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

Mr BEATTIE: Let me consider what "Mr GST" says. The document that I tabled in the Parliament was prepared initially by the South Australian Treasury—a Liberal State—but endorsed by all the States and referred to by Peter Costello and John Howard in our meeting last week. The document points out that, in the first three years, we lose $465m. The Leader of the Opposition cannot argue about that. It is irrefutable. It is a Treasury document. I have tabled it for the Parliament. "Mr GST" cannot argue about that. It is very, very clear. Let us go up to Mulgrave and argue about that $465m that the Leader of the Opposition is taking out of schools and hospitals. My challenge to the Leader of the Opposition is this: take John Howard to Mulgrave.

Time expired.

School Principals' Communication with Members of Parliament

Dr KINGSTON: I address my question to the Minister for Education. During my preparation for the Department of Education Estimates committee hearing, I contacted some school principals within my electorate. Within the next few days, those principals were reprimanded by the regional office of Education and were told that they should not speak to their local member about such concerns, concerns that must affect their ability to provide high-quality and equitable education to our children. I ask: is that restriction that school principals must not speak to their local members about their concerns affecting their schools a policy of this Government? Further, do such actions conform to the practices of an open and transparent Government that the Premier has promised the citizens of Queensland?

Mr WELLS: In the last 20 years or so there has been a movement towards the development of school communities, towards school-based management—to use a phrase that was very popular under the last Government. The move to school-based management has meant that schools take collegiate decisions about important things. It has also meant that, typically, when delegations occur or when representations need to be made, those representations are made on behalf of the whole school community by the P & C or, in the case of a school where there is a school council, by the school council. Bureaucracies generally prefer that those who are in the service of the public should report through the chain of command so that people know what is going on. It is most inconvenient for a director-general, for example, to find something out second-hand from the Minister as a result of a principal going directly to a member of Parliament.

In all departments, directors-general generally prefer to hear that through that process first of all. The usual protocol then is, if the response is not satisfactory—in any department—the community body, the body representing the school community, then makes a representation at the political level. The first step is that the principal makes an application for whatever it is that the school wants through the usual departmental processes. If that does not work, the second step is that the P & C contacts the local member of Parliament. Perhaps the principal would be there with the P & C. That is the usual protocol. I did not give any instructions that anybody should be reprimanded for that; however, that may very well have occurred from any level in the bureaucracy, because that is the protocol, the correct way of doing it, the way of getting a successful result.

School Based Policing Program

Mr LUCAS: I refer the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade in his capacity as acting Minister for Police and Corrective Services to comments made by the honourable member

for Crows Nest in his Budget reply speech of 31 October, where he refers to school-based constables and states—

> "We funded that program over the next three years at a cost of $1.4m ..."

He goes on—

> "... those numbers have not increased to anything like what we had intended, and that is a tragedy ..."

Can the Minister please advise the House of any moves made by the Beattie Labor Government to downgrade this program?

Mr ELDER: I thank the member for the question, because the Minister was keen to raise these points and to put this on the record. The fact of the matter is that there are no such plans as alleged by the member for Crows Nest. In fact, the Beattie Government is looking at expanding the School Based Policing Program. To prove the point, I remind members opposite that we made the same allocation as they did when they were in Government, the same allocation made by Mr Cooper when he was Minister. There were five more positions in that program in 1998-99.

To illustrate the point, I go to page 1-4 of the coalition Ministerial Program Statements, which outlines an increase of five officers to a total of 17 at a cost of $0.1m. The Ministerial Program Statements state—

> "... expansion of the School Based Policing Program will continue with a further $0.1M being provided to fund computers and vehicles associated with the establishment of five new locations. This will bring the total number of locations to 17."

I will now move forward and refer to pages 1 and 2 of our Ministerial Portfolio Statements, which state—

> "Expansion of the School Based Policing Program will continue with a further $0.1M being provided to fund computers and vehicles associated with the establishment of five new locations. This will bring the total number of locations to 17."

Is there any coincidence? Does that sound similar? In fact, it is exactly the same. Five officers are doing exactly the same job and there is the same allocation.

Mr Cooper interjected.

Mr ELDER: One can draw only two conclusions from the fact that the Ministerial Portfolio Statements and Budget papers for the coalition Government and this Government are the same: firstly—and this is hard to accept given that the member for Crows Nest has been in this House for a very long time—that the member for Crows Nest has no grasp whatsoever of Budget papers and Ministerial Portfolio Statements; secondly, that he deliberately misled the Parliament. They can be the only two points that one could make, because both commitments in both the Ministerial Portfolio Statements are the same. There has not been a downgrading. In fact, if the member read the explanation in his Government's Ministerial Portfolio Statements, he would realise that it mirrors what this Government put in its Ministerial Portfolio Statements.

Is it that the member does not understand Budget papers or Ministerial Portfolio Statements or that he deliberately misled the House at the Estimates committee? Which one is it? The member runs for cover when the truth is told, because the truth hurts. The fact of the matter is that this Government is increasing and enhancing opportunities, including the five additional sites that we have committed ourselves to already in Government.

Time expired.

Labor Party Preferences, Springwood Electorate

Mr SANTORO: I ask the Premier: will he continue to deny knowledge of the underhanded deal in the key marginal seat of Springwood which secured Democrat preferences ahead of the coalition instead of behind the coalition as was the case at the 1995 State election? Is it not a fact that this decision in the June election was the Democrat's first departure from the split ticket and one of only six such decisions favouring Labor around the State? It is not a fact that Labor's sleazy, underhanded deal in the key marginal seat of Springwood meant that the coalition received just 19% of Democrat preferences in 1998 compared with 73% of Democrat preferences in 1995? Is it not a fact that Labor's sleazy, underhanded deal in the key marginal seat of Springwood was the eventual difference between the coalition holding the seat and losing it by just 191 votes?

Mr BEATTIE: There is a very interesting question about preference deals to which all Queenslanders want to know the answer, and that is: what is going to be the preference deal between the National Party and One Nation in Mulgrave? That is what everyone in Mulgrave wants to know and so does everyone else in Queensland. The question to the Leader of

the National Party and to the National Party organisation should be: are they going to do another secret deal like they did in Mundingburra? Is that what is going to happen or are we going to see the National Party follow what the Leader of the Opposition said on radio: that for the first time they may not distribute preferences?

This by-election could be interesting. It might be the first time that the National Party goes simply No. 1. I say to Bill that that is what the Leader of the Opposition said on radio. He will have to keep an eye on the Leader of the Opposition. The member for Tablelands should also note that. One Nation may not get those preferences: it will have to keep an eye on the National Party.

As I said to the member for Tablelands and the member for Caboolture, at least they know where Labor is. We come through the front door and we stand in front of them. They know exactly where Labor is. However, when it comes to the National Party——

Mr Hamill: Mr Santoro did a grubby deal with One Nation in Brisbane.

Mr BEATTIE: I thank my colleague for reminding me that, indeed, the member for Clayfield did the deal with One Nation to exchange preferences in Brisbane. That is why the member for Clayfield is held in such high esteem in the Liberal Party.

A Government member: He didn't get a One Nation candidate.

Mr BEATTIE: A One Nation candidate did not stand in his electorate. That is why there was a brawl within the Liberal Party. It was Santo Santoro, One Nation's mate——

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. The question related to what the Premier knew about the sleazy deal that delivered him Government in exchange for a licence.

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

Mr BEATTIE: The answer is this: I gave——

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The Leader of the Opposition is protesting about my answer to another member's question. I say that the Opposition should put up or shut up. They should put the material on the table of this Parliament or they should put it to me in correspondence.

Over the past five months, what we have seen from the Opposition is just typical—smear, slander and muckraking. They are in the gutter and it is about time that they got out of the gutter and did something positive. Today, I warn the people of Mulgrave that they will see more of this dirt and mud over the next few weeks, because that is the only way the Opposition knows how to operate.

Time expired.

James Cook University Medical School

Mr MULHERIN: I refer the Minister for Health to last week's ministerial statement regarding the James Cook University medical school, wherein it was indicated that a meeting of key stakeholders was to be held to progress the matter, and I ask: what was the outcome of this meeting?

Mrs EDMOND: I thank the member for his question. I know that this matter is of importance to not just people from Townsville but also to people from across north Queensland. I am pleased to advise the House that, during that meeting, positive progress was made on the north Queensland medical school. It was the first meeting of all the key stakeholders, which I convened.

It has been agreed that the stakeholders will move towards a multi-entry course designed to allow entry at undergraduate level by specially elected students—not just OP1 students—and also graduate entry for students with appropriate undergraduate qualifications. I welcome that innovative approach. Arrangements for the transition of the North Queensland Clinical School to the James Cook University medical school in Townsville will be pursued by a joint working party involving the JCU, U of Q and Queensland Health.

The participants agree that the earliest possible start for the medical school is required. Ideally, we would like to see it in the year 2000. However, that will be contingent on accreditation by the Australian Medical Council, and we recognise that that starting date is rather optimistic. However, Queensland Health and James Cook University will consult to establish the capital and possible recurrent cost implications for the Queensland Government. This will occur with a view to having it finalised by the end of November to ensure ongoing progress can be made quickly.

The Commonwealth sent representatives from the Department of Health and DEETYA and they have agreed to match the $10m capital funding. They acknowledge that this had not been put in writing, but it was in an election commitment by the Prime Minister and we have their assurances that it will be

regarded as a core promise. They say that they will match the funding that the Queensland Government has already committed and identified in its Budget. The Commonwealth further agreed that there will be appropriate recurrent funding for student places, which so far has not been progressed but will be sought by the normal Commonwealth Government budgetary process.

The Commonwealth agreed to the allocation of 60 student places at the new medical school, consisting of 20 new places, 20 transferred from the University of Queensland and 20 transferred from other universities not as yet identified. All Queensland participants agree that compensation for the University of Queensland for lost funding should be met by the Commonwealth, as is usually the case. I will be writing to both Dr Michael Wooldridge, the Commonwealth Minister for Health and Aged Care, and Dr Kemp, the Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs to advise of these outcomes and formalise funding arrangements.

Labor Party Electoral Activities

Mr GRICE: I ask the Premier: can he assure this House that the ALP will not cut another sleazy, underhanded preference deal in Mulgrave like its sleazy, underhanded preference deal in Springwood? Can he assure the House that the ALP will not hand out misleading and dishonest how-to-vote cards in Mulgrave like its misleading and dishonest how-to-vote cards in Greenslopes? Can the Premier also assure the House that the ALP has not resorted to electoral fraud in Mulgrave as it did in Townsville?

Mr BEATTIE: Perhaps the honourable member would like to give the House a detailed explanation of the activities of Chris Nicholls, his former employee. That might provide edification and it might be very informative. We might all like to see that. I see now that he had private investigators following a Prime Minister.

I make this absolutely clear: my party does not do deals when it comes to preferences. I know that that will come as a surprise to an Opposition that did all those sleazy deals in Mundingburra. It is very simple: they should not judge others by their own standards. There was no deal in Springwood and there will be no deal in Mulgrave. We do not do deals like the National Party did in Mundingburra.

As I said, there is only one deal that the people of Queensland want to know about, that is, the sleazy, shonky deal that the National Party will try to do in Mulgrave. The people of Mulgrave need to be very acutely aware that if this Opposition gets away with it, it will endeavour to do——

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: They are rude, are they not? We try to lift the standards and yet we see the despicable way in which they all behave. If there is any problem with the running of the Parliament, let the Opposition wear the blame for it. I have indicated very clearly——

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: There goes the Leader of the Opposition again. He has no manners. I have indicated to the Parliament very clearly——

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: There he goes again. He has no standards and he is rude. I have indicated to the Parliament——

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: There we go again. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is being rude. I have indicated——

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: There we go again. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is being rude again. Every time that a member of the Opposition abuses the time of the Parliament, I am happy to put it on the record.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The Deputy Leader is being rude again. The bottom line is this: if there is any material to support any of these wild and fanciful allegations, members should put it on the table or write to me about it. This is just scaremongering. Members opposite are throwing mud. This is the sort of dirt campaign that we will see in Mulgrave. Let the people of Mulgrave beware: the National Party is trying to win this campaign by sleaze and filth. It will use sleaze to try to win a by-election, whereas we will run a positive campaign based on policy.

Time expired.

Environmental Education Centre, Barcaldine

Mr PEARCE: I refer the Minister for Education to his announcement of the establishment of an environmental education centre in the grounds of the Australian

Workers Heritage Centre at Barcaldine. I ask: can the Minister provide the House with some information on the purpose of this environmental education centre, particularly its significance for people in the west?

Mr WELLS: I thank the honourable member for his advocacy of western Queensland in general and of education in western areas in particular.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I give the honourable member for Toowoomba South a final warning.

Mr WELLS: In January 1999 a unique centre will open in Barcaldine that will provide the people of Queensland with an educational resource of which they can be proud. Indeed, the people of western Queensland——

Mr Cooper: Where's Barcaldine?

Mr WELLS: The honourable member for Crows Nest wants to know where Barcaldine is. Barcaldine is where my shearer father used to shear the sheep of his squatter ancestors.

The people of western Queensland can be especially proud of this centre, which has been specifically designed to allow schoolchildren to explore the landscape and history of Queensland's central west. It will be the first environmental education centre to be established in western Queensland. In keeping with this Government's focus on jobs, it will provide a major boost to the economy of the central west through school tour bookings.

The centre will be more easily accessible to the children of the west than existing environmental education centres. It will become a destination for students and teachers in metropolitan coastal schools. Those students will be able to experience first-hand life in the outback. A 56-bed residential facility will provide a base for students to tour over 40 sites of educational significance in the area. For example, the sites that can be visited from the new centre are as diverse as dinosaur prints, the waterhole that inspired Banjo Patterson to write Waltzing Matilda, the trails of Burke and Wills and a rich heritage of Aboriginal art and bush craft.

Also, the centre will be at the forefront of integrating learning technology with on-site experiences for students. For example, tours using local site ambassadors will be supported by a world-class learning technology package developed by Education Queensland's Open Access Unit. This package includes a web site, CD-ROM and written resources for teachers and students. What makes the centre unique is that students from all over the State will be able to learn about the area through CD-ROM, even if they are unable to visit the centre. The CD-ROM is fully interactive with photographs, interviews and video clips showcasing the local sites and people. The associated resource packs have been quality assured and linked to syllabus documents. The centre's associated resource package will be——

Mr Schwarten: You'd think that the member for Gregory would take a bit more interest. It's in his electorate.

Mr WELLS: One would have thought that the honourable member for Gregory would be interested in this. We know about his advocacy of the centre and we know about his advocacy of education in the area. This is a great boon to the people of his electorate.

The package will complement teaching in the areas of studies of society and the environment, and science, English and arts courses. A principal will be appointed to the centre. Further developments on site are planned by the Australian Workers Heritage Centre and a resource library and outdoor activities area are planned.

Time expired.

Sunland Meats Abattoir

Mr COOPER: I refer the Minister for Primary Industries to the closure of the Sunland Meats abattoir at Landsborough and the loss of 40 jobs, which the plant's management has attributed to the increasing cost of workers compensation and the increasingly outrageous demands of the Department of Environment. I refer also to the much vaunted announcement on 27 October 1998 of the establishment of the meat processing development initiative, which ignored 16 of the 22 recommendations of the coalition's meat processing report, including those specifically relating to the cost of workers compensation and the Department of Environment. I ask: what action will the Government take on the remaining 16 recommendations that have so far been ignored and what assistance, if any, can Sunland Meats expect from the $20m initiative?

Mr PALASZCZUK: I have not yet received a confirmed report on the situation at the meatworks at Landsborough. However, I restate what the Government is doing to revitalise the meat processing sector. In a joint announcement to industry leaders, the Deputy Premier, Jim Elder, and I announced Cabinet's agreement to set up the Queensland meat processing development initiative, which will

have up to $20m available to support projects around the State over the next three years. Despite warnings from its own consultative committee that a failure to act could see up to 17 abattoirs close and 5,000 jobs be lost over the next five years, the previous Government had adopted a do-nothing approach.

In stark contrast, the Beattie Government is committed to reviving one of the State's biggest rural industries and creating jobs with value adding, improved equipment, greater investment, better marketing and a range of support programs for regional communities. The strategy will be driven by a meat processing industry task force that will be headed by the Deputy Premier and I, and backed by senior officers of the Departments of State Development and Primary Industries. Other key departments will also be involved. The strategy will allow Government and industry to work closely together to generate new opportunities and give fresh momentum to meat processing in Queensland. It will also provide a single point of contact for industry wanting to work with Government as a part of this major strategy.

The Government will exit ownership of the Queensland Abattoir Corporation's plants at Cannon Hill and Ipswich, but not until arrangements have been put in place for the redevelopment of the plants or for their relocation to other sites. This will also allow clients' contracts and legal obligations to be honoured, unlike the proposal by members opposite. Detailed work will be carried out by five task force project teams covering industry improvements, new investment, the redevelopment of the Queensland Abattoir Corporation's sites, a long-term meat processing industry strategy and alternative regional opportunities and support for communities. I commend the work of this Government to all Queenslanders.

Motorcycle Mounted Paramedics

Mr MUSGROVE: I refer the Minister for Emergency Services to a trial of on-road and off-road motorcycle mounted paramedics that is to be conducted on the Gold Coast, and I ask: can the Minister advise the House of the anticipated benefits of this initiative? Will the off-road paramedics be a first in Australia?

Mrs ROSE: I know that the honourable member shared my excitement when I recently launched the first ever Queensland trial of emergency response motorcycles on the Gold Coast. The response time of a conventional ambulance vehicle on the Gold Coast can be significantly delayed by traffic congestion, especially at holiday time and because of crowds and restricted access at events like the IndyCarnival, Schoolies Week and surf carnivals, and a generally high demand for ambulance services in the area. The tourist nature of the Gold Coast means that rapid emergency responses are needed for a wide variety of reasons—beach, pool and river accidents, hiking accidents, recreational boating and fishing incidents, international sporting competitions, theme park incidents, agricultural shows and surfing incidents. This was behind the decision to trial emergency response bikes on the Gold Coast.

The primary role of motorcycle response officers will be to reduce Code 1 response times, increase the chances of survival for the sick and injured in emergency situations, and provide early defibrillation. On a secondary level, they will be used to increase the availability of ambulance units——

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

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Mr F. Clair; Criminal Justice Commission

Mr GRICE (Broadwater—NPA) (11.30 a.m.): The passing of the Clair regime at the Criminal Justice Commission will not be mourned by anybody apart from, I suppose, a few hardcore apologists whose motives, as well as their sense of proportion, must be seriously questioned. Even the most cursory review of Mr Clair's chairmanship exposes what an unmitigated disaster it has been. It has been marked by the following: a brutal and uncompromising attack upon a duly elected Government; a botched and ill-considered attempt to don the Fitzgerald mantle and expose what was claimed, by the chairperson, to be high-level corruption in the Police Service; a self-serving whingeing in public about the budget allocation; and an approach to the most serious crime of paedophilia that was contradictory, confused and woefully lacking in even the slightest sense of purpose, resolve or direction.

The CJC was established under legislation introduced in 1989 by a National Party Government under then Premier Cooper. It was a clear recognition then by the National Party that the sins of the past, which so seriously damaged the very fabric of Government, the then police force and the image of this great State, should never happen again. By and large, until the appointment of Chairperson Clair, the CJC did its jobs well, although there were some

significant disagreements between it and the then Goss Labor Government, as honourable Ministers and many members opposite will recall.

However, the election of the coalition Government in February 1996 unleashed a campaign by Chairperson Clair that was unprecedented in its scope, unparalleled in its vehemence and without peer as a deliberate pre-emptive strike. The issue was the famous memorandum of understanding signed by then Opposition Leader Borbidge, then Police spokesman Cooper and the Police Union. It was typical of so many undertakings given by all political parties to legitimate interest groups, and yet it was grabbed with both hands by Chairperson Clair—with the desperate hope of a drowning man—as a lifeline; indeed, he saw it as his crowning achievement as a fearless corruption buster.

The fact that the Courier-Mail gave enthusiastic endorsement to this vendetta served only to encourage Chairperson Clair and his loyal band of urgers, who undoubtedly felt that their place in history would be confirmed as the new "Untouchables". But Clair was no Elliott Ness. What we did not know then but what we know now is that the chairperson had secret legal advice from Cedric Hampson, QC, to the effect that neither Mr Borbidge nor Mr Cooper were guilty of any offence. Yet despite this advice—and in the ruthlessly determined face of that advice—the chairperson persisted and established that giant money-munching machine called the Carruthers inquiry.

It was grossly irresponsible and had a serious destabilising effect upon the then minority Government. That we managed to achieve so much of what so urgently needed to be done during that period is nothing short of a miracle. Of course the Labor Party was all for it until, under the heaviest pressure, the inquiry was extended to include the deal done by the Goss Labor Government shortly before the 1995 election with the gun lobby. Suddenly, the ALP lost its much-ballyhooed confidence in the inquiry and, indeed, in the chairperson's guiding spirit.

Eventually, Mr Carruthers spat the dummy and went home, pausing only long enough to pick up his very generous cheque. From that moment on, the chairperson was on a very slippery slope, having lost the confidence of all concerned Queenslanders and most members on both sides of this House. His notion of accountability was never better illustrated than by his bitter reaction to the Connolly/Ryan inquiry. He was outraged that a democratically elected Government, which he had so maliciously tried to bring to its knees, should have what he saw as the unmitigated gall to actually believe that his regime should be questioned. The whole thrust of his attitude was that he was so utterly and completely beyond the slightest reproach that he deserved to be ahead of Mother Teresa in the queue for sainthood.

Then we had the juvenile dabbling in politics that marked the chairperson's whinges and whines about the CJC budget. He argued that it had to be expanded vastly because of the need for a huge full-blooded inquiry into high-level corruption in the Police Service. He cried bloody murder and then came up with a parking ticket. Yet the painfully restored good name of the Police Service was plunged into doubt again, and public confidence in it seriously undermined. That also was unforgivable. It was an exercise in self-survival by the chairperson which, by way of historic analogy, made the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union look like a textbook exercise.

On the matter of how the CJC, under Chairperson Clair, handled the most serious matter of paedophilia, I can only wonder at the bumbling and stumbling that marked that response. However, it did serve to illustrate starkly how the chairperson regarded his own private little empire. When the home of a then CJC director was raided by police, and that director questioned in relation to possible paedophile offences, the chairperson was very quick publicly to give that director a completely clean bill of health. This was given despite the fact that, after being questioned, that director calmly went to his office and shredded certain documents. Later he was allowed to resign quietly. Every single police officer in this State was left wondering.

The vaulting ambition of the chairperson was illustrated again early in the life of the then coalition Government. Having launched his attack by way of the Carruthers inquiry, he obviously felt that he had us on the ropes and that we would meekly agree to anything, in the faint hope that salvation lay ahead for him in that way.

The then Police Minister, Mr Cooper, received a most remarkable letter from the chairperson strenuously objecting to the proposal to establish a new police training academy in Townsville, on the basis that he and the CJC had not considered it. No matter that it had been coalition policy in the 1995 State election, no matter that it had been a stated undertaking at the time of the Mundingburra by-election! The chairperson

took the view that, because he had the CJC, the CJC should decide how and where police should be trained. Never mind the policy of the Government of the day!

It was an offensive and outrageous letter, and the then Police Minister responded in a remarkably restrained way, although the message was clear. The Government proceeded with that undertaking, the academy was established and it has proven to be an outstanding success. The chairperson could never explain how public accountability and honesty in politics would ever be served by the Government announcing that it would not proceed with this project because it had somehow failed to get the green light from the CJC and its pompous, pious chairperson. That was just one example of his disgraceful meddling.

I believe that the Frank Clair era demonstrates both the virtues and the pitfalls of extra-parliamentary bodies with powers not granted to other law enforcement bodies. We have seen a very poor return in respect of effective prosecutions through the proliferation of crime and corruption detection organisations and the duplication of functions that rightly belong back with other organisations such as the police, the public service commission and so on.

It is worth considering that the Crime Commission and the Criminal Justice Commission be amalgamated and the resultant commission's role be redefined as the central organisation for the gathering and dissemination of intelligence and evidence on crime, corruption and related matters. I firmly believe that the prosecution of such matters should be the duty of the police and the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Too often the CJC has been the vehicle for threats and retaliation by people prosecuting private quarrels. It is a fact of life in the Police Service, the education system, Government administration, local government and so on that the threat of a complaint to the CJC has cowed the policeman, teacher, council worker and so on, because they know they will be caught up in a full-scale investigation for months, often in the glare of media publicity, and will never erase the black mark on their record even if exonerated.

Discipline within the Police Service, the Public Service, Education and so on should be matters for internal tribunals with transparent and public processes—I repeat: transparent and public processes. Commissions of inquiry should be used only for major matters when there are no other effective means of obtaining intelligence or information.

At the moment, all of us in this place are aware of police being frightened to do their job because of the ogre sitting on the back fence. The morale problem in the Police Service is becoming more and more apparent. The processes of such inquiries should be similar to that of the Forde inquiry into child abuse to ensure that the names and reputations of witnesses are protected unless and until it is in the public interest that they be revealed. When a prosecution reaches a court, the media can then have its day.

The operations of the Criminal Justice Commission have shown up the strengths and weaknesses of the existing system. Experience has shown that we must have watchdogs of the public interest, but it has shown also that the watchdogs themselves must stay in their own yard and not substitute loud barking for real bite.

Multicultural Queensland Policy

Mr NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (11.40 a.m.): I rise to inform the House that the Multicultural Queensland Policy is now reaching out across all of Queensland. Since July, I have met with many delegations from the multicultural community in relation to how the new policy can assist its members to access support from our Government agencies no matter where they live in this State. With meetings in Bundaberg, Cairns, Mount Isa, Springwood and Nambour having already taken place and with further meetings planned before Christmas in Townsville and Mackay, as well as a number in and around Brisbane, I am delivering on my promise to have a hands-on approach to multicultural affairs.

Recently, I was able to play a part in the first men's reconciliation dinner at the Greek Club at South Brisbane. I was pleased to represent the Premier and his Government on that special occasion. Comradeship, excellent keynote speakers and entertainment of the highest quality highlighted the evening. As a Government and as a community, we go out of our way to counter racial prejudice and to make welcome all people no matter where they are from. Our multicultural community, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people, has taught us much about racial tolerance.

Some of us, though, still have some way to go in this matter. In recent weeks my office was approached by a leading private school in Brisbane seeking accommodation for its

teachers and staff. When informed that a migrant education association was also seeking a particular building, the caller from this school said, "What about us Anglo-Saxons getting a go?" A copy of the multicultural policy has been sent to the learned gentleman.

I now want to turn to the essence of my speech today. On 15 September, I said that the Government was committed to a focus on trade, investment and small business development, a stronger organisational support and development role, and a strong Statewide presence. To this end, this Government wants to see multiculturalism as giving businesses a definitive, competitive advantage by utilising the pool of skills, the market acumen and the business contacts that are available through Queensland's culturally diverse society.

In collaboration with the Honourable Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade and our respective departmental officers, I engaged Queensland's multicultural business community in developing a business development initiative. This is a strategic move under the Multicultural Queensland Policy. I have sought a coordinated approach to maximise the benefits which Queensland's multicultural skills base can provide to the economy.

At my request, officers from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet have already had discussions with the Department of State Development about holding a business development forum. The opportunity to hold such an event was endorsed on 30 September of this year by the interdepartmental working group established to progress issues arising from the July trade and tourism summit. I intend to leverage maximum value out of this forum for both the multicultural business community and the Queensland economy. It is proposed that a round table forum be held to—

1. develop strategies for utilising the knowledge and contacts of bilateral chambers of commerce and industry and multicultural business organisations to increase trade and investment to Queensland;
2. to discuss with representatives of the chambers how best to work together in attracting business and investment to Queensland; and
3. to develop more effective working relationships between multicultural organisations and the Queensland Government.

Representatives of bilateral chambers of commerce and industry, multicultural business and professional organisations will be invited to the forum and an informal networking lunch to facilitate the exchange of ideas and opinions. At this stage the forum will be held after the Asia-Pacific summit in March next year. It is anticipated that, as a result of the forum, closer working relationships will need to be established between the Export Development and Trade Division, the Office of Multicultural Affairs Queensland and the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Under the New Directions Statement on economic and trade development, one of the new strategies of the Government is to promote the diversification of Queensland's economic structures by expanding our capability to produce greater economic value from our natural wealth in minerals, agriculture, ocean resources, the environment and intellectual capital. The multicultural business communities forum relates to promoting the diversification of Queensland's economic structure by expanding to produce greater economic value from our wealth of intellectual capital based on our multicultural community.

A recent research study conducted by Access Economics has demonstrated the economic benefits of skilled migration and has shown that businesses established by business migrants are exporting strongly, generating significant jobs for Australians and investing millions in our economy. The research has indicated that business migrant firms have a higher rate of exporting than their Australian counterparts, on average employ more staff than Australian businesses, have a higher turnover than Australian firms and are more likely to remain as viable businesses. In regard to fostering and supporting a dynamic multicultural Queensland, the Government has now launched the multicultural policy. This Government also outlined that the new responsibilities for Multicultural Affairs Queensland will include a focus on trade, investment and small business development as well as a stronger organisational support and strategic development role.

There are significant opportunities available to Queensland in terms of trade and investment via our multicultural community. Cultural diversity is of economic and social benefit to the State and it encourages an environment that supports and rewards participation in the cultural, social and economic opportunities that Queensland offers. Business and the community alike benefit from the skills, experience, cultural understanding and networks of contacts that

people from multicultural communities bring. Immigration has brought to Queensland a range of occupational and business skills, international experience and trading connections. These multicultural skills are now a major business advantage for this State.

As employers recognise that multicultural skills can benefit their business through increased and more effective business activity, companies are increasingly utilising these skills to capture new business in export markets and target niche markets. For major international companies considering locating in the Asia-Pacific region, the availability of employees with foreign language skills and international experience is a major factor in choosing the ideal business location. Queensland needs to harness the multicultural knowledge that is to be found in the State and to proactively promote Queensland as an ideal location for the regional headquarters of these companies.

