

~~As I am sure members know, the tourism sector has been particularly hard hit by the fallout from the GFC. Areas like the Whitsundays, where tourism is the mainstay of the local community, are finding the way ahead particularly challenging, so the timing of the opening of our second Great Walk in the Whitsundays could not have been better. The Whitsunday Ngaro sea trail is a fabulous ecotourism opportunity for local business and it will give us another string in the bow to promote the outstanding natural beauty of the area. Therefore, it was entirely fitting that the Minister for Tourism was on Whitehaven Beach to officially open the trail. We were there with representatives of the traditional owners on that beautiful day.~~

## DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

### First Reading

**Hon. NS ROBERTS** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services) (12.40 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Disaster Management Act 2003 and the Public Safety Preservation Act 1986 for particular purposes. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

*Tabled paper:* Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill.

*Tabled paper:* Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, explanatory notes.

### Second Reading

**Hon. NS ROBERTS** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services) (12.40 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Queensland is exposed to a wide range of disasters, each with the potential to inflict significant damage on Queensland communities. During 2009-10, Queensland was impacted by tropical cyclones Olga, Neville and Ului and monsoonal flooding occurred across the north and in coastal regions. Earlier this year, South-West Queensland was inundated by one of the worst floods in living memory. As a result of these events, natural disaster relief and recovery arrangements were activated for 67 of Queensland's 73 local government areas.

Queensland communities need to be resilient in the face of natural hazards such as cyclones, bushfires, floods and storm surges and the threat from human-caused events, such as the *Pacific Adventurer* oil spill off Moreton Island last year and the more recent *Shen Neng 1* grounding on the Great Barrier Reef. It is unrealistic to expect one community, one agency or one level of government to be able to respond effectively to the magnitude of such disasters. Effective disaster management requires a collaborative approach with clarity of roles across all levels of government. Local government is the cornerstone of the disaster management system and locally led prevention, preparation, response and recovery, assisted by district and state level strategic coordination and support, remains the most effective way of preparing for and responding to disasters.

As part of the Bligh government's continuous improvement of Queensland's disaster management and response arrangements, the Department of Community Safety commissioned an independent review of legislation and policy. The review assessed the appropriateness of the Disaster Management Act 2003, policies, guidelines and plans, as well as management and accountability issues relating to the State Emergency Service. It concluded that Queensland's disaster management system is soundly based and affirmed that local government should remain the cornerstone of our disaster management system, supported by district and state level disaster management groups. It recommended that this bottom-up approach to disaster management should be reflected in the objects of the legislation. A number of recommendations focused on ensuring an effective and timely response to disasters, including amendments to allow for verbal declarations of disaster situations and to proactively declare disaster situations.

This bill enshrines in legislation key recommendations from the review, as well as other amendments proposed as part of the Bligh government's ongoing enhancement of the state's disaster preparedness and response capability. It establishes guiding principles for effective disaster management. It includes the requirement for disaster management planning to occur across all four phases of disaster management: prevention, preparation, response and recovery. It also includes the principle that all events, whether natural or human caused, should be managed using the state's disaster management framework, including the State Disaster Management Plan and any disaster

management guidelines prepared by the chief executive, DCS, under the act. Finally, the bill clarifies the relationships between local, district and state groups.

The bill contains a number of amendments to the roles in disaster management groups. These amendments implement the key recommendation from the review report that the Queensland Police Service take on an increased operational role with Emergency Management Queensland, EMQ, to focus on ensuring there is an effective disaster management framework in place. The amendments also make other changes to the groups to remove positions that do not need to be referred to in legislation and create new roles to recognise current practice. These amendments include: transferring responsibility for providing an executive officer of the State Disaster Management Group to the Queensland Police Service, and the Commissioner of the Queensland Police Service will appoint an executive officer to support the SDMG; transfer of the functions of the executive officer variously to the chief executive of the Department of Community Safety, the State Disaster Management Group, the chairperson of the State Disaster Management Group and the State Disaster Coordinator; providing that there will be a member on the State Disaster Management Group nominated by the Local Government Association of Queensland; providing that chairpersons and deputy chairpersons of district disaster management groups will be appointed by the Commissioner of the Queensland Police Service rather than the Governor in Council; providing that the executive officer in a district disaster management group will be a person appointed by the Commissioner of the Queensland Police Service; creation of the role of local disaster coordinator in a local disaster management group; providing for the functions of a chairperson of a local disaster management group; and allowing members of disaster management groups to nominate, with the approval of the group chairperson, deputies to attend meetings in the member's place, ensuring that groups can meet their statutory quorum obligations and continue to operate when members are unavailable.

The bill clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the groups and individuals within the disaster management system. There is a clear delineation of the roles of the QPS and EMQ. The QPS will have primary responsibility for coordinating disaster operations at the state and district levels, and EMQ is assigned a more focused role in mitigation of and preparation for disasters. The State Disaster Management Group is chaired by the Director-General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. It includes the chief executives of other departments, including the Department of Community Safety and the Queensland Police Service, an appropriately qualified officer of the department who ordinarily will be from EMQ and, for the first time, the Local Government Association of Queensland. This reflects the importance placed on local capability.

