



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Hansard Friday, 8 June 2007

ROBINA HOSPITAL, PALLIATIVE CARE UNIT

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (7.25 pm): Last month I stood in this House to raise awareness of the effect the lack of a medical oncologist at the Gold Coast Hospital was having on patients and staff alike. Nurse unit manager Jackie Morgan, who had worked for 20 years in cancer care, quit her job at the Gold Coast Hospital in despair over the bumbblings of Queensland Health in trying to engage a doctor. The minister has promised one oncologist will commence at the hospital later this year, but no-one will believe it until they see it. And why should they?

Two weeks ago a number of very upset patients contacted me over the rapid decision to move the ground floor palliative care unit from Robina Hospital to an upper floor ward at Pacific Private Clinic at Southport. This facility provides wonderful services, but is the wrong environment for this close-knit, dedicated unit. According to staff, cancer patients and their families, there are many issues of concern over this move. Poor parking facilities and the central business location causing difficult family access, a lack of a mortuary and no access to fresh air and the outside environment are just some of those concerns. I note that Dr Brian Bell says that this is only a temporary move, yet it is causing enormous anguish.

News from the minister that all of the unit's nurses have agreed to the move has prompted calls to my office that staff are not happy to go, but were too frightened to speak out for fear of losing their jobs and, more importantly, because they are dedicated to the work they do. For some, though, this heavy-handed treatment is the last straw. Today I heard that Dr Rob Hitchins, the respected head of the Robina Palliative Care Unit and a Queensland Health employee for many years, handed in his resignation effective immediately. Today the head nurse has gone on stress leave and the other doctor is considering his future.

Clearly, the culture has not changed. The minister has not learned from the mistakes of the past. More experienced staff are leaving the system due to enforced, unreasonable behaviour from Queensland Health.

A couple of hours ago, I heard that psychiatric patients from Robina are, within two months, to be relocated to Palm Beach Currumbin Private Hospital next to the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary and private residences. These are patients requiring extended treatment, many under involuntary treatment orders, who require supervision having come from P1 and P2 wards for people with acute psychoses at Southport Hospital.

Serious concerns from medical staff have been raised with me that security at this facility is too low to safely cater for these patients who need specialised care, and there would be a genuine threat to community safety should this plan proceed. Staff and local community members are asking why there was no public consultation on this issue. If palliative care is being moved for psychiatric patients at Robina Hospital, then why is there a need to utilise beds at Currumbin? The Health Minister and his department are in crisis and have a callous disregard for the staff and patients they uproot and disturb when they are at their most vulnerable.



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Hansard Tuesday, 6 February 2007

SUMMARY OFFENCES AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (8.55 pm): I rise to contribute briefly to the Summary Offences and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2006. As members have already heard from my colleague the honourable member for Burnett and shadow minister for police and corrective services, the coalition supports the majority of these amendments but has some reservations with sections of this bill. In essence, the bill aims to implement a coordination system in respect of improving the visual blight suffered by the public in the wake of errant graffiti vandals and provide police with added clarification under the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000.

As it is clearly stated in the explanatory notes, this bill contains provisions amending a number of different statutes, including the Summary Offences Act 2005, the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989 and the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000. In particular, the objectives of the amendments to the Summary Offences Act 2005 are to strengthen existing antigraffiti laws by banning the sale of spray-paint cans to minors and to prohibit persons in trade or commerce from providing a service that informs others of police traffic enforcement sites. I note that minor changes are made by this bill to the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989 to amend the schedule dictionary.

I will direct my comments to changes that aim to reduce the incidence of graffiti damage. Queensland Police Service records show that graffiti offences are predominantly committed by minors and young adults. By restricting the supply of aerosol paint cans to minors, a reduction in the incidence of graffiti offences is expected. The amendments will require retail outlets to display prohibition signs and employers to take standard prevention measures towards their employees who sell spray-cans.

Certainly, graffiti can cause a great deal of angst for local residents when youths and other lawless individuals who have no respect for other people's property deliberately cause damage in an attempt to gain attention for themselves. Vandalism caused by graffiti is thought to cost the community in Brisbane alone some \$10 million every year in cleaning up the damage. Queensland Rail is another target for offenders. This financial year Queensland Rail will spend an estimated \$2 million on repairing carriages and other railway property. I fully support this legislative action, which will send a stronger message to graffiti vandals that their wanton defacing of buildings in our local communities is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. In doing so, I remind this House that it was the coalition which had a policy to wipe out graffiti way back before the 2004 election. We planned to restrict the sale of spray-cans to minors who used the spray-paint not only for graffiti but also to undertake the life-threatening practice of chroming.

In the Currumbin electorate there is a particular shopping centre that has been the target of graffiti vandals on a regular basis, resulting in enormous personal cost to the centre owner and, in turn, the tenants. They have had to install extensive security measures to protect their property. It is absolutely disgraceful that residents and businesses feel under siege from these vandals whom they can identify but are unable to restrain. One of our news items this week highlighted a group of youths who have been caught and charged with approximately 1,000 graffiti offences. This type of destruction on a mass scale must cease and it is about time young people learned some respect.

Calvin Pybus and June Hintz at Phantast have, for over a decade, partnered with neighbourhoods, governments, local councils and schools in an effort to provide opportunities and support for youth through artistic programs. These enlightening and proactive programs coordinated by Phantast build self-esteem in our youth and young adults and provide attractive eye-catching murals. Many honourable members of this House who travel on main roads throughout south-east Queensland are already seeing the work of this dedicated and creative pair without even being aware of it. Picture the many murals you see beside the M1 and the Logan motorways of cane fields and other landscapes. As you drive into Palm Beach you are greeted with hundreds of smiling children's faces. In many instances you are witnessing fine examples of former graffiti vandals who are now using their artistic skills in a legal manner and contributing in a mutually beneficial way to our society.

Phantast is a non-profit organisation supported by both state and federal governments to provide training for young artists through community works. Its web site states—

Phantast through its Smart Arts club strategy ... offer a wide variety of challenging and fun activities giving youth countless opportunities to pursue existing interests and develop new ones.

Phantast believes that young people from all backgrounds are capable of making the most of their lives and talents when they are given two essential things—opportunities and support. All Phantast programs are designed to maximise opportunities to acquire four basic senses—competence, usefulness, belonging, power and influence—which help them build self-esteem and be responsible rather than irresponsible. With the banning of the sale of spray-paint cans to minors and initiatives of organisations such as Phantast, it is to be hoped that a reduction in vandalism through graffiti will ensue. I commend the bill to the House.



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Hansard Tuesday, 6 February 2007

PALM BEACH NEEDLE AND SYRINGE PROGRAM

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (10.00 pm): Palm Beach residents have opposed a needle exchange facility for more than a decade. Since 1995, the Labor government gave the people of Queensland repeated assurances that the proposed community health centre would not include a needle and syringe supply program. Here we are in 2007 with residents once again fighting the battle against a needle and syringe program setting up in the middle of a thriving business precinct and improved residential dwellings.

On 16 June 1995 the then member for Currumbin, Merri Rose, asked the then Minister for Health, Jim Elder—

... can he inform the House whether the community health centre soon to be opened at Palm Beach will have a needle exchange program?

Mr Elder replied—

The short answer to that question is that the Palm Beach community health centre will not have a needle exchange unit.

Mr Elder went on to state—

... it is an outrageous lie to say that the Government will be putting a needing exchange unit in that centre.

I would like to state clearly that neither me nor the Palm Beach Action Group, which formed to protest the location of the facility in Fifth Avenue, Palm Beach, have taken a moral stand on this issue. The key objection is that the community health centre is an inappropriate location for this service due to its proximity to residences, businesses, parks and beach.

In December 2006 this action group and I met with Queensland Health officials who answered our questions in a polite and straightforward manner. Probably the biggest shock was to be told that of course IV users were not encouraged to bring back used equipment as they would be 'dirty'. This makes a mockery of the term 'needle exchange', which was used when these programs were first started. I imagine that the majority of the population would be of the belief that there was some onus on users to bring back their used needles to be exchanged for clean ones. Somewhere along the way the lines have blurred and we have needle supplies in place of needle exchanges. Has the general public been duped into believing that this program is a true needle exchange when, obviously, it is not?

Needle and syringe programs were conceived as a harm minimisation strategy designed to provide sterile injecting equipment for people who inject drugs. What we see happening today has become marginalised and diluted, bearing very little resemblance to the original program. Governments have a duty of care to the entire community and have an obligation to place everyone's safety on the same level. Of particular concern is the disposal of dirty, used needles by IV users into regular waste bins. It is grossly irresponsible of Queensland Health to not only permit this practice but also encourage it by not making an effort to get back used needles.

GPs cannot throw their sharps containers into the ordinary rubbish. They would be sued for doing so. They have to pay an approved waste disposer to collect them and dispose of them properly by incineration. Monitoring of needle and syringe programs is critical. It is timely at the 20-year mark of the

implementation of needle and syringe programs to review the effectiveness of the project and to ensure that every effort is being made to not only minimise infection but also rehabilitate IV users. By doing so, public confidence would rise and communities would be more accepting of these programs if they were told the truth and felt secure that every effort was being made to follow the original intent of the program.



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Hansard Wednesday, 21 February 2007

TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (11.49 am): I am pleased to join the debate on the Transport Legislation and Another Act Amendment Bill 2006. As members have already heard from my colleague and shadow minister for transport, the honourable member for Gregory, the coalition will be supporting this bill for the many reasons he so articulately highlighted.

In essence the bill seeks to make amendments to eight transport acts in an attempt to improve road safety in Queensland. The main intent of this bill is to introduce legislation to assist the enhancement of road safety by the following measures: authorising a means for detection, prosecution and deterrent of use of certain illicit drugs by people and then driving motor vehicles; providing for technologies to be used in conjunction with fixed speed cameras; and, further, addressing the problem of young drivers being overrepresented in Queensland's road crashes by introducing new rules in relation to the behaviour and licensing of young drivers.

Whilst the key initiatives are those that directly improve road safety in Queensland, of equal importance is the provision to create the offence of driving whilst a relevant drug is present in the driver's blood or saliva. The government is to be commended for including proposals resulting from the Queensland Road Safety Summit held in February 2006. However, I cannot let the fact that this government has adopted coalition policy No. 130, roadside drug testing, pass unmentioned. Imitation is the greatest form of flattery so the saying goes. Once again the Beattie government has proven it is devoid of original ideas and on yet another occasion has pinched our policy and sprinkled on some extra sparkly bits so that it can claim it as its own.

Primarily I would like to address the matter of drug testing on drivers. It could be said that the Queensland government has been dragging its heels on this issue because similar measures have already been introduced into other states across Australia. I do acknowledge that the minister purports the Queensland legislation is more advanced than that of other states which introduced it earlier. This contention will be further examined later in my speech.

Before I do, though, it is interesting to look at some of the background research that preceded this important and overdue legislation. A study by researchers at Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne in April 2003 found that drugs were now responsible for more deaths on the road than alcohol and the most common drug identified was marijuana. These findings dispel one of the great myths about marijuana, otherwise known as cannabis, which has somehow attracted a belief in some circles not to be that dangerous. I am pleased to say that a recent study has emerged in the past week indicating that finally cannabis is being seen to be the harmful drug that it is.

Every person who ended up in a vehicular accident statistic in one Melbourne morgue during a period that stretched well over a decade had their blood analysed to see if the crash was caused by alcohol, marijuana, amphetamines or other drugs. Professor Olaf Drummer's results were confounding, to put it mildly. Drivers who use cannabis and are driving shortly after are at seven times higher risk of being involved in a fatal crash than a drug-free driver.

The Swinburne experiment was certainly a scientific trial with a difference. In order to reach their revealing conclusions researchers asked volunteers to smoke joints and drink alcohol and then jump behind the wheel of a driving simulator. One researcher said that the studies have found that the effects of marijuana on driving were quite different to alcohol. Booze makes a driver more likely to speed and take risks. Marijuana does do this but it does make drivers more likely to drift across the road. Another researcher commented on the following upshot of using cannabis—

Specifically your ability to maintain a specific position within a lane, so you tend to have two or more wheels of the vehicle crossing over lanes marked out for traffic coming in the opposite direction or in the same direction.

Simply put, when something unexpected happens a cannabis driver is much slower to react. Cannabis gets into the blood stream much faster than alcohol. If a cannabis cigarette is smoked by a person with a blood alcohol content of 0.04, which is below the legal limit to drive, that is in reality equal to a 0.14 blood alcohol concentration, increasing the risk of accident by 48. Not 48 per cent but a whopping 48 times higher.

Cannabis is very sensitive in urine and readily identified. However, collection of a urine sample is awkward to obtain at the roadside. Results of the study in 2003 highlight the urgent need for legislation to curb the number of drug drivers on roads. I ask the minister to clarify if there will be a comprehensive review of the implementation of these measures, such as a 12-monthly review to assess its effectiveness which has been written into parallel legislation in South Australia.

Another question I would like to ask the minister to address is how Queensland can perform the roadside saliva test in three minutes when other states require five to 10 minutes. Bearing in mind this time differential brings me to seek an answer as to the type of oral swabs that will be used and what quality they will be. Where will these swabs be sent for testing? Surely not the John Tonge Centre where the backlog of cases has seen reports of magistrates throwing out samples that were passed their use-by dates.

I note the comments by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee in the *Alert Digest* with regard to a lack of clear definition in the legislation of what is a relevant drug. I seek advice from the minister as to why he has left this definition open to be determined by regulation instead of including, at the very least, the three drugs that are identified—THC, methylamphetamine and ecstasy.

Random roadside tests currently utilised in other states are able to check the presence of these three drugs but also list in addition other illegal drugs such as heroin. It is not uncommon for regular users of illegal drugs to take multiple substances. These combinations have even more serious ramifications when a person gets behind a wheel. Benzodiazepines, Valium and Serepax are widely abused and trafficked in large quantities and can cause driver havoc. It would be unfair to punish therapeutic users of morphine and other prescribed medication. Nonetheless patients have a responsibility to know the restrictions and side effects of their prescribed medication and take due care.

I have already informed honourable members of the effects of cannabis on driving skills. Taking speed also increases the crash risk, particularly for heavy vehicle drivers. The second most commonly used illegal drug, speed, when taken by fatigue impaired persons can cause microsleeps which lead to crashes. Ecstasy is known to disorientate the user, slow their reaction times and impair driving ability by reducing the driver's basic vehicle control.

The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee also commented on clause 57. It stated—

... an analysts certificate that indicates a 'relevant drug' to be present in a driver's blood or saliva is a conclusive evidence of that fact. This is subject to the defendant's capacity to prove the test result was not correct.

Further it stated—

These provisions effectively reverse the onus of proof since, in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, the court must accept the matters stated in the certificate as proven.

I ask the minister to address these comments in his reply together with what level of funding allocation for drug testing the government is committing. It is widely accepted that the primary reason behind utilising saliva testing is that it can be undertaken at the roadside, is easy to collect, is less intrusive and can be screened using a quick and accurate method.

I move now to the proposed amendments to the transport operations act 1995. These will seek to reduce the learner licence age to 16 years, extend the learner licence period to 12 months, require learner drivers to record 100 hours of supervised on-road driving, implement the compulsory display of P-plates, restrict provisional drivers from driving high-powered vehicles and introduce peer passenger restrictions between 11 pm and 5 am. The minister is to be applauded for bringing in these amendments which are a positive step in the campaign to reduce our appalling road carnage statistics. No doubt there will be a degree of confusion as these new amendments, with their significant changes to existing laws, come into play and a widespread education campaign is essential.

During 2005 I undertook a survey amongst senior high school students within my electorate to garner opinions and views of adolescents and young drivers. This was soon after the two students from

Palm Beach Currumbin High tragically lost their lives due to a combination of inexperience, speed and driver incompetence. Many of the students who responded to my survey indicated an eagerness to undertake some form of driver education if it was offered within their school. However, other questions delivered some worrying responses. Their attitude to police enforcement if they or their friends broke the law was negative in the extreme. Many had been passengers in overloaded cars, gone without seatbelts and been in speeding vehicles with drivers who had consumed alcohol, which further highlights the urgent need for these amendments.

