

Mr CRIPPS: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I waited for as long as I could in relation to relevance. Is the minister going to tell the House the date he was told by the Premier that he would no longer be responsible for managing the Vegetation Management Act in the state of Queensland?

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister, it was a specific question. If you are able to answer that, I would like you to answer it.

Dr LYNHAM: I think it was probably a week after we gained government and we had our first meeting to discuss how our plan for vegetation management would be enacted. Since that time, as I said before, we have undertaken a consultation process. Now we are just about to deliver our comprehensive suite of vegetation management plans—reforms that are fair to all and reforms that are much needed for Queensland and much needed for climate change.➤

◀Cairns Hospital

Mr CRAWFORD: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services. Will the minister inform the House of the government's efforts to improve the flow of patients at Cairns Hospital?

Mr DICK: I thank the member for Barron River for his question. Obviously as a former paramedic, he knows well the need to effectively treat people in our community, both outside of hospital and inside hospital. A short while ago I was able to convene a Cairns round table to discuss issues in relation to hospital access in Cairns. I was very pleased to convene that high-level round table involving leaders from our hospital and health service and leading clinicians. I also invited a number of industrial organisations—trade unions—to attend such as United Voice, the Together union, the Salaried Medical Officers' Federation Queensland and of course the Queensland Nurses' Union. All had input, including doctors and nurses. Why did I do that? Why did I invite all of those organisations? So we could get the best outcome. If you sit down and listen to all of those individuals and organisations, including their representatives—their trade union representatives—you get the best possible outcome. I am pleased to say that one of the outcomes was the creation of a low acuity response unit for Cairns which commenced operation last Monday. There are already low acuity response units, LARUs, operating in Brisbane, Townsville and the Gold Coast. During the six month pilot period in Brisbane north in 2013, the LARU attended 1,462 cases and identified that 39 per cent of those patients did not require transport to an emergency department. So by using that mechanism we can take pressure off emergency departments, and I can report to the House that we want to do that in Cairns and we have started that process.

In the time since it has started, I am advised that the LARU has responded to a total of 80 cases of which 44 cases or 55 per cent have either not been transported or have gone to an alternative health facility. There has been no compromise in health care, but we have been able to treat them in the right place. Some of the instances the LARU in Cairns has addressed include a patient who complained of dizzy spells who was taken to a medical centre, a young man who stubbed his toe and was treated at the scene by paramedics and a man with an earache who was scheduled an appointment with a GP. All of those people had their medical needs addressed without tying up hospital resources. It is a terrific initiative of the Queensland Ambulance Service. I am very pleased to support it and I know that the member for Mulgrave, the member for Cairns, who supports this, and the member for Barron River know the positive impact this will have on their communities. It is a forward thinking initiative of Labor governments to implement these sorts of responses. It will have a positive impact for paramedics, nurses, doctors and most importantly the patients that they treat in Queensland. I thank the members from the Far North for their support. We want to engage in this sort of innovation. It is the innovation that Queensland Health is well known for and we will roll this out further as we can, but I am pleased it is having a positive impact on the community of Cairns.➤

Cairns IRD Project

Mr COSTIGAN: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines. After failing to attend the Major Projects Summit in Bowen recently, can the minister confirm that the state government is now, as part of its ongoing series of reviews, spending \$100,000 to conduct an independent analysis of the Cairns IRD project?

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, the time for question time has expired.

<Introduction



Mr BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (4.03 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990 for particular purpose. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Fire and Emergency Services (Smoke Alarms) Amendment Bill 2015.

Tabled paper: Fire and Emergency Services (Smoke Alarms) Amendment Bill 2015, explanatory notes.

