



RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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TUESDAY, 6 OCTOBER 2009

The Legislative Assembly met at 9.30 am.

Mr Speaker (Hon. John Mickel, Logan) read prayers and took the chair.

For this sitting week, Mr Speaker acknowledged the traditional owners of the land upon which this parliament is assembled and the custodians of the sacred lands of our state.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have to report that I have received from Her Excellency the Governor letters in respect of assent to certain bills, the contents of which will be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*. I table the letters for the information of members.

The Honourable R.J. Mickel, MP
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

I hereby acquaint the Legislative Assembly that the following Bills, having been passed by the Legislative Assembly and having been presented for the Royal Assent, were assented to in the name of Her Majesty The Queen on the date shown:

Date of Assent: 17 September 2009

"A Bill for An Act to declare and implement principles of justice for victims of crime, to provide a scheme to give financial assistance to certain victims, and to amend the Acts mentioned in chapter 7 for particular purposes"

"A Bill for An Act to amend the Juvenile Justice Act 1992 for particular purposes and other Acts as a consequence of the change of that Act's title and to amend the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities (Justice, Land and Other Matters) Act 1984, the Child Protection Act 1999 and the Young Offenders (Interstate Transfer) Act 1987 also for particular purposes"

These Bills are hereby transmitted to the Legislative Assembly, to be numbered and forwarded to the proper Officer for enrolment, in the manner required by law.

Yours sincerely

Governor

17 September 2009

The Honourable R.J. Mickel, MP
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

I hereby acquaint the Legislative Assembly that the following Bills, having been passed by the Legislative Assembly and having been presented for the Royal Assent, were assented to in the name of Her Majesty The Queen on the date shown:

Date of Assent: 22 September 2009

"A Bill for An Act to refer certain matters relating to security interests in personal property to the Parliament of the Commonwealth for the purposes of section 51 (xxxvii) of the Constitution of the Commonwealth"

"A Bill for An Act to amend the Electrical Safety Act 2002, the Electrical Safety Regulation 2002, the Acts Interpretation Act 1954, the Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Act 1991, the Contract Cleaning Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Act 2005, the Evidence Act 1977, the Holidays Act 1983, the Industrial Relations Act 1999, the Industrial Relations Regulation 2000, the Industrial Relations (Tribunals) Rules 2000, the Parliamentary Service Act 1988, the Parliamentary Service Rule 2000, the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act 1990, the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003, the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Regulation 2003, the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995 and the Workplace Health and Safety Regulation 2008 for particular purposes"

"A Bill for An Act for a framework to integrate planning and development assessment so that development and its effects are managed in a way that is ecologically sustainable, and for related purposes"

These Bills are hereby transmitted to the Legislative Assembly, to be numbered and forwarded to the proper Officer for enrolment, in the manner required by law.

Yours sincerely

Governor

22 September 2009

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 17 September 2009, from Her Excellency the Governor to Mr Speaker advising of assent to bills on 17 September 2009 [968].

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 22 September 2009, from Her Excellency the Governor to Mr Speaker advising of assent to bills on 22 September 2009 [969].

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Catholic Mission Display

Mr SPEAKER: In the period since the parliament last sat, there have been three significant natural disasters in our sphere of the world. Tragically, they have involved serious loss of life and have caused widespread devastation. I draw to the attention of honourable members a display here at the parliament during this sitting week—in the foyer of the Parliamentary Annexe—by Catholic Mission promoting the humanitarian work and aid projects it is involved in. The month of October is the organisation's Mission Month.

Coinciding with this, Catholic Mission has launched three appeals in response to the recent natural disasters—the Samoa Tsunami Appeal, the Sumatra Earthquake Appeal and the Philippines Flood Appeal. Catholic Mission was already involved in aid projects in each of these countries before these disasters hit. The money raised through these appeals will go directly to the relief efforts in which it is directly involved.

Obviously there are other relief efforts and other appeals that have been organised, such as by the Red Cross and also the Premier's Disaster Relief Appeal, and these also are worthy and deserving of support. I understand that the parliament will be having a discussion on this later this morning.

REPORT

Office of the Information Commissioner

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have to report that I have received the annual report of the Office of the Information Commissioner for 2008-09. I table the said report.

Tabled paper: Office of the Information Commissioner—Annual Report 2008-09 [\[970\]](#).

ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF CHATSWORTH

Court of Disputed Returns Order

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have to report that the Clerk has received from Her Honour Justice Atkinson SC the final order in the Court of Disputed Returns for the electorate of Chatsworth, ordering that the application filed on 13-14 and 17-18 August 2009 be dismissed. I table a copy of the order.

Tabled paper: Electorate of Chatsworth, Report of the Court of Disputed Returns, Final Order made 17 September 2009 [\[971\]](#).

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Presentation to Governor

Mr SPEAKER: I wish to remind all honourable members that Her Excellency the Governor will be pleased to receive the address-in-reply at Government House this Friday, 9 October 2009 at 9.30 am. Members who are accompanying me on this occasion are advised that cars will depart from the portecochere at 9 am sharp. Members wishing to proceed to Government House using their own transport should aim to arrive by 9.25 am.

PETITIONS

The Acting Clerk presented the following paper petition, lodged by the honourable member indicated—

Vehicle Registration; Four-wheel Drives

Ms Simpson, from 19,728 petitioners, requesting the House to incorporate charges into vehicle registration based on pollution rating and the weight of the vehicles and to ban four-wheel drive vehicles from school pick up zones and inner city shopping areas [\[972\]](#).

The Acting Clerk presented the following e-petition, sponsored by the honourable member indicated—

Minister for Seniors

Mr Bleijie, from 332 petitioners, requesting the House to re-instate the position of Minister for Seniors responsible for all matters relevant to that portfolio [\[973\]](#).

Petitions received.

TABLED PAPERS

PAPERS TABLED DURING THE RECESS

The Acting Clerk informed the House that the following papers, received during the recess, were tabled on the dates indicated—
18 September 2009—

[936](#) Letter, dated 17 September 2009, from the Premier (Ms Bligh) to the Clerk of the Parliament enclosing a copy of material from the Commonwealth Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Treaties including treaty texts and National Interest Analyses for proposed treaty actions that were tabled on 13 May and 25 June 2009 in both houses of the Commonwealth Parliament

[937](#) Letter, dated 16 September 2009, from the Premier (Ms Bligh) to the Clerk of the Parliament enclosing a copy of material (Reports 102 and 103) from the Commonwealth Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Treaties referring to the committee's conclusions on four treaty actions that were tabled in both houses of the Commonwealth Parliament on 12 and 16 March 2009

[938](#) Queensland Treasury Corporation—Annual Report 2008-09

22 September 2009—

[939](#) Response from the Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women (Ms Struthers) to a paper petition (1286-09) presented by Mr Foley from 123 petitioners regarding the funding available to agencies that make up the Department of Communities

[940](#) Letter, dated 21 September 2009, from the Premier (Ms Bligh) to the Clerk of the Parliament enclosing a copy of material from the Commonwealth Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Treaties listing proposed international treaty actions tabled in both houses of the Commonwealth Parliament on 20 August 2009

23 September 2009—

[941](#) Response from the Minister for Tourism and Fair Trading (Mr Lawlor) to a paper petition (1237-09) presented by Mr Dempsey from 150 petitioners regarding the noise levels from licensed premises

[942](#) Surveyors Board of Queensland—Annual Report 2008-09

[943](#) Response from the Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland (Mr Mulherin) to an ePetition (1254-09) sponsored by Ms Simpson from 587 petitioners regarding the position of Principal Industry Development Officer (Horses)

24 September 2009—

[944](#) Report to the Legislative Assembly from the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Minister for Trade (Mr Robertson), pursuant to section 56A(4) of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992, regarding the River Improvement Trust Regulation 1998

[945](#) Reports to the Legislative Assembly from the Minister for Tourism and Fair Trading (Mr Lawlor), pursuant to section 56A(4) of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992, regarding the Business Names Regulation 1998 and the Lotteries Rule 1998

28 September 2009—

[946](#) Response from the Minister for Main Roads (Mr Wallace) to a paper petition (1273-09) presented by Mr Knuth from 1129 petitioners requesting a permanent B-double route for the transportation of goods in and around the township of Ravenshoe

[947](#) National Electricity (South Australia) (National Electricity Law-Australian Energy Market Operator) Amendment Act 2009 (SA) which received Royal Assent on 25 June 2009

[948](#) National Electricity (South Australia) (Australian Energy Market Operator) Variation Regulations 2009 (SA) published in the South Australian Gazette on 25 June 2009