There is no doubt our young in particular are at high risk when we look at road toll statistics. Drivers between 17 and 24 account for only 13 per cent of Queensland's drivers yet they tragically account for 32 per cent of Queensland's road toll. Road carnage not only results in injury, either temporary or permanent, and in some cases loss of life, but it affects families, friends and those who work in our emergency and allied health fields. In December last year when 16-year-old Alesha Benjamin lost her life in an accident when her 17-year-old boyfriend's Holden Commodore smashed into a power pole, her father David Benjamin made a public plea that these kids should not have these vehicles because they are deadly.

In January this year south of the border of the Currumbin electorate four boys were killed in a disastrous car accident on the New South Wales north coast. Mr Wells, father of one of the boys, put it mildly when he said that his family was doing it tough after their son and brother became another statistic in last year's horrific road crash. A further poignant comment was—

We had a spare seat at the table at Christmas. I don't want this to happen to any other family.

This highlighted the enormous sense of grief experienced by those who have lost loved ones this way. The Queensland minister for transport has confirmed that young drivers behind the wheel of eight-cylinder cars involved in crashes in Queensland from 2001 to 2005 were twice as likely to be driving with excessive speed when compared with young drivers in cars with less than eight cylinders. Yet the disparity in this legislation is that the minister will not list excluded vehicles. He will only provide definition and specification of high-performance vehicles.

Stakeholders, too, have been strong in expressing their views. RACQ spokesperson John Wilkman stated—

It's still grey on which vehicles will comply and which won't comply.

Jeremy Davey of Queensland's Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety said—

Young people and high performance cars just don't mix.

It is not just the stakeholders who are actively putting forward their opinions. The average person in the street is joining the debate to reduce the bloodshed on our roads. Some of those comments include—

We could start teaching learner drivers using simulators before they even got behind the steering wheel.

Another citizen commented—

Road safety should be taught in all high schools and all young drivers should attend a driver safety course before being issued with their licence.

There has been some discontent regarding the lowering of the minimum age requirement for obtaining a learners licence from 16½ years to 16, even though the age to obtain a provisional licence remains at 17. Asking some teenagers for their comments in the last couple of weeks, a common response was that as Queenslanders generally finish high school in the year they turn 17 school leavers are heading off to university and into the workforce before they turn 18. Given that the public transport system in most of Queensland is woeful, transport needs to be available to these young people to help facilitate the smooth transition of potentially moving away from home to attend university or going to work full-time. These comments are supported by the argument that decreasing the age required to obtain a learners licence is in fact increasing the time Queenslanders spend behind the wheel in the supervised conditions of a learner driver, gaining more driving experience while still being able to obtain a provisional licence at 17. With these comments, I commend the bill to the House.



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Hansard Tuesday, 6 March 2007

CHILD SAFETY

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (12.02 pm): I rise to illuminate ongoing concerns in regard to Child Safety in Queensland in my capacity as shadow minister for this critical portfolio. Even though the government is throwing money at this department like never before, and I congratulate it for that, there are unacceptable backlogs and high rates of staff burnout due to work overloads. These can lead to poor judgements being made that further place the life of a child in danger.

Stories of children having as many as five caseworkers in one month do not auger well for any child. The alarming number of child deaths in care shed a very sorry light on the Department of Child Safety. My office frequently receives calls highlighting avoidable deficiencies in some of the processes which have been applied by the Department of Child Safety. Anyone who has worked in this field knows too well the heartbreaking stories that are part and parcel of child abuse and neglect.

It is not my intention to identify any names related to specific cases or any particular departmental worker because that is not appropriate, nor would it progress the ultimate goal of protecting children. Furthermore, I wish to acknowledge departmental workers for the dedication they bring to their difficult jobs. However, there are many workers within the department today who were not part of it under its previous banner and therefore lack extensive knowledge of the Child Protection Act and all of its interpretations.

Families have expressed concern about babies who are days old being moved from their mothers at the determination of someone who is not long out of university and who has never been a parent. Similarly, child safety workers state that there still remains an internal culture of intimidation against workers who speak out to protect children from returning to a detrimental situation. It is appalling to know that a child safety worker who spoke out to protect a child not only was hung out to dry by the department but also had to endure her husband being falsely accused. A decade after the Ombudsman's recommendation, the family is still being subjected to a settlement run-around by this state government despite promises by the Deputy Premier, who was families minister, to resolve this matter. What encouragement does this give to anyone who wants to speak out to protect the innocent and vulnerable victims of child abuse?

A more determined effort to get the right staff in the right positions and the provision of support systems to keep them must be a priority. I note that there has been a massive recruitment drive, yet some entrenched problems are still continuing as a result of good staff leaving and poor practices continuing. Is it any wonder the QPSU describes the staff turnover as horrifically high.

Outcomes for children could be vastly improved with better communication between parties. Parents often say that Child Safety staff do not understand what they are telling them and will not explain why they are undertaking certain actions. One family was placed in fear of their lives because, despite being given assurances that the location of a subject child would remain completely confidential, it was revealed to the very person the family was to be protected from. A combination of inexperience and lack of thoroughness by certain officers has understandably caused a great deal of grief for the family concerned.

On 25 September 2006 the minister wrote an article for the *Courier-Mail* in response to a public outcry over the death of a three-year-old girl. Along with her three older sisters, aged five, seven and eight,

this little girl was returned by the department to her mother who was a prostitute and a drug addict. In this article the minister stated—

'Whenever a child dies who is known to the department an internal review by an independent expert is completed. The outcomes of such reviews have not previously been made public but they should be'.

Yet on 23 February 2007 this case once again hit the pages of the *Courier-Mail* because the police are still awaiting vital evidence. Our police need close cooperation from the department to ensure that prosecutions can occur. I ask the minister if she intends to make the review of this case and others public once they have been finalised.

As we approach the third anniversary of the blueprint for reform, it is vital that we address issues relating to child safety as a matter of urgency and focus our determined attention on protecting children and, where possible, family units in an equitable, impartial and compassionate way. There have been eight and a half months of excuses and delays and we still have not seen the full introduction of the integrated client management system. Children are too precious and vulnerable to use for political gain, yet here we have a Premier who pats himself on the back and grandstands on this issue by announcing further spending while thousands of Queensland children are still suffering in miserable circumstances. At every level we must be committed to developing a better system which will proactively protect children in need in Queensland and restore some public confidence in a once-neglected department.



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Hansard Tuesday, 6 March 2007

BODY CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (5.48 pm): I rise to speak on the Body Corporate and Community Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2006, which seeks to amend the Body Corporate and Community Management Act 1997 and the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal Act 2003. Before I go any further I wish to declare to honourable members that I am a unit owner on the Gold Coast and therefore I am part of a body corporate and have firsthand experience of how they operate.

The bill aims to improve the dispute resolution functions of the BCCM Act by way of focusing on informal processes such as self-resolution and improving access to justice by expanding the jurisdiction of the CCT. Further, this bill seeks to introduce guidelines for body corporate committee members through the introduction of a code of conduct for voting members. In my former role of shadow minister for tourism, fair trading and wine industry development, I became abundantly aware of many issues which were being encountered in respect of body corporate matters.

As we have heard from other members, there are over 33,000 community title schemes in Queensland, with over 303,000 individual lots. It is important to recognise the necessity of detailed rules for the ongoing administration and operation of community title schemes. This relates to committees, general meetings and financial and property management, which includes duplexes, home unit blocks, townhouse complexes, high rise apartment buildings and some commercial premises.

I note that the key policy objective of the bill is to improve dispute resolution processes through the following steps: self-resolution, departmental conciliation, the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal, parties to a dispute, exclusivity of the dispute resolution process and adjudicator powers. The bill also enhances the statutory code of conduct for body corporate managers and introduces a code of conduct for voting members of a body corporate committee to provide guidelines for voting committee members without increasing their existing obligations.

The last two clauses of this bill introduce the opportunity for new evidence to be submitted in respect of liquor licence applications in particular circumstances. I note that these clauses replicate the intent of the Liquor (Evidence on Appeals) Amendment Bill 2006.

As we have already heard from the shadow minister, the honourable member for Clayfield, the coalition will be supporting the intent of this bill. The amendments foreshadowed by the member for Clayfield intend to further enhance the bill, particularly in the areas of code of conduct and registration of managers. Whilst I genuinely welcome these amendments to the BCCM act that have finally found their way before us and purport to balance the rights and responsibilities of individuals with the responsibility for self-management as an inherent aspect of community title schemes, it is appropriate to mention issues raised by unit owners in this regard.

The minister and both her predecessors, Stephen Robertson and Merri Rose, have maintained the myth that the Community Titles Institute of Queensland, which is the new name for the Body Corporate Managers Association, is able to impose self-regulation on its managers. They have also maintained some

comfort from the false assumption that because the number of appeals against judgments have been few, a general satisfaction exists regarding judgments. However, it was the enormous expense and time-consuming appeal process to the District Court that was the key to that result.

A few years ago, the then secretary of the Gold Coast unit owners association decided to appeal a flawed decision by adjudicator Richard Meek. She won, but it took almost a year and cost her in excess of \$14,000 to overturn just 10 votes. At meetings of unit owners far and wide, this story is repeated and obviously is a deterrent to going to the District Court. It illustrates just how discouraging the former process was to the clients.

Notwithstanding that unit owners want a simpler and less expensive appeal process than they have at present and that, therefore, this move in the bill away from the District Court in the first instance is a step in the right direction, it is of little use to reform the appeal process if you do not reform that which will cause a flood of appeals, namely, the competence and bias of adjudicators or, to be fair, I should say the widespread perception of incompetence and bias of adjudicators.

The commission is meant to be a place where owners can go to obtain justice, yet it has been the subject of intense criticism by owners. The Gold Coast, which is a premier tourism destination and fast growing city, has a particularly high proportion of units and that equates to a high number of community title schemes. Last year on the Gold Coast at a meeting of 200 unit owners there was a unanimous vote of no confidence in the commission and a 100 per cent demand for the registration of body corporate managers. I understand that the shadow minister has outlined changes to this effect in his amendments.

When a previous minister, the Hon. Stephen Robertson, introduced amendments to the body corporate act in December, he promised that the review would be ongoing. Back then, he was aware that the two matters that most affected unit owners and which drew most criticism from unit owners were the failure of his government to register body corporate managers, which Mr Robertson himself threw into the too-hard basket, and the incompetence and perception of bias of the body corporate commission. Dissatisfaction extended even to the case management of the commissioner herself at the time. I note that despite massive dissatisfaction with her services and that of the commission under her leadership, the same person was promoted to the position of Acting Commissioner for Fair Trade.

I have read some of the unit owners' submissions to this government over the years and the majority condemn the failure to register managers and the failure to reform the commission, in which it seems most unit owners have little or no confidence at all. I understand that some whole bodies corporate have passed motions of no confidence in the commission after the commission has handled disputes in their resorts.

The primary focus of body corporate reform has to be transparency and guarantees of honest dealings with unit owners. This is where it all begins. Decent people buy home units, either to live in or for investment purposes. From the moment they consider this move, they are shelling out of their own pockets. They start with a real estate agent who takes a commission from the vendor for the sale. Then they have to employ a lawyer for conveyancing. Often they pay a valuer to ensure that they are paying the right price. Once they become an owner, they pay levies to the body corporate. Part of the levy may go to a building manager who acts as their caretaker and the rest goes to a body corporate manager who takes his or her fee to act as a secretariat and banker for the body corporate. If they are investors, they pay further for the building manager to rent their units for them. Banks usually have a piece of them, as well as insurance companies. In short, unit owners just keep paying.

One of the few areas where unit owners can control their spending is with the management of their body corporate, although they may have some control over their letting agreement also. However, it is in the body corporate management area that they are most vulnerable if they are not vigilant. For the benefit of members who are not aware of this, the body corporate manager is not the person who lives on site in the building manager's unit and who is usually the letting agent for investor owners as well. The body corporate manager provides a secretariat for the work of the elected committee of owners and also usually collects levies, manages the bank account and pays the bills.

Given that the large body corporate management companies have dozens of bodies corporate that they manage, it is easy to see that they have millions of other people's dollars under their control. This is why it is imperative that they be registered and that standards be set to protect unit owners against bad managers. Astonishingly, this was an area pigeon-holed by the minister during the review that began in 2001, took two years to see the light of day in this parliament and then, reprehensibly, omitted to regulate this most important area of money management. Here we are today with another minister and another set of amendments to this act, and we still have no indication of when the government will move to register these managers, whether they will set a bar that managers will have to reach or whether they intend to merely register all operators currently in business.

As I move around my electorate, which is one of the largest body corporate communities in Queensland along with that of the honourable member for Surfers Paradise, I hear appalling stories of mismanagement by some managers. I hasten to add that, as in all things, not all managers are bad and not all of them are rogues. I do not want to give the impression that I think so. However, it is a fact that, as

in all matters of corrupt and/or dishonest practice, there are a few who give the entire industry a bad name.

The managers' own association must be more diligent in disciplining the worst offenders amongst its own ranks, rather than avoiding this course of events when it is aware of the complaints raised by unit owners about certain of their members. Of particular concern are people who have been struck off professional rolls in other states, and who come to Queensland and can set up as body corporate managers because this government has failed to enact registration laws and set standards for registration. I ask the minister: where is the protection for unit owners in those circumstances? Why has the government done nothing about this disturbing anomaly?

The most common way managers can dishonestly draw money from accounts without the units owners' control is when they maintain the body corporate's bank accounts. Managers quote to handle the tasks of collecting and managing levies, finding the best insurance and often other services for the body corporate, and taking care of the secretarial work. Without strict controls by the committee, it is a simple matter for the manager to determine to send out information to all owners at whim and thus create an over service.

The Community Titles Institute of Queensland, which is the new name for the Body Corporate Managers Association, tells the minister that it has its own ethics committee which imposes standards upon members and that it can self-regulate if only it is given the chance. However, it has been alleged to me by more than one person that in this case the manager was a member of that very ethics committee. What chance of self-regulation is there if the association cannot even clean up a fiasco of that obvious dimension? I repeat: not all managers should be tarred with the same brush, but this is a very important point that I wish to raise. The government should have moved long before now to make registration compulsory and, in doing so, it should have set a standard that all managers have to reach.

Let me now address self-resolution. The bill requires that a person must take reasonable steps and make a demonstrated attempt to resolve the dispute with that person's body corporate prior to making an application to the commissioner. From the wide consultation I have undertaken, many individuals have explained that they have tried to attempt to resolve their issues directly with their body corporate. However, they often feel their concerns are not being acknowledged and have often complained of feeling manipulated by managers. I am disappointed to say that this is happening on a much more regular basis in my electorate. A lot of people come in on regular occasions to make these complaints.

With respect to departmental conciliation, I applaud the initiatives that improve the communication between parties to a dispute and bring about conciliation rather than forcing people through extensive legal processes that clog our court system. A regular complaint that I heard as shadow minister was that individuals felt that dispute resolution was a process that dragged on and on, often deliberately by one of the parties to a dispute, in order to wear down the other party. With these thoughts in mind, I ask the minister to confirm if she intends to revise the time line targets of the BCCM office from finalising 80 per cent of applications within 60 days from the close of time of applicant's reply to submissions. It would appear that this figure is unattainable.

Clause 37 establishes part 5A in chapter 6 which outlines the structure for departmental conciliation. Yet once again we do not have before us clear requirements of qualification criteria to be fulfilled by departmental conciliators. Clarification of parties to a dispute is welcome because this is what is needed to ensure explicit determination of who is in a position to enter into the dispute resolution process, and it will serve to eliminate misconceptions in this regard. The bill allows parties to a body corporate dispute to agree to not have the matter determined under the dispute resolution provisions of the BCCM Act but, rather, to refer the dispute to a court, tribunal or dispute resolution process with appropriate jurisdiction.