The myriad multicultural business organisations and bilateral chambers of commerce are a ready-made gateway to the world of international business. Linking the multicultural work force to Queensland businesses focused on international trade and using their networks to attract overseas business to Queensland is one of the strengths of these organisations and one which has not really been harnessed. The forum will provide the Queensland Government with the opportunity to affirm the importance of the multicultural business community and bilateral chambers of commerce in the role that they play in fostering trade and investment to Queensland and to achieve a better understanding of the multicultural professional and business perspectives on trade and investment development in Australia.

As one of the coordinated initiatives arising from the trade and tourism summit in July and aiming to position Queensland positively in Asia, this initiative will be the first step towards harnessing the opportunities available for increasing trade and investment in Queensland through the multicultural business organisations and bilateral chambers of commerce and industry. It also demonstrates to key participants in the trade and tourism summit that the Government has taken notice of the major issues raised and is proactively working on them for the benefit of all Queenslanders.

Child Protection Legislation

Mr HEGARTY (Redlands—NPA) (11.49 a.m.): I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of my mother, who is here today to celebrate her birthday with me.

On 10 November the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services introduced the Child Protection Bill. One aspect of that Bill causes me concern. Since the Bill's introduction I have been contacted by some people who deal with the issue of child abuse, and they have raised similar concerns. The concern is that by trying to protect a child from being identified we could be causing that child more problems, as the child may feel that somehow they were the cause of the abuse.

The Minister stated that the legislation will respect the right of children and young people to have their views taken into account. No-one questions the good intent of that statement. However, I do not believe that insisting on a code of silence in regard to identification and so on gives the child that right to have their views taken into account. Is there something the victim should be ashamed of to the extent that their identity should be compulsorily hidden?

The legislation should provide an out for families and children who do not want silence. While I agree that protection should be in place, I also maintain that victims have the right to be seen and heard. I believe that, under certain circumstances and with professional advice, counselling and assessment, and combined with parental approval, the decision must remain with the child and their non-offending family. I do not expect that many will call on this option, but it must be there for those who want it and even for those who do not want it initially but subsequently change their minds. It must be there as a fall-back provision.

The general public can see and identify with a child who has, say, leukaemia or who is the victim of an horrific road accident. They feel compassion and provide support. Why are the public to be forbidden by a code of silence, no matter how well intentioned, to see the face of an innocent child who has been abused? What makes this innocent victim any less innocent, any less needy or the circumstances any less tragic——

Mr FOURAS: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member is raising matters that are in the Child Protection Bill, a Bill before the House. I suggest that he is out of order in discussing it.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Clark): Order! I am advised that the member can continue until we have actually seen the Bill. The member may continue.

Mr HEGARTY: This same tendency to silence and secrecy aids and abets paedophilia, something that is——

Ms BLIGH: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The Bill has actually been tabled in the House and the Parliament has in fact seen it. It is No. 16 on the Notice Paper. It was introduced last week.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Clerk has reconsidered his advice. Because the Bill has been tabled, the member cannot refer to things that are actually in the Bill itself.

Mr HEGARTY: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I will relate my remarks to the topic in general and not to any relevant aspects of the Bill which may be discussed in the future. Concern about the publication of information relating to child sex or child abuse offences is one aspect that I do not think has been taken to excess to this point in time. No doubt we all recall the recent incident involving Matthew Nemet, the child who was tortured by his mother and her de facto husband on the north coast. In highlighting the legislation brought into the House by the Minister, the Courier-Mail pointed out that sometimes publication acts in the best interests of an abused child, as was the case with this unsavoury incident.

Matthew Nemet's grandmother, Mrs Jelka Nemet from Adelaide, who has had the child placed in her custody, agreed that silence was not always the right thing because it ended up protecting the guilty and creating problems for the innocent. She went on to say—

> "I believe in freedom of speech. In our case hiding the names was no help to Matthew, it just protected Michelle and Jason (his mother and her boyfriend convicted of torturing him)."

I think that is a very good recent example of how the exposure of issues such as child abuse alerts the population in general to things that are going on in society. Of course, the Forde inquiry is highlighting acts of a similar nature.

Recently I became aware of the problems of child abuse when I hosted a white balloon day in the Redlands area. That is an initiative of the organisation Advocates for Survivors of Child Abuse. That organisation was formed in Belgium a few years ago by the mother of a child who was murdered by a recently released sex offender. That horrific murder highlighted people's lack of awareness of the commission of such offences. Since its inception, white balloon day has been an annual event and is now spreading throughout other countries.

I first became more keenly interested in the problem following the report last year of the Children's Commissioner. That report highlighted the fact that there were cases of child abuse in areas such as Redlands Shire and Logan City, which were identified as hot spots. Parts of those areas are in my electorate.

I refer to some recent studies referred to by the Wood royal commission in New South Wales that the Minister might like to reflect on when her Bill comes before the House. The report of that royal commission pointed out that an understanding of the victims and a recognition of their needs and wishes are paramount. It also pointed out that isolation arising out of the secrecy surrounding the abuse, and the efforts of the abuser to maintain that isolation, fear, confusion, shame and self-blame on the part of the child, is to be discouraged. I feel that the disclosure of certain child abuse offences will better enable society to eliminate that element of abuse, which has been going on for far too many years and which, unfortunately, until recently, through that code of silence, had for a variety of reasons not been made known to the public.

I ask that, before the Bill introduced by the Minister is debated in the House, members give consideration to issues such as the suppression of identification. They should respond appropriately to the problems of child abuse victims, who have undergone considerable trauma and difficulty which in many cases marks them for the rest of their lives and in their adult years prevents their taking their place as productive members of the community.

Accrual Output Budgeting

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (12 p.m.): One of the greatest challenges facing Queensland Treasury and the Queensland Public Service in the year ahead will be implementing the decision to move to accrual output budgeting in time for the 1999-2000 Budget. The Budget recently passed in this place is the last cash-based Budget that will ever be produced for Queensland. The change to accrual output budgeting, as part of the Government's commitment to Managing for Outcomes, may appear to be a simple change in accounting methods, but it actually has far-reaching budget and program implications. I would like to spend some time discussing this reform because, while it represents a major departure from the old budgeting methods, very little is known about

what it actually means for this Parliament and for the Queensland community.

Accrual output budgeting is a more comprehensive and useful method of managing all the State's resources. Budgeting based on accrual financial information shifts attention from year-by-year cash management to managing service delivery over the longer term. It also facilitates assessment of agency performance by showing the full cost of service delivery. It detects when current levels of service provision are not sustainable, for example, where funding levels will not provide for asset replacement. It further enhances the benefits of the Government's existing investment in financial management systems and expertise. It improves the transparency of Government accounting and ensures that monitoring, evaluation and reporting occur in a timely, meaningful and transparent manner.

The key benefit of this change is that it will improve the transparency of Government spending by placing the Budget emphasis on outputs rather than cash inputs. It will also be of great assistance in delivering the Government's charter of social and fiscal responsibility, which the Treasurer announced in his Budget Speech. Members would also be pleased to know that the greater Budget transparency expected from this accounting method will greatly assist future Estimates committees in their important role in scrutinising Government expenditure.

Accrual accounting will assist this and future Parliaments to keep the Executive accountable for its decisions about the allocation of funds and service delivery priorities. The Queensland community will also benefit from this reform because people will be able to see clearly how taxpayers' money is spent and what benefits their dollars are providing. Greater consultation is also expected to be a by-product of the change as customer consultation becomes inherent in the planning, budgeting and performance management cycle, because customer service and outcomes will become the agencies' main focus. These are all positive consequences that flow from reforming the Budget process—consequences which I believe all members of this Parliament would welcome. Next year's Estimates process will provide us all with an opportunity to see how the Treasury Department has fared in its ambitious goal of reforming the State's budgeting process.

The shift to accrual accounting is not the only change happening in the Treasury portfolio. The Queensland Treasurer, the Honourable David Hamill, has a strong commitment to provide more funds to the long-neglected social portfolios which are such an important part of State Government's service responsibilities. The Government is committed to a charter of social and fiscal responsibility. The primary objective of this charter is to address the Government's social objectives and obligations within a fiscal policy framework that maintains the State's sound financial position. The $30m a year extra funding to disability services announced in the recent Budget demonstrates that this Government is serious about its commitment to social objectives. It is an important step towards redressing the abysmal underfunding of social policy areas which characterised previous State Budgets.

Along with this commitment to place important social programs on a firmer financial footing, the Treasurer and I, as his Parliamentary Secretary, are directing our efforts towards job creation. Creating sustainable jobs and bringing the State's unemployment level down is the highest priority of this Government. It is a policy objective that influences all our decisions in Treasury. To help us better tackle the issue, an employment secretariat is being established within Treasury to undertake detailed research analysis of labour market conditions and assist in the design and implementation of effective labour market programs.

As the Treasurer has pointed out on numerous occasions, the 1998-99 State Budget is heavily focused on creating jobs. The Budget includes $282m for the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative, which is a targeted labour market program aimed at providing the long-term unemployed with new skills, work experience and support. The Government's labour market initiatives are further supported by the Budget's record funding for public works and infrastructure projects, which are intended to directly raise employment and to increase growth through the positive external effects of public investment on private sector output. The Capital Works Program in Labor's 1998-99 Budget will provide more than 65,000 jobs, including 17,800 new jobs and ongoing employment for another 47,800 workers. These are two key mechanisms by which the Queensland Government is tackling the high unemployment rate, which has consistently troubled an otherwise strong Queensland economy. I believe all members would agree that the Government has to be innovative if it is to achieve substantial reductions in the unemployment rate.

The employment secretariat which is planned for the Treasury Department will be tasked with developing and coordinating innovative solutions to the unemployment problems that face this State. Particular attention will be paid to spots where the regional unemployment rate is dreadfully high and the participation rates depressingly low. The risk that long-term youth unemployment represents to the emotional, physical and economic wellbeing of such a large proportion of the State's younger generation will also be a high priority of the secretariat. I can assure the Parliament that the Treasurer is determined that this secretariat will look at the unemployment issue from a responsible community-focused perspective aimed at long-term sustainable solutions.

The Beattie Government, through its first Budget, has laid the foundation for improved Government services and greater Government accountability—important aims which will be further advanced by the adoption of accrual output budgeting, which will underpin the next State Labor Budget.

Ocean Current Monitoring, Great Barrier Reef

Mr TURNER (Thuringowa—ONP) (12.07 p.m.): It is common knowledge that our Great Barrier Reef is the most profitable tourist attraction in Queensland. Tourists travel from all over the world to view this spectacular natural wonder of the world. The revenue received from this attraction by the Queensland Government and Queensland businesses amounts to many, many millions of dollars. The number of jobs directly linked to the Great Barrier Reef is mind boggling. Yet every day the life of the coral reef and the lives of the people visiting this reef are threatened.

Too many lives have been lost on the reef, too much damage has been done to the reef, and too little knowledge has been gathered to find out why. Every day, oil tankers, laden with their cargo of fish and coral killing oil, travel through and along our Great Barrier Reef, risking a potential disaster with every kilometre that they travel, and the occurrence of a major oil spill on our fragile reef is only a matter of time. In this instance we do not ask why, but when. These oil spills will happen, more coral will be damaged, and more fish and wildlife will be killed. These tragedies will occur, but there is a way to reduce the impact on the environment.

Accurate knowledge of the ocean currents is essential for our oil spill emergency teams to be able to clean up before major damage is done. Ocean currents change with the seasons many times in a year, but every year the pattern remains the same. Once the ocean currents pattern has been monitored and set down, this knowledge could become as available as a tide sheet and be just as easily accessible to all reef visitors from the shipping pilots to the weekend diver. Most importantly, this information would be available to our reef protection authority and our search and rescue teams.

It has now been revealed that the search for the Lonergans, who were accidentally left stranded on the reef, was conducted in the wrong area. Pieces of equipment worn by the Lonergans were found nowhere near where the search started. Unfortunately, these two lives were lost, and nothing we could do now would bring them back, but what we can do is reduce the risks of such a tragedy happening again.

A precise knowledge of the ocean currents could pinpoint the position of any floating object whether it be a boat, plane wreckage, an oil slick or a person, thereby narrowing the search area and shortening the rescue period. The search for the Lonergans cost around $500,000. I know that not one of us here begrudges the spending of one cent of that money; there can be no price put on a life. Yet, for a mere $150,000, the price of ocean current monitoring equipment, the search for the Lonergans could have possibly ended with a successful rescue. The use of ocean current monitors would be the extra safety precaution we could offer the millions of visitors to our Great Barrier Reef in the coming years.

Recently, I visited the Australian Institute of Marine Science in Townsville. I believe $150,000 for two ocean current monitors and $60,000 per year operational maintenance would be a small investment in the protection of lives, the reef, the fishing industry, tourism, businesses and jobs. All of Queensland would benefit from and profit from that meagre but wise investment.

Not only can the knowledge gained from that ocean current monitoring equipment help to stop the killing of our reef, it can also be used to rejuvenate the coral and protect endangered ocean species that rely on ocean currents for food, water, temperature and breeding. On the same night of every year the coral of the Great Barrier Reef spawns. For hundreds of kilometres, billions of coral polyps, like some magical illusion, eject their spawn into the ocean currents. This phenomenon has been studied, discussed and filmed for many

years. Still, there is more to be learnt about the outcome of when the coral spawn is swept away by the ocean currents. Many questions remain unanswered, limiting our ability to help the replenishing of our coral reef and also hampering our endeavours to stop the death of the coral reef in some areas.

Marine biologists know that the ocean currents play a major part in the continuing life cycle of coral, but their lack of knowledge and understanding of the ocean currents has hampered their research and progress. Exact monitoring of the ocean currents would open up a whole new area for researchers to study. The knowledge they would gain would benefit not only our Great Barrier Reef but also other coral reefs around the world. The fragile and delicate structure of the coral reef and the ocean species that rely on the reef for food and protection are suffering from the cancerous ravages of pollution and ignorance. The purchase and use of ocean current monitors would be an insurance policy against further damage to our Great Barrier Reef. I urge the Minister for Primary Industries to investigate funding for this essential project and further basic scientific research. We cannot continue to play Russian roulette with the environment.

Cairns Museum

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (12.12 p.m.): I would like to inform the House of some good news for Cairns. The board of the Queensland Museum has called for applications for a museum development officer in Cairns. According to the advertisement in the Far North Cultural Industry Association newsletter, the position "will provide a range of professional advisory and training services to museums and galleries in the Cairns region". That is timely news for Cairns and the region, though not before time. I am pleased to say that only last week I celebrated my 20th anniversary in Cairns.

Mr McGrady: Your 20th birthday.

Ms BOYLE: My 20th birthday as a Cairns local. During those 20 years I have, of course, visited the Cairns Museum on many occasions. The Cairns Museum is run by Les Sim, the Cairns Historical Society and very substantially staffed by volunteers. What I had not been aware of until recently was the network of museums, volunteers and other people who care about our history who are housing important collections and attempting, in small and difficult premises, to showcase those collections right across the region of far-north Queensland. There is much that is instructive for us in our history. On its recent anniversary, I congratulated the Cairns Historical Society on the collection of footage of old Cairns that has been put together and is now available for us all to see. I am sure that it will be as instructive for other members in their electorates as it was for me to see that, although the appearances may change, the underlying issues stay the same. In the footage of the twenties and thirties in Cairns, water supply was an issue. The provision of transport services—particularly railways—was an issue. The issue of jobs and employment was mentioned on many occasions, as was the Cairns Hospital and the pressure on this facility. It may be that the mandate that I have now is some years down the track, yet the significant issues in the region of Cairns have not changed.

Of course, as the House well knows, Cairns has been through a period of rapid development and has changed dramatically, particularly in the last 15 years. The City of Cairns is not as fortunate as the City of Townsville, which has many fine historical buildings that have been well maintained and which can preserve in built form the region's history. In Cairns, many of our older buildings were not worthy of heritage rating and have been mowed down for development. That makes it even more important for a place such as Cairns and the far north to find other means to house our history, to keep it close for schoolchildren, those who need to be educated about the past in order to prepare for the future, and for the very many visitors to town. The rough estimate is that the Cairns area has at least 10,000 visitors on average each night. In discovering the unusual city in the tropics and the diversity of the region of far-north Queensland, visitors very often wish to discover some of the history via a museum. Of course, there are those of us who, during recreation time, enjoy the exploration of times past, of lifestyles now past. How then in Cairns and the far north to best put together our history and to showcase it is a question that has been asked for some years by concerned locals, yet it has not been answered properly.

It is my hope that, with the appointment of the museum development officer, with the continued enthusiasm of the many volunteers across the region for showcasing and preservation of our region's history—and with my small part—we may be able to come up with a way of putting the jigsaw pieces together. It is probably not widely known that there are museum groups and historical societies in the communities around Cairns, including Innisfail, Mareeba, Atherton, Port

Douglas, Cooktown and Chillagoe. All those components must not be lost. I know it has been the ambition of some in the past to have a conventional museum in the City of Cairns; however, that is not presently available to us in terms of planning and funding. At first thought, it may not take account of the regional needs and the collections across the broader regions. One example of those is the collection put together by a single individual, Mr Jeff Andersen, of war-related memorabilia. Through his commitment and his genuine interest, he has, over a period of years, developed a very significant collection related to the far north's participation in the wars that have been, unfortunately, so close to our shores. That memorabilia is partially supported presently by the Cairns RSL, but it has no permanent home. There is no way that the broader public as well as visitors to the region can enjoy it and explore it.

Knowing that we need a way to preserve our history, that it is precious, that we need people who can care for it and that it is necessary for education as well as for inquisitive and nostalgic recreation, our task ahead, hopefully with the assistance of the museum development officer, is to answer the questions of how best to house it, how best to coordinate it, how best to showcase it and, of course, how best to fund it.

A study recently completed by a committee headed by Senator Lyn Allison has published its report. That report, I understand, is available now at our Queensland Parliamentary Library. I will quote a particular part of that report, because I believe it is relevant to those of us in Cairns who are committed to a museum project. The report states—

> "The Committee's evidence, though anecdotal, suggests that on the whole museum/gallery fees do significantly discourage visitation, causing a deadweight loss of welfare which the Committee regards as regrettable."

This then presents for us the conundrum of not only capital costs probably going to be required in order to find the way to house safely and showcase the region's artefacts but also the requirement for additional, recurrent costs. Although the resource is important to the community, the community's willingness to pay substantial entry fees seems limited.

The other important aspect that those of us who are going to work on this project will need to attend to over the next several years is the theme for any museum or collection of museums in the far-north region. It has been suggested by some that we should take advantage of our natural attributes of the Great Barrier Reef and the tropical rainforest and work in conjunction with what are already world-famous attributes of the far-north region of Queensland. Another element of our museum in the far north must be the proud history of the indigenous people and their surviving cultures, although frequently we are not proud of the events that have occurred historically along the way. The far north is home to one third of the indigenous population of Queensland. We hope that their participation and their cultural contribution to our museum would contribute to further advances in reconciliation.

Beyond the indigenous people and their cultures, far-north Queensland was multicultural long before it was fashionable to use that word and recognised the positives of a blend of cultures. We have a proud history of Chinese, Malaysian and Japanese people who settled in the far north as well as the Italians and the Irish and people from Papua New Guinea and the Pacific islands. Further, the wave of tourism of recent decades has contributed to the tremendous social diversity. That is my own preference: that it be in whatever form a social history museum in the tropics.

I hope that the several studies that have been done already, along with the continuing assistance of local volunteers, the museum development officer, my own small contribution and I hope, with respect, that of the member for Barron River and other local members will bring us to an agreed concept of a plan for a museum collection in far-north Queensland prior to the end of this term of Government. I certainly place on record my sincere commitment to work to develop that plan.

Time expired.

Brisbane River

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (12.22 p.m.): I rise to speak about issues relating to the Brisbane River. The former Borbidge/Sheldon National/Liberal coalition Government stopped dredging on the Brisbane River, which will take effect at the end of December. I believe that that is a great step forward in our efforts to clean up the river and to make it more beautiful than it is already.

Brisbane has become known as the river city. I put on record in this place my thanks to the former Environment Minister, the Honourable Brian Littleproud, the member for Western Downs who, as Chairman of the

Brisbane River Management Committee, was directly responsible for stopping the dredging of the river. That followed many years of representation not only by me but also by other members on this side.

I believe that cleaning up the river is a way of looking towards the future. It is a most important task. Of course, in taking this course of action one has to be aware of the fact that other issues are afoot. For example, we will have to be most careful of silting and water content. Water quality is a most important issue. In the past, the water has become muddied because of a lack of water quality. In fact, some decades ago there was a lot of growth on the river surface. That occurred because of the various nutrients in the water. So it is very important that, in the cleaning up of the river and stopping the dredging, we do not allow other factors to blemish the river.

I understand that the current Brisbane City Council is keen to create a six-metre-wide walkway along the banks of the river and, in some areas, over the water itself. That might sound okay, but six metres is quite a width for any type of walkway to be constructed along the river banks and, as I say, in parts over the water itself. That comes about because in quite a number of areas along the river there is private property right down to the water's edge and in those places it is not possible to construct a walkway along the banks of the river.

The traffic laws of this State stipulate that three metres is the necessary width for a motor vehicle carriageway. Therefore, a walkway of six metres wide will be of sufficient width to carry two motor vehicles along the river bank and, in some cases, over the river. One has to ask: why will the walkway be of that width? What effect will it have? It will mean that this walkway, which will be many kilometres in length, will require enormous maintenance. The effects that the water will have on the structure itself will be significant. Unless the walkway is allowed to run down and become an eyesore, the maintenance cost to the ratepayers of this city will be quite considerable.

There is also the issue of security for those people who live along the river bank and the effect that this walkway will have on their private access to the river and access by other people. The construction of any walkway along the bank or over the water itself will deny others access to the river bank and the water. I think that it is quite a significant matter about which, to date, I have heard very little. The walkway will affect current access arrangements. As a large number of parks have access already to the river, one has to question the need for this walkway as it is proposed by the council. Currently, many people are able to gain access easily to the river from private property and public areas for their boats and other purposes. Once that walkway is built, their access to the river for those purposes will be affected enormously.

I believe that the Government needs to have regard to the construction of this walkway because I am sure that, at the end of the day, in terms of various maritime Acts the authority of the Minister for Transport will be required. I appeal to the Minister to have a careful investigation into this matter before giving the council any go ahead.

Although at first blush the walkway might seem to be a wonderful idea and something that should occur, it will create in itself a range of significant issues, not the least of which is the issue that we have seen created in recent times of the need for a rock wall along the river bank. That need has arisen because of the greater use being made of the river through the CityCats. There is no point in people saying that the banks are not soft and that they are not collapsing because, in a number of areas—both in public and private areas—they are. I have looked at a number of areas along the river where people have said that the bank is collapsing and that someone needs to do something about it. In this regard, the council seems to be most reluctant to take action. Nevertheless the wash from the CityCats has created an issue that did not exist previously. Therefore, I suggest to the council that it should consider urgently a program that addresses over time those areas of the banks that are not reinforced with rocks before the bank collapses and serious damage is done.

Although the council says that we are going to benefit from this walkway, there is not much point in constructing it if, at the end of the day, serious damage is being done to the banks and they are slipping away into the river. Over the past decade, parts of the banks of the river have fallen and the subsequent widening of the river has caused problems. With increased usage of the river, there is an increased need to fix the bank walls. Of course, the river is often used as a means of transport for people going about their daily business, and also by sightseers and people engaged in sailing, rowing and so on. There has been a general increase in the usage of the river.

In time to come, as dredging ceases and other action is taken to clean up the river, we

may again see people swimming in the river. Perhaps there will again be sandy riverbanks to play on and people will be able to fish in the river, an activity that has largely ceased in recent times.

Time expired.

COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY (FORDE INQUIRY—EVIDENCE) REGULATION 1998

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (12.30 p.m.): I move—

> "That the Commissions of Inquiry (Forde Inquiry—Evidence) Regulation 1998 (Subordinate Legislation No. 278 of 1998) tabled in the Parliament on 20 October 1998 be disallowed."

At the outset, I reiterate the support expressed by the coalition for the Forde commission of inquiry. We have been very clear in our desire to seek justice for the victims of child abuse. We have always believed that Mrs Forde is an appropriate and most suitably qualified person to serve as commissioner. There can be no doubt that the inquiry presents a very real opportunity to deal with a matter that has long been ignored. We must never condone abuse of any nature within our society. Child abuse is a most reprehensible crime and, as parliamentarians, we must do everything within our power to protect the innocent and weed out the perpetrators. For those reasons, the former National/Liberal coalition Government toughened up the penalties for a range of offences involving children in the Criminal Code. Of course, those offences are not just of a sexual nature but include offences involving violence, such as torture, and the offence of paedophilia. For this reason, the legal standing of the Forde inquiry should not be left to chance.

This motion seeks to disallow a regulation introduced by the Government on the recommendation of the Attorney-General. The Commissions of Inquiry (Forde Inquiry—Evidence) Regulation 1998 essentially amends the provisions of the Children's Services Act 1965 and the Juvenile Justice Act 1992. This Henry VIII style amendment was necessary to facilitate access by the Forde commission of inquiry to documents held by the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care under confidentiality provisions contained within the Children's Services Act and the Juvenile Justice Act. The regulation affects the meaning of the secrecy provisions in the Juvenile Justice Act and the Children's Services Act, such that those provisions are subject to a summons or request to produce documents and certain other things in writing from the chairperson of the inquiry. Importantly, the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee has stated—

> "In the committee's view, this provision that a particular order 'takes precedence' over a provision of an Act constitutes 'amending' that Act. Accordingly, the committee concludes that the regulation does not 'amend statutory instruments only'."

The Opposition opposes the introduction of this regulation because we believe that the matter could have been dealt with quickly and expeditiously through legislation introduced into the Parliament that the Opposition would have been pleased to support. The matter could have been handled very quickly. Indeed, it could have been handled within 24 hours. We do not oppose providing the commission with access to the documents under amending legislation that could have been passed easily by this Parliament, but we oppose the provision of access by the method provided in this regulation—a method that is totally inappropriate.

While Rome burns, the Government and particularly the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and the Attorney-General have merely fiddled. They fiddled with a Henry VIII clause because they were too incompetent and lazy to ensure that appropriate legislative provisions were made to provide the commission with access to documents. In fact, the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care has been so busy screeching and screaming that the issue was not addressed when the commission of inquiry was first established. At that time it was widely acknowledged that, should this inquiry be successful, access to the documents would be required. The problem should have been rectified when the commission was established. Why it was not is a sixty-four dollar question that has never been answered by the Minister. Anyone who had anything to do with the issue would have appreciated fully the problems that were going to occur under the Acts of the Parliament when the commission of inquiry wanted access to the documents that were held by the department. Therefore, the Government's behaviour is totally inexcusable. What is more, the sleight of hand was performed when the Parliament was sitting.

I need not restate the fact that the proceedings of the Forde commission of inquiry are of great importance to many victims

of child abuse. The former Government established the Children's Commission, which ultimately led to this inquiry being established. Any attempt to sweep this matter under the carpet is clearly unacceptable. The victims of child abuse deserve better and Commissioner Forde offers a very important opportunity for victims to seek justice. Unfortunately, Mrs Forde's ability to fully access important documentation held by the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care has been limited by the Minister's own incompetence and her failure to introduce proper and appropriate legislation into the Parliament when there was adequate time to do so.

For good reasons, not the least of which is the strict legislative requirements, the department keeps a tight rein on access to some of the information it has collected. This commitment to maintaining privacy and protecting the interests of many Queensland families and individuals ought to be commended. Nonetheless, amongst the very good people who have been protected by this commitment to privacy, there are some people and records that should and need to be exposed in the pursuit of justice. For this reason, the coalition supports the right of the Forde inquiry to access all the documents and information necessary to complete its investigations.

There are right ways and wrong ways to provide this information. I thank the Attorney-General for contacting me prior to bringing in this regulation. However, that does not get away from the fact that the House was sitting during this period and, over several weeks, there was ample opportunity for the Minister or the Attorney-General to bring in appropriate legislation. It is little wonder that in 1997 the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee reported on a Henry VIII clause and highlighted the problems that the former Goss Government had with this legislation. Of course, those problems continue under this Government, because it cannot get it right. It fails to get it right every time and the Attorney-General has to sail to the rescue of the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care because, despite her screaming and screeching, she is too lazy to get on with the job. It is terrible that, despite having so many sitting weeks, she was too lazy to bring in a small Bill that could have been passed expeditiously by the Parliament. The Attorney-General has to do that with another Act that is before the House at the moment, but the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care is too lazy to do so, even though the Government knew about the matter. Perhaps the Minister had something to hide in her department. That might explain why she failed to introduce a Bill to fix up this problem. She failed to do that, she is guilty of it and she knows it.

That is highlighted in the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee report tabled in the Parliament today. It highlights the fact that the Government had an opportunity to bring in a Bill. However, the Attorney-General pleads urgency. Conveniently, he does not mention the sitting days of the Parliament during this period when an amendment could have been brought in and the Opposition would have agreed to expedite its passage through the House, as we did in respect of the Bills that the Government introduced last week that will be going through the Parliament this week; the Government needs to get those Bills through this Parliament for good and proper reasons.

Government members like to joke about these serious issues and laugh them off. They try to laugh away the issues. However, they know that they are guilty of trying to usurp the role of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee in respect of the Henry VIII clause. That certainly changes the legislation, as was pointed out by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. We want to get the Government to bring in a proper Bill. There is still sufficient time this week to do that. However, it is too lazy to fix up its problems. It cannot be bothered doing the right and proper thing in this regard.

Not only was this an issue in relation to this commission of inquiry; it was raised also during the time after the Children's Commission was put in place. The matter was brought to the attention of the former Government, and legislation was brought into the Chamber to rectify the problem to allow him to gain access to these records. This is something that has been known for a while. In respect of the investigation of paedophilia and the abuse of children, there would need to be legislation to allow that to occur. There can be no excuse for the Minister's not making provision for access to these documents at the outset; furthermore, there was ample opportunity to ensure that the Parliament considered this matter and granted its approval to amend the legislation protecting the confidentiality of these documents.

The inquiry was established on 13 August. There were a number of sitting days after that date when legislation to rectify this matter could have been introduced. However, the Minister is too busy trying to become the Deputy Premier to be concerned about the

processes of the Forde inquiry. Today the Minister said again, "Let's not worry about the detail, let's just get on with it." However, it is important to know these details so as to make sure that the processes are proper.