[949](#) Gas Industry Code (Second Edition: effective 1 July 2009) made on 25 June 2009 by the Queensland Competition Authority (QCA) under the Gas Supply Act 2003 (Qld) which recognises the transfer of the operation of the Queensland gas retail market to the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO)

[950](#) Darling Downs-Moreton Rabbit Board—Annual Report 2008-09

29 September 2009—

[951](#) Report to the Legislative Assembly from the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Minister for Trade (Mr Robertson), pursuant to section 56A(4) of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992, regarding the Land Regulation 1995

[952](#) Report to the Legislative Assembly from the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Minister for Trade (Mr Robertson), pursuant to section 56A(4) of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992, regarding the Soil Conservation Regulation 1998

30 September 2009—

[953](#) Quarterly report on key indicators in Queensland's discrete Indigenous communities—April-June 2009

[954](#) Family Responsibilities Commission: Report to the Family Responsibilities Board and the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships—Quarterly Report No. 4—April-June 2009

[955](#) Letter, dated 30 September 2009, from the Premier (Ms Bligh) to the Clerk of the Parliament regarding the tabling of the State Government's broad objectives for the community (Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland) under s 10 of the Financial Accountability Act 2009 and related documents

[956](#) Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland

[957](#) Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland—Community Consultation—Government Response

[958](#) Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland—List of Inaugural Q2 Partners

[959](#) Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland—Q2 Partners Program—Application Guidelines

1 October 2009—

[960](#) Response from the Minister for Tourism and Fair Trading (Mr Lawlor) to a paper petition (1235-09) presented by Ms Stone from 176 petitioners regarding an application to increase the hours of operation of the Chatswood Hills Tavern at Springwood

2 October 2009—

- [961](#) Response from the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability (Ms Jones) to a paper petition (1275-09) presented by Mr Rickuss from 1965 petitioners regarding the Lockyer Valley Regional Council's Master Plan for Lake Apex in Gatton
- [962](#) Response from the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability (Ms Jones) to two paper petitions (1292-09 and 1308-09) presented by Mr Gibson from 1101 and 75 petitioners respectively and an ePetition (1270-09) sponsored by Mr Gibson from 533 petitioners regarding proposed Cooloola Recreation Area vehicle access permits
- [963](#) Report to the Legislative Assembly by the Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland (Mr Mulherin), pursuant to section 56A(4) of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992, regarding the Agricultural Chemicals Distribution Control Regulation 1998, Agricultural Standards Regulation 1997, Apiaries Regulation 1998, Brands Regulation 1998, Diseases in Timber Regulation 1997, Exotic Diseases in Animals Regulation 1998 and Timber Utilisation and Marketing Regulation 1998
- [964](#) Report to the Legislative Assembly by the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability (Ms Jones), pursuant to section 56A(4) of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992, regarding the Nature Conservation (Whales and Dolphins) Conservation Plan 1997
- [965](#) Annual Report and State of the Wet Tropics Report—Annual Report 2008-09

5 October 2009—

- [966](#) Reports to the Legislative Assembly from the Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations (Mr C R Dick), pursuant to section 56A(4) of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992, regarding the Criminal Offence Victims Regulation 1995 and the Trustee Companies Regulation 1996
- [967](#) Consolidated Fund Financial Report 2008-09

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by the Acting Clerk—

Superannuation (State Public Sector) Act 1990—

- [974](#) Superannuation (State Public Sector) Amendment of Deed Regulation (No. 4) 2009, No. 196

Electricity Act 1994—

- [975](#) Electricity Amendment Regulation (No. 4) 2009, No. 197

Electricity Act 1994—

- [976](#) Electricity Amendment Regulation (No. 4) 2009, Regulatory Impact Statement for No 197—Close control air conditioning

Electricity Act 1994—

- [977](#) Electricity Amendment Regulation (No. 4) 2009, Regulatory Impact Statement for No. 197—Lighting

Electricity Act 1994—

- [978](#) Electricity Amendment Regulation (No. 4) 2009, Regulatory Impact Statement for No. 197—Televisions

Corrective Services and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2009—

- [979](#) Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 198

Transport Infrastructure Act 1994—

- [980](#) Transport Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2009, No. 199

Exotic Diseases in Animals Act 1981—

- [981](#) Exotic Diseases in Animals (Acarine and Varroa Mites) Amendment Notice (No. 1) 2009, No. 200

Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008—

- [982](#) Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2009, No. 201

Forestry Act 1959, Nature Conservation Act 1992—

- [983](#) Forestry and Nature Conservation Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 4) 2009, No. 202

Criminal Code and Other Legislation (Misconduct, Breaches of Discipline and Public Sector Ethics) Amendment Act 2009—

- [984](#) Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 203

Police Service Administration Act 1990—

- [985](#) Police Service Administration Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2009, No. 204

Animal Care and Protection Act 2001—

- [986](#) Animal Care and Protection Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2009, No. 205

Resorts and Other Acts Amendment Act 2009—

- [987](#) Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 206

Sanctuary Cove Resort Act 1985—

- [988](#) Sanctuary Cove Resort Regulation 2009, No. 207

State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971—

- [989](#) State Development and Public Works Organisation (State Development Areas) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2009, No. 208

Integrated Planning Act 1997—

- [990](#) Integrated Planning Amendment Regulation (No. 4) 2009, No. 209

Coroners and Other Acts Amendment Act 2009—

- [991](#) Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 210

MINISTERIAL PAPERS TABLED BY THE ACTING CLERK

The following ministerial papers were tabled by the Acting Clerk—

Deputy Premier and Minister for Health (Mr Lucas)—

[992](#) Report to the Legislative Assembly from the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health (Mr Lucas), pursuant to section 56A(4) of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992, regarding the Health (Drugs and Poisons) Regulation 1996, Health Regulation 1996 and Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Regulation 1998

Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services (Mr Roberts)—

[993](#) Queensland Police Service—Surveillance Device Warrants: Annual Report 2008-09

[994](#) Public Interest Monitor—Six Monthly Report of the Public Interest Monitor, delivered pursuant to section 363 of the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000: Reporting period 1 July 2008-31 December 2008

MEMBERS' PAPERS TABLED BY THE ACTING CLERK

The following members' papers were tabled by the Acting Clerk—

Member for Gregory (Mr Johnson)—

[995](#) Non-conforming petition from 322 petitioners regarding the supply of bore water to the township of Longreach

Member for Southport (Mr Lawlor)—

[996](#) Non-conforming petition regarding the dismantling of the St Lawrence Creek Historic Railway Bridge

REPORT TABLED BY THE ACTING CLERK

The following report was tabled by the Acting Clerk—

[997](#) Report pursuant to Standing Order 158 (Clerical errors or formal changes to any bill) detailing amendments to certain Bills, made by the Clerk, prior to assent by Her Excellency the Governor, viz—

Juvenile Justice and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2009

Amendment made to Bill

Schedule (Consequential amendments)—

At page 50, line 3, 'Legal Aid Queensland Act 1977'—

Omit, Insert—

'Legal Aid Queensland Act 1997'.

Electrical Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2009

Amendment made to Bill

Long title—

'particular'—

Omit, Insert—

'particular'.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**Pacific Islands Tsunami and Indonesian Earthquake, Motion to Take Note**

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.35 am): At 3.48 am Australian Eastern Standard Time last Wednesday, an 8.3 magnitude earthquake shook the Pacific Ocean nation of Samoa. It triggered a devastating tsunami which battered the coastlines of the islands of Samoa, American Samoa and Tonga.

As we have seen on our television screens and in newspapers around the world, the impact on these island nations has been catastrophic. More than 170 people have been killed, including four Australians. Thousands more were injured and many have been left homeless, their businesses destroyed and their possessions ruined and lost.

But just as the world was coming to understand the devastation that had occurred in Samoa, a major earthquake hit the Indonesian island of Sumatra on Wednesday night. The 7.6 magnitude earthquake hit the main city of Padang and was followed by a second major earthquake in Jambi province the following day.

The destructive quakes turned much of the area into rubble and the loss of life has been immense. Over 600 people have been confirmed dead, with thousands more injured and many hundreds still missing. Millions of people have also been affected by typhoons which first hit the Philippines, then other parts of South-East Asia, in the past week. The resulting floods have forced hundreds of thousands of people into evacuation centres.

Mr Speaker, I know that I speak for all members and all Queenslanders in sending our thoughts and prayers to the people of South-East Asia and the South Pacific islands affected by these disasters. There is no doubt that it will take many years for the people of these nations to recover.