I must, in all conscience, raise my concerns over the changes proposed to extend the jurisdiction of the CCT to determine complex BCCM disputes through clauses 71 to 74 and to extend adjudicator powers. Of note is the intent of clauses 14 and 16 of the bill which insert new sections 149A, 149B and 178 that extends the jurisdiction of the CCT to determine complex BCCM disputes currently resolved compulsorily by specialist adjudication. I invite the minister in her summation to clarify how the same level of specialist level of determination can be provided by the CCT with the extension of its powers.

Adjudicator powers are also addressed in this bill. They will be extended to permit an order for costs in favour of an affected person or the body corporate who have incurred costs with respect to the application, access body corporate records in the investigation of disputes and have the power to consider an application for an interim order.

The minister will no doubt recall the concerns I raised in July 2006 during estimates hearings regarding the classification of positions of adjudicators within the BCCM office and the issues surrounding the enforceability of orders on managers. Clause 23 specifies appointment of appropriately qualified persons as departmental conciliators and adjudicators, yet confirmation of what appropriate qualifications are fails to be clearly defined. One of the most common complaints is that the commission ignores

commonsense and follows the letter of the law so literally that, even when utterly ridiculous outcomes portend, they continue along their way regardless.

Clause 53 of this bill neglects to address adequately the enforceability of orders in section 287. It is only when orders are complied with that thorough closure resolution of the process occurs.

Clause 10 introduces new sections 101A and 101B. It clarifies expectations and roles of body corporate committee members as well as initiating statutory protection from liability. I support the introduction of section 101B, which clearly defines the expectations on voting members of body corporates. Recognising that it is much easier to remove a volunteer for breach of a code of conduct than a body corporate manager, it is a shame that there is not more detail regarding the execution of this provision.

I note the concerns raised in the Scrutiny of Legislation *Alert Digest* in that there appears to be a potential for conflict between proposed section 101A, which confers a conditional immunity, and existing section 45(4) of the Body Corporate and Community Management (Standard Module) Regulation 1997, which purports to confer absolute immunity upon body corporate committee members. I would ask that the minister confirm if she intends to review this proposed section for the purpose of eliminating potential conflict.

Concerns were raised with me initially by stakeholders about possible civil liability that could deter unit owners from agreeing to be members of their body corporate committee at all. I note the minister's amendments to clarify immunity from liability in the new section 101A.

In closing, it should be noted, nevertheless, that in August the current minister told parliament of her concerns that unethical practices by managers were still rife. The minister acknowledged people's fears and flagged an intention to introduce legislation and probity checks during the ongoing review that is currently taking place. Considering the minister knows there are fears of manipulation, it can only be seen as remiss of her not to bring some change in with this act. It is not good having legislation that is continually playing catch-up and not keeping pace with a rapidly expanding Queensland. Legislation that responds slowly and reluctantly to pressure and legitimate arguments from stakeholders is not only insincere but also ineffectual and virtually out of date before it is in place.



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Hansard Tuesday, 6 March 2007

CURRUMBIN ELECTORATE, SCHOOLS

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (9.48 pm): I am pleased to inform honourable members of some of the memorable celebrations I have attended in Currumbin in recent times and I wish to convey my heartfelt congratulations to all of these deserving recipients. With schools back in full swing, it was indeed a genuine pleasure to take part in two school leaders' induction ceremonies held at Elanora High and Elanora State School respectively. At the full school assembly at Elanora High School, captains Vanessa Bath and Jacob Reid were presented with their badges. School vice-captains Thirushka Naidoo and Kyle Dunlop, plus a throng of student leaders from house captains to peer mediators, were duly recognised and it was enlightening to see such senior students taking on leadership and mentoring roles.

At Elanora State School the induction ceremony acknowledge new school captains Brittany Hodgkinson and Reid Price, with Madison Hoffman and Brad Cook appointed as vice captains. House captains, student councillors and performing arts representatives were also formally presented. I take a moment to congratulate Mrs Roslyn Wilson upon her recent appointment as principal at Elanora State High School. After serving several years as deputy, this is welcome news as Mrs Wilson is a stabilising influence in this large school.

On 23 February it was a pleasure to join emergency services minister, Pat Purcell, at Bilinga Fire Station for the official commissioning of a new fire truck, a Mercedes Atego type 3, worth around \$490,000. Later in the afternoon I attended the presentation of national medals to long-serving members of the Currumbin Valley Rural Fire Brigade. Clyde Holst, the fire warden at Upper Currumbin Creek; Bill Griffiths, from Piggabeen Road area; and Peter Old, deputy fire warden and first officer have 75 years of volunteer service between them. The National Medal is awarded after 15 years service in organisations that protect life and property at some risk to their members. A clasp is awarded to the holder of a National Medal after each additional 10 years of service. The medal is individually inscribed and is a fine recognition of an individual's dedication to their community. Unlike many government ministers, Pat Purcell acknowledges members when he is visiting the electorate, regardless of their party status. Perhaps other ministers could take a leaf out of Pat's book and show some manners under similar circumstances.

Tonight, Volunteer Marine Rescue members were presented with their National Medals at Currumbin. They were Peter Saunders, who began his service in the Brisbane floods in 1974; Robert Craig, who joined Currumbin Air Sea Rescue as a volunteer in May 1980; and John Nolan, who joined the Currumbin Air Sea Rescue Volunteer Service in May 1990.

I would now like to correct some misinformation put forward by the member for Burleigh. I am on record as supporting low-cost housing in my electorate. It is the government that sold the parcel of land at Elanora, which would have been far more appropriate for this sort of housing than spending big bucks on the Gold Coast Highway. I would welcome more public housing in my electorate. That was a very cheap shot by the member for Burleigh.



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Hansard Thursday, 8 March 2007

MOTION: INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (12.02 pm): I rise to support the motion from the honourable member for Burdekin on International Women's Day 2007. For centuries, women have battled for recognition and rights that were bestowed automatically on males. In the 19th century when women first sought admission to the legal profession, the courts resisted their requests. At that time, the legislation was couched in terms of 'persons' joining the profession and male judges held that the definition of the word 'person' did not include women. According to Richard Chisholm and Garth Nettheim in *Understanding Law*, it could be said that the legal system embodies a tradition of indifference to the rights of women to protection against violence. Superficially, those domains remain neutral but in truth it is not the case. Last week figures published showed that women's representation in parliaments around the world is at 17 per cent, which is said to be a record high.

I dedicate this speech to all those women who were unfairly treated by past Queensland state governments through the forced removal of their children by callous practices under the guise of moral danger and the Adoption Act 1901. Their suffering continues today because of the insensitive decisions made by past governments.

In this day and age it is abhorrent to think that only a few decades ago young single pregnant women could be seized by police and taken to government sanctioned facilities to wait until their children were born. In many cases they were treated as slave labour, worked long hours in laundries without pay and were forbidden from seeing their boyfriends or, indeed, family members. They were imprisoned as criminals.

Under the Adoption of Children Act 1964, the director of the department of children's services was the sole authority to control and make adoption orders in this state. Most politicians and key decision makers were men who had no concept or personal experience of motherhood, yet they took children from their natural mothers under questionable circumstances.

Last month in parliament I was privileged to attend an art exhibition and book launch that was organised by Origins. I acknowledge members who are in the gallery today. Stories tumbled from women still raw with the grief of not knowing whether they had delivered a son or daughter as they never got a chance to see their child's face. Women's adoption stories were supported with graphic paintings and shocking memoirs of mistreated women. One would think that the cruelty depicted came from the Dark Ages. Women were tied to beds, treated like animals and drugged to the eyeballs so that they were beyond comprehension as their babies were extracted from them.

Today in some circles the term 'single mum' still carries a degree of stigma, as it did for women and girls who had babies out of wedlock in days gone by. Today in this House and parliaments elsewhere in Australia, there are women who have had children out of wedlock. I ask them to ponder for a moment how they would feel if they had lived during the dark days of discrimination and had to surrender their babies in such a manner?

In 1990 and 1991 amendments to the legislation made provisions for adults who were adopted and birth parents to receive identifying information about each other where no objection was lodged. Additionally, people who were adopted and birth parents who signed an adoption consent after June 1991 were provided with an unqualified entitlement to access identifying information once the adopted person attained the age of 18. What of children born prior to 1990? Herein lies the inconsistency, discrimination and cowardice of past governments.

Proof is forthcoming that many were tricked into signing adoption papers, which they were told were merely hospital discharge forms. Another ploy commonly used was to get the mothers to sign the papers when they were drugged so heavily that they were incapable of knowing what they were doing.

I have heard the excuses that governments ignored mothers' pleas because of claims that adoptive parents and birth mothers were promised secrecy. Those excuses are only partially true as, in yet another cruel twist of justice, there is evidence that the Department of Families did not keep the name of the natural mother private. In reality, it provided the names of mother and child to adoptive parents, thus denying the natural mothers any sense of equity.

In 1990 members from both sides of the House debated the Adoption Act. After 16 years of lobbying by birth mothers and Origins, affected groups were devastated to learn that section 39 of the legislation included permanent objections.

On International Women's Day we need to be cognisant of the trauma inflicted not once but twice on those women. Hearing their stories and looking into their sad eyes, I can begin to imagine the heart-wrenching grief that they have felt for so many years. We have the power and the opportunity to correct this gross prejudice and human injustice which discriminates unfairly against a group of women who are caught in a time warp.

In closing, I acknowledge all Queensland women who had their children taken and who have continued to search for them despite the enormous odds. I admire their courage and strength.

Time expired.



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Hansard Tuesday, 13 March 2007

CRIMINAL CODE AND CIVIL LIABILITY AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (4.06 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Criminal Code and Civil Liability Amendment Bill 2007. As my colleague the shadow Attorney-General, the honourable member for Caloundra, has already stated, the coalition will be supporting this bill. I would like to take this opportunity to comment on two areas of this bill: the amendment of section 328A of the Criminal Code to increase the maximum penalties for the offence of dangerous operation of a vehicle causing death or grievous bodily harm and to expand the existing 'aggravating circumstances', and the amendment of the Criminal Code by the insertion of a new offence of identity fraud.

Firstly, I will address amendments to section 328A of the Criminal Code. I am certain all members in this House will be aware of growing concern about dangerous driving offences, particularly where death or serious injury results and alcohol, drugs or speed are contributing factors. We heard from the minister this morning in this House that there have been 71 road deaths in Queensland since the beginning of 2007—11 more than last year. Appalling statistics such as these drive home the urgency of implementing measures that will curb these avoidable deaths. As common sense fails with an increasing number of drivers, tough measures and harsh penalties are warranted in conjunction with comprehensive compulsory driver training. Public confidence in the soft sentences handed down by our courts is at an all-time low and the amendment of section 328A has the potential to lift that confidence.

In recent years the Gold Coast has experienced a high number of road fatalities, as members have also heard from the honourable member for Surfers Paradise—each of these being more spectacular and terrifying than the last. The gruesome sight of cars wrapped around power poles or driven on to the wrong side of the road and down steep embankments is all too familiar. Add to this innocent victims who pay the ultimate price for dangerous choices made by those who drink or take drugs and then get behind the wheel of a vehicle.

In 2000 a nine-year-old girl was killed and a man left with extensive brain damage in Surfers Paradise after being run down by a young woman who was reported as being high from sniffing butane. Serving 2½ years of a 6½-year sentence, Christie Morgan brought added trauma to these families by applying for a drivers licence upon her release. Victims are not only those who are killed or maimed but also the families who have the unenviable task of picking up the pieces amidst lost dreams in the wake of high-speed, drug or alcohol induced recklessness.

Of increasing community concern is the growing incidence of hit-and-run traffic offences resulting in death or serious injury. In December 2004 in the Currumbin electorate we encountered the untimely passing of Shaine Johnson who, at the age of 21, was the victim of a hit-and-run driver as he crossed a road in Tugun at about 10 pm. Only months after the crash the same driver was caught on two occasions, one for drink driving and another for driving without a licence. Despite a number of driving infringements, he received a two-year jail term suspended after six months.

I have met and spoken to Shaine's family a number of times and witnessed firsthand their grief at the loss of their son and brother. Especially upsetting in cases of hit-and-runs is the fact that people are callously left by the side of the road often in cases where if first aid was offered it could have meant the difference between life and death. This family was extremely courageous and spoke out publicly about the

grief and the circumstances surrounding Shaine's death as they believed the leniency of the sentence offended the value of Shaine's life.

In May 2005 two young year 11 students from Palm Beach Currumbin High School, Matt and Aki, lost their lives through high speed, an inexperienced driver and the car in which they were travelling careering out of control. Last year cyclist Ken Gibbons of Palm Beach was struck and killed by a hit-and-run driver early one morning while riding across Tallebudgera Bridge. Uncaring displays such as this reveal that a percentage of our society fail to exhibit any compassion or remorse.

I endorse the introduction of new section 408D, obtaining or dealing with identification information, which specifies the offence of identity fraud that prohibits a person from misusing another entity's identification information.

One of the greatest concerns with technological advances is the use of information technology to commit crimes, including fraud and theft perpetrated through the use of false personal identification information. Prior to and during schoolies on the Gold Coast police and organisers are on the alert for under-age youth carrying false identities and attempting to purchase alcohol or enter licensed premises. If teenagers get away with this illegal exercise, what is to stop them from becoming adults with no respect for the identity of others.

Our multibillion-dollar tourism industry is another sector where the practice of credit card skimming poses major concerns. Tourists can become easy prey away from the everyday minutia and in new surroundings as many tend to drop their guard and adopt a carefree holiday mentality. As members have heard from the member for Caloundra, credit card fraud cost the Australian economy between \$100 million and \$120 million in 2002 and it is estimated that this escalates to \$3 billion per year world wide.

Card skimming often results in personal financial details being obtained through a variety of methods including the use of electronic devices fitted to banks' ATMs or EFTPOS machines. This information is then used to effect financial transactions, often overseas, that result in individuals, financial institutions, insurers and ultimately the community losing significant sums of money. There is certainty that new forms of card skimming will emerge that will pose great challenges for law enforcement agencies to stay one step ahead.

On a wider scale, the problem of identity theft and fraud can leave victims with a lost financial, social or legal reputation that is difficult to recover. Honourable members have no doubt read or seen on television the unfortunate tales of innocent people who, through no fault of their own, have been targeted by unscrupulous individuals for financial gain.

Admittedly, there are existing offences in the Criminal Code relevant to the theft or misuse of personal identifying information including stealing, fraud, and forgery. It has been identified that a potential gap exists where a person possesses, obtains or supplies another person's personal identifying information with criminal intent and it is then used to commit a fraud outside the jurisdiction. The web site of the Australian Institute of Criminology—www.aic.gov.au—outlines a raft of simple precautions that can be taken in relation to the disclosure, disposal, maintenance and storage of personal information to prevent identity theft. Many of these precautions are common sense, as mentioned earlier, and can often be overlooked when people, predominantly when travelling, leave their caution at home. Some of these include the careful destruction of expired documents such as licences, passports and credit cards; ensuring accuracy of transactions on financial statements; storing official documents such as birth certificates in a secure place; not providing personal information and data to anyone unless you have reason to trust them; using a locked mailbox; and not carrying your tax file number, PIN or passwords in your purse or wallet.

Identity fraud and theft is becoming more sophisticated and everyone needs to maintain a greater degree of vigilance to protect themselves. I am very pleased to see this legislation before the House and I commend the bill.



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Hansard Wednesday, 14 March 2007

SECURITY PROVIDERS AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (2.49 pm): I am pleased to join the debate on the Security Providers Amendment Bill 2006. Madam Deputy Speaker, as you have already heard from my colleague and shadow minister for tourism, fair trading and wine industry development, the honourable member for Clayfield, the coalition will be supporting this bill.