One can only wonder what sort of advice the Minister is receiving. Perhaps it is the sort of advice that the Minister received in relation to the appointment of Hans Heilpern as an assistant commissioner. Mr Heilpern, one of the commissioners of this inquiry, was sacked as the Director-General of the New South Wales Department of Youth and Community Services. He was an absolute failure when he served previously under the Queensland Government as the Registrar of the Queensland Building Services Authority. I understand from information supplied by the Minister that Mr Heilpern is on the commission of inquiry and is earning some $1,100 a day to investigate matters similar to those that he was criticised for not investigating in the 1997 report into paedophilia by the royal commission into the New South Wales Police Service. That is the fact of life. Presumably the same thinking and attitude that applied then now applies in relation to these documents. That is alarming to say the least. I am sure that whenever the Minister presents a submission to Cabinet these days her colleagues are asking questions about the matter.

It is wrong for the Government to invoke an archaic Henry VIII legislative clause in relation to this matter. Members would be well aware of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's attitude towards the use of these clauses. Again, that is set out in the Alert Digest tabled today. In January 1997 the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee set out to deliver a report on the use of these clauses. The report stated that the committee "urges Ministers to be vigilant and to maintain a firm stance against the use of Henry VIII clauses in Queensland legislation." It is clear that in introducing this regulation the Attorney-General has defied the wishes of that committee and has acted more out of political desperation than in the interests of good government. There is no doubt that the Attorney-General was forced to introduce the regulation because of the gross political incompetence of his colleague the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care. The Minister does not appear to be willing or able to do the homework that is required in relation to this matter. I wonder what Mr Sullivan, the former deputy chairman of that committee—were he here now—the Minister for Education, the member for Nudgee and the member for Lytton would think of this course of action. The use of these types of clauses formed part of the deliberations of the former Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. That has now been followed up by the current Scrutiny of Legislation Committee in the Parliament today. I am also sure that deep down those members do not support the Minister's action in relation to this matter.

The Premier has spoken a great deal about lifting parliamentary standards and the dignity of this House. At the very first opportunity the Minister and the Attorney-General have to do something about it they have demonstrated that they are not prepared to come into this House, in the long-accepted fashion, and introduce a Bill to amend a piece of legislation, as is the normal and proper process. They have to be dragged in kicking and screaming.

What does that say about the dignity of the Parliament and parliamentary standards? What does it say to the people of Queensland, who expect good government and responsible Ministers? The coalition has stated that it will support any legislation necessary to provide the commissioner with access to any other necessary Government-held documents. It is clear that this would ensure speedy access to those documents. That is an offer that makes this regulation totally inappropriate. The sensitivity and importance of this inquiry makes it absolutely imperative for the Government to put beyond any doubt any legal questions surrounding access to these documents. As the Office of Parliamentary Counsel highlights, this legislation is outside the guidelines set down in the Cabinet Handbook. It is also——

Time expired.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (12.46 p.m.): I second the disallowance motion moved by the honourable member for Indooroopilly. Before I speak about some of my concerns about the regulation we are debating the disallowance of today, I commend the Attorney-General for his courtesy in notifying me that there was an issue and that the Government wanted to move to make sure that the Forde inquiry could have access to the information that it required to do its duty properly. I very much support that. The Government's objective is eminently sensible. However, my concern is that the process is questionable. This afternoon in my contribution I wish to outline why I believe that to be the case.

The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee has brought down a very balanced and proper report in respect of this matter. It is true that it

has indicated that there is a head of power in the Commissions of Inquiry Act which allows the use of a Henry VIII clause in this case. However, it also raises some very serious concerns about whether it should be used and the future of that section in that piece of legislation.

There is little doubt that no member of this Parliament and no reasonable member of the community would condone the horrific reports of child abuse that have emerged in this State and throughout the rest of Australia over the past few years. Today there is a lot more transparency and a much greater desire on the part of members of Parliament, the authorities and Government departments to uncover these appalling acts that have happened in the past in this State and around the rest of Australia, and to attempt to do something about it. Therefore, I commend the Government for the establishment of the Forde inquiry. I hope that at the end of the day we will get to the bottom of these matters and that a better process is arrived at for protecting our young people in the future. We owe that to our young people.

There is also no doubt that we need to be very careful about the way we treat the private information of individuals. That has been the concern in relation to what the Government has been seeking to do. There has to be a balance between the holding of private information on individuals by those people charged with the responsibility of keeping that information private—that is, the employees of the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care—and the public interest. The issue of the public interest is what we are debating.

I turn now to the report of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee, which says—

> "The regulation was made to allow persons subject to the secrecy and confidentiality provisions to provide confidential information to the Inquiry, and thus facilitate the Inquiry."

It goes on to talk about the role of the committee. The report states—

> "Section 22 of the Parliamentary Committees Act 1995 provides that the committee's area of responsibility is to consider the lawfulness of particular subordinate legislation, and the application of fundamental legislative principles contained in the Legislative Standards Act 1992 to particular subordinate legislation."

In fulfilling its responsibility, the committee has considered a range of issues arising from the regulation. It goes on to say—

> "The committee's consideration is limited to consideration of the lawfulness of the regulation, and an assessment of the regulation in light of the fundamental legislative principles. The policy issues underlying the regulation are beyond the scope of this committee's area of responsibility."

As I indicated, no member of Parliament has any problem whatsoever with what the Government is attempting to do. It is a very, very noble principle; it is something that we certainly should be doing. We should be making available that particular information. It is the process which the Opposition does have some concern about, and that is the issue that we are trying to draw to the attention of this Parliament.

At 6.3 of the committee's report, under the headings "Other Relevant Factors" and "Legitimate role for 'Henry VIII clauses'", it states—

> "The committee agrees with the 3rd Scrutiny of Legislation Committee that use of a 'Henry VIII clause' in an act of Parliament may be justified to facilitate immediate Executive action.' Accordingly, the making of a regulation under a 'Henry VIII clause' may be justified. The current committee interprets 'immediate' in this context to mean urgent."

The report goes on—

> "The committee considers that the respective time frames of introducing and passing primary legislation and making a regulation is one factor which is relevant to a consideration of whether the regulation is justified and has sufficient regard to the institution of Parliament."

That is a most important factor, that is, has there been a usurping of the role of Parliament? Bearing in mind that we needed only a rather small amendment to legislation to actually facilitate what it is trying to do here today in the form of a regulation, could the Government have put together such legislation? I dare say and I suggest to this Parliament that the Government would have had time to do that. The Opposition would have quite properly facilitated the passage of that legislation as urgent legislation, as all Oppositions do so from time to time in this Parliament. I would say that it was a matter that could have been dealt with in a few short days.

Another issue which causes me some concern is certification by the Office of Parliamentary Counsel. It raises some concerns that I believe we do need to put on the Hansard record. The report states—

"6.18 The Department of Justice and Attorney-General has supplied the committee with an explanatory memorandum containing background information about the regulation. The committee notes that the explanatory memorandum provides that:

> 'Parliamentary Counsel has drafted the regulation but is unable to certify it under the Cabinet Handbook, paragraph 7.4 and considers that the matter should be referred to Cabinet. The office is not satisfied that the regulation has sufficient regard to the fundamental legislative principles.'

6.19 The Attorney-General has provided the committee with a copy of the advice from the Office of Parliamentary Counsel. That advice referred to the 3rd Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's definition of a 'Henry VIII clause' and concluded:

> 'The issue here is not clear and judgment must be exercised. Ultimately the proposed regulation, because it can specify any Act to put to one side, is too close to the Committee's definition of what is a 'Henry VIII clause' to allow the office to certify it.' "

Under "Conclusion", the report states—

> "The committee makes no comment regarding the objective the regulation seeks to achieve."

That is something that I indicated earlier in my contribution. It quite clearly indicated that that, of course, was a matter for the Parliament and it is a quite proper and absolutely right objective.

The issue once again is whether proper and due parliamentary process has been followed, whether we should have been debating this in the form of a legislative amendment—and I believe that we should have been doing that. Once again, quite clearly, I believe that the Government did have time to bring this particular matter to the Parliament in the form of a legislative amendment. That is the point. If we are going to use Henry VIII clauses, we need to be extremely careful in the way that we use them. I know that all members of this Parliament believe that we should be doing the right thing. If we are going to do something that is somewhat questionable in terms of process and it could be done in the proper way, I say that we should err on the side of caution and do it in the proper legislative way.

I conclude with these simple points at the end of the report in 5.3—

> "Provisions which allow an order of a Commissioner of inquiry to take precedence over an express secrecy or confidentiality provision in legislation are, in the committee's view, extremely serious. Such confidentiality and secrecy provisions generally exist to protect various rights and interests of clients, staff, and other people in contact with the relevant department. Any provision which takes precedence over the secrecy or confidentiality provisions therefore risks impinging upon these rights and interests. As a general rule the committee considers that provisions of this nature should be fully considered by Parliament, and are not appropriate for inclusion in regulation."

I will now touch briefly on 5.5, which says—

> "The committee recognises that in the circumstances the matter is appropriate for regulation, as it is clearly within the legislative provision. However, the committee reiterates its earlier comments that provisions of this nature are more appropriate for legislation."

That is my fundamental point as to why I believe the Parliament should move to disallow this particular regulation. There is no doubt that the legislation says that it can be done. The committee has said that it does not like that particular clause of the legislation and it says that it should be repealed. It goes on further to say that these sorts of issues should be dealt with by legislation. That is why this particular regulation should be disallowed.

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services) (12.56 p.m.): One has to hand it to the member for Indooroopilly; he continues to come into this House and lead with his chin. He has come in here today and used an opportunity to once again rail pompously about the dignity of the Parliament. I have to say that, in my view, listening to the member for Indooroopilly promoting respect for the

dignity of Parliament is worse than listening to Henry VIII promoting the virtue of long marriages or, to take a leaf out of the member's own book, listening to Henry V talking about better relations with Europe.

On what ground does the member opposite come in here to seek to do this? He seeks to disallow a regulation that will have the effect of ensuring the release of information which is vital to the work of the Forde inquiry into the abuse and neglect of children. He suggests instead that we should amend two pieces of primary legislation: the Children's Services Act of 1965 and the Juvenile Justice Act of 1992. Both the member for Indooroopilly and the shadow Attorney-General have promoted the view here this morning that in the next two days we could amend those primary pieces of legislation, that we should—in what in my view would be an unseemly rush—rush into amending that legislation, as they did with their own failed attempt earlier this year to amend the Children's Commissioner Act. Not only would this involve a suspension of Standing Orders; it would give us no opportunity to consult with any of the affected departments or non-Government organisations which would be affected by such moves. Talk about a contempt for the Parliament! Let us suspend the Standing Orders, give nobody an opportunity to look at the proposed amendments and rush them through!

Given the parliamentary timetable and the Standing Orders, this could only have been achieved by 10 November at the earliest. Would that have been good enough? Not in my view! If, like the member for Indooroopilly, this Government was in the business of establishing long-term, grand-scale inquiries with limitless budgets, then we too might have pursued the course that he is suggesting by putting forward these two pieces of amending legislation. But we are not in that business. We are in the business of ensuring that an adequate inquiry is held—one which will ensure that the taxpayers' money is protected while getting to the heart of what are very serious matters in our community.

I make no apologies, and nor does this Government, for using the simplest and most straightforward way of guaranteeing that files in the custody of my department were made available to the Forde inquiry as soon as possible. It was not good enough, in my view, to wait another four weeks—what would have been one-sixth of the time allotted to the inquiry to do its work. The member for Indooroopilly knows that the practical effect of the disallowance would mean that this inquiry would grind to a halt; it would stop in its tracks. One has to wonder: who would this help? How would such a halt come to the assistance of the many people who are now adults and who lived their lives as children in these institutions? It would have the effect of ensuring that no further information would be available to the inquiry.

I should point out that, in the intervening period between the passage of the regulation and today, my department has, as of this morning, cooperated fully with the Forde inquiry's request for information. My department has handed over 150,000 individual folios to the inquiry, and this is only the tip of the iceberg. Earlier this week my department received a 22-page request from the inquiry for more information and, as I speak, it is in the process of compiling that information. Nothing will stand in the way of that information going forward—certainly not the political cheap shots of the member for Indooroopilly, who accuses me this morning of not making provision for this to occur. To the contrary, I say to him that we did make provision; we used the provisions that are available to us. This Government has given a perfectly lawful remedy to achieve the necessary outcome, which was justified given the timing of the inquiry and the speed with which that inquiry is required to report to Government on the important issues before it. The report of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee, tabled here this morning, confirms this view.

It is important in this debate to make the distinction between the creation of a Henry VIII clause and the use of a Henry VIII clause. The member for Indooroopilly and the coalition as a whole seem to have a great interest now in paying homage to the importance of Henry VIII clauses and in promoting them at the expense of and over and above the importance of children. This concern has only been evident while the coalition has been in Opposition, because the Henry VIII enabling clause in the Commissions of Inquiry Act which gives the Executive Council the power to make regulations such as that which the member for Indooroopilly is now moving to disallow was inserted into that Act by a coalition Government in 1988. Who was a member of the Parliament at the time it was moved? Who was a member of the Parliament that voted for the inclusion of the Henry VIII clause? The member for Indooroopilly! The then Attorney-General, Mr Paul Clauson, said when moving the amendment——

Sitting suspended from 1.01 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

Ms BLIGH: I quote the then Attorney-General, Paul Clauson, when he introduced the regulation-making power into the Commissions of Inquiry Act. In his second-reading speech he stated—

> "Accordingly, the Bill provides for an amendment to the principal Act which establishes a procedure whereby a summons or writing of a chairman of an inquiry will take precedence over any oath taken, affirmation made or provision of an Act relating to secrecy where, by Order in Council, the Governor in Council declares that the secrecy provisions in a particular statute will not apply. The procedure which has been developed will ensure that decisions are made on a case-by-case basis"—

such as has been done here—

> "and will also ensure that the views of the Minister of the Crown responsible for the administration of each relevant statute are sought and obtained prior to its being recommended to the Governor in Council ... The provision has been drafted so as to apply to all commissions of inquiry which are held under the Act and, as such, has a general application."

In other words, the Parliament in fact intended the regulation-making power to be used for the very purpose for which it has been used by this Government in relation to the information to go to the Forde inquiry. As I said, the member for Indooroopilly was part of the Parliament that voted for that regulation-making power to be introduced.

In January 1997, the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee tabled a report entitled The use of 'Henry VIII Clauses' in Queensland Legislation. The member for Indooroopilly now relies on that report in his opposition to this regulation. Is he as offended by the use of Henry VIII clauses as he claims to be? It must be remembered that he was the Attorney-General of this State in January 1997, when the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee handed down its report. He was the Minister who had administration of the Commissions of Inquiry Act. If he believes that the Henry VIII clause is such an offensive instrument and that it creates such a problem, why did he not remove it when he could have? Why did he not take the opportunity to remove this offending clause from the Bill that he administered in January 1997—18 months before he left office? He now carries on about Henry VIII clauses for political purposes. He used his time in Government and his energy while a Minister for more destructive and wasteful pursuits, such as the discredited and failed $14m waste that was the Connolly/Ryan inquiry into the CJC and the slashing of criminal compensation payments to victims of criminal violence and sexual assault.

Let us face it: here we are seeing grandstanding from the failed former Attorney-General. He is playing petty politics with a very important inquiry. Just as he did in his disgraceful attack on one of the commissioners, he is seeking to turn this inquiry into a political football. Unfortunately for him, I and, I believe, all members on this side of the House, and in fact the majority of the public of Queensland, are more interested in the welfare of our children than in the welfare of Henry VIII.

Who are the architects of this attack on the Forde inquiry? It is none other than the very same architects of the Connolly/Ryan inquiry, of the failed Heiner inquiry and of the flawed Children's Commissioner legislation, which was put in place to avoid a commission of inquiry in the first place. It is the very same people who, during their time in Government, refused to establish an inquiry into these matters. It is time for the Opposition to support what it says it does. It continues to say that it supports the inquiry. Does it support this inquiry—yes or no? We constantly hear "yes, but"—"Yes, but we do not support one of the commissioners"; "Yes, but we do not support the information going from the Families Department". It is not good enough.

Members should remember that the effect of this disallowance motion being passed is that all information will stop being given by my department to the inquiry. Every vote for this disallowance motion is a vote for secrecy. It is a vote to hinder the work of the Forde inquiry. If the motion succeeds, nothing can go forward. Without the suspension of Standing Orders, Bills cannot proceed this week and other important legislation will be delayed. If this regulation does not proceed this week, it will have to come in next year, when the inquiry will be one week away from reporting.

The member for Indooroopilly accuses me of having scant regard for the institution of the Parliament. That is about the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard. The member for Indooroopilly is no-one to stand and talk about a lack of respect for the institution of this Parliament. He is the only Minister we are aware of in any western democracy in the world who has refused to stand aside when a vote of no confidence has been passed by a Parliament.

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham—NPA) (2.35 p.m.): I rise to speak in this debate this afternoon as a former chairman and now deputy chairman of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. It has been interesting to see the reactions of various people to this disallowance motion. Obviously, I wholeheartedly support the inquiry, as do all other speakers. I particularly support Mrs Leneen Forde, the former Governor, for whom I have a very strong regard. I believe she did a great job as Governor. I think she is an excellent person to conduct an inquiry such as this. Let there be no doubt about where I stand in relation to the inquiry.

It appears to me that the Government has fallen into a trap, which rather surprises me. Many on the Government side of the House championed Henry VIII clauses. In the last Parliament the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee brought down a report on the use of Henry VIII clauses. Over the life of that committee, things were gradually brought around to the point where the previous Government was in fact assisting in the carrying out of a review of legislation. For example, the former Minister for Primary Industries was going through relevant legislation piece by piece. As he modernised it, he was taking out Henry VIII clauses. That was in conjunction with and with the support of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. The former Premier was probably one of our greatest supporters. We had the odd recalcitrant Minister who was not all that keen——

Ms Bligh: The member for Indooroopilly.

Mr ELLIOTT: I was not pointing at the member for Indooroopilly at all; I was thinking of others. It is interesting that the then Premier assisted us. In fact, he put considerable pressure on Ministers at different times to ensure that they did take some interest in it. I think it ill behoves anyone in this House to talk piously about the Westminster system—about how we believe in it, how we want to see the whole system operate properly and how we believe in the sovereignty of this House and those people who serve in it. If we believe in that, surely we cannot go around, willy-nilly, using Henry VIII clauses when they are not necessary.

There is no question that there would have been support from all sides of the House to carry out what was required in this instance. There was no need whatsoever to go about things in this way. The report of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee states that the Act contains the clause which gives the power to use a Henry VIII clause if it is felt necessary, but in this case it is not necessary because all of the people in this House would have been perfectly happy to see that go through as a matter of expediency. It could have gone through in 10 minutes. That is all that would have been required.

I think this is disappointing, particularly in the light of the people who are involved. Here we have the supposed up-and-coming young star of the Labor Party—the Minister—and the Attorney-General, the good old former civil libertarian. I used to watch him on television and say, "Here's Matt Foley." It was interesting to see him championing various causes. On a number of occasions before he came into this House, I saw him championing this sort of a cause. So I am disappointed that he will not stand up and be counted to ensure that this is not done in this way.

Quite frankly, the member for Warwick very eloquently made most of the points that I was going to make from the point of view of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. I do not intend to reiterate those points and bore everyone to tears. However, I remind all members that far more flies are caught with honey than with vinegar. I suggest to Government members that they should endeavour to work with the committee. Simply because there has been a change of Government, members should not think that the committee has lost its teeth, that it has lost its nerve, or that just because Jon Sullivan is no longer here to tilt at windmills, we will not get stuck into members if they do the wrong thing. Believe me, the committee will do its work. When its members enter the committee room, we hang up our hats and we operate on a nonpartisan basis. The committee most definitely did that for the last three years, and I guarantee that it will continue to do so for the next three years. All Ministers should be working with the members of the committee, rather than trying to circumvent them, particularly in respect of Henry VIII clauses.

As to an RIS, members should not look for ways to get around an RIS. When there is a need for an RIS, members should be considerate to the public out there. After all, the whole concept of putting in place an RIS was to assist and protect the business community. They do not want over-regulation or over-legislation. They do not want to be hidebound with red tape every time they do something. We should be saying to the Public Service, "Hang on. Do we really need this regulation?" They should have a look at what is required and why they are doing it before they create regulations that are not needed.

I have much pleasure in being involved in this. However, it disappoints me that those people, particularly those who are involved, did not see fit to go about it the right way.

Hon. J. FOURAS (Ashgrove—ALP) (2.43 p.m.): In introducing this legislation, the member for Indooroopilly, in very cynical tones and in a rather pathetic speech, indicated to the House that he supported the Forde inquiry into child abuse. He said that he was very concerned about the dignity of the Parliament and that it was inexcusable for the Parliament to behave in this way. He quoted very selectively from the report of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. In fact, he should be told unequivocally that the committee gave a unanimous report which, in the end, justified the making of this regulation under these circumstances.

Before I discuss that aspect, I would like to comment on the contribution of the member for Warwick. I do not believe that his heart was in it when he supported the member for Indooroopilly. It is very sad that the member for Warwick, who is a very reasonable person, had to pretend that he would have supported us if we had suspended Standing Orders and rushed through the House in five minutes these two amendments—one on the Children's Services Act and the other on the Juvenile Justice Act—without discussion or debate. He, too, supports the Forde inquiry and is against child abuse.

As a member of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee, and for Mr Beanland's edification, I point out that this regulation was enacted with the authority provided under an Act, namely, the Commissions of Inquiry Act, which was enacted by Mr Beanland when he was a member of the governing parties. The committee stated that it was satisfied that the regulation is within the authority provided by that Act. Section 5.4 of the committee's report states—

> "However, the committee notes that the regulation falls clearly within the category discussed in s.5(2A) of the Commissions of Inquiry Act. On this basis it would appear that it was Parliament's intention that matters such as this could be incorporated into regulation."

That point was very well made by the member for South Brisbane. It was the Parliament's intention that that would happen. But what we have had is a pious debate on Henry VIII clauses.

I was a member of the original Scrutiny of Legislation Committee when it was the only committee of this Parliament. We certainly did not agree that we should have Henry VIII clauses in those days. Of course, matters such as those contained in Henry VIII clauses should be brought before the Parliament. But in a report to this Parliament in relation to Henry VIII clauses, there was a justification for their use if it was identified by the committee that it was to "facilitate immediate Executive action". In this report, the committee indicates quite clearly that that was the situation. It quotes Mrs Forde, who advocated the promulgation of this regulation. She said—

> "In order to enable the Inquiry to carry out its terms of reference fully and faithfully, I consider it appropriate and necessary for the Inquiry to have access to all relevant information which is subject to the secrecy and confidentiality provisions.
>
> Any hindrance in the timely provision of information necessary to the performance of the Inquiry's task, will severely curtail the ability of the Inquiry to comply with its terms of reference."

The member for South Brisbane very eloquently said what an expensive process it would be—not just in terms of resources but in terms of time—if we were to put the inquiry back five or six weeks. It is a very important inquiry, and timeliness is an important aspect that was considered by the committee. The committee agreed that, as there was a need to facilitate immediate Executive action, "Yes, it is a proper function of Henry VIII clauses." Of course, we would like to see that removed from the original Act when it is amended in the future. I do not believe that Acts should provide that sort of power.

I give very strong support for this inquiry—an inquiry which, from the first days, the member for Indooroopilly attempted to scuttle. I believe that the member now realises that he cannot roll that barrel across the electorate, because people will not accept that. Therefore, he is piously talking about supporting the dignity and authority of the Parliament. The committee says unequivocally that, in its view, under the circumstances the Parliament's authority was not at all diminished by this regulation being made.

I now wish to quote from the Burdekin report into homeless children, which I had something to do with. It states—

> "The failure of the states ... both to provide appropriate nurture and support to children committed to, and leaving their care, is a serious indictment on the willingness and capacity of those authorities to properly discharge their legal

> and social responsibilities. Children between 12 and 15 or 16 years of age are particularly ill-served. The states are ill-equipped or unwilling to offer appropriate services and the Commonwealth regards the matter as a state responsibility."

In the early eighties, the then Director of Children's Services said in a report to this Parliament that the State could not meet its statutory obligations to protect children from neglect and exploitation. States all over Australia—not just in Queensland—have been resourcing their family services departments so badly that they should be charged under their own legislation with neglecting and exploiting young children. In a submission to the homeless children's inquiry, the Queensland Government said that coming into the care of the State led to homelessness. So it is ludicrous to suggest that such an inquiry cannot look at what State Governments are doing and have access to the necessary files—looking at circumstances in which there have been documented failures.

In documenting the failures of the lack of resourcing of our State departments around Australia, particularly in Queensland, we will hopefully find that we will do something about meeting our responsibility as a Parliament for ensuring that we do not allow the continuation of sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation of our children. I believe it is about time we did that. Under our State departments, young people go from placement to placement and nobody seems to be giving a damn at all about what happens to them. They are like flotsam and jetsam. Young social workers leave departments because they are stressed, overworked, overloaded and unable to do their job.

The Commonwealth Government is a signatory to the convention on the rights of the child. In relation to abuse and exploitation, the convention states—

> "The state shall protect children from all forms of physical and sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation, including child prostitution and participation in child pornography, and all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to the child's welfare."

We need a national policy to protect children. We need national standards. We have national standards in regard to child care. We make sure those who run child-care centres meet certain standards of accreditation in relation to their facilities and staff. We do not do that in relation to institutions that look after children.

It is a shame that the member for Indooroopilly brought this disallowance motion before the House. I believe he is playing crass politics. He should be ashamed of himself. From the moment that the Forde inquiry was brought forward, he has wanted an excuse to scuttle it. He seems to me to be very hollow in the expression of his concerns. If we accepted his disallowance motion, a vital, important inquiry would be stymied and problems would arise in relation to the information that has already been made public. This motion is disgraceful. It is totally untenable for any sensible and thinking member of this Parliament to vote "Yes" to this motion. If that is the case, why are we debating it? Why would the member for Indooroopilly want that totally untenable situation, which is not in the interests of the inquiry, this State or the young people we are trying to protect? In this House he has said piously that he is concerned about the dignity of this Parliament. This Parliament acted on legislation that he was responsible for bringing before this House. It has acted in the only way it could because of the speed that was required. It has acted with the support of a committee of this Parliament that said, "Yes, we don't like Henry VIII clauses; but, in these circumstances, we will unanimously give you a tick." That committee said that it was all right to bring in the regulation in order to have the inquiry and to enable it to do what it needs to do in the interests of protecting our children. I ask all members, irrespective of their parties, to support the Forde inquiry and to reject this shocking motion.

Time expired.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (2.53 p.m.): I rise on this motion of disallowance. The member for Indooroopilly raised some concerns regarding the generic use of Henry VIII clauses. That concern is valid. The use of subordinate legislation to amend primary legislation is a disregard of this Parliament. The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee has rightly criticised the use of Henry VIIIs in the past and promoted the removal of provisions in legislation that allow for Henry VIIIs. The committee's position has not changed. I am a member of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. We produced a report based on the facts. The facts clearly indicate that the Act of Parliament under which the regulation was drawn up empowers the use of a Henry VIII clause. On the last page of the report we said that that piece of legislation needs to be reviewed and that provision removed.

One intriguing aspect of the use of a regulation to clarify access to information for

the Forde inquiry was the experience of the former Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care, Naomi Wilson, when she established the Children's Commission. After the commission was established and the commissioner commenced to use his powers, it was seen then that he had inadequate powers to access departmental information. I can remember that there was a great deal of discussion both in the Chamber and outside the Chamber about the appropriateness of increasing his powers, the difficulty of increasing his powers, the risks that attended that increase and a number of other ancillary issues. It became an issue of great debate just before the last election. The reason that the Children's Commissioner sought, and the reason this inquiry is seeking, the power to access that information is one fundamental that I do not believe anybody in this Chamber would disagree with: the protection of our children from abuse in the past, present and future. Part of the charter of the Forde inquiry is to examine institutional and institutionalised abuse. People are living with memories from the past that are completely untenable. They need an opportunity to be able to express the sadness and the experience and to receive some assistance in living through that experience and beyond. The current Government in Opposition criticised Minister Wilson for the difficulties she was facing in giving the Children's Commission power to access departmental files.

I seek the Attorney-General's response to a question. In part, I believe he has answered it in his letter to the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee, but I would like to have his comment on the record. I seek his assurance that there is no risk that an injunction or another challenge to this regulation could be made to, at some point in time, make the information that is currently being accessed invalid or inappropriately accessed. The Attorney-General's letter to the committee indicated that information has been requested from 104 individuals' files. That is a lot of people who have been affected. It was almost from a similar basis to this that we had the debacle that was the Heiner incident, where information was accessed and subsequently the basis on which that access was made was found to be flawed.

Mr Lucas: We all know who caused that.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: Irrespective of who caused it, it has occurred and we do not want it to recur. My major concern is the effect of this disallowance motion. I believe that everybody in this Chamber wants to see children now, in the future and—for those children who are now adults—in the past looking forward to a more secure future. One of the effects of this disallowance motion would be that, although those 104 inquiries to date would be valid under the regulation, any future inquiries that the Leneen Forde inquiry wanted to make would be unavailable to them until this House sat and appropriate legislation could be drawn up and passed. Even as an emergent Bill, it would be several months before the commission of inquiry could continue. I believe that everybody in this Chamber would agree that that is untenable. We do not want that sort of delay. We want to see the issue of past inappropriate departmental behaviour and past unacceptable institutional behaviour dealt with and any risk of its happening in the future rectified.

The report states that the Attorney-General advised that without the provisions of the regulation in place the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care would be placed in an invidious position where it could not provide information caught by the secrecy provisions to the inquiry without breaching its own legislation. Further, on the basis of a statement made by Mrs Forde to the Attorney-General, which was repeated to the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee, it appears that Mrs Forde is of the view that without a provision such as the one under consideration the inquiry would be inhibited from carrying out its terms of reference fully and faithfully.