Queenslanders can be very proud of our state's rapid response to provide assistance as part of a united and coordinated effort led by the Australian government. Within 24 hours of the tsunami hitting Samoa, our first rapid medical assessment team of doctors, nurses, paramedics and other health professionals had departed for the island nation, along with a team of search and rescue personnel. Two days later a further team of another 36 expert search and rescue officers flew into Sumatra to assist in the international effort, searching for survivors amongst the rubble.

For the past week, these Queensland men and women have been working tirelessly to help our island neighbours in this time of incredible suffering—treating the injured, consoling those who have lost loved ones, helping to search for survivors and supporting the recovery effort. Over the coming days they will begin their journey home. The Indonesian government has advised that rescue operations have now ceased in Sumatra and therefore our search and rescue officers are no longer required and will return home this week. Search and rescue officers will remain in Samoa for the rest of this week, providing ongoing support to the strife-torn community. Yesterday the medical team, including three paramedics who had been working with teams in Samoa, returned to Queensland, while all others deployed are expected home by the weekend.

The contribution of these men and women has been remarkable—many having had just a few hours to prepare before being deployed. We are fortunate to have people with these skills and this commitment available at short notice to lend a hand. These Queenslanders have been part of a great humanitarian effort. On behalf of the people of Queensland and our Pacific island and South-East Asian friends and neighbours, I say a very sincere thank you to each and every one of them.

I would also like to say thank you to all of the Queenslanders who have made contributions to the Premier's Disaster Relief Appeal, which we activated last Thursday. More than \$10,000 has been donated so far, and I know many others have been donating directly to the Red Cross. Queenslanders have always been ready to lend a hand to our neighbours in times of tragedy, and I am pleased that my government was able to kick-start the appeal with a \$500,000 donation.

It is not just those people living in the disaster areas who have been affected by these tragic events. Queensland is a multicultural state, home to large communities of people with Samoan, Tongan, Indonesian, Filipino and South-East Asian backgrounds. These Queenslanders have lost friends and families. They are mourning the loss of loved ones and families who have been devastated by losing their homes.

I, along with a number of local members, met with representatives from these communities last Thursday to discuss the kind of support they need as they struggle with their own loss and grief. As a result of that meeting, we have now worked with nine neighbourhood community support centres in areas with large South Pacific and South-East Asian communities to provide specific information and referrals to Queenslanders concerned about their family and friends caught up in these disasters.

When tragedy strikes, it brings people and communities together. I have no doubt that we will see great resolve from our friends and neighbours in our region to rebuild their villages, to rebuild their communities and to rebuild their lives. I am sure I speak for all Queenslanders when I say that we will be here to help however we can whenever it is needed. I move—

That the House take note of the statement.

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.40 am): It is my pleasure to rise to speak in support of the motion moved by the Premier about these terrible tragedies in Tonga, Samoa, Indonesia and the Philippines and the typhoon in Vietnam that have affected hundreds of people, and thousands of people in terms of death in Indonesia. We do not usually deal much with foreign affairs in this parliament. We usually speak about the affairs of the great state of Queensland, but I think it shows just how the world has become a village. In this modern age of communications, we have become very aware of issues that occur in other places that in olden times we would not have heard about for some days or weeks after.

The confluence of events last week was a great tragedy. The opposition and the whole parliament want to pass on our condolences and support to those Australians who had family members who were affected and also to the people in those countries who were badly affected, as we have seen so graphically on the news. Over the last couple of generations, as migration has increased and as the relationships that many of us have with the Asia-Pacific region have matured, we have seen many more people from those communities come to our country.

I was privileged to be part of a Pacific parliamentary dialogue a couple of years ago with the former member for Redlands where we met with members from Samoa and Tonga and heard about the issues affecting their countries. I think it is very important that we acknowledge that we do not want to work with other jurisdictions on just parliamentary procedure but also on social issues and humanitarian issues that have affected these communities. Acknowledging that our world is a village, we should work with them in times of trouble. That is why it was so great, as the Premier has said, to see on the news the emergency services officers, the doctors, the nurses, the paramedics, firefighters and members of the Defence Force rallying into the Hercules to get these supplies there. Contributions from our country

and our state really should be acknowledged. I want to express my pride and the pride of all of us in our search and rescue service, which provided 36 people to Indonesia and 10 to Samoa and some paramedics who are in Samoa. Again, we saw a very graphic illustration on the news when one of the paramedics said that none of the training could prepare her for what she found on those idyllic beaches of Samoa and the tragedy that has affected many of those families.

I echo the words of the Premier in encouraging Queenslanders to donate to the relief fund. I commend the Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs for the relief centres that the Premier mentioned to help those in our Samoan, Indonesian, Filipino, Vietnamese and Tongan communities. We all know when we are in those countries how difficult communications can be. Trying to find out what is happening over there would be very difficult, especially for Australian families who have relatives over there.

I think it is very important we acknowledge we are a country that has so much. There are those who would criticise relief funds being applied. I think it is very important in these times that we acknowledge we have so much and we should generously help those who have so little and need our support at times like this.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Kurilpa Bridge; Brisbane Festival

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.44 am): On Sunday the public were given the chance to walk on the new Kurilpa pedestrian bridge linking the cultural precinct with the Brisbane CBD for the first time. An estimated 20,000 people turned out for the opening. This is a stunning structure which was finished on time and on budget. Thanks go to the more than 1,000 people who were employed on the project. The design and construction contractors Baulderstone Pty Ltd built the bridge. It was managed and delivered by the Department of Public Works and led with great leadership by the Minister for Public Works, who I know has been a great fan of this bridge since day one.

Local design consultants Cox Rayner Architects and Arup Engineers formed part of the company's design team and worked closely to finalise the design with our Department of Public Works project team. Hats off to the designers and the workers who brought this bridge to fruition. It is an iconic Queensland structure. This beautiful piece of infrastructure is an example of the lasting legacy that our building program is delivering for the people of Queensland. This is a great addition to our capital city. Whether you live in Brisbane or not, it is something that you will visit when you come to our capital from all parts of the state. I hope it is one of the must-dos for the schoolchildren who come here for a visit to parliament. I think it will be a bridge that people who come from other parts of Australia and from other parts of the world will be keen to say they have walked on. We anticipate that we will see more than 36,000 people every week using this bridge. Many of them will be people commuting to work. Opening up this link will allow them to walk to work when it might not have otherwise been possible.

Its design is a world first. It is an exciting new landmark for our state as we celebrate our 150th anniversary. The bridge is the world's largest tensegrity pedestrian and cycle bridge which balances tension and compression components to produce a light but incredibly strong structure. It is named after the Indigenous name for that peninsula. In the local area it is known as Kurilpa, which means place of the water rat. It was a rich source of food in and around that water area. It is another link that will unify the city. As the local member for South Brisbane, I was pleased to be joined by the local member for Brisbane Central, Grace Grace, because it is another opportunity for our constituents to cross the river on a much easier basis.

Already it has people talking about what it looks like. Whether you love it or hate it, it is a design that people are talking about. Some say it reminds them of a fishing trawler at sea. Others say it reminds them of knitting needles. I have heard people say that it reminds them of the plastic ties that stick out the top of many bike helmets during magpie season, which is a quintessentially Brisbane thing. I am sure in time people around the world will also be talking about it as they start to see it featured in architectural and engineering magazines.

The bridge also changes colour. We expect that on State of Origin night we will see it looking very red, pink on Breast Cancer Awareness Day and green on St Patrick's Day. It will also be a feature every year now in the annual Riverfire Festival. On a more serious note, it is a bridge that will promote healthy lifestyles by encouraging pedestrian and cycling traffic by completing a pedestrian and cycle loop between the city and South Bank via the Goodwill Bridge. I am pleased to say that my running group was out on it this morning, and there were many other people out and about, all keen to have their first chance to run, ride or walk across this great bridge.

Ms Spence: I rode over it this morning.

Ms BLIGH: The Leader of the House tells me she rode over it this morning. It is a great addition to that cycle loop.

It is also an environmentally friendly bridge, with 75 per cent of the power required to run the LED lighting in the fully-lit mode provided by solar energy. In most lighting configurations 100 per cent of the power will be provided by solar, with any surplus power being returned to the grid. This amounts to a saving of some 37.8 tonnes of carbon emissions every year. No other bridge in the world supplements its power to such a degree. It is a great outcome for our capital city. Again, I congratulate all involved with it and particularly the oversight by the minister and the Department of Public Works.