In essence this bill seeks to provide a licensing regime in Queensland for security providers specifically identified in the explanatory notes as crowd controllers, security officers, private investigators and security firms. It is intended that this will assist in protecting and enhancing community safety through implementing strategies which contribute to safer communities. In particular, it addresses many issues including the scope and coverage of the act in relation to existing licence categories and probity checks, and the test to determine an applicant's appropriateness to hold a licence.

On previous occasions during my time as shadow minister in this portfolio I have indicated my support for extending probity checks to be conducted in any area which encompasses public safety. I am glad that this bill has finally found its way to the House, because it has now been nine months since the minister's statement on 7 June 2006 in which she said—

... the Beattie government will dramatically boost security industry standards of the security industry under a package of reforms currently nearing completion.

When one considers that this bill has been languishing in some form for a period of almost five years, once again one can only say that we are very glad it has finally made its way into the House.

During this time we have witnessed a number of incidents where shocking assaults have caused grievous harm to patrons of nightclubs in entertainment precincts which the media have labelled 'bouncer bashings'. Claims that certain Gold Coast nightclubs are controlled by bikie gangs do not promote public confidence in the security industry. Recent forays into Coolangatta and Palm Beach licensed premises by northern New South Wales gang members who use vandalism and standover tactics provide further evidence of the need to strengthen existing laws.

In a ministerial statement on 7 June, from which I have already quoted, the minister also made the statement—

I am determined that Queensland will have the best security provider regulatory regime in Australia.

But will these laws be tough enough to prevent malevolent people from entering the industry? We have seen what is happening with rogue tourism where state government laws lack any teeth, prosecution is rare and the problem persists largely unchecked to our detriment.

Whilst debating the Liquor Act Amendment Bill 2005, which introduced a 3 am lockout and legislated the necessity for licensed premises to have crowd controllers, I raised a number of concerns. There were difficulties raised at that time regarding the supply of adequately trained and licensed security providers for the security industry, and the availability of appropriately qualified personnel still, I believe, remains as a difficulty for the industry today.

One of the critical areas that the departmental review and this amendment bill have failed to incorporate within the licensing process is a psychological assessment particularly for those security providers who are dealing with the public in potentially violent and often volatile circumstances. I acknowledge that this bill aims to provide greater clarity through the more specific classification of the types of security providers by the changes in definitions in clauses 4 through to 10. What does alarm me is the amalgamation of security equipment installers with crowd controllers, bodyguards and security guards into this one piece of legislation. What we have in fact are two distinctly separate industries—one in electronic security and the other a physical security presence. The Queensland Security Association has confirmed—

The industry has grown substantially since 1993 both in size and accountability. The majority of the growth has been in the technical sector where there is no licensing regime.

It goes on to say—

This sector comprises of the following: alarm sellers, installers, electronic reporting facilities, CCTV and access control consultants, sellers and installers.

A disparity arises with regard to this statement with respect to the highly regulated electrical contracting industry. This industry is already subject to many regulatory requirements under the Electrical Safety Act 2002, and the Electrical and Communications Association, as the primary employer association in Queensland, is comprised of approximately 2,000 electrical contractors. To make it clear for all members of the House, being an electrician is not the same as being an electrical contractor. Electrical contractors must hold specific electrical contractors licences as well as ACA licensing, occupational licensing and be a fit and proper person. It may be said that anyone can purport to be a security system installer, but to have it completed properly consumers should ensure that the installer is a licensed electrical contractor.

I am aware that the ECA has made a submission in the review process. I ask the minister whether she will grant its request for either an exemption or positive notice registration for electrical contractors and their electrical workers from the need to hold a security firm licence or a security equipment installers licence. Due to their compliance under existing licensing arrangements and given that the imposition of new licensing requirements would create an unfair competitive advantage to others in the security product market, I urge the minister to give this due consideration.

In respect of the physical security presence, I remind honourable members of the minister's comments also on 7 June 2006—

Our model will include tougher industry probity checks, including the use of charges, unrecorded convictions and criminal intelligence so that we can weed out the thugs before they start work and ensure that criminal elements do not infiltrate the industry.

For the public to have confidence that they can go out to public places and enjoy themselves, we need to have confidence in those people who are placed in charge of crowd control. As I have already stated, I support measures that increase the probity and integrity checks which in turn serve to enhance the credibility of the industry. Our society's attitudes have changed drastically since 1993, as has our population. A culture of binge drinking and easy access to drugs that induce violent behaviour have given rise to a sharp increase in aggressive and often unprovoked attacks on patrons both by other patrons and overzealous bouncers—sometimes with lethal consequences.

The case of former Australian cricketer David Hookes in 2004 created a wave of protest from the public when the bouncer involved was found not guilty of a charge of manslaughter. In the last 10 months we have seen headlines in the newspapers covering incidents where patrons have been victims of alleged assaults by bouncers in Brisbane and on the Gold Coast. Sadly these actions cast a black cloud over the integrity and credibility of those who work in this demanding industry.

One area which this bill does not clarify is a specific licence for a security provider and partner dog. Under clause 8, the minister seeks the definition of a security officer under section 7(1) to include those officers who also work with or without a dog. Leaving this partnership type of security provision to councils to monitor is unsatisfactory. Moreover, it does not ensure accreditation. It is my understanding that the New South Wales parliament addressed the need to be aware and respect security working dogs when partnered with an accredited security provider under the New South Wales Companion Animals Act 2000. I wonder why this is an area the minister seems loath to address.

Regulations for security providers who are seeking to work with a partner dog to have completed the course PRSSG24A 'Manage dogs for security patrols' as recognised under the Australian National Training Quality Framework, or the ANTQF for the benefit of the honourable for Clayfield, are lacking here and should be considered in this legislation. Additionally, it would be practical for these handlers to be assessed by someone of a similar standard to those who are recognised as an accredited appropriate person to monitor dog handlers who work within our Corrective Services, Police Service and armed forces.

Another area which the minister seems to have omitted from this legislation is that of cross-border recognition of licensing. Whilst there is potential for a national uniform licensing regime, this is not likely to eventuate in the short term. As the Currumbin electorate shares a border with New South Wales, I strongly

urge consideration to be given as to how Queensland can work more closely with New South Wales on this issue. I would like to use this opportunity to seek clarification from the minister in relation to another of her statements on 7 June 2006, and that is—

We will boost resources and operations to ensure compliance with our tough new laws.

I would ask the minister in her reply to advise how her department intends to boost these resources and operations, how many staff will be added to the department to deliver this and what will be the associated costs.

In closing, I recognise that this bill is a step in the right direction. However, there is still room for improvement in relation to training provisions and that part of the industry involved with security dogs. I applaud those who have stood by this industry over the years and I am sure that they will be pleased to see some strengthening of the laws so that this industry can gain the credibility it so deserves.



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Hansard Wednesday, 14 March 2007

PARLIAMENTARY DRESS CODE

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (9.36 pm): This week public perception of politicians sunk to new depths with the Premier pulling yet another stunt in lowering dress standards in the 52nd Parliament under the guise of saving water by running air conditioners in parliament at warmer temperatures. The Premier pulls these stunts on a daily basis to divert attention from issues of corruption and sleazy deals associated with his government, and the motive behind moving this motion without notice is obvious. If he was so concerned about saving water in the parliamentary precinct, why did it take until after the September 2006 election to install dual-flush toilets in the offices and bedrooms in the annexe? New sessional order 6 states—

Dress standards in the Parliamentary Chamber should be appropriate to the Queensland climate and reflect general community standards. All Members and staff are expected to dress in business attire. Male members and staff may wear a long sleeve shirt and tie or coat and long sleeve business shirt without tie.

Interestingly, there is no dress code mentioned for women either in this motion or in existing standing orders. A 2001 report of a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Study Group entitled *Gender-sensitising Commonwealth parliaments* noted that generally there is an absence of a dress code for women in most parliaments. Perhaps the Premier will bring in a new code for women at the next sitting.

Over the years Speakers in the Canberra House of Representatives have permitted alterations to dress codes. Some have proven to be mistakes, attracting humiliation. In 1977 it was acceptable to wear tailored safari suits without a tie. Thankfully, that dress code was changed in later years. I will never forget the ridiculous sight of South Australian Labor Premier Don Dunstan in his short pink hot pants.

Politicians are paid substantially high salaries compared to most Queenslanders. Parliament is recognised as an institution where formality rules and business dress, which is a coat and tie, and professional conduct are expected. Since the commencement of the 52nd Parliament led by the Beattie government behaviour in the House has been shameful. Derisive personal comments and insults are hurled across the chamber in a sloppy and dishonourable manner.

Ministers' replies to questions on notice contain sarcastic and unprofessional remarks to well-intended questions asked by members on behalf of constituents. I share those shoddy replies with residents in my electorate who have innocently requested answers to their concerns. They are not impressed with the unprofessional manner exhibited by ministers. Neither were a dozen guests from the Gold Coast who witnessed this morning's disgraceful antics by the Premier and his government during question time.

Correspondence is treated with disdain and arrogance by some ministers who take months to reply. A sampling of their tardiness includes a letter to the minister for transport dated 13 October 2006 which did not receive a response until 5 January. A letter to the minister for education dated 5 September 2006 was not answered until 4 December 2006. At least with a petition or a question on notice one gets a reply in 30 days, even though it may contain personal and shabby comments.

The relaxing of dress standards by the Premier has the potential to further diminish parliamentary standards. The emperor may have new clothes, but his motivation for doing so is transparently insincere.

Time expired.



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Hansard Tuesday, 17 April 2007

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILIES

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (11.59 am): This morning I rise to draw the attention of this House to mounting concerns over the stream of issues that keep bobbing up within the Department of Child Safety. The department of families brought so much shame on the Beattie government that it deemed the safety of children an issue important enough to be the trigger for the election in 2004. Three years have now passed since the renaming and reformation of this portfolio which promises to protect children. Granted, there have been significant reforms. However, there is something very unsettling about the minister's premature gloating.

On 22 March this year the minister boasted of the government's implementation of all 110 recommendations, exactly three years to the day after her government received the Peter Forster blueprint for desperately needed reforms for a grossly neglected system. However, on 15 April news broke about major failures in the long-awaited integrated client management system for child protection, with 2,440 reported issues in less than one month of operation. This computer system was heralded by the government as a world first, paving the way by integrating information to assist decision-making processes for individual case management for children under the care or attention of the department.

I am gravely concerned about reports that cases of alleged abuse have been mistakenly closed, placing children at serious risk of sexual harm or abuse in greater danger by this malfunction of the system and its processes. Vital information has also allegedly been lost or attached incorrectly to other files, resulting in a flawed decision-making process. It is essential that all relevant information is assessed and this is critical in the domain of Child Safety. The ICMS was meant to be operational on 30 June 2006. It was delayed until November 2006 and further postponed until March 2007. After such excessive delay and pilot testing under the guise of getting the system right, it is inexcusable for the level of problems experienced.

Child Safety case loads is another area of disquiet and deserving of urgent attention and was the topic of my question on notice No. 372, which I asked on 8 March this year. The aim for case loads was to reduce them to 15. Yet from the answer provided to my question, there is direct evidence that out of the 34 Child Safety service centres within this state, this target has been achieved in only one centre, that being Redlands. Statistically, that means that 97 per cent of these centres are overburdened and are not operating effectively in the best interests of the children they are meant to protect. After examining the case loads across the state, over 80 per cent of centres were found to bear case loads greater than 120 per cent of what is recommended and 23 per cent had case loads exceeding 150 per cent. Even more disturbing are revelations that the areas of South Burnett, Mackay, Atherton, Goodna, Ipswich, Woodridge, Logan Central and Loganlea are each managing case loads that are rapidly approaching double the number that they should be handling. The minister has made media statements claiming a tick for reducing case loads as per the CMC recommendations. Whilst there has been a big step in the right direction, realistically the government has not achieved all that it could.

The loss of experienced workers from the department is another matter that needs to be addressed without further delay, with about 75 per cent of permanent separations resulting from staff resigning from

the department. Concerns raised by staff must be supported by the government and acted upon to better assist them in tackling the difficult tasks, heart-wrenching situations and tough decisions that they face on a daily basis.

Results from the recent Child Safety staff survey certainly reflect a demonstration of creative reporting. It is what is not said that speaks volumes. There are large gaps in the survey, which show that staff refused to answer whether they felt that the department had improved because they were not given the option to disagree with the statement. By not allowing this option, we are left with a flawed presentation of the responses and an incomplete picture of the facts—a picture that permits the government to crow about the figures that show only agreement and support the department's focus.

In order to be transparent and accountable, the department should have given staff the opportunity to openly disagree. The survey should have invited all staff to partake in it, not just a sample of staff. A critical point to note is that less than 30 per cent of staff actually agreed that the department has made significant progress in its ability to address the complex needs of children who come into contact with the child protection system. Sadly, an increasing number of people in today's society either tolerate or turn a blind eye to child abuse and the growing trend of neglect. We have an obligation to curb this trend by implementing a host of programs in our communities to provide support for parents.

The minister, together with the whole Beattie government, also has an obligation to the children of Queensland to do everything in her power to protect them and to make sure that staff are well equipped to handle their roles, with manageable case loads and systems that are properly tested for efficiency and safety. I hope the minister comes back from America with some proven ideas to help address this situation so that Queensland children can feel safe.

Time expired.



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Hansard Tuesday, 17 April 2007

CURRUMBIN ELECTORATE

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (9.34 pm): Over the past month the Currumbin electorate experienced a number of festivities. On 23 March the Pines Shopping Centre at Elanora celebrated its 20th birthday with colouring competitions, \$20,000 worth of gift vouchers and service awards to a number of retailers and their staff who had clocked up 20 years with the centre. Those retailers included Change Alley, Travelworld, Coles, Healthpoint Chemist and Kmart, the latter becoming the only Super Kmart store on the Gold Coast. I would like to make special mention of local resident Allan Robertson, who has been employed at the Pines since 1988 and is a familiar friendly face to the thousands of shoppers who frequent this centre. I give the thumbs up to a great management team, which is headed by Stewart Breen who took over the reins from long-serving and popular centre manager Athol Cowan.

Wild Island, the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary's first new attraction in five years, was opened on 3 April, which was a glorious sunny day highlighting the natural beauty of this oasis in the suburbs. Wild Island is an interactive adventure for children. It educates visitors young and old about predators and birds of prey. It would be a great idea for all primary schoolchildren in the south-east region to attend as part of their school curriculum. The CEO of the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary, Michelle Monsour, and her dedicated team of staff and invaluable volunteers deserve vigorous praise for working so hard to realise their vision to get the sanctuary back on track as a thriving educational and tourism facility.

The next project for the sanctuary is a new wildlife hospital to treat the over 4,000 injured native animals that are brought to the 25-year-old sanctuary hospital's doors each year. As the only facility of this kind in south-east Queensland, the hospital is bursting at the seams and funding is needed desperately. It is a real shame that to date the Beattie government has not considered this unique attraction worthy of any funding. I urge the government to make up for its neglect by assisting with this deserving project.

On Tuesday, 27 March I was pleased to play a role at the opening of the Gold Coast Obesity Surgery Centre in Fred McKay House, which is part of the John Flynn Hospital complex at Tugun. This centre is a unique multidisciplinary facility and is the first in Queensland to offer a complete range of weight loss services under one roof, including services offered by a gastric band surgeon, dieticians, psychologists, nurses and GPs to ensure that patients benefit from a holistic approach to support their weight loss program. Obesity is an emerging problem of major concern for many Australians. The gastric banding procedure is proving effective in reducing comorbidities such as diabetes, sleep apnoea, high blood pressure and associated musculoskeletal pain.

National Youth Week commenced on Saturday, 14 April, with the in2youthfest held at Salk Oval, Palm Beach. Live bands, workshops, stalls and even rock climbing made for a load of fun for young people and their families. Throughout Queensland a wide range of activities are being planned, with help from the Gold Coast City Council and the Department of Communities.