Do I support the use of Henry VIII clauses? No. Do I support the disallowance of this Henry VIII clause specifically, particularly in the light of the issue that it is dealing with—the fact that people's lives will again be affected? Those lives are ones that have been affected in the past in an inexcusable way. I cannot and will not be supporting the disallowance.

Do I support the use of Henry VIII clauses generically? No. I support 100% the view of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee and the view of many in this Chamber that it is inappropriate to amend Acts of Parliament—on issues important enough to be brought forward as legislation—by regulations. I believe that that is an inappropriate use of regulations and I will continue to hold that view. However, in this instance and in these circumstances, I will not be supporting the disallowance motion.

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (3 p.m.): I note the considered views of the member for Gladstone in relation to this matter. I believe that, at the conclusion of her contribution, she crystallised very precisely the issue. The

question is not whether Henry VIII clauses are desirable or whether in all instances we should apply them; rather, in the particular circumstances of this situation, is it called for. I think the answer is a resounding yes.

I am surprised and bemused that the member who moved this disallowance motion before the House, under the pretext of the form of a Henry VIII clause, was none other than the former discredited Attorney-General, the honourable Denver Beanland MLA. Never in my short time in this Parliament have I seen less regard for form than the appointment of the disgraced Connolly/Ryan inquiry. In the short time that I have been in this House, if ever there has been one incident that rang through the halls of the place as an utter disgrace and a contempt for the Parliament it was the setting up of the Connolly/Ryan inquiry.

I am pleased to say that the current Attorney-General was at the vanguard of the fight to expose the shabby deal that really was Connolly/Ryan. When one looks at the very great job that Commissioner Forde is attempting to do for children who have suffered abuse at the hands of this State over past years, it is sad that $14m of taxpayers' money was wasted on the Connolly/Ryan inquiry—the most shocking abuse of process that this House has seen in recent years. So shame on the former Attorney-General for attempting to put one over this House with this very ill-conceived and very dangerous disallowance motion before us today. It goes very much to discredit the Forde inquiry.

Earlier, in having a shot at the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care, the member for Cunningham said that the Forde inquiry was something that the "rising star" was doing. Too right the rising star is doing it! I am pleased and proud to say that in this House we have rising stars such as the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care, because that rising——

Ms Bligh: There are not many on that side of the House.

Mr LUCAS: There are not many on the opposite side of the House. At the last election, they had a few supernovas. However, at the moment that are all big, orange giants who make no contribution other than to take up space. They are enveloping themselves and turning into black holes.

The fact is that this Minister has bothered to do something about the problem. For a long time, we have had a stream of complaints from people about what has happened to them in the past in institutions. When this Minister was in Opposition she came down to my electorate and spoke to people about it. She was serious about doing something about it. The Forde inquiry is the first attempt that we have seen from a Government in recent years to actually address the problem. We should be supporting the Forde inquiry lock, stock and barrel instead of taking cheap political points that do nothing but undermine the integrity of that inquiry. No-one has called into question the great public esteem in which Commissioner Forde is held. This motion does nothing to assist her and her inquiry, or the esteem in which that inquiry is held.

In the last Parliament I had the experience of serving on the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee and dealt a little bit with Henry VIII clauses. Let no-one in this House be under the misapprehension: Henry VIII clauses are not preferred in legislation. However, they are not excluded from legislation. There is no reason why, in appropriate cases, there cannot be Henry VIII clauses.

I could not think of a Henry VIII clause being more warranted than in this case. The fact is that the Commissions of Inquiry legislation is general legislation of application to all commissions of inquiry. The juvenile justice legislation and the family services legislation are specific and have very important secrecy provisions. We should not be amending that legislation each time we want to hold an inquiry. It is dangerous. We do not know what can of worms it will open. A far better way of doing that is by regulation where we can be specific with a case and we can easily remove that exemption at the time that the inquiry is closed.

If there has been a defect in the Children's Commissioner legislation that I have noticed it is that the Children's Commissioner does not have access to confidential material in the possession of the department. It is very, very difficult to assess what has happened unless one has the opportunity to have a look at that confidential information. The Forde inquiry will stop dead in its tracks and be a total waste of time unless it has access to that Family Services material.

That is what this regulation is about. If the shadow Attorney-General thinks that he can come into this place and grandstand at the expense of the expedition of that inquiry, he is very, very sadly——

Mr Springborg interjected.

Mr LUCAS: Not the shadow Attorney-General, the shadow Family Services Minister. I apologise to the shadow Attorney-General,

but he is in on it, that is for sure. He will be voting for it. I challenge him to vote on this side of the House when the disallowance motion is put.

The fact is that we are here to answer a simple question: do we support the Forde inquiry process or do we not? It is a total furphy to suggest, as does the shadow Minister for Families, that this regulation results in some diminution of the role of Parliament. The fact that we are debating this motion indicates clearly that the regulation is totally within the control of Parliament. If Parliament does not like the regulation, Parliament can disallow it. So let us have none of those red herrings, let us not be fooled by that furphy; the fact is that today the Parliament has the scrutiny of the regulation and if members do not like the exemption of the secrecy provisions, they should have the guts to say that is why they want to vote for the disallowance. Members should not hide behind any sham or farce or form or pretence of Henry VIII clauses.

A number of constituents have spoken to me of their concerns about abuse in institutions. I am very glad that the Forde inquiry has been established because they——

Ms Bligh: Did they talk to you about Henry VIII clauses?

Mr LUCAS: As the Minister points out, they did not come into my office and say, "We have a bit of a concern about Henry VIII clauses." These people were wronged in the late 1950s and early 1960s. There was an inquiry into the shocking things that happened to them, but what happened? Nothing! Finally, here is their chance to get justice. They did not come to me with concerns about Henry VIII clauses; they were worried sick that they did not have an opportunity to express their concerns in the right forum. Finally, this Minister has given us the Forde inquiry in which they have an opportunity to state fully their cases and have them investigated.

Far from voting for this disallowance motion, this Parliament ought to be congratulating the Minister on her foresight and fortitude in addressing the issue finally. This inquiry is about addressing the issue and looking into these matters so that, hopefully, they will not be raised in relation to institutions ever again. I commend the Minister and I totally oppose the disallowance motion.

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (3.07 p.m.): Today is the 454th day since the previous Parliament voted no confidence in former Attorney-General Beanland for his disgraceful disregard for the institution of the Parliament.

Today, we have seen a brazen attempt on the part of the former Attorney-General to have this Parliament strike down a very important regulation designed to assist the Forde inquiry to carry out its vital investigation of reported child abuse in welfare institutions. This Government opposes that disallowance motion, because its passage would prevent the Forde inquiry carrying out its important work.

The coalition's attempt through this motion to block access to Government child welfare files shows a stunning indifference to the great community concern over the need to get to the truth of child abuse in institutions promptly and effectively. It is argued on the part of the member for Indooroopilly that this should have been progressed by way of legislation. If that were so, why did he not bring in a private member's Bill at the same time as moving the motion for disallowance? The remedy lay in his own hands. Did he take it? Certainly not! Because this is not a serious attempt to show respect for the institution of the Parliament, much less is it a serious attempt to assist in the work of the Forde inquiry; it is something else altogether!

I turn to the conclusion of the all-party Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. Paragraph 7.9 of the report states——

> "Although the regulation appears to be contrary to s.4(5)(d) of the Legislative Standards Act 1992 the committee is satisfied that the regulation has sufficient regard to the institution of Parliament."

The learned Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care referred to Henry VIII with respect to the honourable member for Indooroopilly. I join with the Honourable Minister's observations and simply add that the honourable member for Indooroopilly shows as much respect for the institution of Parliament as Henry VIII showed for the institution of the papacy.

The regulation is lawful and proper. It is lawful because it is made pursuant to an Act of this Parliament. It was not some Crown prerogative that descended from the mists of medieval history. It came about as a result of the authority conferred upon the Executive Council by an Act of Parliament. In 1988 that Act of Parliament was introduced by the coalition Government to achieve this end.

The arguments advanced by the Opposition are that the regulation offends the

institution of the Parliament by using a regulation-making power to amend an Act of Parliament and that this should have been done by legislation. Firstly, throughout the life of this matter there is and has been a need for urgency. Secondly, the regulation had proper objectives, namely, looking after the welfare of children and assisting an inquiry to gain access to relevant information. Significantly, the scope of the regulation is limited in time and application. This regulation will not amend holus-bolus an Act of Parliament once and forever. The regulation amends the secrecy provisions for a specific purpose, namely, allowing the Forde inquiry to gain access to information for a limited time, because the inquiry is required to report by March of next year. The Government is concerned to advance the interests of child welfare and it is concerned to ensure that the Forde inquiry is given the assistance that it requires.

On 25 September 1998, I received a letter from Mrs Forde, the chairperson of the inquiry, which stated——

> "In order to enable the Inquiry to carry out its terms of reference fully and faithfully, I consider it appropriate and necessary for the Inquiry to have access to all relevant information which is subject to the secrecy and confidentiality provisions.
>
> Any hindrance in the timely provision of information necessary to the performance of the Inquiry's task, will severely curtail the ability of the Inquiry to comply with its terms of reference."

In response to that letter, the Government gave consideration to the two alternatives: either introducing a regulation or introducing legislation. Following receipt of Commissioner Forde's letter of 25 September, if the Government had decided to do so, legislation could not have been initiated until the next parliamentary sitting day, 20 October. Such a Bill would not have been mature for debate until the next parliamentary sitting week commencing 10 November 1998. That would have resulted in a delay from 25 September until 10 November, causing an unacceptable delay in the vital work of the Forde inquiry.

I will deal with some of the other matters raised by contributors to the debate, and I start with the contribution of the member for Gladstone. I thank her for her contribution. I reassure the honourable member, as I assured the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee in writing, that the regulation is lawful. There is no risk of its lawfulness being challenged and there is no risk of an injunction. The files were lawfully obtained by the commission of inquiry from the 104 individuals concerned. The material, which I am informed covers some 150,000 folios, can quite appropriately be dealt with by the commission of inquiry.

I deal passingly with the contribution of the member for Cunningham, who saw fit to lecture this side of the Parliament on civil liberties. That was a novel experience. After all, the Labor Party introduced the Legislative Standards Act. A Labor Party Government made possible the machinery that has allowed this sort of scrutiny to take place. For a generation we have contested against the National Party—the National Party that presided over racist legislation in the area of Aboriginal and Islander affairs, the National Party that presided over the abuse of civil liberties with respect to the Special Branch, the National Party that presided over the ban on street marches, the National Party that refused to introduce freedom of information, the National Party that refused to introduce judicial review. When attacking this side of the House on civil libertarian grounds, the words of the honourable member should scald his tongue because the record of his own party in Government has been such an appalling one.

Ms Bligh: The MOU party.

Mr FOLEY: Yes, I thank the Honourable Minister. But for the discovery of that secret agreement, we would have seen yet another attack upon the apparatus of the rule of law in this State through the sleazy memorandum of understanding that attacked——

Mr Springborg interjected.

Mr FOLEY: For the sake of the current shadow Attorney-General, I hope that they treat him in Opposition better than they treated the member for Indooroopilly. When the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Borbidge, and the current shadow Minister for Primary Industries, Mr Cooper, entered into the sleazy deal to roll back the powers of the CJC, they did not even consult with the shadow Minister responsible, the member for Indooroopilly. They knew that they had the Liberal Party in the bag on the CJC, and they did not even consult him. Such was their contemptuous attitude towards the protection of the bulwark against corruption in this State. I thank the honourable member for Cunningham for drawing attention to that record on civil liberties. I invite him to provoke the debate on that topic any time that he likes.

The member for Indooroopilly suggested that this action was in some way taken by the Government by sleight of hand. Let the record show that far from this action being taken by

sleight of hand, it was done publicly. It was done by way of regulation, it was done with a media release and it was done following my speaking personally with the member for Warwick and the member for Indooroopilly to draw their attention to this very matter. Indeed, I wrote to the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee to draw its attention to the matter before any motion was moved by the member for Indooroopilly in relation to it. For the honourable member to say that there was some sleight of hand involved is not only demonstrably untrue but is, in fact, absurd. The honourable member simply fails to make out a reasonable case.

Let me deal with some of the others aspects of the contribution of the member for Indooroopilly. In his attack upon this Government's record in the area of family services, he accused the Government of doing nothing. I think he suggested that the Government was too lazy to do anything in this area. Let the record show that this is the Government which set up the Forde inquiry. This is the Government which brought in the Child Protection Bill, which languished under the former Government. This is the Government, through the Minister for Families, that brought in the Juvenile Justice Amendment Bill, which passed through this House. This is the Government that brought in The Hague Convention legislation. This is the Government which increased funding for child protection. This is the Government which has spectacularly increased funding for disability services. I thank the honourable member for Indooroopilly for his drawing attention to the record of the Minister for Families and this Government. It does not do anything for the dignity of the member for Indooroopilly to make patronising and personal remarks in respect of the Minister for Families. It is unfortunate that he descended to that level in the debate. We have seen more legislation and action in respect of this portfolio in four and a half months than in the two and a half years of the coalition Government.

The hypocrisy of the member for Indooroopilly is truly of Olympian proportions. After all, this member on behalf of the former Government was responsible for introducing the last commission of inquiry that we had, which was the Connolly/Ryan inquiry. Not only was that brought into existence for an improper purpose, that is, the improper purpose of getting Mr Borbidge and Mr Cooper off the hook before the Carruthers inquiry; it was done in such a ham-fisted and politically biased way that it made constitutional and legal history throughout the Western World in that it achieved for Queensland the ignominy of being the only jurisdiction in the history of the common law where a royal commission has been struck down for political bias. Yet this is the honourable member who comes to this House to lecture the Government on respect for the institution of Parliament and the proper way to set up and run a commission of inquiry. This is the member who was responsible for wasting millions and millions of taxpayers' dollars in order to allow that spending machine out of control—the Connolly/Ryan commission—to run its odd course.

This Government, in establishing the Forde inquiry, was not interested in a spending machine out of control. It was interested in setting up a commission of inquiry which would get to the truth promptly and effectively. It set a time line on it. It indicated in its terms of reference what was required, and has proceeded to assist the Forde inquiry where that has been necessary.

Let me turn to the observation of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee about the need, as the committee sees it, for amendment of the Commissions of Inquiry Act. It observed that section 5(2A) of the Commissions of Inquiry Act should be removed from that Act. Consideration will be given to that report similar to that given to the report of any all-party parliamentary committee. However, may I drawn attention to the consequences of such an action.

If it were changed so that any commission of inquiry could override any secrecy provision, that would raise very serious problems for the liberty of the citizen, because the secrecy provisions are individual and particular to a range of Acts of Parliament. As a former Attorney-General, Mr Clauson, said in his speech to this House, there is a need for each secrecy provision to be examined specifically before it is set aside. On the other hand, if the committee contends that the power to override secrecy should simply be abolished, the consequence of that is that it would require an Act of the Parliament to set up a commission of inquiry or to give such an inquiry power to access confidential material in any event. That would give rise to real problems, for example, if the need for a commission of inquiry were to arise during the course of the Christmas break, when Parliament is not sitting for a couple of months. I note the observations. I respectfully compliment the all-party Scrutiny of Legislation Committee for a careful and thorough analysis of the issues and assure the committee that its observations will be given careful attention.

The Government strongly opposes this disallowance motion. This Government strongly supports the Forde inquiry. This Government wants to ensure that the Forde inquiry gains proper access to those files held by the Department of Families that would otherwise be inaccessible by virtue of the Children's Services Act or the Juvenile Justice Act. That is a lawful and proper purpose for the regulation. The scope of the regulation is limited in time and application for the very reason that this Government cares about the need for confidentiality and the need to protect the civil liberties of its citizens, just as this Government cares about respect for the institution of the Parliament. I urge all honourable members to oppose the disallowance motion moved by the member for Indooroopilly.

Motion negatived.

HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 12 November (see p. 3138).

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (3.26 p.m.): The other day, in respect of what should have been a very non-controversial Bill, the debate turned into an episode of personal abuse from the shadow Minister. That abuse was not personal abuse of the Minister—Ministers expect to have to take that—but the personal abuse was directed at the senior bureaucracy in the Department of Health.

Who are these people? They are people who were appointed by the current Premier when he was the Health Minister. They were people in whom the now Deputy Leader of the National Party, the member for Toowoomba South, had absolute confidence. In other words, they survived the change of Government unscathed and now, lo and behold, the only person they are not acceptable to is the member for Maroochydore. Why are they not acceptable to the member for Maroochydore? The Minister takes advice from them! According to her, that is their big sin.

The shadow Minister made comments such as, "You shouldn't be listening to the bean counters." I thought that was a rather odd thing to say. I heard her go on to speak about the role of the Chief Health Officer, and she went into some detail. I thought that she knew something about the Chief Health Officer. But then I heard the member for Burleigh and the member for Caloundra make pretty well the same speech. But lo and behold it was the member for Callide who gave it away. That joker came straight into Parliament from the Monto Council, yet he knew something about the Chief Health Officer. What did that prove? It proved one thing and one thing only: far from listening to bean counters—something that the shadow Minister said we should not do—she had obviously been given the speech and handed it out to all of the other members who spoke. She got that speech from one person and one personal only—the Chief Health Officer. The member should not give us this rubbish about not listening to bureaucrats; she does not listen to anybody other than one bureaucrat.

When the shadow Minister said, "These things operate elsewhere", I challenged her. I said, "Name the one other State that does not have these authorities." All other Australian jurisdictions have a senior medical officer who advises on medical or public health matters, but all have limited or no statutory powers. In Victoria and New South Wales, the equivalent to the Chief Health Officer has no statutory powers. Such powers are vested solely in the chief executive.

When I challenged the Opposition spokesperson to name the State, her only offering was the Australian Capital Territory, but it is not a State. In fact, unlike Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory has only one hospital, and that hospital is smaller than the Princess Alexandra Hospital. In other words, she is trying to use a model of anything other than a State. What sort of a joke is she? She has more front than the Myer Centre in coming in here, attacking the Minister and attacking the senior bureaucracy when she cannot point to one single State that has the same set of circumstances.

It is obvious; it is complete hypocrisy. The shadow Minister's speech was written for her. All the notes were written for her by one person, and that person had a vested interest in making sure that she and Opposition members used exactly the same speech. Why do we know that? Because that is the way bureaucracy works! When there is power to be lost, they will hand around the speech, and she was mug enough to pick it up without looking at it. There was the old stand-by of, "There should have been more consultation." Everybody who is on a losing side uses that excuse—more consultation. What about consultation? It was there in February of this year under the former Health Minister.

Mr Grice: Have you got anything to say about the Bill?

Mr MICKEL: This is about the Bill. The honourable member should go back to sleep.

The other thing was about money. Opposition members said that Health should not be about money; it should be about other things. They would say that, would they not? Because the previous Minister had a Horan health tax which, under Mrs Sheldon's answer to the Parliament last year, was going to rip $144m out of the recurrent money needed to pay for doctors and nurses in the public hospital system! The other thing they said was, "The hospital system is in crisis because a few beds are being closed down." They went on to cite the Royal Brisbane Hospital. Do they know why the RBH has to close them down? Because under the previous Health Minister there is a $15m budget overrun!

Mr Grice: What has that got to do with the Bill?

Mr MICKEL: The member opposite asks, "What has that got to do with Health?" Let me tell him. There is an enterprise bargaining system, which the previous Health Minister said would be paid for, that is not paid for and has not been delivered and there is a $15m overrun. Let me offer the member this statement—

> "It makes good management sense, if hospitals are running millions of dollars over budget ... to run them properly so that perhaps the occupancy rate can be not 60% but about 85% or 90%, just like it is in a lot of larger and busy hospitals, and make better use of staff and budget."

Do honourable members know who said that? The previous Health Minister said it in 1997. In other words, it was good enough for him then, but apparently it is a crisis when the current Health Minister has to bring that hospital back into budget because of the absolute and sheer incompetence of the previous Health Minister which is now taken up by the current shadow Health Minister. In other words, they are trying to build this scenario of a crisis in the public hospital system when none exists. The reason for that is that they are trying to stooge for the Federal Government, because it has embarked time and again on diverting money that should be used for the public hospital system into the private health coverage system. It spent $1.5 billion and it did not make one tap of difference. That money could have been used in the Queensland public hospital system.

The Opposition is silent on that. The reason it is silent on that is the same reason it is silent on the GST and the way Queensland was short-changed the other day. When push comes to shove, the Opposition will never stand up for Queensland and, in this case, it will not stand up for the Queensland public hospital system. If honourable members have any doubt about that at all, they should look at the situation in Maryborough. They were told they needed a certain amount of money and what were they given? Half the amount that was required! How can a hospital system be run when it is getting less than the amount of money that is required?

I wanted to nail—and nail quite convincingly—the rubbish that was being peddled by the Opposition spokesperson and certainly the member for Toowoomba South the other day. I will deal now with other aspects of the Bill.

Mr Grice: The Bill?

Mr MICKEL: I have been dealing with the Bill the whole time. The honourable member's mind has been in neutral while his mouth has been engaged. He is an excellent case for wearing helmets in motor cars.

The Bill mentions, among other things, money for cancer. Next week the member for Kurwongbah will be down in Logan Central doing something absolutely positive—delivering services for the people of Logan City. She will be opening a breast screening clinic. This is a major breakthrough; it is a tremendous service for the people of Logan City. Without that new clinic, as honourable members would know, people from my electorate and the electorate of Woodridge would have to travel vast distances to access such a service.

It is a comprehensive and useful service that the Minister is providing. It will be much appreciated by those women aged over 40. I am going down to the Crestmead Community Centre this Friday to address the over forties to let them know the good things that the Minister is delivering. She is delivering better health services for the people of Logan City.

While I am at it, I want to talk about the child health service clinic and the child health service in Browns Plains. As honourable members know, the Browns Plains area is a growth area; it has a large population and is the centre for a whole lot of growth to the north in the electorate of Archerfield and certainly to the south in the electorate of Beaudesert and, of course, in my wonderful electorate of Logan. That health service needs a couple of things and I am hoping to alert the Minister to them.

One of the things we are about is providing a wider range of parenting programs

so that we can get that early intervention to help those mothers down in Logan who may be under stress or in need of some parental support. I am hoping that, just as the Minister has been sympathetic in providing the breast screening clinic for those women aged 40 years and over, she will take on board the need for better programs to help those mothers there to provide better parenting services and to prevent things such as child abuse and also to help those people who are under stress. I am hoping very much that the Minister will take that on board today—and perhaps the director-general over there can take a few notes as well—and see if we can have a talk with the Logan/Beaudesert health district and see if we can provide much enhanced services for the people of the Logan City area.

It is a pleasure to be able to support this Bill. I commend the Minister for the excellent services that she is providing for the Logan area. I hope that the House will reject—and reject utterly—the fanciful comments made by the member for Maroochydore in her personal abuse of the Minister the other day and certainly her personal abuse of people such as Dr Rob Stable, for whom I have a very high regard and who has done an excellent job.

Miss SIMPSON: I rise to a point of order. The member's accusations are unfair. They are also malicious and untrue, and I ask that they be withdrawn. I at no time cast reflections upon the Director-General of Health. I was referring to the Bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order! The member has made her point. The member for Logan will withdraw those remarks.

Mr MICKEL: If she finds some offence in that, of course I withdraw. She was referring to Dr Stable. He is the only one who could be the chief bean counter——

Miss SIMPSON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. He has not withdrawn those comments. That is offensive and untrue.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! He withdrew the remarks.

Mr MICKEL: I will clarify. I want to protect you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I do not want to put you in an awkward position. I withdraw. I simply make the point that the shadow Minister is attacking people for being bean counters and for not listening to the bureaucracy. The director-general is the one responsible. If the shadow Minister does not want to own up to her remarks of the other day, then I am very pleased that I have persuaded her that Dr Stable and his officers are excellent officers who do not deserve to be derided by the likes of her. As for her personal attacks on the Minister, she will find it far better——

Miss SIMPSON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I have at no time derided the director-general. I have referred to the principal legislation.

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

Miss SIMPSON: That is offensive and untrue and he is continuing to——

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Which words in particular did you find offensive and untrue?

Miss SIMPSON: He repeated exactly the same words—that I "derided the director-general". I at no time——

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Which words were they?

Miss SIMPSON: He said that I "derided the director-general". I have at no time done that. I ask that his comments be withdrawn. They are offensive and untrue.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Logan will withdraw the words that the shadow Minister "derided the director-general".

Mr MICKEL: I withdraw those words. I have tremendous confidence in Dr Stable and his administrative staff, unlike the Opposition. I think he has done an outstanding job. He did a great job in trying to clear up the mess created by the previous Minister, the honourable member for Toowoomba South. The $15m overrun at RBH alone is a disgrace. I know that Dr Stable will be working hard with the Minister to help try to get that great hospital back in order so that it can carry on. There is $52m in unfunded commitments left over from the previous Minister. I know that there is a lot of work to be done there.

In my view, Stage 4 of the Logan Hospital was deliberately slowed down under the administration of the previous Minister. I am hoping that we can get cracking on that. As I have said to the House previously, there will be 400 full-time equivalent jobs there when that stage is finished. It is an important project. I support the Bill and hope that the House will do so as well.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (3.42 p.m.): A number of aspects of the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill are worthy of support. The Pap Smear Register is something that one would hope will, over time, result in a better review of women's health. I have a number of questions for the Minister. The proposal is that the Queensland Cancer

Fund administer the register. Were either the QIMR or the Cancer Research Centre, both of which report to Parliament, considered appropriate to carry out that role?

I pass on a concern raised with me. I do not think this would happen, but what would happen if there were an incident in the Cancer Fund's administration, either through depleted funds or a downturn in fundraising? Its core job is fundraising for cancer research. What would happen with the new work under its control? I am not in any way intending to demean the Queensland Cancer Fund. It has done a magnificent job over a number of years. Its work has funded a significant amount of new services and new information being made available to the medical profession, not only in Queensland but in Australia as a whole. Why was it chosen as the appropriate body to administer the register, as opposed to the Queensland Institute of Medical Research or the Cancer Research Centre?

The other issues I raise particularly relate to the CHO's position. Following the previous speaker, I raise them almost with fear and trepidation in case I get a strip taken off me as well. The main provisions of the Bill are to realign responsibilities that are currently under the Chief Health Officer to the chief executive officer, the Minister and a person who will be called a public health officer. I have not spoken to the CHO, but I have spoken to a number of practitioners about this proposal. They have raised some concerns with me that I pass on and in relation to which I seek a response from the Minister. I thank the Minister for the briefing I received at the Health building. I value that greatly, because people's health is a core issue and it particularly comes into focus when someone is crook. It comes into focus if there is a serious health incident in the State. The advice that the Minister gets must be accurate, timely and independent. It is partly on that basis that I put my questions to the Minister.

I have some conflicting information that I want clarified. On 21 October the Minister wrote outlining some of the changes that the Bill will introduce. One of the dot points states—

> "The Chief Health Officer position will continue to be a statutory position, providing high level medical advice to the Minister and the Director-General on health issues, especially on standards, quality, ethics and research issues. The Chief Health Officer will continue to be a member of the medical board, the Queensland Institute of Medical Research Council and the Radiological Advisory Council."

At the briefing I had with the Minister's officers, I asked whether I could have a document outlining the CHO's current responsibilities and new responsibilities if this Bill is enacted. That document, under "Ethics and Research", shows that one of the responsibilities is membership of the Council of Queensland Institute of Medical Research. The document also shows that the CHO currently has responsibility under the Queensland Institute of Medical Research Act. The officer responsible after the enactment of this Bill will be the CEO, to advise the Minister and the chief executive on——

Mrs Edmond: It is the CHO.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: The document I have states "the CEO". It states—

> "... advise the Minister and the Chief Executive on matters relating to the QIMR, advise the Minister and the Chief Executive on ethical issues relating to transplantation and anatomy, forbid performance of a"——

Mrs Edmond: It must be a printing error. Certainly on mine it says "the CHO".

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: All of those under "Ethics and Research" are transferred from the CHO to the CEO. I might come and get clarification.

Mrs Edmond: Where?

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: Under "Ethics and Research".

Mrs Edmond: It is all CHO.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I will come back to the Minister with that document. My copy states that the first five responsibilities under "Ethics and Research" all go to the CEO——

Mrs Edmond: They are all CHO.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: On this document they are going from the CHO to the CEO. I will come to the Minister and check that.

I will outline some of the concerns that have been raised with me. First, the amendment would significantly change the balance of power between our elected representatives and the health bureaucracy. The medical practitioner holding this position currently has statutory authority, is answerable directly to the Minister and Parliament, gives independent, professional advice to the Minister and has access to all data relating to public health and health policy matters.

I raised a similar issue fairly bluntly with Dr Stable, and he knew that I was not being too offensive. More and more in the parliamentary system in Queensland, whether we like it or not the CEO or director-general positions are becoming political. I acknowledge that the current director-general has been in that position under three administrations—with two changes—but that is attached to the person as opposed to the position.

One of the primary responsibilities of a Chief Health Officer is that of making an emergency declaration forbidding production, or ordering the destruction, of food under the Food Act. More importantly, and of concern to me, is that currently the CHO is responsible for the declaration of public health emergencies. That power is to be transferred from the CHO to the Minister, after seeking advice of the CHO and the CEO. I go back to my earlier comment: the CEO positions tend to be fairly political. I would like to think that they would go back to being apolitical. I do not have that confidence.

My concern is encapsulated by saying that, where financial accountabilities sometimes conflict with the action necessary to protect the health of the public, and where the bureaucracy may wish to prevent the accountable Minister from understanding the full impact of administrative decisions that have affected public health and wellbeing in a negative sense, there is the risk that the Minister may receive flawed or incomplete advice. Again, no sleight is intended on the current incumbents. People change. Often, when the Minister is given the responsibility to make a public declaration, or advisers are giving the Minister advice on public declarations that have significant financial impact, there would be a strong push to balance public health issues against monetary constraints. That is a concern. At the moment the CHO is completely independent. Some would say that independence could contribute to declarations about health issues that perhaps do not take into account the cost of remedying that problem. That is precisely why the independence of that position is important.