While I am on my feet, in relation to the Brisbane Festival I thank those people from the Cherbourg Walkers who triumphantly marched into Boundary Street, West End on Saturday night as the final event of this year's Brisbane Festival. Matt Malone was among a dozen or so who walked the 300 kilometres from Cherbourg to Brisbane. Along the way they gathered soil and ashes from each of their camp sites. These have been stored in a log that Matt has asked me to present to this parliament. I will make arrangements to do that with you more formally, Mr Speaker, at an appropriate time.

Their arrival was a fitting end to the 2009 Brisbane Festival. Their arrival was symbolic of some of the barriers we have broken down in past decades. Sadly, Boundary Street, West End, like boundary streets in other parts of the CBD, was named for a real and shameful purpose. It, along with the other boundary streets, denote a deliberate demarcation and exclusion zone by name and by action. In the 19th century these were the boundaries of the line on the map of Brisbane that excluded Aboriginal people from entering the city after dark. Thankfully this is no longer the case. The reception on Saturday and the warm singing of the great Kev Carmody and didgeridoo playing by David Williams added to the festival atmosphere.

I pay tribute to the talent and commitment of this year's festival director, Lyndon Terracini. 2009 was Lyndon's last Brisbane Festival. Many will know of his work with the Queensland Music Festival and now the Brisbane Festival. This is his last Brisbane Festival before heading off to take up his new position with Opera Australia. I, along with others, wish him well in his new role. It will be a very fine thing if he can bring a more regional perspective to the national opera company because it is my view that Queensland does not see enough of some of the major national companies. I expect to see more of Opera Australia with Lyndon Terracini at its helm.

Parliamentary Secretary for Healthy Living

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.50 am): Late last month my government presented its response to the Smart State Council's report, *Queenslanders tackling chronic disease: becoming Australia's healthiest state*. In our response we accepted the majority of the recommendations. In the instances where we did not accept a recommendation, we posed an alternative that was more practical. One of the alternatives that cabinet approved in response to the Smart State Council's suggestion that we appoint a new minister for healthy living is that I will move to appoint, through the Governor in Council process, a parliamentary secretary to the Minister for Health as the designated Parliamentary Secretary for Healthy Living. I am very pleased to announce that the member for Everton will take on this role.

I think it is important to provide a dedicated focus on this. This is one of the biggest challenges facing every health system in every first-world developed country—the need to stem the tide of chronic disease with better and healthier lifestyles. I know that the member for Everton has accepted the personal challenge to not only improve his own lifestyle but also take up the cause across government to see what we can do to respond better. I look forward to the outcomes of the parliamentary committee that is looking at this issue.

Drought, Declared Areas

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.53 am): While the combined levels of our major South-East Queensland dams are at a welcome 75 per cent, I think we should all spare a thought for the residents of the 16 shires, which cover more than 35 per cent of Queensland, that are still battling drought. The 60 million hectares of southern and south-western Queensland remaining in drought represent an area nine times the size of Tasmania. Areas such as Jondaryan, Cambooya and Clifton that have been drought declared since October 2000—almost a decade of drought declaration—eagerly await improved seasonal conditions.

This time last year there were 29 shires drought declared covering 54 per cent of the state. While this reflects some relief for parts of Queensland, with the Southern Oscillation Index remaining in a consistently near zero phase the probability of exceeding median rainfall during the September to November period is below 60 per cent for most of Queensland.

I think everybody in this House shares my hope that some gentle soaking rains are headed the way of those Queenslanders battling these droughts. However, the reality is that the latest index indicates that the chance of exceeding median summer rainfall over much of the state is only slightly higher than normal.

In South-East Queensland it is not just our primary producers who are looking for a break in the weather. One of our largest regional centres, Toowoomba, just 100 kilometres to the west of Brisbane, presently has dam levels—

Opposition members interjected.

Ms BLIGH: I do not think that drought is a laughing matter.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms BLIGH: It may have escaped those opposite, but the drought in South-East Queensland is over. It is not over in 35 per cent of the state. Just 100 kilometres to the west of Brisbane, Toowoomba presently has dam levels at just nine per cent. Thankfully, with the city's bore field holding up well and an additional emergency supply available, the city's supplies look certain leading up to the completion of the Wivenhoe-Cressbrook pipeline. This honours our commitment to the people of Toowoomba. We expect it to be complete some time during November. I know that it has the full support of the member for Toowoomba North, and I thank him for it.

I take this opportunity to encourage all eligible primary producers and businesses to contact QRAA for information about grants of up to \$15,000 that are available to assist those people who are still struggling with the clean-up and restoration after cyclones Charlotte and Ellie. For those producers in the Carpentaria and Croydon shires who have been exceptionally hard-hit by the flooding, I look forward to a positive response from the federal agriculture minister Tony Burke to Queensland's application for exceptional circumstances assistance. Queenslanders are as resilient as our landscape but I look forward to a wet, but hopefully not too wet, summer to provide a little relief to those who are still affected by our contrasting seasons.

Vegetation Management

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.56 am): My government has a strong and proven commitment to protecting Queensland's precious environment. We are particularly committed to managing the state's vegetation and we are committed to protecting key areas—

Mr Seeney interjected.

Ms BLIGH: We are particularly committed to managing the state's vegetation and we are committed to protecting key areas of our state from broadscale clearing and today—

Mr Cripps: Committed to winning the next election!

Ms BLIGH: They hate trees. Every time I want to talk about trees—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr Robertson: If it moves, shoot it; if it doesn't, cut it down.

Ms BLIGH: That is right.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. I call the honourable Premier.

Ms BLIGH: This issue is, I think, of great state significance and I would encourage those opposite, many of whom represent constituents who will be affected by it, to listen.

We are particularly committed to managing the state's vegetation and to protecting key areas of our state from broadscale clearing. Today we take that commitment a significant step forward with our vegetation management plan that will affect millions of hectares of land Queensland-wide. To this end, later today the government will introduce the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This legislation will set in place long-term arrangements for regrowth management to replace the current moratorium which expires tomorrow. The moratorium allows the government to consult with stakeholders without the risk of panic clearing. This bill takes on board the results of that consultation.

The bill delivers on my 2009 election commitment to bolster Queensland's management of regrowth vegetation and it will protect Queensland's high-value regrowth vegetation from broadscale clearing, including significant areas of vegetation within 50 metres of watercourses in priority reef catchments. This is a major win for Queensland's unique biodiversity and yet another in our record—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Ms BLIGH: If you need any evidence that the Nationals are running the show, listen to the interjections. They love this kind of stuff out in Indooroopilly, Mr Speaker. This is a major win for Queensland's unique biodiversity and yet another in our record of contribution to the reduction of

greenhouse gas emissions. We unashamedly set out to make Queensland a greener place. Today we deliver on that. Most importantly, we have heeded the strong advice given to us by rural industry groups that a flexible approach is needed if we are to achieve these outcomes while at the same time maintain production of food and fibre.

Rather than a blanket ban, the new arrangements will set minimum mandatory standards for anyone wishing to clear regrowth in certain circumstances. These will apply to over 2.6 million hectares of the state and, provided the standards are met, clearing will be allowed without the need for a development approval or permit. It is expected that over one million hectares of the highest value regrowth vegetation will be protected under these mandatory standards. This will include regrowth which is endangered in wetlands, riparian areas, habitat for threatened species and native vegetation within 50 metres of watercourses in priority reef catchments. To augment this, my government will be working with industry groups on a \$2 million co-delivery program which will improve land management practices applying on grazing lands. This will encourage greater uptake of best management practice standards so that landholders move beyond their minimum regulatory obligations in the management of regrowth vegetation, as many of them do now.

To provide further encouragement and support for landholders, my government has also been encouraging the Commonwealth to recognise as far as practicable carbon stored in regrowth in its Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. Where this is not possible an alternative incentive mechanism is required, and we will be continuing to make recommendations to that effect. These proposals represent a significant step forward for the protection of Queensland's environment. The Minister for Natural Resources will outline further details to the House this morning and I would encourage those opposite to have a good look at this legislation. I think it is one that finds the balance.

Health Infrastructure

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for Health) (10.00 am): The Bligh government is a united team, and we deliver. Our record \$6 billion health infrastructure program is the largest ever. All those on that side of the House ever do is deliver rebuffs to Peter Dutton. As I said, our \$6 billion health infrastructure program is the largest ever embarked upon in the nation. It will deliver more than 6,000 full-time jobs this year alone. That is a 34 per cent increase on 2008-09 in the number of full-time jobs through our capital program in health. We are also delivering on our promise for more doctors and nurses. In just 12 months, we have employed more than 560 additional doctors and more than 2,350 additional nurses.