Finally, I would like to take a moment to commend the Queensland ballet on its recent Gold Coast performance of the *Nutcracker*. This popular ballet is an escape to another realm with its elegant sets, myriad costumes and, above all, talented dancers. We are indeed fortunate to have our own ballet company, as there are only two state ballet companies in Australia.



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Hansard Thursday, 19 April 2007

VACANCY IN SENATE OF COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA: NOMINATION OF SK BOYCE

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (12.07 pm): It is an absolute delight to support the motion moved by the Premier in this House today to endorse the nomination of Suzanne Kay Boyce as the new Queensland senator to fill the recently created Senate vacancy. As members heard, Sue beat off an impressive field of candidates—all male, I might add—to clearly win this highly sought office in the Howard Liberal government. Joining Sue today in the gallery are many friends, including her daughter, who is with her in the chamber here, and members of the Liberal Women's Council Executive, including the new Acting President, Melina Morgan, who, I might say, has enormous shoes to fill, and the immediate past president, Rae Watkins.

To date, Sue Boyce's life has embraced motherhood—and I mean embraced motherhood—producing three now adult children. She has had a busy career as chair of the family company, Everhard Industries Pty Ltd—a business established in 1926—and numerous positions on disability advocacy group committees. Prior to Sue's involvement in the family company, which has its headquarters at Geebung, as members have heard Sue worked as a newspaper journalist in Queensland, Victoria, Papua New Guinea and the United Kingdom for a period stretching over 20 years. Some of this time was spent as a political journalist, which will no doubt assist her to navigate the media contingents in Canberra.

Some members may not realise that Everhard makes products used in the water industry—a very topical issue—including laundry units, waste water treatment systems and rainwater tanks. In her preselection speech last weekend Sue's vibrant personality saw her make the most of the opportunity to promote her tanks to a large audience. After telling preselectors that she had planned to step back from her role as chairman of the company, Sue invited anyone needing a rainwater tank 'to come and see me later'.

As a fellow female Liberal and also a good friend, I believe I am in a position to reveal what some of her aims, inspirations and motivations are. First and foremost are her family—her three adult children. Bede is an electrician, Gina is an intensive care nurse and Joanna, the youngest, is a bakery assistant and student. Joanna has Down syndrome and is a remarkable, independent 23-year-old woman with dreams and aspirations like each and every one of us. Joanna is a gold medal winning Special Olympian, and I felt honoured to share in Sue's joy and pride as we watched her special girl compete in gymnastics on the Gold Coast last year.

Like many mums, though, with a newborn with a disability, Sue admits she saw her baby's differences—and I quote Sue with her permission—'as a disaster, as that's how everyone in our community, including medical staff, frame the birth of a child with a disability'. She said, 'It took me some time to realise that what I had was a happy, healthy little girl, and I'll always regret the time I wasted getting to that point.'

It is no great surprise then to understand Sue's passion and involvement as an advocate for people with a disability. Adopting the slogan 'Nothing about us without us', Sue knows that people with a disability want empathy, not sympathy. Since Joanna's birth 23 years ago, Sue has fought for the real inclusion—

and I repeat for the real inclusion—of people with a disability in all aspects of life and decision making. Urging us all to see the person first not the disability, Sue concurs that the main problem for this group is the community's attitude to disability, not the disability itself.

As a past president of the Down Syndrome Association of Queensland and current management committee member of recently formed Lifeways, Sue has projected a strong and reasoned voice on behalf of people with a disability and their families. Lifeways is a new organisation in Queensland to assist ageing carers to decide what happens when they can no longer care for their son or daughter with a disability. No wonder then when you read a list of Sue's goals and interests, right up there with promoting Queensland family businesses is developing a framework for ageing parents to enable long-term planning for adult children with a disability and employment, housing opportunities and advocacy for people with a disability.

Also on her list is a desire to improve the participation rates of women in leadership roles in business and in politics. For the past 2½ years Sue has worked energetically as the President of the Liberal Party's Women's Council. As a former Women's Council patron, I admire enormously her ability to bounce back from defeat and her total commitment to fostering and encouraging women to put themselves forward both as candidates and for senior positions within the party. Sue's helping hand and wisdom has touched me and many other women in the Liberal Party.

Sue has an amazing capacity to pick herself up and throw herself straight back into the fray, and I have to say that her loyalty to the Liberal Party has been unquestionable under some difficult circumstances. Perhaps it is her philosophy—and that is that every decision is improved by having a variety of perspectives, and one of the most critical of these is having views from both men and women—that has inspired many women, including myself, to higher office.

Sue has been involved in the Australian Institute of Management's Women on Board program, which takes groups of women who aspire to be directors to the workplace of successful women directors. In her own company, Sue encouraged Everhard's female staff to participate in women in leadership courses, as she observed that in a male dominated industry it often takes a level of confidence for women to even put their hand up, and confidence in women is not necessarily innate. In many cases it needs to be learnt.

Another piece of advice she gave me which is absolutely classic, and I want to share it with the House, is: always ask the apparently obvious question. Perhaps we should do that in question time. If you do not know, you can guarantee that more than half the people in the room do not know the answer either but are too embarrassed to ask.

Sue, in your own words, you have put your heart and soul into two Liberal Senate campaigns thus far. You are a seasoned campaigner who is ready to go the full 15 rounds, or however many, to secure another win for the Howard government. Today in this House—and I am sure you can feel my pride—I feel immensely honoured to be standing here and welcoming you to your new role. I convey my sincere wishes as a close friend and mentor. I speak on behalf of the Liberal Party but in particular on behalf of the Queensland Women's Council. The considerable skills you bring to this position will serve Australia, and particularly those with disabilities, well. Long may you be in the Senate.



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Hansard Tuesday, 22 May 2007

GOLD COAST HOSPITAL, ONCOLOGY SERVICES

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (9.47 pm): In December 2005, upon hearing of the staffing crisis at the Gold Coast Hospital, Jackie Morgan went to work as nurse unit manager of the haematology oncology day unit. As a former nurse I understand the dedicated approach nurses and allied health professionals bring to their roles despite working under enormous pressure to provide quality care for terminally ill patients.

After 20 years working in cancer care this modern-day Florence Nightingale reluctantly resigned in March this year after failing to receive any reply from Uschi Schreiber over her concerns at the lack of a full-time medical oncologist. Patients were and still are forced to travel to Brisbane for treatment despite being severely unwell. Distance creates extra paperwork and increases the risk of human error. One patient was given the wrong drug during Jackie's term of employment.

Instead of employing a full-time oncologist or rotating doctors from Brisbane the Beattie government employed three cancer care coordinators at a cost of \$80,000 each per annum. Two opportunities to recruit a medical oncologist have been lost according to Jackie due to inefficient processes of Queensland Health. Jackie recently helped form the Gold Coast Cancer Services Action Group to demand this government provide basic services for cancer sufferers as a priority. A distraught Mrs Burns who lives in the Currumbin electorate wrote the following letter—

At the age of 50 my husband Robert was diagnosed with terminal cancer 16th July, 2004 and tragically lost his fight for life 5th April, 2007.

During his inspirational battle we were to learn of the obstacles we needed to overcome for Robert to achieve a deserved quality of life. As a public out patient in the early stages of treatment we had the financial ability to avail ourselves of the private cancer facilities, such as they are, on the Gold Coast.

But once becoming a Public Inpatient in December 2006 these services were no longer offered. Robert's need for continuing radiation treatments was to be provided in Brisbane with a two week waiting list.

Am I to understand that when one is diagnosed terminally ill, one should not expect ongoing treatment? Should Robert have accepted his fate and not be given the chance to spend longer with us? How in all conscience can your Health Department allow this appalling lack of cancer facilities to continue in the ever increasing population of the Gold Coast?

An email of complaint to Mr Robertson was answered on 24th April, promising a detailed response when 'advice in relation to this matter' was received. No reply has been forthcoming, highlighting the lack of compassion or concern from the Minister.

My darling Robert's passing has brought the plight of other patients to the attention of our many acquaintances and your Government's lack of attention will not go unnoticed.

Sadly, little has changed since thousands of concerned Gold Coast residents took to the streets in 1998 disgusted at underfunding and poor resources of our public hospital. Members opposite and especially those from the Gold Coast should hang their heads in shame, but instead they arrogantly gloat of Beattie's achievements. One year ago I stood in this House to plead the case of Kate Saunders, a 46-year-old nurse who passed away from a brain tumour because she could not get any treatment at the Gold Coast Hospital.

Time expired.



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Hansard Thursday, 24 May 2007

POLICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (3.18 pm): I rise to speak to the Police and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2007. As members of this House have already heard from my colleague the shadow minister for police and corrective services, the member for Burnett, the coalition will be supporting this bill with the exception of clause 6 and the amendment to clause 10.

An opposition member interjected.

Mrs STUCKEY: We will be supporting it. Can I confirm what I just said. The honourable member has informed me that we will be supporting it.

The principal objectives of this piece of legislation are to remove redundant provisions, correct deficiencies or omissions and implement agreed policy changes.

Unlike some members opposite, we can actually admit when we change our minds. They seem to find that very difficult to do. The Police and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2007 makes amendments to the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000, the Police Service Administration Act 1990, the Child Protection (Offender Reporting) Act 2004 and the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995.

Today I will focus my response to two specific areas of this legislation: the first being the amendments to TORUM which facilitate the enforcement of the proposed peer passenger restriction reforms to improve young driver safety; the second being the changes to the Child Protection (Offender Reporting) Act 2004.

In respect of the new young driver licensing provisions due to commence on 1 July 2007, it is imperative that we in this House as responsible legislators effect changes which reflect methods enabling greater protection for the younger members of our society. Since being elected the member for Currumbin there have been a number of instances in my electorate where young people have been killed in motor vehicle accidents. The tragedy that spreads throughout the community has a very numbing and humbling effect, one that is especially felt on the anniversaries of some of these young people's deaths.

When I spoke on the Transport Legislation and Another Act Amendment Bill on 21 February this year I highlighted to the House the young driver survey which I undertook in 2005 after the death of two Palm Beach Currumbin High School students. As I stated then and I repeat now, their young, unfulfilled lives were tragically lost due to a combination of inexperience, speed and driver incompetence.

As the mother of two children who are now grown and both over the age of 25, I remember well feeling secure in the knowledge that during their late teens and early 20s when they went anywhere with their friends they took turns to share the responsibility of driving. I trusted them to be sensible and take every precaution to look after their mates so that they could all come home safely.

Many young people practise this arrangement as it avoids the need to wait at lengthy and sometimes dangerous taxi queues or bus stops. Making it illegal for young people to engage in this practice will certainly be seen by many of the young people who venture out together in groups to licensed

venues as overly restrictive. There are many areas on the Gold Coast, particularly west of the M1, where public transport is non-existent after 11 pm. In some areas it is non-existent full stop.

Coupled with a shortage of taxis at peak entertainment times on Friday and Saturday nights, which other members of the House have acknowledged, these new laws have the potential to create considerable difficulty for a number of our younger adult generation. However, the high number of avoidable and senseless young deaths due to vehicle accidents warrant this legislation.

Growing up is often a tumultuous time and can present many situations to young people where the difference in their decision making can result in life or death, especially where cars are involved. I do support the measures which are being introduced with the new young driver licensing laws, and I note that these new requirements impose not only the display of learner's, P1 and P2 plates but also the mandatory 100 hours of driving experience.

Like many members I have recently received the brochures published by Queensland Transport outlining the requirements. The department has done a pretty good job of spelling out to young drivers exactly what their rights and responsibilities are under this new system. As part of my community awareness program, I will be promoting this brochure in my electorate, particularly to the senior students of my local high schools.

Clause 9 of this bill sends a clear message to young people that if police are required to stop a vehicle and as passengers they are asked to provide proof of their age they must do so or they may face charges. The government must ensure that it continues to circulate the information about the new laws and to ensure that in its efforts to reduce road carnage it provides sufficient security and public transport to convey residents to their homes or chosen destinations safely and not place young people in potentially dangerous situations. As far as the police are concerned, it is a lot better for them to be pulling vehicles over and undertaking identity and age checks than having to attend a motor vehicle accident and the checks end up being done by the parents at the morgue.

We know that statistics show that young drivers, high performance cars and peer pressure can have significant impacts on young drivers. The passenger restriction provisions will hopefully go a long way to curtailing some or all of these factors. Tonight local police are holding a road safety forum at the Currumbin RSL. It will cover the causes of traffic accidents. I sincerely hope that this will be well supported by our community considering there are two very large high schools in the electorate. The forum is for parents with teenagers who are in the process of obtaining a driver's licence. One of the featured speakers tonight is Shem Aitken, who is now in a wheelchair as a result of a speeding traffic accident. It is to be hoped that those in attendance will listen and learn and not be statistics of the future.

The police in the Currumbin electorate do a remarkable job in engaging in community consultation, and I am very pleased to announce that Coolangatta has recently formed a community consultative committee following along the lines of the Palm Beach consultative committee, which started less than two years ago.

In relation to part 2 of this bill, which incorporates clauses 3 to 7, we have specific changes to the Child Protection (Offender Reporting) Act 2004. These clauses particularly clarify the requirement that a reportable offender must report their personal details to the Commissioner of Police within the later of either the period specified for the offender detailed in the table of the provision or 28 days after the commissioner gives the offender a notice under section 59.

As we have heard from the member for Burnett, there is contention in respect of clause 6, particularly in regard to the principles of maintaining secrecy of a reportable offender's location, over the community not knowing if there is a sex offender living there. The effective gagging of police from releasing this information goes against the coalition policy of a Megan's law type scenario.

Of concern to me are child sexual offenders, most predominantly those who fall within the Wortley and Smallbone stranger profile. This type of child sexual offender has multiple numbers of victims and will normally take the highest risk to ensure that they are able to offend. This type of offender uses opportunity and situations to sexually offend. With multiple victims, it is more often the thrill. This offender is most likely to reoffend and falls into the predator category. When examining the circumstances which lead to a person being designated as a dangerous prisoner and a child protection reportable offender, it is the antisocial predatory stranger child sexual offender behaviour which results in this identification for the register.

Research suggests that these offenders are the ones who will reoffend despite rehabilitation and hence place children in our community at greatest risk. There is the potential over the next three years that 100-plus prisoners will be released back into the community who the courts and forensic psychologists have deemed have a high risk of reoffending. I know within my small community, even within a couple of streets—I live on acreage—that there is great concern amongst people moving to my area that a paedophile lives amongst us. It is a very difficult task to continually reassure people with young children in particular that everything is being done to protect them without identifying the address or the name of the offender.

I ask the minister perhaps in her reply to tell the House what measures have been implemented by her government to give the community any knowledge that the reportable offenders will be living in their midst, understanding the sensitivity of this situation. We also need to know that Queenslanders can be guaranteed that departmental officers will be able to adequately monitor the reportable offenders and that resources will be provided to police to track them to ensure that they do not reoffend. Resources, as we all know, are stretched within the Department of Child Safety, as well as in both police, community corrections and health. We need to keep the pressure on everyone to continue to be diligent in this regard.

The final thought I leave members with as I commend this bill to the House is that once a child is abused it is a situation that can never be changed. It does become society's problem, a problem for the future, a problem that in one way or another deeply affects all of us.



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Hansard Thursday, 24 May 2007

HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (5.06 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2007. Although the scope of this bill is quite far reaching and extends to amending the Ambulance Service Act 1991, the Health Services Act 1991, the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act 1998 and the Mental Health Act 2000, I will focus primarily on the amendments it makes to the Mental Health Act 2000.

On 14 June 2006 the Minister for Health announced the endorsement by state cabinet of Mr Brendan Butler AM SC to conduct an independent review of the Mental Health Act. As stated in the explanatory notes, the main objective of the bill with regard to the Mental Health Act 2000 is to allow for the appointment of one or more additional judges to the Mental Health Court and to effect a number of recommendations from the final report of the review of the Mental Health Act 2000, promoting balance in the forensic mental health system. I note that during the term of this review portfolio responsibility for mental health policy and legislation was transferred from the Minister for Health to the minister for communities, seniors and youth. I now gather that this portfolio has been moved back to Health.