A domestic house fire occurs in Queensland every 4.7 hours. It is a well-established fact that smoke alarms in Queensland and around Australia save lives. Tragically, just before midnight on 23 August 2011, a fire started on the ground floor of a house located in Slacks Creek. The first of 23 triple 0 emergency calls were made at approximately 12.04 am and the first responder crew arrived at the scene some seven minutes later. By that time, police were already in attendance and the house was fully engulfed in fire. This fire caused the greatest loss of life in a domestic house fire in Australian history. Eleven people lost their lives, including eight children. The findings of the coronial inquest into the house fire were delivered on 28 November 2014. In the case of the Slacks Creek house fire, the Coroner found that smoke alarms were either not present in the dwelling or were not maintained. He also found that had the smoke alarms been working there was a reasonable prospect that some or all of the victims could have escaped and survived. Based on the recommendations of the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services and other testimony before the coronial inquest, the final recommendations of the Coroner were that photoelectric smoke alarms should be the only type of smoke alarm that is the approved smoke alarm for the purposes of residential homes. This bill achieves that goal.

The Coroner's report noted that Chief Superintendent Neil Reid of the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services outlined the difference between ionisation and photoelectric smoke alarms and explained why it is in the view of QFES that photoelectric smoke alarms are far superior. Photoelectric smoke alarms are already compulsory in commercial premises in Queensland and the alarm responds more quickly to a broader range of fires and is less likely to cause false alarms. The bill that we are introducing today provides the staged transition to photoelectric smoke alarms for domestic dwellings in Queensland as was recommended by the Coroner. The commencement date is set at 1 July 2016. Within one year of that date, tenants and landlords need to comply with the new arrangements as set out in this bill. Those who comply with the existing arrangements that are in the current act will have three years from the commencement date to comply with the new requirements. If after the commencement a smoke alarm installed in a domestic dwelling does not operate when tested or was manufactured more than 10 years before the commencement, the owner of that dwelling must immediately replace the smoke alarm with one that complies with the requirements in this bill. It is vital at the very least that we increase the awareness for smoke alarms—working smoke alarms—in Queensland homes.

On Boxing Day 2011 a house fire in Tewantin on the Sunshine Coast changed the life of Matt Golinski forever when he tragically lost his wife and three children. The coronial investigation into their deaths was released very recently on 23 November 2015 and the recommendations of that inquest were linked with that of the Slacks Creek house fire that I referred to earlier. Based on investigations as part of that report, it was concluded that the alarms in the Golinski house were most likely the ionisation type, nine-volt battery operated stand-alone smoke alarms. Neither Mr Golinski or any of the neighbours could remember hearing the sound of an audible smoke alarm on the night of the tragic fire. It also notes that the peak body for public sector fire, land management and emergency organisations in Australia and New Zealand, the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council, made it clear that it advocated that all residential accommodation should be fitted with photoelectric smoke alarms instead of ionised smoke alarms. The Coroner also noted that the Queensland government has not yet responded to the Slacks Creek coronial investigation that was published in November 2014.

While I note the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee is currently conducting an inquiry into the use of smoke alarms to prevent fires and fire related deaths and is due to report on 16 March 2016, the LNP believes that there is currently enough evidence for the Queensland government to take action now. Photoelectric smoke alarms are already mandated for use in commercial premises in Queensland. The Queensland Fire and Emergency Services on its website recommends—

The QFES recommendation exceeds the minimum legislative requirements but does provide better safety.

- All residential accommodation be fitted with photoelectric type smoke alarms.
- Smoke alarms either hard-wired or powered by a 10-year lithium battery.

- Smoke alarms located—
 - on each level of living space;
 - outside each bedroom; and
 - in every bedroom
- All smoke alarms should be interconnected.
- Every home should have a practised escape plan.

If it is good enough for commercial premises, it should be good enough for residential premises as well. While the bill does not mandate interconnectivity between the alarms, I note the QFES recommends that this should be considered by home owners as an additional option that could enhance the protection of their home.

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I support the advice and believe that the first priority is getting all homes protected by photoelectric alarms. A process of further encouraging interconnectivity between alarms may be something worth considering in future years. In that context, since 2014, interconnectivity for new homes in Queensland is already mandated. So with this issue we are effectively dealing with existing properties rather than new properties.

As it is a matter of the safety of our loved ones, I think we can go one better than recommending it: we can legislate the requirement for photoelectric smoke alarms in Queensland. The bill does not stipulate that smoke alarms should be mandated in every bedroom. However, we understand that this is an issue that has also been raised by submitters to the Senate inquiry and would be happy for the parliamentary committee considering this bill to review that matter as part of its further consideration.