A couple of other issues have been raised with me, and I seek the Minister's comments on them. It is currently not mandatory that the CEO position be a medical position. At the moment it is, but that is not statutorially required. That means that public health staff must, if you like, educate the incoming CEO to a high level of understanding to ensure that the CEO is able to understand and exercise his or her statutory powers in an informed manner. Typically, the CEO positions are prone to the vagaries of political fortune and are held for relatively short periods. However, Chief Health Officers, in statutory positions, tend to stay on, providing an invaluable corporate memory. Under this proposal, there will be two: the Chief Health Officer and the Public Health Officer, both of which will be statutory positions. But both of them may have some constraints in reporting directly to the Minister. The Public Health Officer is going to go through the CEO. Therefore, the Minister will be vulnerable——

Mrs Edmond interjected.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: In the chart that was drawn up for me, that Public Health Officer goes through the CEO.

Mrs Edmond interjected.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I would appreciate the Minister's response.

The CEO position may be perceived to be—or sometimes may actually be—more subject to political influence. That is one point that I have already raised, and it is probably the core of my concerns. On occasions, this may have the potential to lead to less appropriate decision making or advice to the Minister. Another point that was raised with me is the ability of the CHO's position to provide independent advice in protecting the health of the public. However, that ability should be regarded as paramount. To achieve this, the CHO's access to health information, including statutory health data collection, must be protected. The Minister has already indicated to me informally that the CHO will retain direct access to the Minister without any constraints, as will the Public Health Officer. Again, the chain of command that was drawn up for me showed that person having to go through the chief executive officer.

Mrs Edmond interjected.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I would prefer the Minister to reply in that vein, because that is the core of the concerns that have been raised with me. This is a really important issue. The transference of administrative and statutory powers is a core issue for the department. A health review has been ongoing for two or three years. I understand that draft legislation should be ready in December. This transfer of authority and power should, more appropriately, be dealt with during the debate on that Bill so that the transference can be done with appropriate checks and balances. To put it into this document is a more piecemeal approach that could lead to a flawed result.

These matters were raised with me by concerned people in the regions—not the person to whom the previous speaker referred. I circulated the Bill to a couple of people to obtain their comments. They were concerned that it came in this format—a format that did not appropriately take into account all the other amendments that the Health Act should bring with it after the review in about December—and that it would be better done in one piece, that is, under the Health Act.

Currently, the manager of public health and the Chief Health Officer are both qualified—as far as the statutory requirement that they be medical doctors. Will the Minister be requiring the current CHO and the current public health manager, both of whom are doctors, to reapply for their jobs, given that the responsibilities, particularly of the CHO, are slightly diminishing and there does not appear to be any valid reason for a reapplication to occur?

Mrs Edmond: No.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: My main concern is not about the change. I understand the mechanics behind the change that the Minister is proposing. The main concern that has been raised with me, and the one that remains in my mind, is the fact that a significant review of the Health Act has been completed. I believe that the draft legislation should be ready by about December of this year. Changes of this quantum would more appropriately be presented in a health Bill, where all the checks and balances can more adequately be considered. Because of the reconstitution of their responsibilities, the Chief Health Officer and the public health manager may be able to give the Minister less information—and less independent information—because of the accountability stream. Again, I reiterate that that is not a sleight on the current office holders; it is a chain of command issue.

The portfolio changes that the Minister has proposed are different from those shown on the sheet that I was originally given. Under ethics and research, the first document had the first five issues transferring from the CHO to the CEO. On that basis, I was very concerned about some of the changes that were being considered. So I would be interested in the Minister's response to the timing of these changes and why they could not have waited until the review of the health Bill, which would have been more appropriate.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—IND) (3.57 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I note that the member for Maroochydore says that the Opposition will be supporting the proposal contained in the Bill relating to the Cancer Register but not that part of the Bill that relates to the role of the Chief Health Officer. The member for Maroochydore says that the role of the Chief Health Officer must be properly considered and not rushed. What absolute rubbish!

The member for Maroochydore has not considered, or does not know, that the Health Bills Committee, set up by the former coalition Minister and chaired by the member for Burleigh, considered this matter. The member for Burleigh said—

> "I point out that the bureaucracy of the Health Department previously presented this option to the former Health Minister and after due consideration and consultation with his Bills Committee and other community representatives the option was soundly rejected."

It is quite clear from this that the shadow Minister is not aware of her own party's previous position on this matter. If she were, she would not be putting forward a proposition that has already been axed by her own party. I believe that this matter has received the proper consideration necessary in regard to the role of the Chief Health Officer.

The member for Maroochydore also claims that the Bill is a potential conflict of interest and would compromise health standards. This is nonsense. I have been informed that the current arrangements in the Health Department allow a number of duties to be delegated to departmental officers by the Chief Health Officer. Yet when the departmental officers report back, they do not report back to the Chief Health Officer who delegated the duties to them; they report back to the chief executive officer. In my mind, I believe that this reporting arrangement is unacceptable, and I believe that the proposal contained in the Bill improves the accountability process in the Health Department. I commend the Bill to the House.

Hon. W. M. EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Health) (3.59 p.m.), in reply: I take this opportunity to thank all members for their contributions. Obviously, members on the Government side had made the effort to inform themselves of the important advances made in this Bill, particularly for cancer research and for women. Some of the Opposition members seemed to understand its significance, although they tried rather desperately to find parts to oppose for opposition's sake. I acknowledge that the

member for Logan submitted his Christmas list and I have taken note of it.

The member for Gladstone raised a number of quite detailed issues. I am happy to discuss some of those with her at a later date. One of the issues that she raised related to the Cancer Fund and whether, if it could not manage the registry, somebody else could do so. The suggestion that the Cancer Fund manage the registry has been on the cards since 1994. It has been delayed. Everybody has been working towards that end. The legislation specifically does not lock in the Cancer Fund, other than through regulations. If, at a future date, the fund does not wish to carry on that duty or there is some problem, it can be transferred to another body such as the QIMR if necessary. I will be addressing many of the other issues that the member for Gladstone raised when I address the issues that were raised by members opposite.

As to serious incidents of a public health nature—if they were to happen, both the Public Health Officer and the CHO have a duty of care to inform the Minister and the Minister has a duty to respond, as does the CEO. The changes to the Bill will mean that two people are able to give independent medical advice to the Minister. It is a misconception that, as a result of the changes to the CHO position, that position will not be capable of giving advice to the Minister. That is an erroneous suggestion.

I will address some of the repeated themes that have been raised. I will address them even though I believe them to be largely political point scoring. One constant theme raised by members opposite and by the member for Gladstone was: why is the provision regarding the CHO included in this Bill? This is the Health and Other Legislation Bill. It contains a string of diverse amendments, not just the Pap Smear Register or the Cancer Register transfer but also amendments related to food services, dental technicians, anaesthetics, the Nursing Act, the Speech Pathologists Act—all sorts of diverse matters are included within this Bill. It is a miscellaneous amendment Bill to amend lots of bits and pieces of the Health Act. That is why that amendment is included in this Bill.

Another theme raised by members opposite was: why the rush? The member for Maroochydore insisted that she was not concerned that the Commonwealth had threatened to withdraw funds if the Pap Smear Register was not progressed. She said that that was not a valid excuse, because she had an assurance from the Commonwealth Government that funds would not be withdrawn. Her trust is greater than mine. The evidence is simply not there to support her view. There is no written agreement to secure funding for the Pap Smear Register. Despite all the assurances that the member for Maroochydore received, the Commonwealth has already cut funding to Queensland Health. It has already reduced the funding by a cut of $761,000 to base funding for the program. That cut that we were assured was not going to happen has already happened. That cut was related directly to the delay in the establishment of the Pap Smear Register in 1998-99. The risk for the next financial year is another snippet, just another $500,000 that the Commonwealth could decide unilaterally to remove. That will not be expended until the Pap Smear Register is established. I would rather spend that money on health-care services than give it to the Federal Government. Why the rush? I would rather ask: why the delay? This legislation relating to administrative changes to the office of the CHO should have occurred along with the major restructure of the department in 1996.

The member opposite is quite right when she says that I vigorously supported regionalisation and opposed the centralisation of the department. I will gladly defend regionalisation and its enormous benefits to regional and rural Queensland. For the first time, we saw tertiary services moving outside of Brisbane to give country and regional people a fair go, to improve access to services wherever they are living—something that I am always surprised that members opposite, who purport to represent the bush, do not support. I well remember how the previous Minister blamed every problem on regionalisation and claimed that abolishing it and setting up a centralised system would save hundreds of millions of dollars. He went so far as to say that there was no need to increase the budget in Health, because getting rid of regionalisation would take away the need for any further funding. In the end, it came to a saving of perhaps $20m. The last figure I heard was perhaps $5m. In fact, there were probably no savings. I noticed in the Budget papers that the cost of providing Queensland Health's human resources information technology equipment increased by $7m—that is just one line item—because it had to be provided not to 13 regions but to 38 districts.

In Opposition I also saw that health workers were fed up with change. They were fed up with the waste of stationery and resources every time there was a Government change. In Opposition I gave a commitment to work within the current system; not to cause

more ideologically motivated upheaval just to score cheap political points but to work with the current system and improve it. I consider that I am mature enough, experienced enough and able enough to be flexible; however, that does not mean that I will not make changes to the current system to make it work. That is exactly what I am doing here.

Much has been said about the dark, secret reasons for the downgrading of the role of the CHO. For very clear reasons, the role is being changed, not downgraded or abolished. The CHO will still and must provide direct advice to the Minister. I think every member on the opposite side of the Chamber believed that the role had been removed totally. That is totally untrue. For the benefit of the member for Callide, I point out that the CHO is not a doctor at the front line who is treating patients and being bullied by the bureaucrats; the CHO is a senior bureaucrat in the Department of Health in Brisbane. That person is a Brisbane-based bureaucrat. The member for Maroochydore is right when she says that the CHO position worked well under Labor's regionalisation, but the 1996 structure created an anomalous position where the CHO has to delegate functions to officers in the department for whom the CHO does not have direct managerial control. Most of the managerial responsibilities for the CHO were removed in the 1996 restructure of Queensland Health and not in this Bill. One of those delegations without management control is the one referred to most by the Opposition speakers, the public health. An argument was put that the CEO would delegate those powers to the Public Health Manager, who is, also within this Bill, a suitably qualified medical practitioner. Yes, he would do that—just as the CHO does now. There is no difference. The day-to-day management of public health would still be handled by the delegated officers who would still have access to the Minister and the CEO as they do now.

The member for Gladstone asked why I do not wait until the introduction of the new public health Bill to introduce those changes. For the benefit of the member for Gladstone, I am happy to say that these changes have been needed since 1996; however, they were first mooted in 1995 and have been included in public consultation as part of the review of the Health Act. However, the Public Health Bill is one of the numerous Bills waiting for attention because of the attitude of the previous Minister. He constantly said, "What is the rush? Why make a decision?" That is why we have such an embarrassing pile of legislation waiting in the too-hard basket, much of which was well under way, with the consultation done, under the previous Labor Government and was expected to come into the House in 1996—for example, the radiation safety Bill, the mental health Bill, the health practitioners registration Bill and all its various professional Bills, and many more.

Much of this legislation comprises extensive regulations and subordinate legislation, which has to be introduced by next year. If the previous Minister had occasionally made a decision or had occasionally put his hand to legislation, maybe we could have waited for the Health legislation. However, I was not prepared to sit back and let a problem caused by the previous Government with its 1996 legislation continue to cause inefficiencies and management problems for the next 18 months. I say to the member for Gladstone that it will probably be more like 18 months before the public health Bill comes into the House because of the previous Minister's inaction. In the short term, the amendment that is proposed is not 18 months too soon; it is proposed two years too late.

I will outline the powers of the CHO. They are: membership of the Council of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research; advise the Minister and the chief executive on matters relating to the QIMR Council; advise the Minister and chief executive on ethical issues relating to transplantation and anatomy; forbid performance of a post-mortem; coordination of ethical and standards issues through the Queensland Health Ethics Advisory Committee; liaise with universities through the Queensland Health University Liaison Forum, the Board of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Queensland, the Board of the Graduate School of Medicine Studies and the NQCS steering and advisory committees; participate in Queensland Health Medical Specialists Joint Working Group; promote, facilitate and coordinate Queensland Health's research agenda; establish the research council, or equivalent, and develop the Queensland Health research policy—and that is a new role; the Queensland Health representative on the National Health and Medical Research Council; membership of the Queensland Council on Obstetric and Perinatal Mortality; oversight of the Queensland committee to inquire into perioperative deaths; educate the health service community about the Powers of Attorney Act; provide advice to the Minister and chief executive on the health risks and the health status of the Queensland public; provide advice to the Minister and chief executive on clinical issues, clinical risk

management and adverse outcomes; participate in National Expert Advisory Group on Safety and Quality in Australian Health Care, which is another new role; membership of the Medical Board; advise the Minister and chief executive on matters of relevance to the Medical Board; management of Queensland's Health participation in emergency services; membership of Queensland Emergency Medical Systems Advisory Committee; oversight of Queensland Health State disaster plan and local district and hospital disaster plans, and we have all heard members opposite try to say that that is now going to be done by the CEO; disaster planning; coordinating clinical aspects of aeromedical transport of acutely ill or injured patients and involvement in other aero-retrieval issues; licensing of private hospitals; advise the Minister and the CEO on matters relating to private health facilities; advise the Minister and the CEO on strategic public health issues; membership of the Radiological Advisory Council; and advise the Minister and the CEO on child abuse and neglect issues. One wonders just how much more we could load into one position. One wonders how much more power one person can handle.

The member for Maroochydore raised the question of how such a position is managed in other States. Indeed, as the member for Logan mentioned, she held out the ACT system as one that we should follow. How on earth do health services in the ACT compare to health services in Queensland? The ACT health service is not even sure if it has a regional or a centralised system as it has only one public hospital. If that is the only example that the member could find of States with a similar system, I rest my case. However, even what she said in that regard is simply untrue.

The real situation in the other States is that, in Victoria, there is a CHO, but it is not a statutory position. Under Victorian health legislation, the Secretary of the Department of Health, which is an equivalent position to the director-general in Queensland, holds all statutory public health powers. In New South Wales, there is a chief health officer but, again, it is not a statutory position. In South Australia, the equivalent of the chief health officer is called the chief medical officer. It is not a statutory position. In Tasmania and Western Australia, there is a chief medical officer, but in neither State is it a statutory position, nor does it hold any statutory functions. In the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory, which the member opposite held out as a shining example, each has a statutory chief health officer position and that position holds some statutory functions. However, unlike in Queensland, the respective chief health officers each manage a division of the Health Department and, therefore, oversee the work of officers to whom their statutory functions are delegated.

Clearly, regardless of which party is in power in which State, these changes are in keeping with modern organisational structures. I recognise the origin of many of the arguments put forward by the members opposite. They were submitted to me and, I gather, hawked around to other Government members. I read those arguments, I considered them and I consulted with those more knowledgeable than me about the situation in other States and the structures that exist there. However, I am not convinced of the accuracy of the arguments or their claims about accountability.

If we are going to talk about accountability, one of the things that I should say is that proper accountability to Parliament can be assured only if there are proper lines of accountability within departments. That usually means that the chief executive, as head of the department, is the accountable officer for all departmental activities. At the moment, there are a number of core functions of Queensland Health for which the chief executive is not properly accountable because those functions are held by the CHO. That is simply not good government. Also, as I said earlier, most of the managerial responsibilities of the CHO were removed in the 1996 restructure of Queensland Health under the previous Government. That means that, because of that restructure, the CHO has to delegate many functions to officers whom the CHO does not directly manage. Again, that type of arrangement is simply not good government.

We also heard about a lack of consultation. As I said earlier, this issue has been discussed since 1995. It was first discussed in a discussion paper on the review of the Health Act in 1995. Over 1,000 copies of that paper were distributed to stakeholders. Earlier this year, it again went through a process of consultation with all interested bodies. It is interesting to note that, in that second round of consultation undertaken earlier this year under the previous Government, the draft policy paper suggested three options in relation to this issue: firstly, that the CHO should retain his or her statutory functions; secondly, that these functions should be transferred to the chief executive; and, thirdly, that these functions should be transferred to the manager of public health services. If the previous Minister totally rejected

this proposal, as we have been asked to believe, why was it included in the draft policy paper put out by the previous Minister of the previous Government? Again, over 1,000 copies of the paper were sent to stakeholders. Submissions closed in May and they were analysed before these amendments were developed.

These consultation processes have indicated that there is limited interest in this issue among the majority of public health stakeholders. For example, of over 200 submissions received on the draft policy paper, only 22 commented on this issue and nine of those submissions came from within Queensland Health. That is hardly surprising. This is an administrative matter that does not affect the daily function or policies of health services. However, of the nine submissions from within Queensland Health, seven supported the powers being transferred to the chief executive, highlighting the concern about this issue within the department.

The submission to the review from the Office of the Chief Health Officer supported the functions being transferred to the chief executive. I will repeat that. The submission to the review from the Office of the Chief Health Officer supported the functions being transferred to the chief executive. Its submission states—

> "... the proposal that statutory public health functions be transferred to the Chief Executive of Queensland Health, on the basis that that officer is ultimately accountable for all of Queensland Health's responsibilities, is persuasive, and is supported by the Office of the Chief Health Officer."

Further targeted consultation about the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill was undertaken with key groups. Those groups included the AMA, the Queensland Nursing Union, the Faculty of Public Health Medicine, the Department of Social and Preventive Medicine at the University of Queensland and the Public Health Association. Those groups made valuable contributions, rather than just opposing for opposition's sake. It is quite clear that the Opposition's huffing and puffing about changes to the role of the CHO is a desperate attempt to find something to oppose for opposition's sake but without any justification, and to cover its embarrassment in the delay in bringing forward all of these important amendments and its embarrassment at the huge backlog of legislation that built up as a result of the previous Minister's inaction.

I now address the concerns of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. Firstly, I thank the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee for its comments on the Bill. The committee sought information as to whether the contracting out of the CEO's function of establishing and maintaining the Cancer Register will in any way reduce traditional forms of accountability through mechanisms such as the Freedom of Information Act 1992, the Judicial Review Act 1991 or the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1974.

I have sought advice from Crown law on the concerns raised by the committee. I am pleased to advise that the proposed transfer of the maintenance of the Cancer Register to the Queensland Cancer Fund does not in any way reduce traditional forms of public accountability. Crown law has indicated that, while a person would not be able to make a request directly to the Queensland Cancer Fund under the Freedom of Information Act, it would be possible to make an application to Queensland Health. This is because under the terms of the agreement between the department and the Cancer Fund, the State retains ownership of the data and the register, and the provisions of the Bill themselves indicate that Queensland Health is entitled to access the register. Crown law has indicated that it considers the register as information that will be under the control of the CEO and as information that Queensland Health will be entitled to access. As such, the register will come under the definition of "document of an agency" for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act.

The committee also asked whether the Judicial Review Act will apply to the Cancer Register after it is transferred to the Queensland Cancer Fund. Crown law has indicated that there are four key elements that must be satisfied in order for the Judicial Review Act to have relevance. One of these is that an applicant for judicial review must be a person aggrieved by an administrative decision. In its advice to me, Crown law indicated that, under the proposed provisions of the Bill, it does not appear that the Queensland Cancer Fund will be making any decisions in relation to which persons could be aggrieved.

I have also been advised by Crown law that, for similar reasons, the Parliamentary Commissioner Act has limited relevance to the Queensland Cancer Fund because, under the provisions of the Bill, the Cancer Fund will not be taking any administrative action in relation to which persons would be aggrieved. However, in the unlikely event that a person

was aggrieved within the meaning of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act, Crown law has advised that sections 13(7), 13(8) and 13(9) of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act clarify that the powers of the commissioner may be exercised in circumstances where an agency such as Queensland Health has conferred functions upon or given instructions to another body such as the Queensland Cancer Fund to act on behalf of the department. Crown law has advised that any action taken by the Queensland Cancer Fund in maintaining the register would be taken to be an action of Queensland Health for the purposes of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act.

The committee also sought information on the by-laws made under the Speech Pathologists Act since 28 November 1995. The committee is concerned that the retrospective application of the proposed amendment would call into question the validity of any by-laws made since this time, unless in practice the by-laws had been submitted to the Governor in Council for approval. The Speech Pathologists By-law 1995 and the four amendments to the by-law have been made since 28 November 1995. These by-laws deal with the administration of the board, including the process for meetings and dealing with the board's funds, as well as provisions about the registration process for speech pathologists, the use of practical names and conditions of advertising, and the fees payable by speech pathologists. I can confirm that the Speech Pathologists By-law 1995 and the four amendments to the by-law were all submitted to the Governor in Council for approval and, as such, the retrospective application of the amendment does not affect the validity of the by-laws.

Finally, I thank all members for their contributions. I indicate that we will be opposing the amendments circulated by the member opposite.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. W. M. Edmond (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Health) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 3, as read, agreed to.

Clause 4—

Miss SIMPSON (4.25 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"1. Insertion of new clause—

At page 6, after line 15—

insert—

'Insertion of new s 7A

'3A. After section 7—

insert—

'Functions of chief health officer

'7A.(1) The functions of the chief health officer include providing high level advice to the Minister and chief executive on health and medical issues under this Act, and other Acts for which the Minister is responsible ("other Acts"), including, for example, issues about ethics, potential health risks, research, quality and standards.

'(2) The chief health officer is to be given access to information kept under this Act and other Acts, that the chief health officer reasonably considers necessary for providing advice as mentioned in subsection (1).

'(3) Subsection (2) applies even if this Act or any of the other Acts states the information is confidential, not to be disclosed or limits the persons to whom the information may be disclosed or given (the "private information").

'(4) However, if the chief health officer obtains private information the chief health officer is to ensure all necessary precautions are taken to ensure the privacy of individuals is maintained to the extent that is consistent with the chief health officer properly performing the chief health officer's functions.

'(5) To remove doubt, it is declared that—

(a) a person does not commit an offence under this Act or any of the other Acts, by disclosing private information to the chief health officer or providing the chief health officer with access to private information; and

(b) the chief health officer does not commit an offence under this Act or any of the other Acts, by disclosing the private information to the Minister or the chief executive when the chief health officer is performing the chief health officer's function of providing advice to the Minister or chief executive.'."

The Explanatory Notes to this Bill state that the Chief Health Officer's position—

"... will continue to be a statutory position providing high level medical advice to the Minister and the Director General on health issues, especially on standards, quality, ethics and research issues."

However, this is not reflected in the legislation. Therefore, the coalition's amendment seeks to enshrine in the legislation what the Explanatory Notes state is the role of the Chief Health Officer.

As part of the coalition's amendment, we propose to ensure that the Chief Health Officer clearly has the right of access to information in order to perform that officer's duties. The right of access to information must be expressed clearly in legislation and not just in the Explanatory Notes to the Bill, because the Government is fundamentally altering the Chief Health Officer's role by proposing to remove that officer's powers under about 18 Acts of Parliament. Without the Chief Health Officer's ability to access information directly, there is a strong potential for the provision of independent advice to the Minister to be compromised. Simply put, if one cannot go directly to the source of a problem to ask questions, there is a danger that one's role will not be fulfilled properly.

Previously, I have raised the issue of potential conflicts of interest due to the way that the Bill has centralised power in the hands of the chief executive officer. Ironically, in 1996 in this Parliament, the current Health Minister was a scathing critic of centralised power. Now she has acted hastily to gut the role of the Chief Health Officer and she has handed over virtually all statutory powers to the chief executive officer.

I could raise numerous examples of concern or hypothetical situations. For example, what if food poisoning occurred or there was a problem with a food contractor in a hospital and the people responsible for the contract were senior officials of the Health Department? There has to be a clear line of accountability and a perception that things are being dealt with in an appropriate way. The Minister must receive independent medical advice that people can access, and the Minister must have confidence that that advice is competent and independent and is not threatened by a perceived conflict of interest.

Another situation was raised today. For some reason, the Minister could not drag herself onto the radio to address concerns about a Gladstone operator whose boat was involved in a tragic death off the coast of Rockhampton. We must have confidence that there is a system of accountability. We need to know that the Minister is receiving independent advice, and not just advice from the department, where there may be conflicts of interest on the basis of financial or industrial issues.

Once again, the Health Minister has not demonstrated what the need for the rush has been in relation to changing the Chief Health Officer's role, given the fact that there is a new public health Act on the agenda in the next 12 to 18 months. I wish to address this issue, because the Minister still has not explained what the urgency is. She still has not explained why the changes are being brought outside of the context of a new Act where there would be proper consideration of even whether some of those powers are appropriate in themselves. For example, should there be a restriction of certain powers? Who is the most appropriate person to hold those powers? All of those things should have been part and parcel of a new public health Act. She still has not told us what these diabolical circumstances are that have caused her to rush this through. We would all expect our current and future chief executive officers to act in the best interests of public health. However, the principle of the matter is that appropriate checks and balances need to be put in place in the legislation.

I will also address some of the pathetic comments of the member for Nicklin. I do not know where on earth he came up with what he was talking about. The coalition policy makers and our committees have opposed the gutting of the role of the Chief Health Officer. We do support a proper review of the public health Act and a review of those powers in a properly considered time frame. I believe that the amendment I have moved provides for greater accountability. It also challenges the Government to put into legislation not just press releases and sundry unenforceable bits of paper, but the role the Government states that the Chief Health Officer will perform. It states that the role of the Chief Health Officer is to provide high-level medical advice to the Minister and the DG on health issues, especially on standards, quality, ethics and research issues—health issues. That is what we are simply seeking to do through the amendment. We are seeking to make sure that the Chief Health Officer in that statutory role has the statutory powers in order to provide that independent high-level advice.

Mrs EDMOND: The Government will be rejecting these amendments for a number of reasons. Firstly, most of the assertions are erroneous. None of the powers that the member opposite is requesting to be written in are currently written into any of the existing legislation in any form whatsoever. It would make a nonsense of the legislation if we had to write down who should do what, when they should open the door, when they should switch on the light, when they should sit down

and when they should go for morning tea. It is just a nonsense. Clearly, the member opposite has absolutely no concept whatsoever of the legislation and what it is attempting to achieve. She has persisted in saying that this legislation is being rushed through, when it is quite clear that this legislation is two years overdue.

The previous Government and the previous Minister put through all of the administrative restructuring of the department that took away the powers of the CHO. They were taken away not by this Bill but by the Bill in 1996 and the restructuring of the department. That is what has happened. All that has happened is that there are a few erroneous bits sitting out on a limb that need tidying up. The shadow Minister is trying to work herself and everyone else up into a lather about it, because that is the only thing she can find to whinge about.

The member did not bother to be in here when I answered any of this before, so I will go through it yet again. I would have thought that she would have been embarrassed to make me repeat the reasons that there is such a backlog of legislation. The previous Minister made no decisions, did no legislating and just left it to pile up. That is why the health Bill will not be coming in in six months' time; it will probably be another 18 months away, if that. The other thing that the member constantly asserts is that there is no threat by the Commonwealth to take away funding if we do not progress this Bill. She was not in the room and she did not bother to listen when I said——

Miss SIMPSON: I rise to a point of order. I was in the Parliament. I heard what the Minister said. I am talking about the Chief Health Officer's role. That has nothing to do with the Pap Smear Registry.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Dr Clark): Order! There is no point of order.

Mrs EDMOND: In her speech in the second-reading debate, the member opposite said that there was no need to rush this Bill through because of the Pap Smear Registry, because the Commonwealth had assured her that it was not going to take way any funding. But it still took $760,000; maybe it does not count to members opposite but it counts to me and Queensland Health, and we are not going to put another $500,000 at risk because the member has a so-called assurance from somebody somewhere about something. We will be opposing these amendments. They do not make sense. They have no consistency with the legislation.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: The Minister's comments about this amendment indicated that it would introduce matters of detail. In her speech she used examples such as having to list when a door is opened and when it is closed. When I read that amendment, it was my understanding that it gave the Chief Health Officer access to new confidential material that the Chief Health Officer may view as important in fulfilling that role. There is a quantum difference in understanding as to what that amendment will mean. As I said, my understanding, upon reading the amendment, was that it was to allow the Chief Health Officer legislated access to information potentially of a private nature. The Minister's comments indicated that it was more trivial than that. I seek a clarification of that point. I am not sure who is the appropriate person to clarify that. There is certainly a quantum difference in the interpretation of that amendment.

Mrs EDMOND: I was responding to the comments by the member for Maroochydore, when she said that we should write into the Act all of the duties of the CHO. In common with any other senior departmental executive, the CHO will have information necessary for her to perform her functions. There is no need for legislation stating that the CEO is to have access to such information. The absence of a proper duty of confidentiality, especially when compared with the duties placed on all other Queensland Health staff, is inappropriate. All Queensland Health staff have a duty of confidentiality, particularly medical officers. It already provides adequate protection for the privacy of individuals. I point out to the member for Gladstone that it was not written into the amendment; it was actually the comments made by the member for Maroochydore about the fact that we had to write in all of the specific duties of the CHO that made me refer to the trivial nature of it.

Miss SIMPSON: I wish again to quote the Minister's statement that this amendment from the coalition is inconsistent with the legislation. If we look at the Explanatory Notes, we see that I have taken the Explanatory Notes and drafted them into an amendment to put them into the legislation. The Minister has been caught out. What we have sought to do is to expressly put those powers clearly in the legislation. As was explained to the Minister before, she has just removed the powers of the statutory office holder under about 18 different Acts, yet she expects us to trust her that that officer will continue to have some power of access to information without it being expressly in the legislation. That is not good enough. We do not trust the Minister. If she

does not put it in the legislation, there is no power to do that.

In relation to confidentiality, about which the Minister spoke earlier, she will also note that technically the chief executive officer is also bound by confidentiality provisions in his role, and yet that is also expressly in the legislation to remove any doubt about that necessity for confidentiality. With regard to this amendment, what the Opposition is seeking to do is to put clearly in the legislation, not just in the Explanatory Notes or some press release or speech, the powers of the Chief Health Officer to give high-level medical advice to the Minister and director-general, and then to have the statutory ability to access that information. The Minister has been caught out. She has gutted this role. She has left it without the powers to do the job. She has not explained to the Chamber why she has taken away those powers and why she will not put it in the legislation.

Mrs EDMOND: The member is obviously confused. She seems to be under the misapprehension that there is currently some statement about the purpose of the CHO currently in the Act. There is no statement of purpose for the CHO currently in the Act.