The bill creates two new positions to coordinate disaster response and recovery operations on behalf of the state group. Where necessary, a state disaster coordinator may be appointed. This position will be responsible for ensuring, as far as practicable, that the state group's strategic decisions are carried out. The appointee will also provide strategic advice to district disaster coordinators. The state disaster coordinator is focused on the response phase and would ordinarily be an officer of the Queensland Police Service. If necessary, a state recovery coordinator may also be appointed, to oversee community recovery operations. This person may be a government official or a prominent member of the public. These positions are also reflected at local level with the creation of the position of local disaster coordinator. Appointees will coordinate disaster operations for their local disaster management groups. They will be appointed by the chairperson, who will be a local government councillor. The person appointed must be either the chief executive or an employee of the relevant local government. The local disaster coordinator will report to the local group about disaster operations and ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, that strategic decisions of the group are carried out.

The bill also introduces the ability for disasters to be declared both proactively and verbally, where necessary. This enhances the ability of the system to respond to rapid onset events with maximum agility and speed. Existing protections will be retained to ensure disasters are only declared where it is necessary, or is likely to be necessary, to exercise declared disaster powers. When a disaster is declared verbally, it must be confirmed in writing, as soon as reasonably practicable. I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The ability to create temporary disaster district groups also increases the flexibility, responsiveness and organisational agility of our disaster management arrangements. Major events like cyclones or floods rarely limit their impact to one locality. If a disaster strikes two or more adjoining disaster districts, a temporary disaster district group may be established to manage the response for all districts. The group will include key players such as QPS, relevant local governments, state government departments and others who are considered necessary for effective disaster management.

The bill also makes some amendments to the act to better define the various roles and responsibilities of the partnership between state and local governments in relation to the State Emergency Service (SES). The SES retains a strong connection to local communities. Reflecting that the SES is supported by both state and local governments, the bill will allow the chief executive of the Department of Community Safety to enter into agreements with a local government, outlining each party's roles and responsibilities with respect to the SES unit in the local government area. I am committed to having such agreements established with local governments.

The bill reflects current practice by stating that the chief executive of the DCS is responsible for ensuring the safe and efficient function of the SES, and that local controllers of SES units carry out their functions. It also includes a mechanism for the creation

of new SES units, requiring the chief executive of the DCS to consult with the relevant local government and other community representatives before establishing a unit.

Finally, the bill seeks to amend the Public Safety Preservation Act 1986 to allow police officers to declare an emergency situation where a natural hazard, such as a landslide, occurs. This will allow the QPS to respond promptly to rapid onset natural events, pending the declaration of a disaster situation under the Disaster Management Act 2003. This bill builds on the sound foundations that already exist in Queensland and seeks to enhance disaster management to help communities to better cope with the effects of disasters. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Johnson, adjourned.

## **CARERS (RECOGNITION) AMENDMENT BILL**

### **First Reading**

~~Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala ALP) (Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs) (12.49 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Carers (Recognition) Act 2008 for particular purposes. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—~~

~~That the bill be now read a first time.~~

~~Question put That the bill be now read a first time.~~

~~Motion agreed to.~~

~~Bill read a first time.~~

~~Tabled paper: Carers (Recognition) Amendment Bill.~~

~~Tabled paper: Carers (Recognition) Amendment Bill, explanatory notes.~~

### **Second Reading**

~~Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala ALP) (Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs) (12.50 pm): I move—~~

~~That the bill be now read a second time.~~

~~The Bligh government has a strong record of supporting seniors and carers. On 24 May this year at community cabinet on the Gold Coast, the Premier launched Positively Ageless Queensland Seniors Strategy 2010-20. This strategy introduces Grandparents Day to celebrate the contribution of grandparents and their important role in the community, and establishes a new grandparents information hotline, to be run by Lifeline, to improve information for grandparents about services and resources for grandparents.~~

~~The amendments proposed in the Carers (Recognition) Amendment Bill 2010 today would make Queensland the first state to legislatively recognise grandparents providing full time care for their grandchildren. The government proposes amendments to the Carers (Recognition) Act 2008 to extend the existing legislation to specifically recognise the interests of grandparents.~~

~~There are approximately 14,000 Australian families in which a grandparent or grandparents are the main carers for their grandchildren. These grandparents, many of whom have completed their child-rearing days with their own children, step up to meet their grandchildren's need for stability and continuity of care. Grandchildren may come to live with grandparents for a range of reasons.~~

~~The government's bill will:~~

- ~~• extend the definition of carers to recognise grandparents as full time carers for their grandchildren where the child lives with the grandparent and the grandparent is the primary caregiver and decision maker for the child;~~
- ~~• extend the functions of the Carers Advisory Council, which already exists under provisions of the Queensland carers act, to include working to advance the interests of grandparents providing full time care for their grandchildren;~~
- ~~• expand the membership of the Carers Advisory Council to include two positions for grandparent carers providing full time care for their grandchildren or a representative body of grandparent carers;~~
- ~~• amend the existing Queensland Carers Charter—again established under the Queensland carers act—to include recognition of the invaluable role that grandparents providing full time care for their grandchildren play in the lives of their grandchildren, and to include a further two new principles in the charter which would recognise grandparents providing full time care for their grandchildren and assure them of access to information that supports them in their role.~~

~~The government's bill will also more closely align the Queensland carers act with the recently introduced Commonwealth Carer Recognition Bill in that it will require public authorities to apply the principles of the Queensland Carers Charter in their human resource policies.~~