We are delivering on our commitment to expand emergency departments across the state, and we took to the last election a \$144.5 million commitment to expand and upgrade EDs in Brisbane, Logan, Redlands, Ipswich, Caboolture, Bundaberg and Toowoomba, and work is already underway. The ED upgrades at Ipswich, Logan, Caboolture and Redlands hospitals will include new dedicated children's waiting areas, new paediatric emergency department bays, short-stay observation beds and new consulting rooms. Children in northern Brisbane will have a new dedicated paediatric ED at the Prince Charles Hospital completed by 2012, including short-stay paediatric ward beds and specialist outpatient clinics.

The Bligh government is delivering on its commitment to open 89 additional rehabilitation beds at Townsville, Rockhampton and Sandgate. Construction is underway at Eventide Sandgate to deliver an additional 44 rehabilitation beds that are set to open early next year. Capital funds have been committed and planning is well underway to deliver an additional 30 rehabilitation beds at Parklands in Townsville, and last month I toured the new 15-bed rehabilitation unit in Rockhampton that will also provide outreach services to the Yeppoon and Mount Morgan communities. It is an absolutely wonderful facility, and the Minister for Public Works was with me.

The Bligh government is literally building a better health system for Queenslanders, but health care is more than just about bricks and mortar. As Australians we have always held steadfast to the national belief in a fair go for all and the tenet of a universal healthcare system. However, this does not come without its challenges, and one of them is the size of the decentralised population of our state. That is why we have worked hard to develop integrated clinical networks across Queensland so our clinicians are not working in isolation. We have developed Telehealth where via video link a clinician, for example, at Cloncurry can access real-time bedside advice from experts in major centres and X-rays can be sent electronically to major centres to be read.

One of the Bligh government's core priorities is to provide more Queenslanders with greater access to health care closer to home. That is why at the last election the Bligh government committed \$15 million in NGO grants to build or enhance accommodation for patients travelling to receive treatment for cancer, heart disease and other illnesses in Rockhampton, Townsville, Cairns and Mount Isa. We have delivered on that promise. Already we have granted \$1 million of this funding to the Central Queensland cancer support and education centre in Rockhampton built by the Cancer Council of Queensland which opened on 7 September. Even though it is built in Rockhampton, it is frankly more

about people in areas surrounding Rockhampton than indeed Rockhampton itself. It is about people from the member for Callide's electorate going there and being able to be treated. That of course also helps critical mass for treatments in the Rockhampton Hospital that everyone gains from.

The Bligh government recognises how important it is for mums to be able to access more care closer to home and to access parenting support for new parents. In fact, the member for Beaudesert has asked me about that before. That is why we committed more than \$42 billion over three years to strengthen reforms already underway for new-born and maternal health under our \$10 billion Health Action Plan. Local consultations have commenced in Dalby, Chinchilla, Charters Towers and Ipswich with GPs, local doctors and midwives. Project officers have been recruited for Proserpine, Gladstone, Longreach and Logan and in Caboolture a clinic is in the process of being established for GP/midwifery antenatal shared care.

Moreover, regional parents will have greater support through the establishment of the nine new-born and family drop-in clinics that provide specialist advice to new parents on a range of topics such as breastfeeding, nutrition, child development and other support. It just about makes you want to go out and have some more kids! Clinics have already opened in Kingaroy, Mount Isa, Emerald, Harvey Bay and Deception Bay and planning is well underway in Bundaberg, Proserpine, Longreach and Caboolture, with services set to open by the end of the year. The Bligh government is united in its commitment to a stronger Queensland for the long term, and we are delivering.

GST Funding

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Employment and Economic Development) (10.05 am): The current debate between states is centred on the independent Commonwealth Grants Commission's five-yearly review of the GST allocation rules. These are the rules that set out how the pool is divided for the next five years. The debate needs some facts. It has had stunts, so-called crisis meetings, name-calling and newspaper advertisements, but it remains short on facts.

For the benefit of members both here and elsewhere, here are some of the facts. Fact No. 1: since the last review in 2004, New South Wales's comparative share is now \$701 million higher per year—\$701 million higher per year. Fact No. 2: Victoria's comparative share has increased by \$708 million per year. Fact Nos 3 and 4: in contrast, Western Australia and Queensland have had their comparative share decrease by \$845 million and \$714 million. Fact No. 5: this is a direct result of the stronger performance of the WA and Queensland economies over the last five years. We have been driving national growth while New South Wales and Victoria have lagged behind, and I table a graph to that effect.

Tabled paper: Queensland Treasury Corporation graph titled 'Share of national output by state' [998].

The inescapable fact for both New South Wales and Victoria—fact No. 6—is that over the decade the share of national output by Queensland and Western Australia has increased while for New South Wales and Victoria it has decreased. The rules of the GST balance up the revenue-raising capacity and expenditure needs of the states and redistribute funds in order of need to the smaller states in particular. So fact No. 7: the best fact for New South Wales and Victoria is that Queensland is a donor state. We contribute to the national pool, not the other way around. Here is a further fact, fact No. 8: we have been for a while now. Why? Because of our success in growing our economy over the last generation.

So here is fact No. 9: New South Wales used to be a donor state. So parlous has its recent performance been that our largest economy needed to be subsidised, along with the minnow states of South Australia, Tasmania and Northern Territory, with a one-off grant of \$118 million during the last financial year. The campaign to defend the status quo by New South Wales and Victoria should be seen for what it is. Why are they campaigning so hard? That is because of fact No. 10, because in fact they are the beneficiaries of the current arrangements. All revenues are assessed before redistribution under the GST rules. That has always been the case. Under the mining assessment conducted by the independent Commonwealth Grants Commission, the allocations are adjusted to reflect access to royalties. The fact is that New South Wales received an additional \$712 million last financial year in its GST because of our strength in mining. Victoria received \$957 million—just under a billion dollars—in addition on this assessment. Western Australia and Queensland have had their assessments deducted by \$1.3 billion and \$547 million respectively because of our strength.

The governments of New South Wales and Victoria should be honest with their parliaments about these facts. The independent Grants Commission is now proposing a fairer methodology that particularly recognises the true cost of providing infrastructure in growing states. The fact is our infrastructure investment has supported the nation's growth. We have invested 80 per cent more per person in general government infrastructure over the last decade. Let us take roads for example. Our roads budget of \$3.5 billion equates to about \$812 of expenditure per person. New South Wales spent just \$362 per person while in Victoria that number is \$185 per person. Rail and port capacity in Queensland has doubled over the last 10 years. We have employed 2,100 doctors, 7,200 extra nurses, 6,300 teachers and there are now 10,000 police in our state. Our population growth has averaged

2.4 per cent over the last five years, massively ahead of the nation's growth. The new methodology proposed by the independent Grants Commission seeks to recognise these facts. I have said from day one that it is a common-sense proposition that states that need to build infrastructure to cater for growing populations and growing economies should be assisted in paying for that infrastructure. It is good for the nation.

Forget about the stunts; this debate needs the facts. The fact is that the proposed change is fair. It stops the unfair allocation that benefits New South Wales and Victoria and that is why they oppose it. The proposed change is not only good for Queensland; it is good for the nation, and I support it. The independent Grants Commission has been thorough in its work, diligent in its consultation, and this process should be supported.

QBuild, Asbestos in Schools

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Information and Communication Technology) (10.09 am): QBuild, in conjunction with Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, is conducting a comprehensive review to ensure that everyone involved in the management, control and treatment of asbestos understands their roles and responsibilities. This is of particular significance in relation to schools. The Department of Public Works and the Department of Education and Training are working together on the operational roles, responsibilities and protocols to manage asbestos in schools.

Asbestos condition assessments must be completed every three years. QBuild and the Department of Education and Training have an agreement where QBuild inspects every state school in Queensland annually. The Built Environment Materials Information Register—the BEMIR—is updated following these inspections to reflect any changes in the condition of asbestos-containing materials. As requested by the Department of Education and Training, QBuild is currently undertaking an assessment of all asbestos vinyl floors in schools. The Department of Education and Training is progressively replacing these floors in schools under its asbestos flooring replacement program. This program, allocated \$6 million in 2009-10, is being delivered by QBuild.

When incidents concerning asbestos-containing materials are reported to QBuild by schools, immediate action is taken to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students and staff. All asbestos related work is to be conducted outside school hours. Before any maintenance or construction work is undertaken in schools, the Department of Education and Training issues a work area access permit to the contractor engaged to perform the work.