Having read the final report of the review of the Mental Health Act 2000, including its 106 recommendations, I must say that I am greatly disappointed with the handful of recommendations that the minister has put before us for consideration in this legislation. In effect, this bill implements a meagre 10 of the recommendations from the report, leaving 96 proposals submerged in the pages of the report failing to see the light of day. In my capacity as shadow minister for mental health policy, I was really looking forward to seeing a host of recommendations and initiatives that were highlighted in this report worthy of inclusion in this bill. I fully expected to be giving a speech commending the government on taking a proactive step for victims and their families. The Beattie government could have demonstrated that it was finally going to address some serious mental health issues. But, true to form, once again it has short-changed Queenslanders.

A costly report, gathered over a six-month period, and then we get 10 recommendations. That is really good bang for your buck, isn't it. I wonder how much each recommendation has cost the taxpayers. Goodness knows what poor Mr Butler is thinking—all that hard work only to receive a slap in the face from the minister and mention that the remainder will be considered in the 2007-08 budget. And what of the good people who put forward 85 written submissions in the belief that their contributions would receive genuine consideration? In addition, Mr Butler is said to have met with more than 80 individuals and groups throughout Queensland and was assisted by an independent expert reference group. My, he was thorough.

Even more disheartening for him was to see his review join the long list of other such exercises undertaken by this government where the majority of the ideas are shoved aside and forgotten. This report provided a golden opportunity to implement wider ranging reforms to our grossly underresourced and poorly managed mental health system. It is well documented that high percentages of men and women in our prisons suffer from mental illnesses that, in many cases, go completely untreated.

Over the past few years we have seen the decay of the public health system through a culture of bullying and neglect, and mental health is one area that has suffered even more greatly under this Labor government. Mental health has been rationed due to insufficient staffing levels and services, making access to care harder for patients to realise. When will this government wake up to the fact that mainstreaming of mental health does not work?

Early in April we heard another admission of failure by the government as it sought tenders from private hospitals for their surgeons to perform operations on public hospital patients. This is further proof that quite simply the Beattie government is not capable of managing our vitally important health system, but then again members opposite do not like doctors and nurses in the private sector. They are always knocking them. Doctor bashing is one of their favourite sports. If this Beattie government had not driven away 2,462 experienced doctors through bullying and low wages, patients would not be forced to suffer long delays for much-needed elective surgery and mental health patients would be able to get in to see a psychiatrist.

The purpose of the review of the Mental Health Act 2000 was to examine current legislative provisions and administrative arrangements that consider the interests of victims and their families, and assess whether those provisions need to be amended to further enable victims and their families to be involved in the decision-making process. The Mental Health Act 2000 commenced on 28 February 2002, replacing the Mental Health Act 1974. It gave victims of crime and their families a chance to supply information to both the Mental Health Court and the Mental Health Review Tribunal, and be notified of certain information about the patient.

In addition to this, the review also considered whether the Mental Health Act 2000 and associated arrangements achieved an appropriate balance between the responsibility of the state to strengthen the safety and protection of the community with the provision of rehabilitation opportunities for patients under a forensic order. Simply put, this act provides the legal framework for the involuntary treatment of people with mental illness. However, this particular review has focused on the 14 per cent or thereabouts of people charged with a criminal offence and placed on a forensic order that requires higher levels of monitoring than other involuntary patients. It is important to recognise the need to balance competing rights in these situations and to ensure forensic patients are accorded basic rights and treated with humanity and respect.

Despite this contextual background, the 10 recommendations that the government has chosen to include in the bill skate over many of the issues that the review was initially set up to investigate. A number of recent high-profile cases involving forensic patients eroded the public confidence and resulted in such a community outcry, which led to the authorisation of this review.

I note comments in this review regarding the recognition of the interests of victims of crime. The review states—

The Review is concerned that the present provisions do not go far enough in meeting legitimate needs of victims.

In view of these comments, it is highly objectionable that the government has chosen to ignore the recommendations that victims of crime be given access to information and support before, during and after Mental Health Court proceedings.

Recommendation 3.1 is the first recommendation to be included in this legislation and it falls under the section heading of 'Victims' rights, needs and interests.' It states—

That the provision stating how the purpose of the *Mental Health Act 2000* is to be achieved be amended to provide that community protection and the needs of victims be taken into account in decisions relating to forensic patients.

I am sure that members would agree that that is a very progressive and caring sounding statement, until one realises that the implementation of the centrepiece of this review, the victim support service, is completely ignored. By the omission of this cornerstone which is the hub of the review's recommendations, these words are meaningless propaganda meant to dupe the general public into thinking that the Beattie government is making community safety a priority. They are nothing more than Beattie spin.

Recommendations 3.2 to 3.12 relate to the establishment of a victim register to enable information to be given to victims about a classified patient. Recommendations 3.13 to 3.17 would put in place a statewide victim support service to be staffed by professional officers with knowledge and skills in forensic health. Adequate administrative staff would be employed to assist the professional officers. These are very sound recommendations, but none have been included.

Victim statements in the Mental Health Court referred to in recommendations 3.18, 3.19, 3.20, 3.22 and 3.23 have been included in the 10 recommendations from the minister. Reference to the term 'nonparty' will be deleted and the legislation will now refer to a statement about a victim or interested person and victim statements will now be taken into account by the Mental Health Court. Granted, this is a positive step but it is a small gain overall when one considers the minuscule number of recommendations contained in this legislation.

Recommendations 3.25 to 3.32 come under the section 'Support for victims in Mental Health Court proceedings', and recommendations 3.33 to 3.40 come under the section 'Information and support for

victims after a forensic order is made'. Both of those sections missed out on inclusion. Recommendations 3.41 to 3.43 are included. That section relates to victim statements in the Mental Health Review Tribunal and also deletes the term 'nonparty'. Recommendations 3.46 to 3.54, under the section heading 'Support for victims for Mental Health Review Tribunal matters', failed to make the grade as, like other recommendations, they rely on the implementation of the victim support service—the hub of the recommendations that I have spoken about.

Chapter 4 is headed 'The forensic mental health legal process' and covers the following sections 'Delays up until the Mental Health Court hearing' and 'Proceedings in the Mental Health Review Tribunal'. One would have thought that the government would have considered some of those recommendations a priority, especially where delays add to the torment that victims and families go through looking for some closure. These are not victims of petty squabbles. Rather, they are victims and families who have endured shocking trauma. Some have lost a loved one under indescribably tragic circumstances. The review states—

A major problem for victims is the delay in matters coming before the Mental Health Court.

However, the minister only saw fit to include recommendation 4.22, which states—

That the *Mental Health Act 2000* be amended to provide that the role of the Attorney-General in the Mental Health Review Tribunal is to represent the public interest.

The Mental Health Review Tribunal is purportedly an independent body. However, in practice many of the psychiatrists and community representatives who sit on the tribunal panel are Queensland Health employees. In addition to this, the tribunal panel only requires one psychiatric report when assessing a patient—that is, the one compiled by the patient's treating doctor who is also usually a Queensland Health employee. Given that most of the patients who come before the tribunal are Queensland Health patients, this situation calls into question the independence of the Mental Health Review Tribunal. The one critical recommendation from the review that addresses this situation has been left out of the bill.

Usually, three people form a Mental Health Review Tribunal hearing: a lawyer chair, a psychiatrist and a community representative. One suggestion as to why there are so many Queensland Health employees on the tribunal is because of the limited financial remuneration that is offered to medical members of these tribunals in comparison to fees paid by other Queensland agencies. There is a growing school of thought in the profession that panel psychiatrists on the tribunal should be independent of Queensland Health, as should the community representative. I do hope that the minister will take those concerns on board. Additionally, victims and their families deserve a place at the table, so to speak, in the Mental Health Court and at the mental health tribunal. Back in 2002 after the last review of the Queensland Forensic Mental Health Services, the government said that some of these issues were going to be addressed, yet Queensland is still waiting after the completion of another taxpayer funded report.

All of the recommendations in remaining chapters 5, 6 and 7 have been ignored. They fall under the important headings of 'Intellectual disability and the forensic process', 'Managing risk'—which, I might add, was what prompted this review in the first place and led the public to believe there would be a review of practices within limited community treatment—and 'Community awareness'. Comments regarding managing risk for violent offenders indicate that the review considered it essential to strengthen these safeguards and supports amendment of the Mental Health Act 2002 to strengthen policy and practice guidelines for forensic patients generally and persons of special notification.

Those who contributed to this review must feel frustrated at the glaring omissions. Moreover, this government is clearly indicating that it wants to limit the involvement of victims and their families in the decision-making process. The government said in response to recommendations in the 2002 Mullen-Chettleburgh report that a more positive attitude to victims will be fostered within the mental health services. Here in 2007 the government has denied victims a statewide victim support service. The Premier and the Minister for Health gave a commitment that training in relation to risk management would be provided to mental health services staff across the state, but here in 2007 all the recommendations regarding risk management have been left out of the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill.

This is yet another example of the government making promises but continuing to deliver very little, slowly drip-feeding Queenslanders between elections. I issue a word of caution though: even intravenous drips need to be set at a certain speed in order to administer the correct amount of nutrients or medication to keep people alive.

I wish to congratulate Mr Butler and all who contributed to this review. I found their recommendations to be in the best interests of community safety, striking an appropriate balance between the rights of patients and victims. This review was undertaken at considerable cost, with time and input from a host of groups and individuals who put forward submissions and suggestions in good faith. They like me have every reason to be underwhelmed with the mere 10 recommendations included in this bill. Indeed, 96 recommendations have been ignored at this stage and the government has an obligation to ensure that the majority of these are not only considered in the 2007-08 budget but granted funding so that they can be implemented. The general public deserves to feel more secure, and so do patients. These amendments as they stand offer little comfort or confidence to victims and their families.

I would like to briefly mention now the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act, which I have to say bears an uncanny resemblance to the private member's bill brought into the House by the honourable member for Surfers Paradise. When the honourable member presented his bill, the government found reasons to reject it, but now it has a bill of its own. One would think government members could at least give a little bit of credit to the honourable member for Surfers Paradise for his foresight in this matter.

In banning the display of ice pipes, the government states that it aims to address the harm caused by the illicit drug crystal methamphetamine, or ice. The minister proudly proclaims that these provisions demonstrate his government's commitment to the war against dangerous drugs. I find his comments profound, as this same minister opens up needle supply facilities without full support programs or any monitoring at the drop of a hat if he believes there is a need in the area. The minister would not listen to the Palm Beach action group which put forward a very sensible, considered submission. The residents of Palm Beach have felt that the department has treated them with contempt.

We are learning very quickly that ice is a dangerous drug and can be injected as well as smoked. Its availability and its cheap price make it attractive, especially to the young. The community around me is genuinely worried about the needle and syringe program near one of our largest schools that contains nearly 2,000 students. Students are being offered strawberry ice within the vicinity of the school. It is pinked-up to make it more sexy and appealing to our young. Ice has infiltrated our society to such a degree that when university students register for their classes they are actually handed an ice facts sheet. It is a coloured brochure telling them that ice is a term used to describe a very harmful form of the drug methamphetamine and goes on to describe some of the symptoms that people can experience.

We have read much in the *Courier-Mail* about the effects of ice. An article in the *Courier-Mail* in April this year said that it took handcuffs, three police officers, some police shields, capsicum spray and a police dog to detain a man high on ice who went on a rampage west of Brisbane. Other articles about ice-frenzied patients trying to jump out of hospital windows are common in our papers. Hospitals have been forced to install special treatment rooms with reinforced walls and foam furniture to stop drug-crazed ice addicts from violence, self-harm and destruction.

The cost to society is phenomenal. We all must continue to do everything we can to clamp down on the distribution and usage of this terrible drug and to educate against illegal drug use. That means a review of the needle and syringe program here in Queensland to make sure we help as many people as we can who are addicted to drugs to get off the habit and resume a life in society that lets them fulfil their potential. With those comments, I commend the bill to the House.



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Hansard Wednesday, 6 June 2007

VOLUNTARY CARBON CREDIT TRADING BILL

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (9.13 pm): I rise to speak in the debate on the Voluntary Carbon Credit Trading Bill, a private member's bill introduced into the Queensland parliament by the honourable member for Moggill. In doing so I wish to congratulate him on his initiative. As we have just heard from the honourable member for Caloundra, we do not actually hear or see much but criticism from members opposite with regard to new ideas.

This bill looks to create a carbon credit trading exchange as a way of significantly combating greenhouse gas emissions and would provide certification on a voluntary basis to corporations and enterprises which reduce carbon emissions in three ways. I know the House has already heard these, but I will reinforce them. They include sequestration such as forestry, or geosequestration and power produced from low or zero emission industries. A third category of credits would be available after certification for traditional power sources able to demonstrate reduced per unit emissions.

There has been much in the media recently with regard to climate change and along with it the issue of carbon credits. In fact, just last weekend we saw a front-page story in local newspapers about a farmer who has become a millionaire almost overnight through signing a deal with a major company seeking to gain carbon credits. We have heard from many members in this debate, and we all agree, that we have a responsibility to be taking steps to reduce our greenhouse emissions.

This bill would permit certification for corporations and enterprises which reduce carbon emissions on a voluntary basis. Additionally, these companies will be able to publicise their voluntary commitment to carbon trading credits. It is important to reward companies that use technology innovation and other means to reduce their emissions substantially and demonstrate legitimate environmental credentials.

In order to ensure the success of this initiative we must generate positive interest from customers to purchase these carbon credits and then we need to inspire a strong market for the credits that these environmental investors wish to sell. Many small, medium and large companies would be in a position to take up the offer of buying enough credits to offset greenhouse gases emitted by their respective businesses or industries. Additionally, individuals will be given the opportunity to counterbalance the greenhouse gases emitted by their electricity and gas consumption and usage of motor vehicles in a similar way to the green option that was offered by Energex. If implemented this bill would allow Queensland to lead the way in carbon trading schemes in Australia.

I would like to take a few moments to inform the House of a project in the Currumbin electorate which has been awarded, amongst many other commendations, the 2007 Urban Development Institute of Australia National Award for Excellence—Australia's Best Environmental Development. Renowned as Queensland's finest example of sustainable urban development, the Ecovillage in Currumbin Valley offers something inspirational—the chance to live a natural lifestyle within a community atmosphere.

The first of its kind in Queensland, if not Australia, the Ecovillage is a great example of reducing greenhouse emissions and has sustainability as its goal. Its concept embraces the land instead of pillaging it and includes over 80 per cent as open space with approximately 50 per cent as flora and fauna reserves. Ecohamlet planning allows for a social mix with a variety of home parcel sizes and prices contained within

each precinct. This development is the first in Queensland to voluntarily—and I use the word ‘voluntarily’—disconnect from the main water supply and be totally water self-sufficient and requires homes to have solar power for heating water and gas-only appliances. Interestingly, there is a mandatory ecovision resource monitoring system in each home which monitors gas, electricity and water levels and consumption.

Other specifications for those wishing to live in this tranquil place are building materials are strictly covenanted to be as renewable as possible; slab on the ground building is prohibited so as not to change the topography and hydrology of the site; no bricks or tiles are allowed inside or out; a mandatory thermal mass component in every home, for warming in winter and cooling in summer; the use of cross ventilation; natural lighting and use of energy efficient light fittings; solar hot water with gas backup; a minimum 1.2 kilowatt photovoltaic system in each home; the correct solar orientation of the building on site with consideration of the solar orientation of neighbouring sites meaning that all buildings face north; and no wood fires, only gas heating. This development, I am sure members would agree, certainly demonstrates how we can all do our share to reduce these harmful emissions.

But back to this bill. An important aspect of the success of this bill will be the robustness and credibility of any assessment processes associated with the calculation of emission reductions. Like any assessment process we need to be assured of verifiability and consistency of measurements. The quality of the certification sets a new standard.