Miss SIMPSON: Once again, I draw the Minister's attention to the fact that in Schedule 1 she is wiping out the Chief Health Officer's role under some 18 Acts, which virtually removes that person's ability to do that job in a statutory capacity. She is obviously misleading the Chamber in that regard. The coalition seeks to have it put clearly into the legislation that the Chief Health Officer has the ability to access information in order to provide that independent high-level medical advice that the Minister wants to talk about but for which she will not legislate.

Mrs EDMOND: I do not know how to get it through to the Opposition Health spokesperson. The member opposite seems to keep claiming that this Bill is taking away enormous powers of the CHO to give advice to the Minister, etc. It does not. If the CHO feels that she is not getting access to information that she needs to give advice to the Minister, then she can actually ask the Minister and the Minister can direct it. However, there is no provision under the current Act. The member opposite is trying to insert extra power and control into the legislation that is currently not there, nor is it in there in any other jurisdiction.

Question—That Miss Simpson's amendment be agreed to—put; and the Committee divided—

AYES, 39—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, E. A. Cunningham, Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Goss, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Knuth, Laming, Lingard, Littleproud, Malone, Mitchell, Nelson, Paff, Prenzler, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Turner, Veivers, Watson. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

NOES, 40—Attwood, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, J. I. Cunningham, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Hollis, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

Pairs: Gibbs, Stephan; Mickel, Sheldon; Barton, Lester; D'Arcy, Pratt

Resolved in the **negative**.

Miss SIMPSON: I move the following amendment—

"2. Clause 4—

At page 7, after line 6—

insert—

' '(4) The manager must keep the chief health officer informed about any incident involving the delivery of services dealing with public health in the State that is a significant incident and, as soon as possible, must give a written report to the chief health officer about the incident.

Examples of significant incidents—

1. A cluster or an outbreak of a tuberculosis or food poisoning.

2. A recurrence of the same types of injuries within an area or occupation.

'(5) As soon as possible after the chief health officer considers a written report under subsection (4), the chief health officer must give a copy to the Minister, together with the chief health officer's advice about the incident, including comments and recommendations about the way the incident was dealt with.

'(6) A report under the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977, section 37B, on the operations of the department must include a report by the manager about the delivery of services dealing with public health in the State during the financial year to which the report relates, together with the chief health officer's advice about the delivery of the services.'."

Firstly, I would like to say that I hope that the member for Nicklin sticks around. I do not know who wrote his speech, but I suggest that

he go and talk to the member for Burleigh. Perhaps she can help him read the Hansard—

Mr Wellington: It was Hansard.

Miss SIMPSON:—because neither the coalition nor the coalition's policy committee has supported the gutting of the role of the Chief Health Officer. That was not our policy. I do not know whether the Minister's people wrote the speech for him, but if he had come and had a bit of a talk to us instead of running off to the Labor Party all the time, he would have been properly advised. He should read the Hansard.

Mr Wellington interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Dr Clark): Order! I just remind the member for Nicklin that he should be sitting in his seat to interject.

Miss SIMPSON: The coalition amendment here seeks to strengthen the Chief Health Officer's ability to access information and we have just found out from the previous amendment that this Government is a complete fraud. It does not want to legislate to provide what it talks about, that is, provide some independence and accountability. In this particular amendment we are seeking to provide a trigger for information about significant health events to be provided to the Chief Health Officer from this new manager position.

I was interested to hear the Minister talk about the role of this new manager during an interchange with the member for Gladstone. The Minister said that that new manager can go directly to the Minister, but that is not in the legislation. Once again, we are asked to trust the Minister about the ability of people, who are being employed as public servants or employed subject to the Chief Executive Officer, to go direct to the Minister and provide that advice. This particular clause, proposed subsection (3), states—

> "The manager must, subject to the chief executive, manage the delivery of services dealing with public health in the State, including, for example, the prevention and control of disease and sickness and the prevention of injury."

It does not say there that that person, who is subject to the chief executive in that Public Service role, has the ability to go direct to the Minister. So I believe that the Minister is really misleading the House if she is not willing to legislate what she says a person will be able to do when we are talking about something as important as providing independent advice.

We are talking about the public health system here. We are not talking about the personalities; we are talking about the principles of the legislation, about what is going to deliver an accountable system. Under this Minister, we have seen an incredible centralisation of power and, if we refer to other legislation—and, dare I say, even to Western Australian legislation and other legislation around the world—we see that the trend has been to provide statutory roles and some checks and balances upon power. The Opposition has not said that the current situation is perfect, but this rushed job is totally inappropriate. This Bill should not be passed without a proper review of the whole legislation.

We see a centralisation of power into the hands of a chief executive officer, without the appropriate checks and balances which we see applying in other jurisdictions. In recent times a lot of other jurisdictions have sought to apply some checks and balances to the power. That has not happened here. We have simply seen a transfer of the power. The crux of our concern is the lack of checks and balances upon quite considerable powers.

The Minister still has not explained the rush. Is it true that the Minister rushed to draft this legislation while the Chief Health Officer was overseas?

Mrs Edmond: No. I briefed her on it before she went overseas.

Miss SIMPSON: When did the Minister initiate the drafting of this legislation? This is not about the Pap Smear Register or the Cancer Register. The main point of contention relates to the way the Minister has sought to draft this legislation—in an unholy rush. To see this we need look only at legislation which the Minister introduced into the Parliament a month before. The Chief Health Officer's role was maintained within that health Bill. The Minister at no time alluded to the fact that the measure in that Bill was only temporary, even though it was introduced only a matter of weeks before the legislation we are currently debating. The evidence is before the Parliament. This could not have been more hasty or ill considered in the light of due and ethical processes.

I have talked to a number of other people, including the college of psychiatrists. A letter from the college of psychiatrists confirms that it had not been consulted in regard to the Mental Health Act, which is also significantly amended by this Bill in regard to those particular officers. We are due to see a Bill to amend the Mental Health Act before the Parliament in the not-too-distant future. It is due before the Parliament certainly next year.

Once again, we have seen the Minister rush through this piece of legislation when there is a process which should be gone through. These measures should be properly considered so that we know that the appropriate checks and balances are there.

This amendment of the coalition deals with the manager of public health services—a role which does not carry with it statutory powers; they are delegated powers. This officer is subject to the chief executive officer, who does not have to be a medical officer. This is a centralising of power. It is a stripping away of accountability. This manager does not even have the statutory ability to go direct to the Minister. Once again, the Minister has said, "Trust me", but it is not spelt out in subsection (3).

Mrs EDMOND: The centralisation of power brought about by this Bill is minute compared with the massive centralisation of power that was done in the 1996 legislation and in the restructure of the department. It was at that time—in 1996, under the previous Minister and the previous Government—that this was all set up. The only problem is that a couple of bits were left out.

It is with bewilderment that I hear that this legislation is being "rushed" through the Parliament, when it has been mooted since 1995 and has been made necessary by the 1996 legislation. This legislation is not being rushed into the Chamber; it is two years late into this Chamber. It can only be seen to be rushed anywhere when compared with the situation of somebody never moving on legislation.

I discussed this legislation with the CHO before she went overseas. In fact, she gave me all of the same material that clearly has been given to the member opposite. As I said in my second-reading speech, I took that material, I read it and I talked about it with other people who are more wise than I on matters of public administration. Indeed, I checked on the validity of the material in terms of what happens in other States.

The member says that this is not the case in other States. I will repeat this for the benefit of the Chamber. In Victoria there is a Chief Health Officer, but it is not a statutory position. It does not have statutory powers. In New South Wales it is not a statutory position. All the statutory powers are with the director-general. In South Australia it is not a statutory position. The South Australian chief medical officer does not have statutory functions. Tasmania and Western Australia—the member opposite said that it was definitely the case—have neither a statutory position nor any statutory functions.

If that is the way the member opposite is suggesting we go, then perhaps we should look at it, but that does not back up anything else she has said here today one iota. In fact, it ridicules everything else she has said here today. She suggests that we should adopt the Western Australian model, which has no statutory position and no statutory functions. The Northern Territory and the ACT do have some statutory powers, but they are limited to the divisions of the health department they oversee.

I am surprised that the member opposite even has the gall to mention the Mental Health Act. The Mental Health Act is one of the significant pieces of legislation that has had amendments held up for two years because we had a Minister who could not make up his mind. All the work and all the consultation had been done before 1996—before the change of Government. It should have been introduced into this Chamber before the end of 1996 and it still has not been introduced. I think that speaks volumes about why the members opposite think this is a rush. They think anything less than two years to bring in a piece of legislation is a rush. I am not prepared to wait for another two years to sort out the mess—one of the other messes the coalition left us.

The amendment that the member for Maroochydore has suggested is simply a form-filling requirement that will create yet another bureaucratic bottleneck in the department. This is exactly the sort of situation that we are trying to address and remove—where pieces of paper go into an office and never emerge again. The Opposition amendments will only put in concrete the fact that there will be bits of paper flying around with no clear direction, no end in sight and no direct managerial responsibility. These problems would be worsened by the uncertainty created by using a vague term such as "a significant incident". I reject the amendment.

Miss SIMPSON: It is interesting, when we talk about accountability, that the Minister wants to remove the paper trail or an ability to track what may bring about that very accountability. This is a very simple amendment. It is not an onerous amendment. It is basically talking about giving the Chief Health Officer, who is supposed to be providing high-level independent medical advice, the ability to find out what is going on within the public health system. It is astounding that this Minister will not make that

role accountable to an independent person so that the Minister can receive independent advice. It does not stand to reason. The Minister spoke about a bottleneck. This should be a simple procedure of providing accountability. The Minister does not want a paper trail whereby there is the ability to keep her accountable—or perhaps other officers accountable. That is clearly unacceptable.

I also sought to provide some measure of reporting under the Financial Administration and Audit Act. The Minister referred to a draft policy paper. That draft policy paper, which was put out under the previous Government, mentions being able to have tabled in the Parliament reports concerning public health matters. This is simply extending that and making sure that we are bringing these matters back before the Parliament. If this had all been considered as part of a Health Act overview, all these matters would have been dealt with in the appropriate way. If the Minister gets around to reviewing the public health Act—and she does not seem to be particularly keen to review it or to put it before the Parliament—I wonder whether she is going to include a reporting mechanism back to the Parliament.

The Opposition is seeking accountability. It is seeking the protection of our public health system; the ability of an independent medical officer—the Chief Health Officer—to provide independent advice; and the means of gaining that information in order to provide that advice. The Minister has not convinced the Opposition. She has simply been led by the nose by her bureaucrats. She does not know what she is doing. I am surprised that she does not even know what is proposed generally for the Health Act.

The aspect of reporting to the Parliament was discussed in the draft policy paper. That is why I have moved this amendment—to bring about greater accountability. For the Chief Health Officer to still have a relevant role in providing that independent advice, the Chief Health Officer must be able to receive advice from the department with a trigger that provides that it does not have to come via a very circuitous route through the department.

Question—That Miss Simpson's amendment be agreed to—put; and the Committee divided—

AYES, 39—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, E. A. Cunningham, Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Goss, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Knuth, Laming, Lingard, Littleproud, Malone, Mitchell, Nelson, Paff, Prenzler, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Turner, Veivers, Watson. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

NOES, 40—Attwood, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, J. I. Cunningham, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Hollis, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

Pairs: Barton, Lester; D'Arcy, Pratt; Gibbs, Stephan; Mickel, Sheldon

Resolved in the **negative**.

Clause 4, as read, agreed to.

Clause 5—

Dr PRENZLER (5.09 p.m.): I seek from the Minister some clarification of words used in clause 5. I refer to the word "contractor". The Minister's Explanatory Notes state that the proposed Pap Smear Register is to be maintained by the Queensland Cancer Fund. One must assume that the Queensland Cancer Fund is the contractor under this section. However, I have reservations that this is not expressly defined. What guarantee is there that, at a later date, the contractor may not be made some private firm with profit in mind rather than the noble purposes for which the register has been established?

Mrs EDMOND: I have one point of clarification. The Pap Smear Register is not being transferred to the Cancer Fund; it is the Cancer Registry, which covers all forms of cancer and which is currently kept within the department. The move to the Cancer Fund is not specifically spelt out in the legislation. However, it will be in the regulations. It is not normal to put a contract into the legislation but to allow movement within the legislation to change that at a later date. However, to do so, we would have to change the regulations, which would then be subject to a disallowance motion if that was opposed by members in this place.

The member for Gladstone asked whether it was possible, if the opportunity arose, to consider it going to another research institute, such as the Queensland Institute of Medical Research—but, of course, with the same provisions for privacy and protection of individuals. I reiterate that it is not the Pap Smear Register that is going; it is the Cancer Registry that will be transferred to the Queensland Cancer Fund.

The other thing that should be borne in mind is that, under the Acts Interpretation Act, the second-reading speech is regarded as a legal document that indicates the intention of the Bill. If there were any need for clarification of the Bill, one could utilise the second-reading speech of the Minister, which is a formal

document, to determine the intention of the Bill. As I said, it will be clear in the regulations. They can be subjected to a disallowance motion if members disagree. The freedom is provided to move that if required at some later date.

Clause 5, as read, agreed to.

Clause 6, as read, agreed to.

Clause 7—

Miss SIMPSON (5.13 p.m.): I move the following amendments—

"3. Clause 7—

At page 9, after line 20—

insert—

' '(1A) The agreement must be in the form prescribed under a regulation for the agreement.

'(1B) The prescribed form of the agreement must contain all the agreement's terms .'.

4. Clause 7—

At page 9, after line 22—

insert—

' '(3) A report under the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977, section 37B, on the operations of the department must include a specific report by the chief executive about the efficiency, effectiveness and economy of the contractor in performing the contractor's obligations under the agreement during the financial year to which the report relates.'."

The first amendment seeks to make the contract with the contractor that maintains the Cancer Register subject to a regulation. This is an accountability measure. I have talked to the Cancer Fund about this. This has been done before. The second-reading speech is not the contract with the Cancer Fund. Although it may give an indication of the intention of the Parliament—and we know that a lot of work has been done with the Cancer Fund in preparing for the transfer of the maintenance of the register to the Cancer Fund and that that is what the legislation is enabling—it is a matter of principle that we do not know who, in the future, will be looking after the Cancer Register. We all hope that long into the future it will be the Cancer Fund and that it will continue to do the excellent work that it does. I have explained to the Cancer Fund that this amendment, which would bring that contract and the subsequent reporting of that contract into the parliamentary arena, is an accountable measure that I believe acts in the interests of the Cancer Fund and also acts in the interests of the public health system. The Cancer Fund indicated to me that it did not have a problem with that. It is obviously very keen to support the transfer of the maintenance of the register under contract to the Cancer Fund, because it has a great track record in research, education and support in the community.

What we are discussing are the mechanisms in legislation to provide appropriate accountability. In her reply to the second-reading debate, the Minister outlined other Acts that still pertain to the Cancer Register. We are seeking to make that agreement with an outside non-Government entity subject to the Parliament. I believe this is a positive move. It is not an onerous move. It has been done before in more complicated ways in Schedules to Acts. Some of the coal Acts include Schedules involving contracts. What the coalition is seeking to do is to do this by regulation, which is a relatively easy way to bring about accountability and still provide the flexibility required to get on with the job.

The second amendment deals with the reporting aspect under the Financial Administration and Audit Act. We are seeking a provision for the chief executive to report about the efficiency, effectiveness and the economy of the contractor in performing the contractor's obligations under the agreement during the financial year to which the report relates. This is a non-controversial amendment. I believe it is a positive amendment. The Government may seek to do this in other circumstances in which it is contracting out services. Contracting out the Cancer Register is quite a significant move. I know that there are some very careful mechanisms in the legislation that deal with confidentiality, but we need to make sure that issues relating to the performance, effectiveness and economy of the contractor are reported to the Parliament. That is what this amendment seeks to do.

I have mentioned these amendments to the Cancer Fund. It does not have a problem with the scrutiny of the Parliament. That is obviously the intention of the amendment. It is non-controversial. It has been done in more onerous ways in other legislation through contracts and Schedules. The amendment provides for it to be done through a regulation; therefore, it will have flexibility and still provide the Parliament with scrutiny of the terms of the contract and the performance standards that may be written into that contract. The Parliament would have the ability to see from the information provided to the Parliament in

the annual report just how the contractor has performed.

Mrs EDMOND: We will be rejecting this amendment, because it is unnecessary and excessive. It goes far beyond what the member is saying. I do not know whether it is her lack of understanding or some other factor that has brought that about. I suspect that the Queensland Cancer Fund does not understand the implications of her amendment. All of the contract would be prescribed in regulation. If that is such a worthy measure, why did that not occur in such massive contracts as the $900m-plus 20-year contracts for the Noosa and Robina Hospitals? Of all the contracts that Queensland Health enters into, I would have to say that $900m worth of 20-year-long contracts with major hospitals to provide a range of health services would have to be the most significant and worthy of being included by prescription in the regulations.

If we complied with these amendments, the agreement would include confidential information, such as fees paid to the Cancer Fund, staffing issues—who got paid what—and all the other factors. That would ensure huge delays. I point out to members opposite that the move for the Cancer Register to go to the Cancer Fund has been under active consideration since 1994. I understand that, from the perspective of the member opposite, that has probably been seen to be rushed as it has taken only four years to get it through. I am not prepared to accept the amendments. I do not think the member opposite fully understands the issue. Among the hundreds of different contracts that Queensland Health signs, if this contract is significant enough to be prescribed in the legislation, I would ask her to advise the Committee why the $900m-plus contracts for Noosa and Robina were not so prescribed.

Miss SIMPSON: I draw the attention of the Chamber back to the fact that in the draft policy paper concerning the public health Act it once again talked about Parliament being able to scrutinise the public health indicators, in other words, bringing issues such as public health performance back into the Parliament. This amendment is really an extension of that process. It reflects the need for a service such as this register, which has traditionally been provided by the Government and has been within the control of the Government. I have not heard the Government suggest that the Births, Deaths and Marriages Register should be contracted out, but if they were seeking to do that I would probably be moving a similar amendment.

We need to have a mechanism that brings it back to the Parliament so that the Parliament can see in the annual report or a report that is tabled in the Parliament how that contractor has performed. It is simply a matter of taking the contract that the Minister is obviously seeking to sign with the Cancer Fund, putting that into a regulation and putting it through the normal processes. It should be a non-controversial method of bringing about accountability with a register which has traditionally been within the control of the Government. I urge the Chamber to support this amendment.

Mrs EDMOND: The member is totally confused. I cannot think of one instance in which a contract between Queensland Health and another provider is spelt out in the regulation in the form that she has suggested—not one. In relation to the idea that somehow being asked to provide a report gives greater accountability—I draw the member's attention to the fact that I understand that for many years the CHO has been required to provide Parliament with an annual report. I certainly do not remember seeing one. I have asked whether one has ever been provided and I am told that no-one else can remember seeing one.

I think that the member for Maroochydore is completely off track. There is no way in the world that we are going to support a commercial-in-confidence contract being spelt out in the regulations as this amendment would have us do.

Miss SIMPSON: Does the Minister envisage another operator taking over this contract? Does she see this as being a commercial contract in the future? Otherwise, what is the opposition to having this contract made subject to a regulation? It is easily changed by regulation. We are not talking about this being contracted out for commercial purposes; it is simply the very narrow function of the Cancer Register, which is a very important register and something that has traditionally been within the control of the Government and is now being contracted out.

That Cancer Register should not be a commercial venture with money to be made out of it. I do not think that has ever been suggested. Therefore, where is the confidentiality problem with making that contract subject to the scrutiny of the Parliament? Certainly, the confidentiality aspects were not raised with me as being a problem. Surely the Parliament has the right to know the terms and conditions of the contract, given that we are not talking about a contract that is supposed to be a commercial venture.

Mrs EDMOND: The contract is commercial because the Cancer Fund is being paid to administer it.

Question—That Miss Simpson's amendments be agreed to—put; and the Committee divided—

AYES, 38—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Goss, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Knuth, Laming, Lingard, Littleproud, Malone, Mitchell, Nelson, Paff, Prenzler, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Turner, Veivers, Watson. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

NOES, 41—Attwood, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, E. A. Cunningham, J. I. Cunningham, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Hollis, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

Pairs: Gibbs, Stephan; Mickel, Sheldon; Barton, Lester; D'Arcy, Pratt

Resolved in the **negative**.

Clause 7, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 8 to 12, as read, agreed to.

Clause 13—

Miss SIMPSON (5.30 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"5. Clause 13—

At page 30, lines 17 to 28 and at page 31 lines 1 to 21—

omit, insert—

' 'Chief health officer must give chief executive returns under s 100C

'182.(1) This section applies to a return under section 100C made before the commencement of this section that is given to the chief health officer.

'(2) The chief health officer must give the return to the chief executive and, merely by doing so, the chief health officer does not contravene a provision of this Act.'.'."

This amendment is consequential to whether or not Schedule 1 is admitted. It is purely a machinery measure to deal with Schedule 1, which guts the role of the Chief Health Officer under 18 Acts. If the Schedule is agreed to, this amendment will not be necessary. However, if the coalition is successful in stopping the gutting of that role, this amendment will be necessary to mandate the Chief Health Officer to supply returns in regard to the Cancer Register. That is a machinery provision.

Mrs EDMOND: For all the reasons that we have given repeatedly in the Parliament today the Government will reject both this amendment and the amendments that will be moved subsequently. I do not think there is any need to put the members present through the further agony of again listening to the reasons that have been given thus far.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 13, as read, agreed to.

Clause 14—

Miss SIMPSON (5.33 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"6. Clause 14—

At page 32, line 3, proposed subsection (1)—

omit."

This is also a consequential amendment.

Mrs EDMOND: The Government will not be accepting this amendment for the reasons given beforehand.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 14, as read, agreed to.

Schedule 1—

Miss SIMPSON (5.33 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"7. Schedule 1—

Pages 33 to 44—

omit."

This amendment relates to the 18 or so Acts that we have already referred to and the fundamental change to the role of the Chief Health Officer. Once again, the Minister has not explained adequately to the Parliament why she has moved in this particular way. In the course of debate the Minister has rejected an amendment that would have enacted in legislation the very thing that she said that the Chief Health Officer was supposed to do, that is, to provide high-level medical advice to the Minister and the director-general on health issues, especially on standards, quality, ethics and research issues. The coalition challenged the Minister to detail that in the legislation, but she did not do it. The Minister has been guilty of grave hypocrisy. She talks about not gutting the role of the Chief Health Officer and being able to receive independent advice, but then she rejects an amendment that simply seeks to define in the legislation the proposed status of the Chief Health Officer as explained in the Explanatory Notes of the Bill.

This is not the way that one should alter fundamental legislation. We expect to see a proper review of the Health Act. As I have

outlined, people were not properly consulted on the tagging of this legislation to other Acts in regard to the Pap Smear Register and the Cancer Register. The Minister has been caught out. She has misled the Parliament in regard to her true intentions for the position of the CHO. Now we have two statutory office holders, one with delegated powers and the other with unspecified powers on the provision of high-level advice. The Minister has rejected an amendment that simply challenged her to stand by what she said that role was going to be.

This legislation will gut an independent role. This is not accountability in Government; this is not transparency in Government. This is not the way that one should be leading the health system. I have watched how the Minister has handled herself in relation to this matter and she has not given us great confidence in her ability. Indeed, the same problem occurs in a number of other areas that she is responsible for. People who work within the public health system do not have confidence in the Minister. If this is the way that the Minister consults on legislation and if this is her proposal for a proper overhaul of the Health Act, I hate to think what will happen to the public health system in her term in office, however long or short that may be.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: This is probably one of the core amendments to the legislation, as it deals with the retention of the status quo in relation to the position of the CHO. I again acknowledge the advice that the Minister has provided through her officers and I appreciate that advice. It made it more difficult, because the material that I received was inconsistent with the information that perhaps I should have received.

I remain troubled about the level of concern expressed to me by people from my electorate who are involved in the provision of health services to the community. Therefore, I will be supporting the amendments. I acknowledge that the member for Nicklin has already indicated his support for the Bill in its entirety, so my opposition will be indicative only. However, I will not be supporting the Bill.

I will support the amendments for two reasons, and I want to place them on the record. I do not dispute that changes to the CHO's role need to be made. The Minister has already indicated that that is so because of the 1996 change to the structure of the Health Act. I am worried about the level of concern that has been raised with me over the fact that this was done separately from the review of the Health Act. That is a primary concern. I am also worried about the level of concern expressed to me, and my own personal concern, about the potential for the politicisation of advice to the Minister and the consequences of that for decision making on public health issues. I put that on the record, although it is not intended as a slight to anybody in the industry, the department or the Minister. However, those issues have been raised with me and they appear to be incompletely answered on the basis of the information that I received. Therefore, I will be supporting the amendment.

Mrs EDMOND: The Government will reject this amendment also, because basically it rejects all of the decisions made so far this evening by the Parliament. In fact, I suggest that, basically, the amendment is a contempt of the Parliament, because it says, "We do not care what has been decided in the Parliament. With this amendment we are going to seek to overturn those decisions."

I have to comment also about the statement by the member for Maroochydore that this is not the way to change legislation. I am dumbfounded and amazed, because I would have thought that we would change legislation by consulting and bringing a Bill into this place so that it can be debated and voted on. I thought that is exactly the way in which legislation is changed. That is what I was taught. That is the way in which it has always been done in Queensland. I would have thought that that was still appropriate.

I apologise to the member for Gladstone in relation to the information that she received. If I were paranoid and if I saw reds under the bed and so on, I would even suspect that she was misinformed deliberately about those changes. I do not know what happened. I cannot explain that, and I have not seen the document that she has. However, at the very least I find it rather mischievous. I will follow up whether that was deliberate. However, I assure the member that we are not rushing in this legislation. As I indicated earlier, this should have been done two years ago so as to be consistent with the changes in Queensland Health. If I was sure that we could get the health legislation through next year, I would probably have made these changes then; it probably would have been simpler.

The member was speaking to some Brisbane-based bureaucrats when I was saying earlier that we have an enormous backlog of legislation, much of which has to be passed before June next year. That includes the mental health legislation, the health practitioners registration legislation and the

radiation safety legislation. Much of that legislation involves extensive regulations, and all of it has to be passed by June next year. We are probably looking at a delay of 18 months before we can guarantee that the health legislation will be passed. I am not prepared to wait that long.

In relation to the shortage of time, about four years went by from whence this was mooted to whence it has happened. I think four years of consultation is probably three years of consultation too much. People in positions of authority in different organisations who were consulted have moved on and we have new executive officers in some of those positions. The consultation has been going on for so long that they forget what has happened. They forget who has been consulted and what they have agreed to. I do not think we can go through even a year of that process without getting this sorted out once and for all and passed through the Parliament. We soundly reject this final attempt to overturn the decisions made earlier in this Chamber.

Miss SIMPSON: What nonsense! We are debating legislation before the Parliament. The Minister says it is a contempt to debate legislation. The issue is an ethical one—the way in which the Minister has gone about this process and her competence in doing so. I have had correspondence from people indicating that they were not consulted about the changes to the Acts in which they have a great interest; they are stakeholders in this legislation. I outlined one stakeholder before. I have spoken to a number of people. It is a concern that this matter is not being debated as part of amendments under the public health legislation or the other Acts that the Minister has altered.

The other misleading information that the Minister is continuing to promulgate is that the coalition somehow supported the gutting of the powers of the Chief Health Officer. The previous Health Minister did not agree to the gutting of those powers. A draft policy paper was put out for discussion. The previous Minister did not agree to the suggestion that those roles should be gutted. What we have been saying today is that there needs to be a new public health Act and proper consultation and consideration not only of who holds those powers but also whether some powers are appropriate, and what checks and balances are put on those powers. That has been the whole basis of our argument tonight.

Our argument is not that there does not need to be change. We are saying that any changes should be made in an open and accountable way, with proper consideration being given to the checks and balances that are needed, instead of having this mishmash of legislation tacked onto amendments with respect to the Cancer Fund and the Pap Smear Register in an inappropriate way. This is not the appropriate way to go about altering legislation. It is not an open and accountable way. The Minister has delivered to the Parliament legislation that weakens the checks and balances in our system, weakens the ability to receive independent advice and makes a mockery of the process of proper drafting and consultation in respect of a new public health Act.

Question—That Miss Simpson's amendment be agreed to—put; and the Committee divided—

AYES, 39—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, E. A. Cunningham, Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Goss, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Knuth, Laming, Lingard, Littleproud, Malone, Mitchell, Nelson, Paff, Prenzler, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Turner, Veivers, Watson. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

NOES, 40—Attwood, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, J. I. Cunningham, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Hollis, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

Pairs: D'Arcy, Pratt; Barton, Lester; Gibbs, Stephan; Mickel, Sheldon

Resolved in the **negative**.

Schedule 1, as read, agreed to.

Schedule 2, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

Bill, on motion of Mrs Edmond, by leave, read a third time.

TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

Second Reading

Resumed from 22 October (see p. 2749).

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (5.52 p.m.): In rising to speak to the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill, I say from the outset that this legislation covers some of those matters that I refer to as being omitted from the first Transport Legislation Amendment Bill introduced by the Minister on

6 August this year. Once again, the Opposition is in support of this legislation because, as the Minister is well aware, much of this Bill was drafted under my instruction when I was Minister and when the coalition was in Government.

However, the first provision of this Bill amends the Traffic Act of 1949 to enhance provisions regarding the removal of abandoned vehicles, including trams and animals, from roadways. The reasons for the removal include: that the chief executive officer of a local authority decides that the vehicle is creating a danger, hindrance or obstruction. These amendments also make provision for how local governments can deal with this property in question. Unfortunately, these provisions are necessary as abandoned vehicles are becoming a bigger problem on our roads and more so as the population grows in this State. It is something that we have to address, and it is good to see that it is in this legislation. These amendments will release police officers from these quite time-consuming matters and will permit local authorities to respond quickly to dangerous situations and/or public complaints.

The one thing that I am not quite sure about is: are we talking here about abandoned trams? The Minister smiles! That is a big problem. But given that the Government has abandoned the whole of the Briztram project, it may be just as well that the provisions have been included. I do note that the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill that I had drafted included detailed amendments to the provision of the Briztram light rail project, which was identified in the Integrated Regional Transport Plan for south-east Queensland, which was released in April of 1997. Briztram would have not only created jobs in the construction and operational phases but also greatly assisted in reducing reliance on the motor vehicle in the inner city area.