The principal also provides a copy of the school's BEMIR before work commences to ensure that contractors are always aware of any asbestos present.

Dr Flegg: We can't hear you.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I am sorry, I have a voice complaint. I am doing my best.

Mr McArdle: Have a glass of water.

Mr SCHWARTEN: It is not actually a glass of water that I need. I have a throat complaint. Wake up to yourself.

Mr Hopper: That's not like you, Robbie, to be nasty.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I am doing my best to speak. The BEMIR must be updated if any work changes the condition and/or presence of asbestos-containing material at any location. This ensures that the BEMIR remains up to date.

It is critical that we provide a safe environment for children, employees, their clients and the community in general. It is a fact of life that all the regulations and rules are only as good as those who apply them at the coalface. I reiterate my message to all QBuild workers and the private contractors involved in asbestos handling that they are dealing with a deadly substance and that they are laying their own lives and those of others on the line if they do not follow these procedures to the letter of the law.

Finally, I want to say to those opposite that until they are prepared to doorknock their own electorates and tell every one of their constituents who have fibro in their houses that they are endangering their kids' lives, no-one will believe that they are fair dinkum. They are merely playing base politics on this issue.

Vegetation Management

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Minister for Trade) (10.13 am): This government is united and has clear plans that deal with the environmental challenges that are before us. We know we must take action to protect the Great Barrier Reef and other important ecosystems throughout Queensland. That is why later today I will introduce the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2009, which will introduce new arrangements protecting regrowth vegetation from 8 October this year.

Mr Seeney: To pay off the grubby political deal.

Mr ROBERTSON: The new arrangements strike the right balance between protecting vital regrowth and its high biodiversity values.

Mr Seeney: Protecting marginal Labor seats.

Mr ROBERTSON: And allowing landholders to continue to manage their property responsibly.

Mr Seeney: A base political deal.

Mr ROBERTSON: The National Party boys are back in town. This bill will deliver on this government's election commitment to consult on and deliver new protection measures for regrowth vegetation. The new measures will apply to areas of mature regrowth not cleared since 31 December 1989 and to native regrowth vegetation within 50 metres of watercourses in the priority reef catchments of the Burdekin, Mackay-Whitsundays and the Wet Tropics.

Category X areas on property maps of assessable vegetation will remain unaffected by the new laws, providing certainty for landholders. Landholders will not need to get a permit to clear regrowth. They only need to notify the department of their intention to clear and follow the new code. This approach recognises that the majority of farmers are doing the right thing with regard to regrowth and are able to adhere to the necessary requirements themselves without the imposition by government of an application and approval process.

Most routine clearing is still exempt under the new arrangements. This includes important fire management exemptions, such as clearing for firebreaks. Landholders who do not comply with the code may be subject to a range of compliance measures, ranging from a warning letter to restoration of unlawfully cleared vegetation to prosecution. We have listened to stakeholder concerns in developing this legislation. If any farm business is made nonviable by the new regrowth code, special provisions may apply that allow for clearing of otherwise protected regrowth vegetation. The state government has committed \$2 million for partnerships with industry to assist landholders to understand the new arrangements and encourage best management practice.

Mr Seeney: Pay-off.

Mr ROBERTSON: I will be interested to see how the former Liberal members vote on this legislation.

Mr Seeney: They won't support a base political deal.

Mr ROBERTSON: Listen to the old guard of the National Party. This will play out really well in Indooroopilly, won't it. It will play out really well in Clayfield. It will play out really well in all the Liberal member seats in the south-east corner. I invite Mr Seeney to go on the campaign trail because, unlike the LNP, this government is united in confronting environmental issues in a balanced manner that protects our environment—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr ROBERTSON: Mr Speaker, as I was saying, unlike the LNP, this government is united in confronting environmental issues in a balanced manner that protects our environment while still encouraging economic development and supporting landholders. In days gone by, this government could have relied on the Liberal Party to support such measures. We could have relied on the support of the Liberal Party to reduce tree clearing in this state, just as it did in 2006. From the comments we have heard today, it is clear that, like the branches in the electorate of McPherson, the Nationals are back in control.

Pacific Islands Tsunami and Indonesian Earthquake

Hon. NS ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services) (10.17 am): I join with the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in extending my condolences to the families and friends of those who lost their lives during the recent tragedies in Sumatra and the South Pacific islands of Samoa and Tonga. The Queensland based contingent of the specialist urban search and rescue team deployed to Indonesia in the wake of the devastating earthquakes will make their way home over the next 48 to 72 hours. The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service is now negotiating with the Australian Defence Force and Emergency Management Australia for the return of our people. The team of 36 Queensland urban search and rescue personnel provided invaluable support to the stricken communities of Sumatra. With their expertise, they have been able to assist the people of Sumatra with the very difficult task of locating victims of the earthquake who may have been trapped in the rubble.

The Indonesian government has advised us that it is now entering the recovery phase and that search and rescue operations will now be scaled down. Queensland's urban search and rescue teams and paramedic crews have provided invaluable help and support in both Samoa and Sumatra. They were the first urban search and rescue team in Australia to be accredited by the United Nations for international deployment. They have been magnificent in their response in Sumatra and Samoa, being

deployed into these countries with just a few hours notice. Team members have made a real difference to devastated locals in these areas, treating the injured, consoling those who have lost loved ones, helping search for survivors and supporting the recovery effort.

The Sumatra based USAR teams arrived in Padang on 2 October and, as I have indicated, will be returning within the next day or two. A crew of 10 urban search and rescue personnel remains in Samoa following the devastating tsunami which hit the country on 30 September. The crew will continue to play an intrinsic role in supporting the people of Samoa until the end of this week.

An engineer who had been working with the teams in Samoa returned to Brisbane last night and three paramedics who were part of the emergency medical and USAR team returned to Brisbane yesterday. The urban search and rescue personnel in Samoa are expected to leave Apia later this week. The Queensland Emergency Services personnel who travelled to Sumatra and Samoa were excellent ambassadors for our state and our nation on the world stage. They deserve our thanks and recognition.

Roads Implementation Program

Hon. CA WALLACE (Thuringowa—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads) (10.20 am): I am pleased to advise the House that last month I released the 2009-10 to 2013-14 roads implementation program in Townsville. Queensland is the only state in Australia to publish a rolling five-year roads implementation program. The strength of the RIP is that it provides certainty to our people, our partners and our roadworks providers as well as improved efficiency in the delivery of roadworks.

Over the five years of this program \$18 billion will be spent on Queensland's roads. This represents an increase of \$1.8 billion or 11 per cent over last year's five-year program of \$16.2 billion. In the current economic climate, infrastructure projects play an important role in Queensland's economic recovery. This program will provide sustainable employment in these tough economic times for an average 30,000 Queenslanders every year in roads and supporting industries over the life of the program.

In this roads implementation program, \$300 million is provided over five years under the Safer Roads Sooner program, more funds than in any other previous roads implementation program. In addition to our capital program, about \$2.86 billion will also be provided towards maintenance, preservation and operation of our road network, ensuring improved road user safety and employment, especially in Queensland's regional and remote areas. The Bligh government is united in its determination to deliver the infrastructure that Queenslanders need.

To put it in perspective, we are outstripping our interstate counterparts in investing in roads to meet our continued growth, spending more per capita this year than the governments of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia combined. This year we are working on projects that will deliver 630 kilometres of new and upgraded roads—greater than the distance between here and Rockhampton. We are also resealing and resurfacing 4,500 kilometres of road lanes across the state. That is the equivalent of resealing and resurfacing the road between here and Adelaide. Safer and less congested roads will get Queenslanders home to their families safely and sooner.

ABSENCE OF MINISTER

Hon. JC SPENCE (Sunnybank—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.22 am): I wish to advise the House that the Minister for Local Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships will be absent from parliament on Thursday this week. Minister Boyle will be travelling to attend the Local Government and Planning Ministers' Council in Darwin, Northern Territory.

EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

EDUCATION AND TRAINING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Cognate Debate

Hon. JC SPENCE (Sunnybank—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.22 am), by leave: I move—

That, in accordance with standing order 129, the Education Legislation Amendment Bill and the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill be treated as cognate bills for their remaining stages, as follows:

- (a) one question being put in regard to the second readings;
- (b) the consideration of the bills in detail together; and
- (c) one question being put for the third readings and long titles.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Judicial Appointments by Former Attorney-General

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (10.23 am): I am a parliamentary democrat. As I have said before in this chamber, I believe in the primacy of the parliament. I also believe in the prerogative power of the Attorney-General as first law officer to advise the executive council on judicial appointments, a power founded as it is on centuries of tradition, practice and, indeed, contained in the statute law of Queensland. This means that the Attorney-General is answerable to the people through the parliament for any appointments he or she might recommend. Those appointments must be able to withstand public scrutiny.