Although this current government in Queensland has done nothing and this Minister for Fire and Emergency Services has sat on her hands and has sat on these coronial recommendations for 12 months now and has been completely missing in action on this issue, we will act. Like we did in government, our priority is all about community safety first.

In terms of the commentary about the photoelectric smoke alarms, I think it is important to point out the difference between the various types of alarms in the state of Queensland. For the benefit of members, I have them with me. There are ionised smoke alarms in Queensland. If Queensland citizens looked at their smoke alarms, they would generally be hardwired but they would also have a nine-volt battery. They have a radiation symbol on them. If a Queenslanders goes home tonight and has a look at their smoke alarm in the hallway of their bedroom, if they take off the cover, generally it should be a hardwired and they will see that it has a nine-volt battery for extra protection if the electricity is cut. It will also have a radiation symbol. That means that it is an ionised smoke alarm. If the smoke alarm does not have a radiation symbol on it, which is the little black and yellow symbol, it will be a photoelectric smoke alarm. As I said, at the moment all the evidence is suggesting that photoelectric smoke alarms are the best in the business. If a smoke alarm has one of these little batteries, that is a nine-volt battery.

Mr Nicholls: Put it on your tongue.

Mr BLEIJIE: I will not put it on my tongue. For the benefit of the House, I should disclose that I do not have a contract with Duracell batteries. I am achieving no beneficial interest in Duracell batteries or Quell smoke alarms. That nine-volt battery will last one or two years. Unfortunately, people rely on the hardwiring of the alarms in their house. But, in a house fire, that can go first. If these batteries die, then the house is not protected. The photoelectric alarms that are on the market these days, both hardwired and interconnected by wireless activation, have a 10-year lithium battery.

This bill offers the best protection for Queensland citizens by offering smoke alarms like these. There is no need to replace the battery. The battery lasts for 10 years. It is tamper proof, it is sealed and it is a 10-year lithium battery, which is better than a nine-volt battery, which will die after a couple of years. So our bill—

Mr Pyne interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: The member asked a question about cost. There is a discernible difference between the cost of an ionised smoke alarm and a photoelectric smoke alarm. That is why we have given a transitional period of over three years for all smoke alarms to be changed from ionised smoke alarms to the photoelectric smoke alarms. The evidence shows that the photoelectric smoke alarms offer the best protection in the majority of house fires at a smouldering level.

I refer to an ABC news article dated Monday, 26 October 2015 about Keith Golinski, the father of Matt Golinski, who lost his wife and three children in a house fire. That article states—

A Queensland man whose three granddaughters and daughter-in-law died in a house fire has backed calls for photoelectric alarms to be made mandatory, saying ionisation alarms are not as effective.

...

He has backed calls for photoelectric alarms to be made mandatory, saying that ionisation alarms were not as effective.

I refer to the recommendations arising out of the coronial inquest, which was handed down by the Coroner, Terry Ryan, with respect to the Golinski family. On behalf of the House, I pay tribute to Matt Golinski. No-one should ever have to face his situation—a man who loses his wife and three daughters in a tragic house fire. But I pay tribute to Matt's father who, since that tragic incident, has now been campaigning to have smoke alarms changed in Queensland. The Coroner recommendations into the Golinski case were tabled very recently—on 23 November 2015. I think it is important to note a couple of things from the report of the State Coroner, Terry Ryan. He stated at item 27—

The smoke alarms failed to perform their role in warning the occupants of the house that the fire had commenced. The house was engulfed by fire by the time the occupants were awake and able to understand what was going on, resulting in Rachael and her daughters not being able to escape from the burning structure.

At item 28 he stated—

Police concluded that if the smoke alarms had been functioning effectively, the fire, and consequently the deaths, could have been prevented. I agree with that conclusion.

Terry Ryan also states in that report—

Throughout the course of my investigation, I have received and had regard to information provided to me by the World Fire Safety Foundation.