Other benefits of this bill include the creation of a greenhouse emission reduction program that is not based on government regulation forcing emission reduction and imposing penalties. This is contrary to the comments from the member for Indooroopilly who endorses Labor’s bullying culture. We on this side of the House engage in a spirit of cooperation.

The bill does not impose heavy costs on government to subsidise the investment in emission reduction programs by entities. The fact that this scheme will require specialised knowledge and skills makes it highly likely that this will foster the emergence of a new industry for Queensland and, of course, new jobs.

We need to take the first steps to advance clean coal technologies, and this bill has the potential to open the door for environmentally sustainable ways of dealing with greenhouse gases to become a major growth industry for the state. Here is an opportunity for Queensland to lead the way towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions by establishing a carbon credit trading exchange, and I encourage members on the other side of the House to support this bill in a bipartisan approach. We have heard members opposite criticise aspects of this bill and this is indeed a great pity, as this bill is a small yet significant step in the right direction. I applaud the efforts of the honourable member for Moggill and I commend the bill to the House.



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Hansard Friday, 8 June 2007

CLEAN COAL TECHNOLOGY SPECIAL AGREEMENT BILL; APPROPRIATION BILLS

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (5.09 pm): I stand here in this House privileged to represent the people of the Currumbin electorate—one that I have told members on numerous occasions is the most breathtakingly beautiful electorate in the whole of Queensland. Twelve months ago when I was giving my budget reply to this House I likened the Treasurer's effort to the movie *The Truman Show* and warned of a rosy facade that covered up the unfortunate truth. I am sorry to say that my predictions have become a reality with record borrowings required by this government to rescue the state from running out of water. Owing to years of poor planning, Queenslanders will be fleeced with the government paying premium prices as a result of its slovenly attitude over the past nine years.

On the other hand, the Howard-Costello team are sound economic managers, delivering two million more jobs and clearing the \$96 billion debt on which we paid over \$8 billion per year in interest under Labor. Our interest rates are lower than when Costello took charge of the economy and prosperity has never been better. On Wednesday this week it was announced that the Australian economy is at its strongest in four years.

The Premier and the Treasurer are pompous enough to take full credit for the prosperity that booming real estate markets, strong employment growth and a thriving mining sector have bestowed upon the fair folk of Queensland. If the truth be known, it is more a case of lady luck shining upon us than any management prowess of these two economic pirates.

I would like to draw the attention of the House to a few salient features of this year's state budget. It is projected that in 2010-11 the debt for which this government is responsible would have reached \$51,725 million compared to the 2006-07 budget estimate of \$21,748 million. Over that period interest costs will total almost \$10,000 million, or 20 per cent of the 2010-11 borrowings. Government owned corporations mainly will have a debt burden of \$32,383 million. On assets of \$63,466 million in 2010-11, they will show a positive operating balance of \$139 million. It is noted that in that year 16 per cent of their revenue will come from state government grants. In just four years, interest expense will consume over six per cent of revenue compared to the 2006-07 budget of three per cent.

This government is starting to show the same appetite for debt that we saw in the Cain and Kirner Labor governments in Victoria and the Keating Labor government in Canberra. If this government persists, its reckless and imprudent policies will place enormous burdens on taxpayers and on continued investment in the state's future for generations to come.

At a minimum, the government must immediately rein in its employee expenses, which have risen by over \$1 billion in a year. Before anyone attempts to defend this outrageous example of irresponsibility by arguing that that increase was due to the employment of extra ambulance workers, police officers, doctors, nurses et cetera, the budget papers reveal that only 1,800 additional staff of these classifications were to be hired, costing no more than \$200 million.

Historically, this government has a track record of squandering opportunities due to its abysmal economic management skills which saw it selling off assets to pay for basic services that are not a privilege but the right of every Queenslander. After sitting on their hands for years and watching the state suffer through drought, these irresponsible leaders recently discovered, as panic buttons continued to be hit, that they will need to fund a water grid, the cost of which has blown out from \$6.5 billion to \$9 billion or more. Mind you, this is no surprise when we look at the saga of the Tugun bypass. A decade ago costs were under \$55 million, but owing to this government's woeful negotiation skills with its New South Wales Labor counterpart—which, I might add, is still not contributing one cent towards the construction of the bypass—costs have exploded to \$543 million.

This government is rolling in money to the tune of around \$30 billion from taxes, grants and subsidies. Yet it is forcing more taxes on Queenslanders. For example, we hear that the tax on new and used cars is supposedly going to fund our sorely neglected mental health services. Although I welcome much-needed funding for mental health services, one would think that a government, which is supposedly so dedicated to climate change, would have allocated these moneys in an environmental direction.

I ask members to remember what happened to the ambulance levy that entitles all Queenslanders to utilise Queensland ambulance services, which some people are forced to pay several times. A total of \$440 million has been raised in taxes, yet the Ambulance Service is crumbling. For over two years paramedics and other Queensland Ambulance Service employees have been warning the minister and his department that the culture of bullying has caused such low morale that the numbers of qualified paramedics and officers was dropping and that in many instances equipment was past its use-by date. A large injection of funds in this budget is expected to be the panacea and cure-all for this much-bullied service. But unless the serious issue of morale is addressed and dedicated paramedics feel that they are valued, the service will continue to flail and suffer from resignations in numbers that outstrip new recruits.

Under this Labor government Queensland has lost the title of being the low tax state. Residents and businesses can expect whopping hikes to their electricity bills and water prices are predicted to go through the roof. Commerce Queensland is clearly disappointed, stating that this year it has received only budget crumbs. Our public health system has decayed to such a sorry state that even full limb amputations will not stop the disease from spreading. My genuine respect goes to the staff who survived the bullying and overwork to continue their professional duties. This crisis-ridden government is relying on the private sector to bail it out time and again to reduce waiting lists by performing public patient surgery. Most recently it moved the Robina palliative care unit to an unpopular location in Southport with only a week's notice. Alas, nothing has changed internally as the culture is still all about bureaucratic number crunching with compassion and staff consultation a very low priority. Money alone cannot change culture and despite a promise of \$7.15 billion in this year's budget, unless health professionals are treated with some admiration and valued for the significant contributions they make, the crisis will not abate.

A shortage of 600 beds on the Gold Coast indicates that patients will still have to wait unacceptable times for medical attention. There should be 2.4 beds per 1,000 people, which means that the Gold Coast should have at least 1,200 beds. Doctor recruitment has gone backwards. In 2004 there were 1,220. In 2005 there were 1,144. In 2006 there were 1,162. That does not include the 2,500 doctors who have left the public system over the past few years owing to poor pay and bullying by this Labor government.

I now move to my shadow portfolios of child safety, disability and mental health policy. We continue to hear from the government that it is spending record amounts as if it deserves a pat on the back for its efforts. As I have said, all Queenslanders deserve basic health, transport, education and community services. It is obvious that, with a growing population, there would be pressures placed on systems. You do not need to be Einstein to work that out. For this government to prance about as if it is doing Queenslanders a favour when it is the people's money it is spending shows just how arrogant and puffed it has become.

Before commenting on the budget for Child Safety, I would like to take a moment to thank the minister for inviting me to a budget briefing yesterday. May I also express my gratitude to staff in the minister's office for their helpful manner. Of all government departments, Child Safety is responsible for looking after the welfare of society's most vulnerable, our children. Complex needs accompany children who have suffered severe violent sexual and emotional harm at the hands of their perpetrators. It takes staff with specialised training and innate skills to make decisions that affect these precious charges.

This portfolio carries a half billion dollar budget investment which, whilst highly commendable, will do little to reduce the alarming rate of child abuse notifications and the number of children in care until the department adopts a more therapeutic rather than a heavy-handed investigative approach. Stakeholders tell me that the government must change its focus and do more preventive work because, according to some sources, up to 50 per cent of children come into care due to neglect. Neglect needs to be recognised as a systemic issue, such as homelessness or poor parenting skills, where help and education could play an important role in improving the wellness of the notified child.

A spokesperson for QCOSS has further criticised the budget for not having any plan to tackle poverty in Queensland. Despite much brouhaha about the importance of early intervention and prevention, there is no increase in this budget. Early intervention, coupled with prevention through education, is the basis of the new Ditto program that has been devised by Bravehearts. Thanks to a grant last year from the child safety and communities departments, this program is being delivered in schools.

An article in the *Courier-Mail* yesterday stating that child abuse reports were expected to rise is seen by some as an admission of failure by this department to effectively understand and deal with the problem. The minister has acknowledged the fact that funding for Indigenous children is disproportionately represented and is further aggravated by big distances between communities in far-north Queensland which necessitates better services and housing for staff. There has long been suspicion in Indigenous communities of government intervention in their communities. This budget is seeking to work towards keeping Indigenous children who are identified as being at risk in close connection with their culture through the new residential care facilities, the first placement house on Palm Island and establishing employee housing and facilities within these communities. Since the establishment of this department the Beattie government has been insistent on throwing more and more dollars at more layers of bureaucratic services when these could be handled effectively by utilising more services from NGOs.

After years of battling this government and the findings of the Forde report eight years ago, the announcement of a \$100 million one-off redress scheme for children abused in Queensland institutions was received with a certain degree of elation. A number of victims have publicly stated the fact that the outcome is marred by the length of time it took the government to accept responsibility for making sure compensation was paid.

In the area of disabilities, stakeholders are expressing their enormous disappointment over this budget, feeling that they have been overlooked with increased funding going to infrastructure rather than services. It is all very well for the Treasurer to boast of bigger spending than ever before and increasing spending in this sector by 222 per cent over nine previous budgets, but Queensland's spending on support for people with a disability per capita of the potential population remains lower than any other state or territory.

There is no substantial funding for community based services to address unmet need in Queensland. While there has been an increase in indexation, it falls well short of matching the rising costs of delivering services in Queensland. Excuses from the Premier and Treasurer that Queensland's rapid growth is the cause of unmet need is both a dispassionate and lame one. As the population grows so does the need for disability services. Like many members in this House I have heard countless legitimate stories of people with disabilities and their families who cannot access any care packages or respite. Funding must be invested primarily in the people the department is responsible for helping, not just programs, bricks and mortar. More money is being spent but it is not equating into services. NGOs are losing their character as compliance mechanisms become more restrictive and prevent disabled people from taking part in activities.

Disability organisations that are well used to making every funding dollar stretch as far as is humanly possible are genuinely worried that they will no longer be able to meet the disability support needs in their respective communities. The big issue is why in this prosperous state of ours is the gap growing in unmet need and what will the long-term social and economic costs be to this state if we fail to meet these needs adequately?

Mental health has finally been given some recognition with a half a billion dollar boost to funding in this budget, together with an acknowledgement that it was an area neglected by the Labor government. I note the Premier's comments in a media release dated 30 May where he stated, 'The most important issue for those with a mental illness is for them to be able to get help when they need it.' I could not agree more. Yet under the Premier's leadership, years of chronic underfunding and a failure to recognise the escalation of the problem has seen Queensland lag behind other states despite numerous reviews and inquiries.

An additional 140 mental health beds for the whole of Queensland is nowhere near enough for our current population let alone future growth. It is not stated in the budget where these beds will be located. The Gold Coast alone needs 40 acute adult psychiatric beds right now to bring us into line with the recommended provision of beds per population. Other regions are in similar situations with existing services and staff stretched beyond what many would consider reasonable boundaries. Emergency departments will continue to overflow with an increase in demand for mental health beds and the situation is not helped by an increase in medical and surgical beds. Apart from a shortage of acute mental health beds, there is an urgent need for extra beds for older age psychiatric patients, drug and alcohol detoxification plus forensic psychiatry units. Supported accommodation for chronically ill patients that is staffed 24 hours and has rehabilitation and recovery services inbuilt is also crucial if we are to supply help when it is needed, as identified by the Premier.

I note the \$10 million per year for four years for the Department of Housing to build or purchase specially designed accommodation for people with a mental illness, together with a further \$22.4 million

also over four years to provide a range of social support services to people living in the new accommodation. However, when one considers the scope of this problem, \$10 million does not equate to a large number of residences across Queensland. Establishment of a statewide victim support centre and additional forensic mental health staff as per recommendations in Brendan Butler's review of the Mental Health Act 2000 are welcome budget items.

The Currumbin electorate has secured funding for big-ticket items such as the ongoing construction of the Tugun bypass, which is being built with both state and federal monies, and infrastructure for the billion-dollar Tugun desalination plant which is a partnership between the state government and Gold Coast City Council. There were also a number of smaller allocations. These include \$400,000 for the widening of the Tallebudgera Connection Road to help ease increased traffic in our suburbs; \$200,000 for improvements at the Tomewin Street and Gold Coast Highway intersection near the entrance to Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary; \$22.5 million for high-voltage feeders from Currumbin to Burleigh Heads to supply power to the desalination plant; \$5.73 million for the Currumbin substation upgrade; and \$4.35 million for underground cables to supply power to the desalination plant. Sadly there was no funding for the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary which continually has to play second cousin when it comes to funding as it receives absolutely nothing from the state government. Fleay's Wildlife Park at Burleigh, however, received \$250,000 for redevelopment, which seems unfair. Funding is desperately needed for a new wildlife hospital to cater for the 4,000 plus injured native animals brought in for care each year.

I heartily congratulate the sanctuary on the initial success of its koala exchange program and recent birth of twin koalas to Murrumbidgee in the world-class Xiangjiang Safari Park in Guangzhou, China. Michelle Monsour and her team are to be praised for the way they have managed this very delicate transfer of our beloved koalas to another country. With loving care from their Australian handler, the koalas all appear to be thriving and millions of Chinese are suffering from koala mania such is the joy our furry fauna bring.

HOST—Homelessness Outreach Support Team—funding of \$600,000 was announced last year to provide help to those who sleep rough and cannot access crisis accommodation. Spread out over three years and covering a region from Beenleigh to Coolangatta, this funding is to be used to provide assistance to people with complex needs who experience difficulty accessing the crisis accommodation that is dearly needed. Liz Fritz of the Uniting Church's Blair Athol crisis accommodation facility brought together a consortium of like-minded agencies to bring about this innovative project which was successful in receiving funding.

Affordable housing has been affected by an increase in the number of households and an undersupply of affordable housing. I applaud the funding from the minister for more public housing as the waiting time in my electorate is eight to 10 years. I just paid the minister a compliment and I hope that he will take it.

Tugun's desalination plant is expected to be finished in November 2008 at an estimated cost of \$1.12 billion. As I look back over my budget reply from last year, I see this project was merely an investigation with a \$14 million investment by the state government. Current spending is about \$70-80 million per month and around 25 per cent of the total project has been completed. Work is about to start on the tunnels and construction of the main water distribution pipeline from Tugun to Worongary started last Friday. Staff who will be working on the offshore barge are undergoing helicopter crash training as part of their safety preparation. This is not for the faint-hearted, I am told on good authority.

It is worth remembering that the people of the southern Gold Coast had to wait 20 years for the Tugun bypass and almost ended up with a road going east of the airport and the resumption of homes. The good news is that this motorway from Currumbin to Tweed Heads is well on schedule. I take this opportunity to commend Main Roads and everyone involved with this long-awaited project.

Talk of quality transport corridors flows freely from the transport minister's lips. At Coolangatta we are literally the end of the line and will have to wait more than a decade to see a rail service. Several million people fly into the Gold Coast airport each year with the newly opened runway extension. This government is always bragging about the value of our tourism industry, but we will not be able to catch a train in Coolangatta until 2018. Suburban Elanora further north will not see trains until at least 2011-12.

The memorandum of understanding between the Premiers of New South Wales and Queensland in February this year has seen common sense prevail with the establishment of dual taxi ranks to assist passengers who undertake cross-border taxi journeys.

I am pleased to report that concentrated policing efforts throughout the electorate have resulted in a reduction in crime, especially in Coolangatta, thanks to the directions of Inspector Des Lacy and Senior Sergeants Steve St George and Mark Johnston.