My only regret is that good and talented people have become the subject of unwarranted adverse media attention in the process. It is for these reasons that I feel compelled to respond to the series of articles that have appeared recently in the *Courier-Mail*, under authorship of Patrick Lion, impugning a number of appointments I made as Attorney-General.

The appointment of Damian Carroll as a magistrate in 2007 was welcomed wholeheartedly by the profession. Mr Fleming QC, on behalf of the Bar Association, described him as a practitioner who brings an extraordinary depth of experience, knowledge and skill to the court. The Chief Magistrate commented on his career of service to the legal profession and the community and to his being the president of the Law Society, described him as a worthy appointment and referred to his long and distinguished career. There can be no argument that Damian Carroll was eminently qualified and suitable for appointment as a magistrate. Magistrate Carroll was admitted as a solicitor in 1972 and has spent 35 years working as a solicitor in Queensland, most of that time in the regional centres of Rockhampton and Toowoomba. His community and charity work are testament to his sense of compassion and understanding, both qualities that make him a very fine magistrate.

Ms Carmel MacDonald was a senior member of the Land Court before I became Attorney-General. When the then president retired there was only one member of the court senior to her and he was due to retire in less than 12 months and has, in fact, since retired. Ms MacDonald had at the time served for seven years on the court. The only other member qualified to be appointed as president had less than 12 months experience on the court. Under the circumstances, Ms MacDonald was the best qualified and the most experienced person for the appointment. In terms of the extent of our relationship, I cannot recall ever having met her prior to becoming Attorney-General. At that time I was unaware that she was on the court or that she was the sister of my friend, Xavier Kelly. By the way, the appointment of President of the Land Court was a cabinet appointment not mine, but I certainly and without hesitation recommended her.

In recommending the judicial appointments made during the period I held the high office of Attorney-General, I consulted with the relevant head of jurisdiction and the legal profession, as well as the Premier of the day. Such consultation was recommended by Mr Fitzgerald in his report. During my time in office, in the matter of judicial appointments I at all times complied with tradition and, indeed, the practice of centuries. I at all times complied with the law of Queensland as set out in the Attorney-General Act 1999. I at all times complied with Mr Fitzgerald's recommendations to the letter.

I have a deep respect for the law and for the institutions of the law. The suggestion that I made appointments on any basis other than the merit of the appointees is one to which I take umbrage. The fact that I know someone or know their brother is not a consideration in making appointments. However, nor should it be a disqualifying factor. If I were to have excluded from my consideration for judicial appointment all of the people I have come to know or call friends throughout over 40 years in the legal profession, as well as their family members, it would leave a very meagre pool depleted of some of the finest legal minds in Queensland. Surely that could not be in the best interests of administration of justice in Queensland.

I understand that last week Mr Lion demanded of the Department of Justice that it supply to him by 5 pm last Friday a list of my appointments. This information, of course, is already in the public domain. All journalists, other than those exhibiting a distinct lack of energy, would have looked it up rather than put the taxpayer to the expense of having public servants do their research.

I said at the outset that I regret that good and talented people have become the subject of unwarranted media attention. Can I say to Mr Lion and to Mr Fagan, editor of the *Courier-Mail*, if they believe that either Mr Carroll or Ms MacDonald are not meritorious appointments they should say so. If they believe that either or both of these people are unworthy to hold that position through lack of integrity, ability, poor performance or whatever reason, they should say so. In fairness, those appointed would then have an opportunity, if so desired, to test the matter in an appropriate forum.

SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Report

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (10.28 am): I table the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's *Legislation Alert No. 9 of 2009*.

Tabled paper: Scrutiny of Legislation Committee, Legislation Alert No. 9 for 2009 [999].

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Annual Report

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (10.28 am): I lay upon the table of the House the Social Development Committee's annual report 2008-09 and I commend the report to the House.

Tabled paper: Social Development Committee, Annual Report 2008-09 [1000].

Mr SPEAKER: Before we call question time, the schools that will be visiting parliament today are the Durack State School in the electorate of Inala, St Bernard State School in the electorate of Beaudesert and the All Souls St Gabriels School at Charters Towers in the electorate of Dalrymple. Also in the House today is Richard Dunn who is a nephew of the honourable Minister for Local Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships. Welcome to Parliament House.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Queensland Rail

Mr LANGBROEK (10.30 am): My question without notice is to the Minister for Transport. I refer to the 26-month advance salary known as retention bonuses to be paid to Queensland Rail executives as part of Labor's privatisation plans, and I ask: will the minister explain if similar special retention bonuses will be paid to Queensland Rail workers as well, many of whom live in Ipswich?

Ms NOLAN: I thank the honourable Leader of the Opposition for his question. As is very well known, this government has made it very clear that there will be particularly strong employment provisions for QR workers involved in this sale.

Mr Lucas: Arguably in excess of retention period rates.

Ms Bligh: A minimum two-year guarantee.

Ms NOLAN: Indeed. As soon as we made this announcement, we outlined publicly that those workers' jobs and entitlements would be protected for at least two years beyond the point of any sale. That is an entirely reasonable and, indeed, generous employment guarantee. It is far better, for instance, than most ordinary Queenslanders have. That is a guarantee that this government has given and that we made straight up upon the announcement of this sale.

In relation to retention payments, as the Treasurer has already said quite clearly on the public record, he is seeking advice on the matter but no decision has been made. Nonetheless, if the Leader of the Opposition's proposition is that there is not some kind of serious effort to protect jobs and entitlements of the QR workforce going forward in the context of this proposition, given that we made some very clear-cut announcements about employment guarantees immediately upon making this announcement, then that proposition is quite simply absurd.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before I call the Leader of the Opposition, we are having some technical problems with the clock. We will call it through manually. I will let ministers know when they have a minute left.

Mr Johnson: Do you want me to keep time, Mr Speaker?

Mr SPEAKER: I thank the honourable member for Gregory for his generosity.

Queensland Rail

Mr LANGBROEK: My second question without notice is also to the Minister for Transport. I refer the minister to the forced privatisation of divisions of Queensland Rail, and I ask: does the government propose any caps on the level of foreign ownership of the assets that have until now always been proudly owned by Queenslanders?

Ms NOLAN: If the Leader of the Opposition had been listening when the Premier announced the Renewing Queensland Plan to this parliament—we were all here—and the people of Queensland, he would recall that the Premier announced very clearly that it was proposed that the details of this sale

would be established through a commercial transactions team over a period of three to five years and that some of those detailed decisions would be resolved during the scoping process. Again, the nature of the ownership is quite properly a matter for that scoping process.

I note the Leader of the Opposition's description of this as 'forced privatisation'. There is no doubt that in this day and age the private sector is perfectly capable of providing freight services and bulk haulage services. For instance, coal haulage services take coal from privately owned coalmines to, in cases like Hay Point, privately owned ports for the benefit of the private sector. It is simply absurd for a Liberal to suggest that this must be, for some ideological reason, a socialist enterprise. Frankly, I find it bizarre that the former Liberal Leader of the Opposition is putting that proposition to the people of Queensland today. I can see no better evidence of the old National Party's takeover of the heart and soul of the former Liberal Party than that question which we have heard this morning.

Vegetation Management

Mr RYAN: My question without notice is to the Premier. Earlier it was announced that the government will later today introduce legislation in relation to vegetation management. Premier, is this in line with commitments that have been given to the people of Queensland?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question and for his very genuine interest in the preservation of Queensland's unique biodiversity. In answer to his question I can say an uncategorical yes, we have delivered on a commitment that we gave the people of Queensland during the election campaign. That election commitment will be delivered today with the introduction of legislation that will set in place long-term arrangements for regrowth management to replace the moratorium that we committed to during the election campaign. Before the election campaign we told people what the latest data said. That data showed a very worrying trend in the continued clearing of regrowth. We went to the election saying, 'We think something needs to be done about this and we will put a moratorium on the clearing of this regrowth so that we can spend some time getting it right.'