Terry Ryan is aware that representatives of the foundation liaised with Detective Senior Constable Hutton throughout the course of this investigation. He states further—

The Foundation, among many other organisations, holds concerns about the continued use and the apparent failings of ionisation type smoke alarms. Ionisation alarms have been demonstrated to be less effective in detecting smouldering type fires. Photoelectric alarms respond more rapidly to a broader range of fires and are less likely to cause false alarms.

The Coroner says at item 44—

On 17 November 2014, Coroner McDougall handed down his findings in relation to the Slacks Creek House Fire which occurred in August 2011.

He states further—

... Coronal McDougall made a number of comments and recommendations in this regard.

One of those recommendations was the implementation of a change to photoelectric alarms. The report states further—

If installed in an existing domestic dwelling in addition to, or replacing existing smoke alarms, a 240 volt hard wired smoke alarm where access is available to the ceiling space or, otherwise, a 10 year lithium battery smoke alarm which is interconnected wirelessly, to all other required smoke alarms...

So it is clear that, unfortunately, the recommendations from the first coronial investigation into the Slacks Creek house fire have sat on the desk of the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services for 12 months now without any action by the state Labor government.

I commend the members of the Logan House Fire Support Network, who have met me on a number of occasions and who have met with the opposition leader. In the short period after we have met them, we have acted. We have acted because we are putting community safety, the safety of kids, first in this state. Just like we did with the rural fireys with presumptive legislation, we acted first and then the government was forced to respond. We are doing that again with this legislation.

With respect to this bill, I believe that the government should implement an education and awareness campaign in terms of photoelectric smoke alarms.

Mrs Miller: There is.

Mr BLEIJIE: The minister can interject and say, 'There already is a campaign.'

Mrs Miller: There is.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection again. If that is the best that the minister can do in response to many Queenslanders dying in the last 12 months while this report has sat on the minister's desk, then it shows the type of minister that we have in the state. She is satisfied that a TV ad, a radio ad is sufficient. We on this side of the House do not believe that that is sufficient. That is why we have the foresight in taking the action in introducing this bill. On that note, I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

Mr BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (4.17 pm): 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.

Referral to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Furner): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee.

Portfolio Committee, Reporting Date

Mr BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (4.17 pm), by leave, without notice: I move —

That under the provisions of standing order 136 the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee report to the House on the Fire and Emergency Services (Smoke Alarms) Amendment Bill by 4 March 2016. >

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

~~CONSTITUTION (FIXED TERM PARLIAMENT) AMENDMENT BILL~~

~~ELECTORAL (CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT BILL)~~

~~Tabling of Bills~~



~~**Mr WALKER** (Mansfield—LNP) (4.18 pm): In accordance with the resolution of the House on 1 December 2015—yesterday—ordering the division of the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill, as introduced on 17 September 2015, I table the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill 2015 and the Electoral (Constitutional) Amendment Bill 2015 and explanatory notes for each bill.~~

~~Tabled paper: Electoral (Constitutional) Amendment Bill 2015.~~

~~Tabled paper: Electoral (Constitutional) Amendment Bill 2015, explanatory notes.~~

~~Tabled paper: Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill 2015.~~

~~Tabled paper: Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill 2015, explanatory notes.>~~

~~Motion~~



~~**Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (4.18 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—~~

~~That the House accepts the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill 2015 and the Electoral (Constitutional) Amendment Bill 2015 presented and circulated to members as complying with the order of the House to divide the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill 2015, introduced on 17 September 2015, and orders that each bill is deemed read a first time and now stands as an order of the day for the second reading to be moved.>~~

~~Question put—That the motion be agreed to.~~

~~Motion agreed to.~~

~~CONSTITUTION (FIXED TERM PARLIAMENT) AMENDMENT BILL~~

~~CONSTITUTION (FIXED TERM PARLIAMENT) REFERENDUM BILL~~

Cognate Debate



~~**Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Leader of the House) (4.19 pm), by leave, without notice, I move—~~

~~1. In accordance with Standing Order 172, the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill and the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Referendum Bill be treated as cognate Bills for their remaining stages, as follows:~~