The Southern Alliance Task Force has contributed largely to the improvement in behaviour of some of our youth, although residents have recently started contacting my office with reports of troublesome

youth gatherings in Tugun. I congratulate Jim Keogh on his recent appointment as superintendent of the Gold Coast district. Jim lives in the Currumbin electorate and is very active in many community groups, having a big involvement in the local surf lifesaving movement.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the terrific achievements and contributions made by our community groups and volunteers such as Neighbourhood Watch, Lions, Rotary, Volunteer Marine Rescue, rural fire brigades and surf clubs to name a few.

In 2005 the Premier listened to huge public pressure from southern Gold Coast locals and promised to protect the site of the original primary school on Kirra Hill from residential development. Heritage listing was sought for the building which was in a poor state and the land was to be handed over to council by the state government. Here we are in 2007 and the government has stalled the Kirra Hill master plan. I urge the government to assist the Gold Coast City Council with this historic and nostalgic project by investing \$500,000 towards the restoration of the old school.

Many surfers believe our famous surfing break at Kirra to be a victim of the Tweed sand bypass project which has pumped millions of cubic metres of sand northwards. The Gold Coast City Council is negotiating with the state government to gain support for a feasibility study to examine the possibility of moving unwanted sand and I encourage the government to explore that.



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Hansard Tuesday, 6 February 2007

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (4.54 pm): As I stand here in this House delivering my address-in-reply speech to the 52nd Parliament of Queensland as the Liberal state member for Currumbin, I wish to place on record the honour and privilege the people of Currumbin have bestowed upon me to represent them in this place. Once again they have invested their trust in me. I pledge my loyalty to this parliament and to the people of Currumbin, to whom I am truly grateful and deeply humbled.

Each of the 89 members in this House, through election to this hallowed institution, have an important duty to discharge with honesty, integrity and respect the conventions that underpin Queensland's state parliament.

The Premier has been given a clear mandate to govern. In accepting this role, he has accepted the responsibility to govern all Queenslanders equally in a bipartisan way, regardless of party persuasions, to deliver for all in this great state and to not show either favour or neglect of basic services for communities in need.

In my first speech in 2004 I spoke of my belief that actions speak louder than words. Spin, grin and talkfests are a complete waste of time and money if there is an absence of action taken to rectify problems and to implement findings. Also a complete waste of time and money are huge spending campaigns that drown voters with mail that clogs their letter boxes, make false claims on issues and pester people in their homes with unappreciated phone calls asking for votes right up to election eve.

Having lived and raised a family in Currumbin Waters for almost 20 years, I have a firm grasp on local issues. Working actively on community projects and initiatives over the years, I know the challenges that lie ahead for our fast-growing population. Through regular information booths, attending meetings, tabling petitions and hosting public forums, I hear first-hand what matters most to residents. High and regular levels of community activity throughout the electorate resonated in my favour with voters in Currumbin re-electing me for a second term. Of the 30,025 enrolled constituents in Currumbin, 26,611 constituents voted, which equates to 88.63 per cent.

This win could not have happened without the support of a small army of individuals. May I apologise now for those I omit to mention. Sincere thanks go first to my campaign team, many of whom came on board because of issues I assisted them with. We might not have had much money, but we had an unswerving desire to keep Currumbin in Liberal hands. I thank Anne Phillips, Anne and Robert Wright, Tony Shield, John Vanzino, Peter Barrett, Luke Barnes and the Tweed Young Liberals, Anthony Robbie, Margaret May, the federal member for McPherson and her husband David for their wisdom, advice and many hours of assistance. I will be eternally grateful.

I also thank Alan Campigli, Don McHenry and Arthur Elliott, who were such willing helpers. Truck drivers Bob Rothwell and Ray Farrow, Linda Stevens, John Nettleton, Pat Hoban and Lois Helmick, and Ruth and Keith Fleming all battled the elements in rain or shine to garner votes for me. To our office volunteers, Lauren Hertel and Paul Smith, you are absolute champions. Thankyous also go to Sue Boyce,

president of the Liberal Women's Council, for friendship and much-needed financial support. I would like to mention Bob Quinn and thank him for his guidance and wise counsel during the 51st Parliament.

I would also like to mention my dad.

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Jones): Order!

Mrs STUCKEY: Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like some respect when I speak about my father.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Jones): Order! I call honourable members to order.

Mrs STUCKEY: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Despite being in their mid-80s, my dad, World War II air force veteran Eric Coleman, and my wonderful stepmother, Mazie, were actively involved in pre-polling and booth work on election day. I spoke of my father in 2004 and the huge role that he played in my entry into politics in the Liberal Party. My two sisters and dear friends the Hertel family were there on the hustings, too. Olivia and Edward, our two amazing kids, have grown into well-adjusted, hardworking adults and they know that by going the extra mile and persisting the sky is the limit.

Bev Malseed in my electorate office has, over the past two years, built up strong relationships with constituents and handled their issues in a pleasant, professional and efficient manner. Bev was on a month's leave and overseas for virtually all of the election period but, through her dedicated attention to constituent issues, we have a strong foundation of trust amongst constituents. Angela Owen-Taylor deserves a medal for literally running the electorate office single-handedly with help from volunteers against a barrage of Beattie propaganda. She also had to deal with countless complaints from people angry about the amount of junk mail stuffed daily in their letterboxes.

With regard to my husband of 30 years, Richard, I really struggle to find adequate words to communicate my sentiments and what he really means to me. His belief in me and the desire to see me not only achieve my goals and dreams but also the hopes and aspirations of others, especially those with special needs, is a constant source of energy and inspiration.

First speeches by members in a new parliament provide a genuine occasion for them to highlight the attributes, demographics and also the problems experienced in their regions. Speeches provide a postcard glimpse of other areas of the state, enabling us all to better understand the various characteristics that define each other's region, along with the range of issues that residents face. I will do my best to cover a good percentage of these in the time allocated to me.

Let me introduce honourable members to Currumbin, an exquisitely beautiful 146 square kilometres of beaches, valleys and rainforests. Currumbin really is breathtaking with her natural beauty and nostalgic history—a history that locals are prepared to protect fiercely. As the southern gateway to Queensland, bordering New South Wales, Currumbin is a world-renowned tourist destination for our stunning beaches which play host to surfing titles and are the location of the famous Coolangatta Gold ironman races. We are lucky to have lively Neighbourhood Watches, Lions, Lionesses, Rotary and general community groups and volunteers spread throughout the electorate, all contributing greatly to the social fabric, health and wellbeing of our area. Our two chambers of commerce, the Southern Gold Coast and Creek to Creek, chaired by presidents Barry McNamara and Darren Mackintosh respectively, are active on behalf of our business sectors.

One of the Gold Coast's first tourist attractions, the tranquil oasis Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary, is also nestled in our midst. We are blessed to have such a magnificent parcel of protected parkland in our electorate. Landslides caused by heavy rains on 30 June 2005 caused several hundred thousand dollars worth of damage to the property and to several homes on Currumbin Hill. To date, neither the sanctuary nor the affected residents have received much help from the state government. An absence of funding to assist with park maintenance reeks of favouritism, as another fauna park nearby receives considerable funding from this government. CEO Michelle Monsour and her dedicated team have performed wonders in re-establishing and repositioning this remarkable attraction, and it is a real pity the government cannot see it as worthy of assistance.

Coolangatta airport is a major employer in our region with tourism providing significant employment. Bumper numbers of passengers are arriving at our terminal and enjoying the many attractions our area has to offer. To maximise the opportunities that these visitors will bring, the M1 requires upgrading sooner rather than later and the rail line to Coolangatta must be fast-tracked sooner than 2025. Like many other areas, we are experiencing growing pains and require better infrastructure and transport services with some newer suburbs like Lakewoods in Elanora devoid of any public transport services at all.

Affordable housing continues to be a problem across the Gold Coast and the number of homeless people is escalating at an alarming rate. Blair Athol Crisis Accommodation at Bilinga turns away over 5,000 individuals a year. For the past 17 years manager extraordinaire Liz Fritz and her staff have struggled with

no funding increases. To her delight, Liz was advised a few months ago that the Minister for Communities had supported a submission from a consortium of agencies headed by Blair Athol in favour of more than half a million dollars in funding to assist them in their efforts to provide services under the banner of HOST. Considering the huge demand for low-cost housing, I, together with many residents, am amazed that the government is building new one-bedroom units right on the Gold Coast Highway in prime real estate when there could be so much better value and more accommodation provided even two streets away.

As I have previously mentioned, Currumbin's beaches are world famous and are patrolled by some of the nation's finest and oldest surf-lifesaving clubs. Point Danger branch has 11 clubs, the majority of which are located in my electorate. Surf Life Saving Queensland has battled unsuccessfully for an increase in funding to continue its vital efforts for many years. With the federal government making 2007 the Year of the Lifesaver, I am pleased to see the state government finally lift its game by boosting funding after a decade of inaction. Recognising the role our volunteer lifesavers play, not to mention their immeasurable contribution to tourism dollars, in 2005 I implemented an annual award with the prize of a surf rescue board for all clubs in the Point Danger branch. Tugun won the first year and last year Pacific was the victor.

Educational needs are a priority, with seven primary schools, a brand spanking new special school and two large high schools in our area. It is recognised that youth hold the key to the future. By maintaining close contact with all of the schools in Currumbin, I am able to follow their progress, initiatives and achievements.

Together we have achieved much in Currumbin during the 2½ years between elections, and I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the victories that were won by the community with my full support and commitment. The citizens of Currumbin are known as a passionate lot and have been vocal on a number of issues. This government, under considerable duress, did listen and respond to some of these and the people of Currumbin are grateful for this. I have no problem in thanking the government for taking positive actions and I am on record in this House as having done so on a number of occasions. However, the fact remains that most of the issues the government did respond to favourably only came about because of intense public pressure.

By far the biggest issue for Currumbin prior to the last election was the long-awaited, much-promised Tugun bypass western route, a project that has sorely tested the patience of residents for more than a decade. Only days before the election on 7 February 2004 the entire Currumbin electorate received a letter from the Premier that tossed out the preferred route and ripped people's homes out from underneath them. His direct mail letter said—

Only my government has a solution for the Tugun bypass. We will fix this issue once and for all.

...

We have identified a new eastern corridor including land within Gold Coast Airport as the alternative to the western (C4) option scuttled by New South Wales. This corridor will require the resumption of 14 houses on the eastern edge of the airport.

The public outcry was deafening and, together with federal member Margaret May, I lobbied hard on behalf of the people of Bilinga and Tugun. Within two months of being elected, I met with the Queensland Minister for Transport, the NSW member for Tweed and the New South Wales opposition leader with a message from residents that any route other than the C4 was not negotiable. The federal government flexed its muscle over its funding promise and, thankfully, the Queensland government was finally able to negotiate the go-ahead with a very reluctant New South Wales.

My Labor opponent in the recent election has accused me of taking credit for things the government did. My involvement is there in black and white and without it we may well be suffering the proposed B4 route the Premier tried to impose. Incredulous during this campaign was the threat that only my Labor opponent would deliver this piece of infrastructure. He used fear tactics stating that the Tugun bypass was at risk of being stopped if conservatives won government. Additionally, he was boasting to the electorate that he had played a part in the Tugun bypass, yet I fail to find any reference to him on this important subject prior to his preselection a few months before the election. Worse was that his brochures spelt the suburb of Tugun incorrectly.

Queensland's only six-star rated EnviroDevelopment accredited project, the Ecovillage, was officially opened on 6 December 2005. Consisting of 144 lots on a 110-hectare site, this highly sustainable residential development fits ideally in the picturesque Currumbin Valley. With World Heritage rainforests providing a lush backdrop, the company behind this project, Landmatters, is to be congratulated on its vision, which is to inspire awareness of sustainable living and development practices.

A wonderful addition to the Currumbin community is the new state-of-the-art special school located in Currumbin Waters. Parents, teachers and students relocated seamlessly from their previous home atop Kirra Hill at the beginning of term 3 last year and are building strong links with the local businesses, groups

and citizens. Jointly funded by both state and federal governments, the school was officially opened by the minister on Tuesday, 21 November.

Jan Derbidge and the Save Kirra Hill Committee are some of the most passionate lobbyists you will ever meet. Believe me, they are champions. Numerous advocates of this group attended the school many moons ago and have cherished memories they want to see preserved and protected. With help from my office, they embarked down the arduous task of applying for heritage listing in 2004.

Knocked back once, they are determined to continue their push for the original school building to be listed. I have already congratulated the government for generously donating the site of the old primary school to the community on 8 February 2005 so that Kirra Hill will be preserved for public use. Now that the special school has moved to its new location it is important that the government honour its promise and gazette the land to council for care.

Fulfilling a pledge I made at the last election to engage in thorough community consultation, the following groups have flourished. Fix Currumbin Creek Committee chairman, Brad Smith, has been an enormous asset to the Gold Coast City Council with regard to dredging appropriate channels in the mouth of Currumbin Creek. The Currumbin Creek stakeholder group was formed in response to residents' concerns about traffic congestion and safety issues along this state government controlled road.

Law and order issues have flared up on a number of occasions. However, a range of police and community initiatives has seen more harmony in our suburbs. The Eleonora Police Beat became officially operational on 3 May 2005. As a result of several public forums, the Palm Beach Community Consultative Committee was re-formed, Southern Alliance was tasked to the area and a youth group has formed due to the persistence of students Elyse McNeill and Ella Horton. Early in 2006 I instigated Youth Community Spirit Awards to recognise young people who have, through their actions, delivered benefits to our community. A petition of almost 5,000 signatures resulted in Palm Beach Police Station opening its doors during the day on weekends. Our region would benefit further from the school based police officer program.

The Tweed sand bypass project has, since its operations began, pumped over 5,000 million cubic metres of sand onto our southern beaches resulting in the loss of nine surf breaks. Competition for remaining breaks is fierce. A group of surfing and beach nourishment stakeholders formed Guardians of the Points. Mena Tsikleas and Phil Arnott are to be congratulated for their commitment to boosting education programs and seeking to improve recreational amenities.

Tugun is to be the location of a large billion-dollar desalination plant that has been rushed forward for completion by November 2008. An increasing number of residents have raised concerns as to the cost, the energy sources, the environmental impact on land and at sea, the effect on their lifestyles and the reduced property values. There is no question that we must secure our water future and desalination is a method worth considering. However, our community deserves answers.

A major attraction to the Currumbin area away from our golden beaches are our lush valleys in Currumbin and Tallebudgera. To their merit they have until recent times resisted the urban creep. The South-East Queensland Regional Plan announced by Terry Mackenroth prior to retiring from parliament in 2005 gave the impression that our valleys were protected from high-density developments. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is fact that Mr Mackenroth sits on the board of the Devine Group that plans to build a 530 house high-density hideaway development in an area defined as outside the urban footprint. My opponent decided to use this sensitive issue for Currumbin Valley residents as a political football in the last few days of the election promising a call-in if Labor won. Talk about blackmail! Well he lost and the new minister, to his credit, has called the project in. Unfortunately, the project was given the go-ahead. The Premier did state that he would not allow the South-East Regional Plan to be compromised. All was to no avail. It has turned out that the whole exercise was nothing more than a cruel hoax exposing the environmental credentials of the Labor Party as a complete and utter sham.

Here in this House today, in these formal circumstances, I once again pledge my unequivocal commitment that I will continue to represent all of the residents of Currumbin boldly, truthfully, proudly and in a proactive manner to make sure we get a reasonable deal. I thank residents for once again placing their faith in me, for withstanding a massive spending campaign from Labor and for sending them a message that Currumbin cannot be bought.

As members have heard, it has been a busy 2½ years in Currumbin and I have loved every minute of it. I will continue to recognise this government when it responds in a positive manner to resolve issues that fall under their jurisdiction. In return, together with the people of Currumbin, we expect this government to serve us as it does the rest of this great state, fairly and honestly.