I think that is one thing that many of us are well aware of. I heard the Minister touch on the Integrated Regional Transport Plan in a ministerial statement that he made to the House this morning. When we talk about the inner city area, we are well aware of the urban development taking place because of people wanting to live in the inner city areas. A very innovative way of using modern technology to move people in vast numbers is to allow them to take advantage of the tram system, the Briztram system, the light rail system, or whatever term one wants to use. It would have encouraged urban renewal and supported inner city living. The project was already being used as a promotional aspect of a number of developments that have fallen victim to Labor's failure to implement infrastructure projects. The light rail project would have attracted tourists to the city and encouraged customers back to the central business district retail centre.

However, there had been little or no news of the replacement light rail project that Labor had waiting in the wings to replace Briztram until we heard the Minister's statement this morning about some of the aspects of the policy that the coalition had already put in place. It was music to my ears and, I am sure, to many members in this House when this morning the Minister announced the Brisbane light rail project—that $235m project comprising a contribution of funding from all three levels of Government and possible private sector involvement as well as a contribution to the value of $100m towards the Brisbane City Council's recently released transport plan. In that statement, the Minister said—

> "The Brisbane City Council Transport Plan contains a package of measures and the State Government's contribution to the value of $100m, including $60m in direct funding and $40m worth of land, is a significant start to the funding and implementation of this transport plan which will put into place much needed local transport improvements across Brisbane."

I ask the Minister, and I hope that he might clarify this in his reply: is this money to go towards the City/Valley bypass or is it money that is going to be used in other areas of general transportation needs in the greater Brisbane area? If I can just go back firstly to Briztram, I say to the Minister: for God's sake do not lose that $65m that the Federal Government has already said that it would put into that project, because it is certainly the nucleus of getting this project up and running. The Minister talks about the project itself being a standard gauge issue as far as our Queensland Rail network here in Brisbane is concerned and whether our narrow gauge would be able to interface with that. I do not have a problem with that, but I certainly do have a problem if we are going to lose that $65m from the Federal Government.

Mr Bredhauer: You can ring John Anderson for me. He will not take my calls and he will not return my calls.

Mr JOHNSON: I take the Minister's point on that. I think we have come to a time when we need a little bit of understanding on this issue. I am somewhat disappointed that John

Anderson is not taking the Minister's calls or returning them. I suggest that some diplomacy be exercised here so that we can make a breakthrough on this.

Mr Bredhauer: I am trying to ring him.

Mr JOHNSON: I will certainly be talking to him. I heard the Minister mention in his ministerial statement today that in Canberra the Premier handed the Prime Minister a letter to the effect that he is hoping that that $65m is secured. It is going to be a sad day for the transportation needs of Brisbane if we see that money lost.

The other matter in the Transport Minister's statement this morning which reflects on this piece of legislation was the $100m, including $40m worth of land, to which I made mention. Is that $100m a contribution from the State Government to the Brisbane City Council or is it a State Government contribution towards the City/Valley bypass?

Debate, on motion of Mr Johnson, adjourned.

TRAINING FOR MATURE-AGE WORKERS

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—LP) (6 p.m.): I move—

> "That this House calls upon the Government to reverse its intention to discriminate against mature Queensland workers in employment who seek to enhance their vocational skills through accessing traineeships."

Last week, in his ministerial statement and accompanying media release, Mr Braddy made a very selective use of statistics from the departmental report produced for him by Dr Larry Smith, one of his departmental officers. Dr Smith prefaces his report with a disclaimer as to the veracity of statistical evidence collected and cites the existence of pervasive problems with the consistency, validity and accessibility of statistical information relating to apprenticeships and traineeships. Similar disclaimers appearing elsewhere in the report include—

> "On almost every statistic collected for this report, there was significant variability across industry areas. Indeed, summating data into one overall training perspective frequently presented a picture that did not reflect the situation in most industries.
>
> ...
>
> The precision and scope of this Report have been limited by difficulties in obtaining valid and reliable statistics that can be compared across time.
>
> ...
>
> Existing data relating to apprentice numbers attending TAFE Institutes is not sufficiently reliable to allow detailed analysis."

As Dr Smith was one of the most senior officers in TAFE Queensland for most of the years covered by his report, this is the first of several surprising admissions and/or omissions in this report. I will continue with Dr Smith's disclaimers relating to the data upon which he bases his report. It states—

> "Older data has been coded using a different set of criteria from that used for 'newer' data and this does not necessarily mean the same thing. A similar problem arises because of the introduction of the A VETMISS standards around 1995."

It is important to note that this date is critical, as the coalition came to power in Queensland in February 1996. Dr Smith goes on to state—

> "Inconsistencies exist across and within the three major data bases."
>
> ...
>
> "There are no up-to-date, readily available and comprehensive statistical reports on trade training which provide a single set of regularly updated and defensible information for policy developers and decision makers."

These admissions about the lack of rigour in the report's statistical database, when combined with its frequent use of anecdotal evidence and reliance on informal findings of internal research projects, research by the department's own director-general and extensively quoted reports based on VET in Victoria rather than Queensland, lead to internal inconsistencies in the document and greatly limit its credibility. Despite his own clear warnings about the quality of the statistics, frequent mentions in the report that information being considered is "anecdotal" and warnings that not too much reliance should be put on short-term, fluctuating figures, Dr Smith completely ignores his own advice and begins his report with a generalisation that struck a responsive chord with his no-doubt appreciative Minister. He states there is—

> "... clear evidence that people in the 15-20 year old age group and particularly early school leavers are increasingly being locked out from structured training. The situation is far more obvious with respect

> to trainees but the trend is also obvious with apprenticeships."

Further in his report this statement is attributed to a 1998 report by the Office of Training and Further Education in Victoria, which coincidentally has the title Apprenticeships and Traineeships: Victorian Trends. Unfortunately, Dr Smith shoots part of his authoritative sounding argument to bits when on page (vii) and again on page 16 he states—

> "There has not been a dramatic change over time in the proportion of apprentices in each age group."

In fact, the actual decrease in the apprentice age group of most concern to the Minister and Dr Smith, the early school leavers, the 15 to 16 year olds, if we make the obviously heroic assumption that the figures are reliable, has been 1% over four years, two of which were Labor years.

I will return to completely discount the other parts of Dr Smith's opening generalisation later—I refer to the bit about traineeships—suffice it to make two points. From the data given in the report concerning the percentage of trainees in each age group and the annual number of trainee commencements, it can readily be calculated that the number of 15 to 16-year-old trainees commencing in 1997-98 is approximately 1,000 more than commenced in 1994-95. So much for the myth that the early school leavers have been locked out of training. There has been a five-fold increase in numbers within this age group.

My second and major point is that Dr Smith's data on page 21 is not comparing like with like. I refer to his own point about changing criteria. When the national system of traineeships was introduced, the national focus was on limiting traineeships as much as possible to 16 to 19-year-olds, and the earlier figures reflect this. This initial rigidity in the system contained two potential injustices for mature workers already in the work force. These workers were called upon to teach work-related skills to new recruits but under the system were denied the opportunity to receive formal accreditation for these same skills. In addition, if older existing workers were excluded from a traineeship and therefore denied the opportunity to attain the qualification involved, the youngest workers, having been provided with the training and having achieved the relevant vocational qualification, could leapfrog or displace their older colleagues.

Mr Braddy appears totally unconcerned with these issues of natural justice and attacks the coalition for softening the unconscionable rigidity of the initial bias against mature workers seeking recognition for and the opportunity to extend their vocational skills. As a lawyer, Mr Braddy should consider whether he is breaching anti-discrimination legislation as he sets about penalising older workers by using age as a primary criteria for deciding who will receive vocational training and qualifications.

Oblivious to the many limitations in this report, Minister Braddy has plucked a few negatives out of the mass of admittedly invalid, inconsistent and unreliable figures and attempted to make a convincing-sounding story of coalition-inspired decline and destruction of apprentice and trainee programs. From page 15 of his departmental report, Mr Braddy could have told the Parliament—

> "Apprentice completion rates in many of the trades have improved quite significantly over the last three or four years. In the period 1994-98:
>
> Automotive completions have risen from 593 to 918 (a 55% increase);
>
> Construction completions have risen from 859 to 1,561 (an 82% increase);
>
> Electrical/electronics completions have risen from 639 to 729 (a 14% increase);
>
> Food completions have risen from 432 to 548 (a 27% increase); and
>
> Mechanical and fabrication engineering completions have risen from 842 to 1,020 (a 21% increase)."

These figures would not have suited the Minister's negative and destructive purpose. From page (v) of his departmental report, he could have told the Parliament that the decline in apprenticeships, though significant, is not as marked in Queensland as in other parts of Australia. As Dr Smith says—

> "Indeed with 18.3% of Australia's population, Queensland currently has 19.7% of the nation's apprentices in training."

Again, such a positive statistic and the mass of other positive material in this report would not serve Mr Braddy's purpose. He could have encouraged those considering a career in the construction industry by pointing out that in the industry over the past 12 months new apprentice approvals have improved by a significant 29%, to 1,682. Instead, he hunted down the most negative statistics he could find to discourage would-be apprentices.

His warped creativity in focusing on the most negative statistics can be best illustrated by his reference to what he believed was an unhealthy growth in traineeships under the coalition. Anyone with minimal mathematical skills can put a ruler on the section of the graph in figure 13 on page 18 which represents the Labor years. By extending the trend line it can be seen that, had the ALP remained in power, it would have created about 20,000 traineeships by 1997-98. Why, then, according to Mr Braddy's report, was it so bad for the coalition to create about 25,000 traineeships by the same date? Did those extra 5,000 Queenslanders not deserve to be trained? On page 17 of his report, Dr Smith indicates—

> "Between 1994 and 1997, Queensland's proportion of the nation's trainees rose from 22.3% to 26.8%, the highest for any State".

The phenomenal growth Mr Braddy considers so unhealthy or bad increased Queensland's share of the nation's trainees by a mere 4.5%. Braddy, a perpetual critic, would obviously prefer Queensland's share of national traineeships to have declined by 4.5%.

On page 14 of his report, Dr Smith describes as a conundrum the fact that Queensland simultaneously has both one of the nation's highest apprenticeship completion rates and the nation's highest cancellation rate. Which part of the conundrum was of interest to this destructive Minister? Well, it was not the higher than average completion rate. Not wanting to give much credit to the previous Government, the report's author indicates that this completion rate indicates that good things may have happened in the department in 1994 to cause it.

The Minister's antipathy to mature workers and traineeships shines through when on page 3 of his ministerial statement he decries the fact that there are now more trainees than apprentices in Queensland. Why should there not be? According to 1996-97 figures I have just received from NCVER, the same situation exists in all other States, contrary to information in Mr Braddy's report. As the average traineeship is one year in length as against four for an apprenticeship, it is logical that there would be more traineeships—up to four times as many.

In addition, traineeships were developed to provide training in new, growing areas of the economy where no formal training already existed; for example, in information technology, service industries, horticulture, and administrative, managerial and paraprofessional areas. It is within these areas that growth in traineeships for mature-age workers—existing workers who need them—was occurring.

We in the Opposition totally reject the false emphasis that Minister Braddy is seeking to place on his new, and what he calls progressive, training agenda. We believe that mature-aged workers within the work force deserve as much access to training as anybody else, because unless some of them retrain they will drop out of the work force as the result of a lack of such retraining. And what the Minister may gain from his new-found zeal and emphasis for employees at the other end—the youth end of the training market—will certainly be counteracted by those dropping out at the other end. The system that the Minister is criticising is the very system that I inherited, which provided precisely the same results as those that were provided when I was the Minister for Training and Industrial Relations.

Time expired.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.11 p.m.): I second the motion moved by the member for Clayfield. What members are discussing tonight is policy developed on the run by the Minister—policy that is being picked out of the report on apprenticeships and traineeships, Queensland trends, which quotes significantly from the Victorian scene. In particular, through Estimates committee hearings and ministerial statements, the Minister has criticised the coalition for providing traineeships for older members of the work force. The Minister has indicated that he wants to restrict traineeships to those between 15 and 19 years of age.

The coalition goes along with providing good opportunities for young people who want to enter the work force, but in the interests of justice and in the interests of everybody, surely there are other people who need traineeships and additional training throughout their careers. Whereas it is absolutely essential for young people to get a start in life, to have a job, to turn up on time, to accept the discipline and direction of working for employers, to learn new skills, to take home a pay packet, to budget and to make a start in life, other people have kids to raise. Many people have worked throughout the years, they are perhaps over 40 or 50, they have raised their kids, and they are trying to save some money towards their retirement, or they are continuing to pay off their houses after raising their families throughout their working years. What we see here is an absolute discrimination against

people. The Minister is making policy on the run out of this flawed report, which contains about one page of disclaimers at various stages giving all sorts of reasons as to why we should not take particular notice of the detail of the report. This is quite unjust.

I ask members to look at what happened over the past few years. Under the Goss Government, we started to see an increase in traineeships being applied to people other than those who have just entered the work force. That practice continued under the coalition Government to the extent that now there are about 1,275 traineeships for young people aged 15 to 16, whereas about four years ago there were in the order of 275. So about 1,000 new traineeships have been created for 15 to 16-year-olds over the past four years. The coalition Government and, indeed, the previous Goss Government were doing their bit for younger people.

In many instances, those who provide the system of training under traineeships are older people in the work force who have the work experience. They have learnt it through the university of life, and they pass it on to the younger people who come in under the traineeships system. Traineeships are a great scheme, because they provide flexibility. A trainee in the hospitality industry might work for six months in a restaurant, then move on to six months in a takeaway set-up and then to some other type of catering institution. So traineeships do provide flexibility and an opportunity that would not exist under an apprenticeship, because someone may not be able to take that person on for the required three or four years. It is the older or middle-aged people who are passing on that knowledge. In many cases, those people have not had the opportunity to obtain formal qualifications, but they are passing on this knowledge to younger people, who can then get their qualifications and perhaps leapfrog them in the workplace or even take away their positions. Let us remember that many people are very concerned about downsizing, the corporatisation of organisations and losing their jobs. They have as much need for training as do the young people who are entering the work force.

I turn now to some statistics. In 1994-95, about 10.9% of trainees were 15 to 16-year-olds. That figure is about 5.1% now. The point is that this equates to 1,275 young people, compared with 275. There has been a big increase in the number of traineeships that are available. What could we expect, though, when one of the members of this Labor Government—the member for Springwood—stood in this House last week and absolutely did over people aged over 50? He has not apologised yet. That is the attitude shown towards older people by members opposite. The member for Springwood talked about dementia and dribbling. He spoke about the need for CPR, but there is still no apology forthcoming from the member for Springwood. He was joined, in his usual style of behaviour, by the member for Logan, who did over the doctors. Then the member for Chermside did over the very police who helped him out when he got his office rammed. And the Premier in this House talked about the people——

Mr SULLIVAN: I rise to a point of order. That statement is false. It is untrue. I criticised a group of police at the Logan Police Station—and no-one else—over one incident. I ask that that statement be withdrawn. It is false, misleading and untrue.

Mr HORAN: If the member finds unpalatable what he said in the House, I will withdraw.

Time expired.

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Kedron—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (6.15 p.m.): I rise to answer a motion moved by the shadow Minister. I move the following amendment—

> "Omit all words after 'That this House' and insert—
>
> 'supports the Government's initiatives to assist young Queenslanders, mature aged and other disadvantaged job seekers to access vocational skills and enter the workforce.'."

The motion of the member for Clayfield is one of the most disingenuous motions to come before the House for some time—disingenuous because, just a month ago, Mr Santoro told the Estimates committee that he realised there was a problem in the very area which the Smith report criticises and which I have been talking about. What we are about tonight is an attempt at an easy headline for the coalition as it prepares for its campaign for the Mulgrave by-election.

How can it be said that mature-age workers are discriminated against? Over 80% of the training dollar is available to workers of any age. What we are talking about is ensuring that traineeship funding is used specifically for what it was intended: to go to those making the transition from school to work; to go to those making the transition from unemployment to work; and to go to those returning to work—women and, dare I say it, the mature-age worker. All this Government

has done is eliminate the exploitation in the system and set sensible priorities—something Mr Santoro failed to do in his two and a half years as a Minister. Let me quote the member for Clayfield's statement to the Estimates committee on 7 October. He said—

> "I agree with you that abuses were occurring under previous guidelines and, if you read and understand the brief that I signed, you will note that I authorised the rapid overhaul of that system when I was the Minister."

The member for Clayfield did not do enough. He merely restricted access to those whose employment was for less than 12 months. All this Government has done is to do what the member for Clayfield did not do, that is, stop the abuses. Dr Larry Smith of the department painted the true picture. His report finds clear evidence that 15 to 20-year-olds are missing out on the benefits of traineeships, with 70% of trainees being over 21 years of age. In comparison with the rest of the nation, there are poor completion rates in Queensland for traineeships—in fact, less than a third are completed. We need to sensibly approach traineeships on an industry-by-industry basis, not the laissez faire shambles of the previous Government. There are problems with the data regarding traineeships that we need to address.

At 30 June, when I had just taken over, the true situation as to traineeships was a public disgrace. In the public sector, under Mr Santoro's stewardship, 80% of the trainees employed in the State Government were existing State Government workers converted to trainees. One of the first things that occurred after I became Minister was that the department rejected a proposal for 100 staff—current staff; those already in the work force—at the Princess Alexandra Hospital to be retrained in clerical work. Under the Beattie Government, 6,000 traineeships will be created in the public sector.

The member for Clayfield knows all about trying to put pressure on the Government over this matter. I table a document from one of Mr Santoro's cronies. It is a memo from Dr David McSwan of the Rural Education Research and Development Centre at the James Cook University. The memo talks of meetings with the National Party. The party's Mulgrave by-election campaign is mentioned. The memo states—

> "It is apparent that the Minister and the department have the single priority of making a rapid and dramatic impact on the unemployment statistic."

I plead guilty to that. He got that right!

Interestingly enough, Dr McSwan gives his memo some semi-official status by putting it on James Cook University letterhead. In addition to his academic mortarboard, Dr McSwan also wears the hat of being a registered training provider and is therefore able to benefit from the inequities in the traineeship system. Dr McSwan has sold training and qualifications to the Department of Defence. One of his trainees contacted the department in November requesting that his traineeship be changed from certificate 4 in information technology to certificate 3 in business. The addendum shows that his occupation was an operations officer. The effect of that training was that an Army officer was to be trained at Government expense in how to run an office, which he was already employed to do in the Army. In another case, a computer company touted to its clients "office skills training for current staff at no cost to you". Its flier read—

> "Effective immediately, cash incentives of $1250 and $4000 per employee will be available to employers whose existing employees undertake traineeships."

The Beattie Labor Government has done what the member for Clayfield has failed to do and what he told this House he wanted to do last month.

Time expired.

Mr PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (6.20 p.m.): I second the amendment moved by the Minister. I find it astonishing that the honourable member for Clayfield has the utter temerity to speak of discrimination in the context of traineeships. I ask the House to remember that he was the Minister for Training and Industrial Relations; employment did not even rate a passing mention. It ill becomes him to prattle on about employment creation and support for employers when the coalition's significant contribution to employment consisted of dismantling programs that were proven to be effective. What a magnificent achievement that was!

However, let us not dwell on the past. Unlike our colleagues opposite, the Beattie Labor Government has a clear vision for reducing unemployment and giving real hope to Queenslanders, whether they are new entrants into the work force or those who have been marginalised in the past. The people of Queensland must be asking themselves what the Liberal/National coalition really stands for. They see a group of people driven by economic rationalist ideology who, when

presented with incontrovertible proof of abuses of the traineeship system, did too little too late. The coalition then has the hide to accuse this Government of discriminating against employers and blocking employment growth. What arrant nonsense!

Mr Santoro interjected.

Mr PURCELL: I will tell the member opposite how people in the building industry did their training. It was the greatest joke on earth. They would go out and hire themselves a boat. They would say, "We are training in Moreton Bay this weekend." They would load up the boat with grog and all the foremen. The workers never got a chop at that sort of training; it was for all the project managers and foremen. Out to Moreton Bay they would go. They were taught how to land a fish and open stubbies with their eye sockets, under their arms or with their teeth. That was all the training they got. It was a great day out at public expense.

How does it discriminate against employers or block employment growth when the entire work force in an aged people's home was converted to traineeship status? Not one new job was created in that cynical exercise. How does it discriminate or block employment growth when a university signs up its entire staff as information technology trainees? There was not a single new job created; it was just a way of getting staff trained at public expense. Does it not discriminate against unemployed people and employers who act within the intent of skills development training when a registered training organisation uses the system to urge businesses to sign up existing employees on the basis that "the company will get thousands of dollars of training free"? Just who is being discriminated against here? Just who is being blocked from employment? I put it to honourable members that the discrimination is against unemployed people seeking to enter or re-enter the work force. Queenslanders, particularly new job seekers, parents and businesspeople who support traineeships and apprenticeships will have no problem in laying the blame squarely where it belongs: at the feet of the coalition, which did not even have an Employment portfolio.

I have heard comments that these are not real jobs; that apprentices and trainees are dumped back into the job market upon completion of their contracted training. Frankly, I wonder whether members opposite have even the vaguest idea of what apprenticeships and traineeships are all about. Firstly, they are an entry point into industry employment, especially for young people. Yes, unemployment is currently unacceptably high; but at the same time there is increasing evidence from industry groups of serious skills shortages. Apprenticeships and traineeships are vital to the future growth of industries, something that even the member for Clayfield would hardly have the temerity to deny. But more than that, they help present and future generations of young people into employment through training that is needed and valued by industry. They are a career pathway.

Overwhelmingly, people who have completed their apprenticeships and traineeships are highly regarded by employers who want to retain their services. That is because they are familiar with the company's work environment, standards, equipment and customers and are better trained and more versatile employees. They are employed for the duration of their training. They have skills that make them marketable to employers. They make the transition to permanent workers. The training gives them confidence and the ability to sell themselves and to go out and start to make a living for themselves. Under this Government's policy, additional training for those already employed will not be made via the use of traineeships. There are many alternative avenues for people to gain additional skills while they are in the work force. If this smacks of discrimination, I for one plead guilty and will be happy to be judged by all right-thinking Queenslanders who want to see unemployed people, particularly our young people, get a fair go.

Mr SLACK (Burnett—NPA) (6.25 p.m.): The House tonight has an opportunity to force this minority Government to face the challenges of the future in public sector training. It should take that opportunity. It should insist that the Government marches resolutely towards the future rather than continuing its headlong retreat to the policy failures of Labor's past. We live in a dynamic State. Queenslanders are energetic and innovative people. For the benefit of the member for Springwood particularly, let it also be noted that they are people of every age group.

Tonight I will examine the question of what exactly are the political and philosophical factors motivating a full-frontal attack by the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations on the previous Government during the Estimates committee hearings last month. Particularly, I believe he should be condemned over his attack on the previous Government's policy of encouraging mature workers already in employment to take

advantage of the new training opportunities opened up for the first time through traineeships.

The primary political reality is that, prior to the State election, the Labor Party made a nakedly opportunistic appeal to the prevailing sympathy of Queenslanders and, indeed, of all Australians for the plight of the unemployed. But Labor got it wrong as usual when it came to actually proposing a solution. It focused exclusively on the situation—and let us all here note that it is a tragic situation—of young school leavers and the young unemployed. In the process, Labor cruelly raised the expectations of that section of the unemployed work force, and of their parents, families and peers. The Premier who leads this minority Labor Government stands condemned for having made this his personal crusade—one that is about as likely as any of the original crusades to achieve a positive outcome. Labor has made promises it cannot keep, raised expectations that cannot be realised and dreamed up targets it will never hit. Where was the analysis? Where was the assessment? Nowhere! It was simply a case of selecting a figure that the electorate might buy. Where was the analysis of the labour market? Where was the assessment of its long-term trends or of likely future developments? There were none. If there were, none of them were what Labor would want to put into the public arena. It was all too difficult and the analysis much too likely to come up with answers that members opposite would not want to live with. When the people they were cruelly trying to hoax found out what they were doing, they came the bounce instead. Now they have to live with the dilemma they have created for themselves. But this Parliament—on the numbers that the non-Labor majority have voted for—can bring them to heel.

It is a matter of no satisfaction to the many Queenslanders whose lives are blighted by unemployment that Labor, in its traditional fashion, is not seeking a future-oriented, creative solution. Instead, it is trolling through its extensive grab bag of past failures and desperately trying to modify any that it thinks might be made to look as though they may work this time around. The first of these recycled failures is the return of community-based, short-term employment initiatives. We have seen it all before: "There's a rock. Paint it." We all know that demand in the work force is for skilled workers in most trades and in the growing information technology sector, the service sector, and in the fields of administration and business management. Even Labor knows that. However, Labor is not directed towards workable outcomes, or even sensible ones. Instead of continuing to build new skills and a broader skills base, Labor plans yet again to spend millions upon millions of dollars on make-work and training-alternative schemes that will put the young unemployed to work, temporarily, in areas unrelated to the future of Queensland and of these young people themselves. They will be developing skills that will bear little or no relationship—or, at best, a minimal relationship—to the skills they need to develop if they are to obtain a permanent job in the developing sectors of Queensland's economy.

It is no secret that the effect of Labor's proposed apprenticeship program will be to engage unemployed young people for up to three years in employment and training, at the end of which no jobs are guaranteed. Worse, taking them out of the job market for three years may well mean that they are simply three years older and even further behind the eight ball when they eventually find themselves dumped out into the real world. That is likely to be even more detrimental to those people who live in regional and provincial areas where genuine jobs—jobs requiring effective trade and other skills—are most needed. Labor's short-sighted policy shifts the focus and funding of critical areas of Government spending from job creation programs that support employers to unemployment reduction by the sleight of hand methodology of short-term employment training programs.

Time expired.

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (6.30 p.m.): In this debate, it is crucial to point out how out of step with the rest of Australia Queensland has been under the previous Government in recognising the damage occurring within the State's traineeship system. It is only under the current Beattie Government that this damage has been recognised and addressed effectively.

It was interesting to note that the honourable member for Clayfield, in moving his motion, supposedly defended his motion and defended his own Government's lack of action on this issue. Currently, many State and Territory Governments do not even allow existing workers to register as apprentices or trainees. Governments in Victoria, New South Wales, the ACT and Tasmania will neither register nor provide public funding for apprentices and trainees who are existing workers. The Western Australian Government allows existing workers to enter

apprenticeships but does not allow existing workers to register as trainees. These States have structured their apprenticeship and traineeship systems to encourage new entrants into employment rather than existing workers.

I am amazed that the honourable member for Burnett should question this Minister's and this Government's motivation in moving so quickly on this issue. That is the key to our motivation: new entrants into employment rather than existing workers. We foresaw the damaging effect that the unfettered entry of existing workers into traineeships would have on job creation and employment opportunities for new entrants to the work force.

Unfortunately, the previous coalition Government did not—at least it was slow to listen and even then, when it did begin to accept that the problem was real, it acted in a shallow and mean-spirited way. Why not fix the problem? Heaven knows! The coalition should answer that. Was it just sheer incompetence? What is worse, when the coalition recognised the damage, all it did was to put in place a weak and ineffectual policy. This policy allows anyone to register as an apprentice or trainee where it is deemed to be above his or her current employment level. The only restriction placed on this entry is where an employee employed for longer than 12 months full time is not funded for a level 1 or 2 traineeship.

The result of this small, mean-spirited action was that Queensland's traineeship system exploded. Over the past three years, traineeship numbers have risen by a massive 800%. According to a recent report by Dr Larry Smith, although Queensland has only 18.3% of the nation's population, it now has 26.8% of Australia's trainees—more than any other State. Oh that it were something of which we could be proud! Instead, it reflects the previous Government's policy of giving jobs to people who already have jobs and of using the public funds that should be devoted to those who need entry to the employment market in order to back up those who are there already.

Sadly, too, the completion rate for trainees in Queensland is abysmal, with only around one third completing. Sadder still, that growth in traineeship numbers appears to have comprised a large proportion of existing workers. Because of that, new entrants to the work force have been unable to access traineeship job opportunities. According to Dr Larry Smith, that may indicate that traineeships have been used as wage subsidies for existing workers. That is yet another example of the publicly funded training system being exploited.

Other States have been able to successfully limit the damage caused by this sort of exploitation. Sometimes I think for some businesses it is a form of desperation. It is the Government's task—the Government's responsibility—to set in place the rules for business, to set the limits to ensure that the publicly funded traineeships are indeed targeted at the people whom they were intended for and should be intended for, that is, for those who need a chance to get into the work force, a chance to get some skills that they are presently lacking.

It was also interesting to note that the honourable member for Toowoomba South accuses this Government of making policy on the run. You bet it is policy on the run! This is more of the positive kind of action that people know that the Beattie Government is taking—not sitting around scratching our heads, denying, considering and taking our time or making small policy changes; you bet that it is making policy on the run. It is action on the run. It demonstrates further, and reaffirms, the ability of the Beattie Government to respond quickly. This is what leadership and decision by Governments are about. It is through this that we can work towards genuinely creating new jobs.

Time expired.

Mr BLACK (Whitsunday—ONP) (6.35 p.m.): I must point out One Nation's policy in relation to employment. We seek to and have always sought to introduce a very workable and viable traineeship and apprenticeship program, because we recognise that the present system is not working to its potential. We must come up with the best alternative to gain useful and complete training and apprenticeships that will develop into full-time employment for our unemployed. This policy encompasses all our unemployed—our school leavers, our youth, our mature-aged people, and our skilled and unskilled unemployed.

The 1996 census found that the qualification levels of many of our Queensland workers in many industries were lower than those possessed by workers in the same industries in other parts of Australia. An improvement in Queensland's qualification profile would result in greater competitiveness in a wide range of industries. The cost of implementing these recommendations should not just be borne by industry but by the Government as well.

However, the Government should not just be supporting business and industry for the hell of it; the Government should be supporting business and industry to reduce the unemployment level. As a small businessman, I believe that traineeships and apprenticeships should be offered to reduce the current devastating levels of unemployment, because unemployment levels of 9% are just not acceptable.

Avenues are available to those workers who are currently employed and who wish to enhance their skills or upgrade their skill level in that area in which they are currently employed by attending a TAFE college and paying the fees personally, or having their employer sponsor their upgrading of skills. DETIR provides grant funds to TAFE colleges and, in rural Queensland, a network of four agricultural colleges provides training for a skilled rural work force to meet local and State industry needs.

DETIR's annual report states that, during 1997, it was revealed that long-term existing workers were being signed up as trainees under the ATS. That was done so that the employer could gain some pennies from heaven—in this case from the Government—from the subsidy provided by the Commonwealth Government as employing a trainee, and registered training organisations could gain training funds from the Queensland Government. Some examples of this practice are a medical practitioner—a tyrannosaurus rex of the economic feeding tree—in Queensland who registered himself as an information technology trainee with the sole purpose of receiving training at taxpayers' expense for the information technology component of the course that he had undertaken; the university that signed up its entire staff as information technology trainees; and one registered training provider who instructed his staff via an internal memo to blitz the local businesses in an attempt to sign up existing employees as trainees. Staff were also instructed to inform employers that, "Essentially, your company is getting thousands of dollars of training free." I am yet to receive any information that any of those people or organisations have been prosecuted. That needs to be rectified.

In closing, I must say that One Nation does not wish to deny existing workers access to training, rather One Nation acknowledges that this Government already provides significant opportunities for existing employees through publicly supported training such as TAFE institutes and, in cases of hardship, subsidised training. One Nation can see merit in the coalition's motion, but as is One Nation's policy, we are able to vote as our conscience directs. We cannot overlook our primary goal to provide jobs for our unemployed. We should resolutely seek ways of reducing unemployment. That is why I will be supporting the Government's amendment to the motion tonight, as will some of my colleagues.

Mr WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (6.40 p.m.): I rise to support this amendment. Queensland's most important goals are reducing unemployment and improving the skills of its work force. This Government is doing something positive about it, unlike the Government that we succeeded. We intend to get it right from the very start, as young people begin the transition from school to work. The Government's Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative is interwoven with the need to improve training and upgrade the skills of Queensland workers. The previous Government believed that all Government needed to do was to provide training dollars, but it did not discriminate between who received that funding. That is when it moved to its philosophical base of abandoning workers to the marketplace. As a result, young unemployed Queenslanders were missing out.

Unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment, worsened dramatically under the previous Government. According to Australian Bureau of Statistics figures, in July 1996 there were 35,821 long-term unemployed persons, accounting for 24.1% of the total unemployed. This figure grew to 39,919 by July 1997, or 26.6%. In July 1998, the figure had swelled to 45,411, or 30% of the total unemployed.

The Borbidge Government not only presided over this situation but also contributed to it by abolishing a range of employment programs that were targeted at assisting the unemployed and long-term unemployed, particularly youth. In fact, job forums that have been conducted around the State show dramatically how much the local community is missing out on the employment programs that were initiated by the Federal Labor Government and the Goss Government. In 1996-97, employment programs totalling $16.8m were abolished by the Borbidge Government. That is why the main target groups of the four-year, $283m package of Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiatives include the long-term unemployed and young Queenslanders.

The Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiatives will lead to an additional 6,000 trainees and 500 apprentices being employed

in State Government departments and agencies, and local government. As a major employer, the Government has a responsibility to give young people the opportunity to gain work experience skills and on-the-job training. As part of these initiatives, the Government is also providing more incentives to the private sector, which will lead to an additional 7,500 apprentices and trainees being employed in industries that require skills that are in demand and that are crucial to the Queensland economy. A $2,000 subsidy will be paid to employees for each additional apprentice employed and $1,000 for each trainee. Queensland is suffering a skills shortage, particularly of tradespeople, in a number of industries and regions. The initiative will address these shortages while, at the same time, encouraging young people to seek careers in those trades and encouraging employers to create more jobs.

The Government is providing incentives for employees to look for opportunities for jobs where they are most needed. The identified areas of most need are information technology, building and construction, tourism and engineering. An additional 900 apprentices in the building and construction industry will be employed as a result of the enforcement of the 10% training rule on Government public works projects. Six hundred new building and construction industry apprentices will be employed in the expansion of the Housing Industry Trade Training Program. The program provides for the training of apprentices who are engaged in the construction of public housing. Nine thousand places will be created for the long-term unemployed on essential public works, community and environmental projects, helping those people to gain valuable work skills. This will help fill the gap left by the previous Government. On top of the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiatives, an industry training fund for the building and construction industry will be established, resulting in $5.4m being made available to assist apprentices in the year 1998-99. Between 800 and 1,000 additional apprentices a year are expected to be employed.

This Government is proud of these initiatives. Obviously, young people are not only the ones who are hurting. Unemployment cuts across all age groups and all sectors of society. Nobody has been forgotten. If one's children are teenagers or young adults who are full of hopes, dreams and energy, one knows how important it is to give them some answers before they start to lose heart. This Government intends to work hard to help its main target groups. We are proud that Premier Beattie and the Labor Government is making a deliberate choice in the crusade to break the unemployment cycle and is encouraging job creation and job security.

Time expired.

Mr DAVIDSON (Noosa—LP) (6.45 p.m.): Nothing shows the vital difference between the forward-thinking coalition and the back-to-the-fifties Labor Party more clearly than the attitude in Government of the minority Beattie administration to the question of mature-age training. The people of Queensland deserve to have that difference pointed out to them at every opportunity. The only opportunities that this Government is interested in are those that can be used to promote its own survival.

The vital difference between this sad and sorry minority Government and the coalition is best illustrated by an actual example of progress from our time in office, which is provided by the reformed and revitalised system of staff management that was introduced into the Department of Training and Industrial Relations when my colleague the member for Clayfield was the Minister. The annual report of that department, which has just been tabled, illustrates this point. It describes the 1998 Business Through Our People initiative for staff, which was introduced by the former director-general of the department, Mr Col Thatcher. This took an innovation further than simply balancing work and family demands. It was about creating a sustainable work force in leading-edge public organisations. This reformist and forward-looking approach to meeting the real needs of today's workers and the 21st century workers who will come after them is based on an understanding that business success contributes to the feeling of a sense of individual achievement and security.

In any operation, public or private, future business success depends on acknowledging all aspects—the mental, emotional, spiritual and physical dimensions—of people's lives. Labor pays lip-service to this principle and these requirements, but Labor's way is the way of the collective—the one size must fit all philosophy—that has forever blighted the Left's approach to humanity. The coalition's policy of enhancing individual self worth within the public sector stands as a shining example of the real way to make progress in a world where enterprise and energy are the true benchmarks of success. The Business Through Our People initiative of the Department of Training and Industrial Relations gave form to this policy. In the

department's 1997-98 annual report, Mr Thatcher states—

> "Within its competitive business setting we needed to cultivate an environment where all staff feel a sense of personal growth and that their creativity is being recognised. Where each person feels their work is expanding their personal boundaries, they feel highly motivated and their 'full commitment' is recognised."

I believe that that stands as a sound explanation of the breadth and depth of the personal commitment that people can be encouraged to make when they are not mere ciphers in some musty little socialist collective.

There is ample evidence that this Government—and particularly its Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, and the department of which he is a political head—has no real vision for 21st century business or management practice. As my colleague the member for Clayfield pointed out in moving this motion, it is abundantly plain that Labor's preference is for the dullness and collective non-enterprise of the past. The Labor Party refuses to see that nowadays training and education is a lifelong task or, if it sees it, it views it as something that the public sector training system should not provide. We have had the Minister's word for that on several occasions. He has even tried to make a virtue out of his lack of vision and his party's shameless acquiescence to the enterprise-sapping demands of the big unions.

Under the coalition, the Department of Training and Industrial Relations was striving to become a learning organisation. We were never so arrogant as to presume that we knew it all, unlike the clone collective opposite. As the community as a whole—across all age groups—needs to be at the forefront of anticipating the needs of customers in order to deliver services and products more effectively, under our stewardship the public sector was adapting to the climate of swift change. It is impossible to make those adaptations and to respond quickly to demands for new or better services without embracing the requirement for constant upskilling and reskilling. It is impossible to separate the new demands on the management of any enterprise of any size, public or private, from the need for the constant renewal of corporate and personal skills. That is what makes this minority Government so culpable in the training area. It is hung up on rhetoric and on the political plausibility of this promise or that pledge.

As a society, our goal must be to make the most of every asset in our human armoury. Under the late and largely unlamented Goss Government, the record of continuous Public Sector Management Commission reviews put the public sector right offside.

Time expired.

Ms STRUTHERS (Archerfield—ALP) (6.49 p.m.): I support the amended motion because the previous system was full of rorts. I want to tell the House about some of the rorts that have occurred as a result of the policies that Mr Santoro put in place. However, firstly, I wish to remind Mr Santoro that traineeships were originally intended as a vehicle by which new entrants to an industry could gain skills and experience.

It is clear that taxpayer-funded traineeship funds have been used in the past to issue paper qualifications to existing workers who had already gained skills from industry experience. When used in this way, public funds are not contributing to skills development, productivity or the Queensland economy. In other instances, traineeship funds have served only to substitute the employer's training effort or have been used for training that is not central to the occupation of the trainee.

The Queensland Government will not stand by while existing workers take taxpayer-funded traineeships at the expense of young people and new entrants to the work force. The young people and unemployed people in my electorate, and in all electorates of honourable members, deserve every opportunity. These past practices have robbed them of opportunities.

Let me remind the House about some of these rorts. What about the doctor in rural Queensland who registered himself as an information technology trainee?

Mr Seeney: We have heard about that.

Ms STRUTHERS: Let me remind the honourable member of the aged people's home that converted its entire work force into trainees. I remind the honourable member of the trainees signed up by a regional sporting club who never received training. What about the regional hospital that signed up its kitchen hands as office trainees? As the Minister said, one training organisation sent flyers to its clients which urged employers to take up cash incentives of between $1,250 and $4,000. The flyer went on to say that the training will be paid in full by the Government, so it is an ideal time for "your company" to purchase a brand-new computer "using the $4,000 provided by

the Government". What a bonanza courtesy of Mr Santoro! How can the former Minister defend this system?

The Beattie Labor Government is seeking to introduce a tighter system in 1999. I would have thought the Opposition would have supported that. But no, perhaps the Opposition wants further evidence of the failings of its system. On 24 August this year, one training organisation sent a message to account managers to stitch up as many traineeships for existing workers as possible before there were changes. The memo states—

> "Until that time we must take advantage of every opportunity presented before us, as anything signed up now will be honoured by the Government. Consequently for the next three weeks, I want Account Managers focusing on existing employees. An excellent opportunity for this is the office administration programs.
>
> Over the next three weeks, I want all account managers to choose areas which have concentrated office areas ... If they procrastinate in their decision, tell them that when the budget is handed down we cannot guarantee the free program. Get them signed up now and there will be no problems."

That situation is totally disgraceful. These are the same trainee numbers that Mr Santoro crowed about during his taxpayer-funded Year of Training campaign. These practices are entirely unacceptable not only to the Government but also to the taxpayers, who fund the use of the traineeship system.

Our Government is not denying existing workers, including mature-age workers, access to training. Rather, the Government is saying that we already provide significant opportunities elsewhere whereby existing workers can access publicly supported training. Our Government is targeting training where it is most needed, not squandering it like the previous Government did.

Question—That Mr Braddy's amendment be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 46—Attwood, Beattie, Black, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, E. A. Cunningham, J. I. Cunningham, Dalgleish, Edmond, Elder, Feldman, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Paff, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Turner, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

NOES, 33—Beanland, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, Davidson, Elliott, Gamin, Goss, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Knuth, Laming, Lingard, Littleproud, Malone, Mitchell, Nelson, Prenzler, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Veivers, Watson. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

Pairs: Barton, Lester; D'Arcy, Pratt; Gibbs, Stephan; Mickel, Sheldon

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Leader of the House) (7 p.m.): I move—

"That the House do now adjourn."

Catholic Church

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (7 p.m.): I rise to offer my support for the men and women in the Catholic church who have dedicated their lives to the service of the community. One could be forgiven for assuming that these people are being specifically persecuted by the media. Let me say from the outset that I am not defending the actions of a small minority of the religious community that has been appropriately dealt with by the legal system.

My attention was particularly taken by a letter to the editor in this morning's Courier-Mail by Dean Gregory Jordan of Toowong, which made a very pertinent point. The letter tells the parable of three Catholic priests in adjoining Brisbane parishes. The first makes a public plea to axe the ban on marriage for priests. The second, sadly, goes to jail, and the third is escorted by his parishioners to Government House to receive an Order of Australia for his devotion to the education of youth and for his care of the disabled. The writer asked—

> "Guess which of the three failed to make headlines in The Courier-Mail? No prize for guessing it was Fr Denis Power, OA, emeritus pastor of Sacred Heart, Rosalie."

His achievements were not worthy of attention by the press.

It is to try to correct this balance that I want to put on record my own personal debt of gratitude to the Catholic church and to those men and women of the cloth who were so much a part of my early life. I might say that it was the Josephite nuns who tried very hard to educate me at their convent in Quilpie and the Marist Brothers in Sydney who taught me many of the values that are fundamental to

my beliefs today. The education structure built by these religious orders and, for that matter, those of other religions have enabled education to be made available throughout our nation. If it were not for the education resources provided by these religious orders, our education system would not have been able to cope. These nuns, brothers and priests dedicate their life to the church and to the education of our future citizens, and it is their personal sacrifices that have enabled education to be available to all.

These religious communities have been prepared to live in poverty, often in the most remote areas of the State. For the people of these remote areas, the availability of a boarding school education has been the only way for generations of children from the bush to gain an education. One has only to look at community leaders today to see the success of these education structures. Many of them are among the most prestigious education facilities in our community today, and their record of academic, sporting, commercial and social achievements is second to none. I hasten to add that I am not making these points in any way to denigrate the public school system, which is also excellent, as are the teaching staff in that sector. I would like to make the point, however, that the private schools, thanks to the sacrifices of the teachers, parents and the church communities, have removed a significant load from the State school sector.

I seem to recall that the private schools assume responsibility for 27% of the State's education task, with about 17% undertaken by the Catholic church. I have been able to establish that there are 80 Catholic secondary schools in this State and 193 Catholic primary schools. There are 18 other independent high schools, 43 independent primary schools and 81 independent combined primary and secondary schools. I should also add here that the same can be said about the wonderful job done by the nuns in our health system, and I point to the Mater Hospital in particular, where my family has had some experience of the dedication and care of the Mercy nuns. It is a shining example of the church's contribution to our society.

The field of aged and special care is also an area in which other religious institutions and religious orders are providing loving care all over our State. There are 13 Catholic hospitals, excluding the Mater adult public hospital, and 22 Catholic nursing homes. It is in the light of these facts that I ask the community to keep the truly dreadful cases of recent times in proper perspective. It is all too easy to concentrate on the bad news and to overlook the magnificent job done by these men and women whose only reward in life is to serve their God and their fellow human beings. Yes, there are some who fall by the wayside, but please do not let us ignore the nobility of their calling and the magnificence of their charity by an undue concentration on the negatives. To do so only denigrates the sacrifice of those who accept the challenge of a vocation but also serves to give solace to those in our society who seem to have a vested interest in the breakdown of religious faith and the calling of a higher service. The compassion, love and understanding given by these people have certainly proved more positive in our society than credit is given for.

Time expired.

Multicultural Service Award

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (7.05 p.m.): It is a great pleasure to rise this evening to acknowledge a group of people whose remarkable achievements were conferred due recognition during a ceremony last night which I had the pleasure of attending. On behalf of the people of Queensland, Peter Beattie presented the Multicultural Service Award to 10 individuals and one organisation who, in a voluntary capacity, have contributed to the development and consolidation of an harmonious multiculturalism and contributed to the reduction of prejudice and discrimination in this community.

In particular, I would like to use this forum to honour the contribution of two of my constituents. Indeed, I am very proud and thrilled that Greenslopes may, indeed, be overrepresented in this respect with two very fine citizens to whom I am about to refer. They are Mr Daniel David and Mr Laurie Rosenblum, whom I have had the privilege to know for many years now. I know Mr David's humble dignity would leave him somewhat bemused and embarrassed at being mentioned here, but I think his contribution to Queensland is, at the very least, worth committing to posterity in the pages of Hansard.

A man who by temperament eschews publicity, Mr David is the founding member of many organisations in Brisbane. Now in his mid sixties, he is the immediate past president of the Brisbane Council for International Students, a voluntary organisation which provides services and assistance to overseas students and their families. His involvement in that organisation in its various incarnations extends back as far as 1956, a time when a

white Australia ethic was still very much entrenched in the consciousness of many Australians. In 1959 he assisted the Rotary Club of Brisbane in launching the International House project and worked tirelessly as the President of the Overseas Student Association to make it a reality. This is characteristic of an indefatigable and enthusiastic involvement in a multicultural life of the State—a committed enthusiasm that meant that he would roll his sleeves up and that is underpinned and nourished by the vision of a more mature Australia, an Australia not only more embracing in its acceptance of migrants and refugees, but better integrated and reconciled to the realities of its geographical location.

In a radio broadcast on Radio Australia in 1960, he announced that the destiny of Australia was intimately linked with that of Asian countries. Almost 40 years ago in 1959, again on Radio Australia, he was marked as a fool for appearing to make this call in terms of appealing to Asian countries to send their children to Australia for higher studies. Today we have more than 100,000 students from overseas studying in Australia and, despite the perennial howls and narrow jingoism that would white picket fence us off from our near neighbours, it is my position and proudly that of this Government that these people contribute immeasurably to the life of our nation. In addition to his work with underprivileged migrants of varying ethnicity, Mr David has sought to ameliorate the conditions of the less privileged strata of the white society and, indeed, the wider society in Australia by work with the Biala drug and alcohol service. I am very proud to refer to Mr David's contributions here.

The other person who received an award yesterday, as I indicated, was Mr Lawrence Rosenblum OAM. Fifty years is a long time for most of us, but that is the time Lawrence Rosenblum, better known as Lawrie, has served the Australian community. He is still doing so even stronger than ever, with a great commitment and dedication. Indeed, I am proud that he is one of my near neighbours.

Mr Rosenblum is a champion supporter of multiculturalism. Over the years he has established and involved himself in countless campaigns to secure the rights of Aborigines and other ethnic minority groups in Queensland and Australia. He organised and took part in many community education programs and conducted lectures on issues of race relations. He also raised funds to further the cause of equality among all Australians.

Mr Rosenblum is the founding member and current President of the Queensland Jewish Board of Deputies, which is the umbrella group of Jewish organisations in this State. In this capacity he is also a member of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry. Mr Rosenblum is also a founder of Australian Advancing Multiculturalism and Reconciliation and is an original signatory to the charter published by Alliance—Community Against Racial Discrimination.

Time expired.

Noxious Weeds

Mr KNUTH (Burdekin—ONP) (7.10 p.m.): Over recent weeks and in the past there have been many reports of fish kills in north Queensland's creeks and ponds. A fair amount of unfounded criticism has been directed towards agricultural and horticultural farmers for those supposed kills of resident fish populations. The claims have been unsubstantially based on fertiliser and pesticide run-off into adjoining watercourses and ponds situated adjacent to the approximate locations of farms.

Some recent studies have indicated that the latest fish kill in north Queensland was due to lack of oxygenisation of the water. This has been scientifically linked to the choking up of the ponds and creeks due to two introduced water weeds known as hyacinth and salvinia. These two noxious weeds have been the curse of our watercourses for years and it is really time to get serious about their permanent removal and destruction.

A third weed that is causing more problems to watercourses and lagoons but has not been receiving the same attention is the water plant cumbungi. This plant is appearing more and more in our north Queensland catchment watercourses, lagoons and ponds and is becoming a disaster in the Burdekin wetlands area. Cumbungi has not been declared a noxious plant, yet it is proving to be more detrimental to the waterways than the other two weeds. Cumbungi is responsible for choking the life out of ponds and lagoons, mainly in the way it restricts waterfowl from landing in the water.

Cumbungi is a tall, robust reed. I have seen pictures taken of a watercourse several years ago when it was free of cumbungi and full of wildlife. Presently, the same watercourse is almost the devoid of waterfowl and looks ugly. I believe that if cumbungi is not addressed and declared, it will choke up all the waterways in the Burdekin area and there will

be an environmental disaster within two years. In some areas there already is such a disaster. I believe that the Department of Environment should be looking into cumbungi, along with hyacinth and salvinia, before they spread any further and kill more marine life and destroy more waterfowl habitat.

I bring the Waipuna system to the attention of the Minister. The Waipuna system is especially designed to control soft tissue vegetation. The Waipuna system pumps superheated water, which is then floated on the current watercourse into the target vegetation at a precise temperature, pressure and volume. The boiling water caps the stem and starves the root system. This is an environmentally friendly system of killing noxious weeds, however funding needs to be made available by the Queensland Government to ensure that the system can be put to use.

Currently, councils and private contractors have access to the Waipuna system, but they need a commitment by the Queensland Government to allocate the moneys needed. I ask the Minister for Environment and Heritage to look into this system and at what is happening in north Queensland's waterways before we have more environmental degradation of our waterways. It is only a matter of time before another fish kill occurs. We need to re-oxygenate the waterways to preserve our marine life.

WorkCover Queensland Act

Mr REYNOLDS (Townsville—ALP) (7.14 p.m.): Tonight I rise to speak about the draconian implications of the WorkCover Queensland Act of 1996. The Santoro amendments to the Act, which were formally introduced in February 1997, represent an attack on the rights of injured workers, using draconian measures the likes of which have not been seen before in remedial legislation.

The structure of the Act, particularly in relation to access to damages provisions, is unnecessarily complex, convoluted and circuitous. It contains many hidden traps for injured workers seeking just compensation for serious injury. Lawyers acting for injured workers report great difficulty in their attempts to interpret the statutory provisions into a coherent format so that they can advise their clients with certainty as to legal action outcomes.

Since February 1997 there have been many instances of seriously injured workers being denied access to common law rights because of the general limitations on persons entitled to seek damages, provided for by section 253 of the Act. It seems that if a doctor employed by WorkCover assesses the injured worker and decides that the worker's symptoms are not related to a workplace accident, then the worker has no right to sue and very limited rights of appeal against such a decision. It should be the role of the common law courts to determine this issue, not someone employed by WorkCover who makes such a fundamental decision.

There have been problems in determining who is a worker for the purposes of the Act. The present definition requires that a worker must be a PAYE taxpayer. This restriction excludes many workers who, for a variety of work reasons, are not PAYE taxpayers—for example fishermen and shearers, who are commonly on RPS and PPS tax systems.

The 1997 Act was supposed to save injured workers legal costs. The reality is that, because of the complexity of the Act and the need to take numerous prelitigation steps, legal costs have necessarily risen, to the detriment of injured workers and the workers compensation scheme. Many injured workers who would otherwise have a good common law claim have been so intimidated by the potential cost consequences of the Act's provisions that they are electing to take meagre payouts offered by WorkCover rather than risk having costs awarded against them or not being awarded the legal costs of their actions. This is a scandal. It amounts to statutory standover tactics being used against injured workers who already have enough to worry about with their injuries.

The provisions relating to the reduction of damages because of contributory negligence by injured workers is another example of legal thuggery. The provisions are oppressive, draconian, unnecessary and an attempt to bluff and terrorise injured workers into settling for inadequate amounts.

The tactics promoted by the Santoro legislation have resulted in a substantial number of injured workers being unjustly deterred from bringing their rightful common law claims. The greatly reduced number of actions which have been commenced under the Act's provisions are testimony to the fact that the fear tactics engendered by this legislation have worked. The tactics may have worked, but in their wake they have left hardship and heartbreak in the lives of injured workers and their poverty-stricken families. The architects of the Santoro amendments should hang their heads in shame.

Many practitioners in the field of workers compensation have expressed the view that the 1996 Goss amendments were more than adequate to redress the problems of the scheme. The Santoro amendments have gone too far and have been to the advantage of employers only and not to injured workers for whose benefit the Act was originally introduced. The Opposition Leader said in this House last week that this is one of the very issues the Opposition would campaign on in the Mulgrave by-election. I say to the Opposition Leader: go ahead. This is an issue the Labor Party will fight very strongly on.

Drugs

Mr GRICE (Broadwater—NPA) (7.18 p.m.): I have spoken in this House previously about the scourge that is drugs, in particular on the Gold Coast but also throughout this State and this country. I have said before that there are regularly five narcotics overdoses per day on the Gold Coast. I spoke quite recently of a mother of five who has just buried her third child to a drug overdose. The child started off on marijuana and finished up with an overdose of methadone tablets. This mother was a sole parent.

The catch of 400 kilograms that the police achieved at Port Macquarie was pure heroin, and that can be cut up—or divided—up to eight times. So a street weight of 3,200 kilograms was confiscated in one day. One of the worst statistics that I know of in our society today is that in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane or on the Gold Coast, the price of heroin did not increase by one dollar or even one cent. So 3,200 kilograms had no marked effect. Therefore, one can only guess at the amount of heroin and illicit drugs that come into this country.

I turn now to some other statistics that exemplify and exaggerate—well, they can never exaggerate the dreadful crime in which these grubs involve our young people. How many of Australia's 762 children who are victims of crime each week can we trace back to drug abuse? We know that 75% of all crime is drug related in one way or another. I have also said in this place that it has been worked out by the Crime Commissioner of Queensland that one kilogram of heroin costs society $1m.

In our job as members of Parliament, I do not know how we approach or attack one of the root causes of crime and drug use. I have mentioned one of the worst statistics that I know. One that is worse is that 51.7% of all children in Australia are raised in a single-parent household. I do not mean to denigrate those who do it successfully. Some single parents do an incredible job of bringing up and providing for children. But I believe that the fact that 52% of Australian children are brought up in single-parent houses is the root cause of lots of our social malaise.

It is easy to imagine that there are many young people out there who have absolutely no idea about how to live in society because they have never lived in a traditional family; they have never had the influence of two parents. How do we approach this? How do we cause a shock wave in society to identify this problem? How do we address it? I am certainly not the font of all wisdom, and I just do not know. But if we, as parliamentarians on both sides of this House and in the Houses of Parliament throughout Australia do not address this issue and find some answers, I can see no improvement in our dreadful crime statistics.

We all talk about the punishment of crime, and that must happen. Stronger punishment of crime is very often necessary and does achieve a result for society. We also often talk of the causes of crime. I know that this current Government often uses the expression that it will address the causes of crime. However, in my view, the greatest cause of crime and our general social malaise in this country is the fact that we have lost the traditional values of families. Lots of do-gooders can say that it does not really matter, that the newness of different relationships is appropriate, good and enjoyable. But it is the kids who suffer—kids who cannot be brought up in a two-parent relationship; kids who are witnesses to changing partners; and kids who do not have the solidarity and the backing of a family. That is the basic problem today. I for one am saddened that I cannot provide an answer in this House. But if we do not work at this together to figure out an answer to that, we will be much the worse for it and not truly representative of our people.

Youth Unemployment; Voices of Youth Forum

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (7.24 p.m.): Over the next month, 37,928 of Queensland school leavers will be facing their future head-on as they go on from completing their secondary studies to facing the tough call of: what next? It is our generation who educates, creates jobs, offers apprenticeships, provides training options and builds communities. And it was our generation who

brought up this generation of young people whom our coalition partners seem so ready to be ashamed of and demonise in their election advertising.

So much of what is important to young people has been lost in a haze. The haze or, more to the point, the pollution to which I refer is the ongoing vilification of our young people by the conservative side of politics and some individuals in the media. The Federal Howard Government constantly reminds the community of young people's mutual responsibility for the financial support that they receive while looking for employment. What about our mutual responsibility to strive to achieve full employment and making jobs available for all those who want one?

This Government is committed to meeting this responsibility. We are committed to fulfilling our obligation to young people by creating jobs, building industry and making all regions of Queensland good places in which young people can create a future. That is why we set a target to reduce unemployment—a challenge that the coalition is still not willing to accept. This is why we have engaged in a campaign to encourage and support Queensland businesses to take on more apprentices. This is why we, as employers, are creating more job opportunities for young people. And as educators, we are giving TAFE back its muscle as a vocational trainer. This is why we have reinstated the $8m desperately needed by the Bayside campus of the Moreton Institute of TAFE, which serves young people in my electorate.

As the member for Cleveland, I have been working to ensure that our community is able to improve on its record of employing more young people locally. Along with the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, local businesses and the Redland Shire Council, I will be working to increase employment opportunities for young people in my electorate. I believe that young people should not be treated just as media grabs. They should not be labelled dole bludgers, criminal gang members, young women exploiting welfare by having children, lazy, good for nothing and ungrateful. All those titles are too convenient when one does not have the answer for reducing youth unemployment. I believe that it is very important that we start listening to young people and including them in this debate rather than marginalising them. So instead of condemning them for the ills that we identify with the young, I would like to present to the House another outlook.

The Voices of Youth Forum included high school students from across the State—many of them included in the class of 1998. Rebecca Machon is the present school captain at the Cleveland State High School and one of the 37,000 students in Year 12 who have just finished high school. Although Rebecca is not old enough to vote, I believe that the recommendations that she has presented to me from the conference deserve our attention. Rebecca has prepared some points for our consideration about a wide range of topics, including regional development, reasons for limited employment opportunities, training and schooling options and the reasons why young people are struggling to exist in our communities these days. In the short time available to me, I would like to put on record some of the recommendations from the youth forum.

On regional development and employment prospects for young people, young people from country areas are experiencing difficulties due to limited opportunities available to them, resulting in young people being forced to move away from their families to pursue a career. It can be noted that the lack of opportunities in regional areas can lead to disturbing degrees of crime, youth depression and suicide. Racial and gender discrimination were seen to be more prevalent in country areas, as females believe that many opportunities that exist are solely for young men.

On vocational education and employers' needs, the forum believes that schools could accommodate students' needs for employment by involving major employers and industry groups in curriculum planning. They also believe in strengthening the link between education and employment by implementing practical learning and generating opportunities for school-based apprenticeships. The inclusion of a greater range of vocational and work-related electives should be offered in a greater number of secondary institutions.

Time expired.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 7.29 p.m.