Today I take the opportunity to thank all of the groups that were part of the extensive consultation. I think it is fair to say that those people approached the proposition with an open mind and an intent to get it right. Agricultural lobby groups and industry groups sat down with ministers, people involved in environmental groups, local councils and people who wanted to get this right. Today I commend both the Minister for Natural Resources and the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability. This is not an easy area of government policy or legislation. We had to walk a fine line between maintaining the most endangered areas of regrowth without endangering Queensland's food and fibre productivity. Later today the Minister for Natural Resources will outline a scheme that finds that balance. Inevitably some people will say it does not go far enough. Others will say that we should never intervene in these sorts of primary production issues. However, the great bulk of opinion will acknowledge that this scheme will protect one million hectares of endangered regrowth in the most endangered places.

Mr Hobbs: What a load of rubbish!

Opposition members interjected.

Ms BLIGH: I note again the interjections from the National Party of Queensland. If members want any further evidence that the National Party has taken over the Liberal Party, listen to them on this issue. All one has to say is 'vegetation management' and off they go. They are off and racing. Queenslanders expect us to protect vegetation and we will do it. We promised it in an election campaign. We are delivering it. I know that the people on the other side of the House would never, ever, ever have what it takes. The Liberal Party that used to stand in their way on issues like this is gone forever.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I seek leave of the House to admit a stranger to carry out technical repairs to the clock. Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

Queensland Rail

Ms SIMPSON: My question is to the Minister for Transport. In the lead-up to the privatisation restructure of Queensland Rail, with Queensland Rail executives seeking retention bonuses, can the minister confirm that, in stark contrast, blue-collar workers are being forced to relocate or lose their jobs due to the pending closure of freight depots in Charters Towers, Hughenden, Richmond, Julia Creek and Cloncurry?

Ms NOLAN: The answer to the question is no. Queensland Rail employees have the most rolled gold employment conditions and entitlements, I think, of anyone.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Just resume your seat, Minister. I will wait for the House to come to order. The honourable the Minister for Transport.

Ms NOLAN: Over the course of the last year Queensland Rail, supported by government, has, as I have already advised the House, embarked upon an extremely successful process of freight reform on the north-west line between Townsville and Mount Isa. That process of reform has led to the removal, quite rightly, of some freight trains and some of that freight now travels by road. But there was sufficient empty capacity on the road which means that no extra trucks have gone on to the road—so no more trucks.

Customers have reported a much higher level of service than was previously the case. Customers now find that they get their freight delivered on time, more quickly and more efficiently than they previously did. There is now a process—and this is all on the public record—of closing or altering five freight distribution centres which employ 13 people. But those 13 people have QR's absolutely rolled gold employment guarantee—that is, they cannot be made forcibly redundant and they cannot be forced to relocate. Further, this reform has saved taxpayers around \$10 million a year.

So what have we got? We have a \$10 million saving, we have a better level of service and we have no-one being forced to relocate or to be made redundant, and the National Party opposes that change. This can only be described as an extremely successful reform that is massively in the public interest, but it is a change and so the National Party opposes it. That is exactly what we would expect from that side of politics. There will be no forced redundancy, no forced relocation, a public saving, a better service and the Nats oppose it.

(Time expired)

Summer Schools

Mrs ATTWOOD: My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier outline the success of last week's summer schools, which I understand took place in 70 locations throughout Queensland?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for her question and for what I know is her interest in good educational outcomes for our students. As school returns this week I am very pleased to be able to update the House on the success of the government's inaugural summer school initiative—again, another election commitment that we have delivered, and it was a key election commitment. Over the past week we have seen these schools during the school holidays helping students who are struggling with literacy and numeracy.

I am very pleased with the response to our first round of summer schools. I want to commend those parents who ensured that almost 4,000 young Queenslanders attended summer schools at some 413 schools state-wide. That is a tremendous first effort and we look forward to building on it. I congratulate all those students who took part. I have no doubt that some of them required a little convincing to turn up at school for some extra work in their school holidays, but that is time that they and their families are investing in their education and their ability to get the very best from it.

I congratulate the Minister for Education and his department. This is one part of our literacy and numeracy improvement program. It is helping those students who really do need a little bit of extra work and it does it in an environment that is also a bit of fun during the school holidays.

It is not only in summer schools that we are delivering on our election commitments. I am happy to advise the House that last week we saw Australia's very first heavy vehicle recovery units start on our network, busting congestion in the face of accidents. Two HVRUs are located at RoadTek Asset Services at Murarrie, and they will be available to get accidents cleared much quicker.

We also saw last week or I think the week before the Remuneration Tribunal award federal politicians a pay rise. I gave a commitment to the people of Queensland during the election campaign that no pay rise would flow to Queensland politicians this year, regardless of what happened in Canberra. As a result, there will not be any regulation to change our pay to reflect that until 1 January.

Also, on Friday we announced the state's eighth state development area to facilitate the gas superhighway to kick-start the LNG industry in Gladstone. So, on this side of the House, we have a government getting on with the job, hungry for reform, keen to make Queensland part of a modern world, prepared and with the stomach to tackle the tough issues. And haven't we heard this morning the voice of conservatism! Usually you have oppositions that are hungry for reform, oppositions that have ideas about what should change and what can be done better. But here, no matter how long we might have been on this side of the House, we are hungry for reform and we have the guts and the stamina for it, and they do not want anything to change. The world is changing and Queensland will change with it and it has leadership that is up to the task.

Bligh Labor Government

Mr SPRINGBORG: My question without notice is to the Premier. I table newspaper reports from 2008 when New South Wales unions accused Mike Kaiser of deliberate deception when just three weeks before polling day he promised on behalf of then Labor Premier Morris Iemma that nothing would be privatised. Would the Premier explain why her election tactics and those of Morris Iemma bear such striking similarities?

Tabled paper: Copy of article from The Daily Telegraph, dated 30 April 2008, titled 'Iemma told unions he would not privatise power sector' [1001].

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. It is another question that demonstrates how unfit and unready for government those on the other side are. Let us just remember the circumstances in which this year's election was held. I, along with the Treasurer, announced in the most open, honest and transparent way of any leader in this country the circumstances facing the Queensland budget in the face of the worst global financial crisis in three decades. I honestly told the people of Queensland that whoever won the election was going to face some very tough—very tough—budget issues. I made it absolutely clear in a number of statements that I at that stage was not in a position to rule anything in or anything out because our circumstances were so dire. So after the election what happened?

Opposition members interjected.

Mr Robertson: You made commitments that you could never fund. You lied as well.

Mr SPEAKER: Premier, resume your seat. Minister, that term is unparliamentary. I ask you to withdraw it.

Mr ROBERTSON: I withdraw.

Ms BLIGH: What happened after the election campaign? We saw a federal budget that resulted in further drops in Queensland revenue. Governments are faced with decisions. No matter what side of politics is in power at what level of government in Australia, what happens is that the world changes and you have to deal with it. As I outlined earlier today, this side of the parliament has the stomach and the hunger for reform and change. We have the ticker for it. It is not easy to make the hard decisions and I make no secret of the fact that, frankly, I wish this was not a decision Queensland had to take. If there were an easy way through this we would love to take it, but government is about hard decisions. That is what we are up for. We will not resile from the need for us to take responsibility as a government to return the budget to surplus and to restore the AAA credit rating. We hear them complain about debt and we do not hear a single word from them about how they would reduce the debt—not one. They are intellectually lazy hand-wringers.

An opposition member interjected.

Ms BLIGH: Oh, now it is my debt! You tell me the infrastructure in your electorates you want me to cut. You haven't got the ticker for that, either.

Health System

Mrs KIERNAN: My question is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health. Can the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health please inform the House about the importance of developing a strong integrated health system to deliver health services across Queensland?

Mr Gibson: Let's see how long he lasts.

Mr LUCAS: I am going to last longer than John-Paul Langbroek is going to last as leader. This is a significant time for the reform of health care across Queensland and the nation.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Resume your seat. We will stop the clock. It would have helped I think, Deputy Premier, if you had referred to the honourable member by his correct title, but that does not excuse the noise that erupted subsequently.

Mr LUCAS: I am sorry, Mr Speaker. Apparently those opposite think you can interject and not get responded to. They have a different idea of the traditions of Westminster parliaments than others do.

This is a time of serious policy work and genuine national partnership. It demands an informed and constructive public debate and it requires political leadership, not just by the government but by all parties. We have again seen in other areas today that the other side of politics have not learnt their lessons from their 1989 defeat. They have never, ever recovered from their lack of policy development since that time.

The member for Caloundra is no stranger to that policy deficit. He has never seen a problem that he does not believe could be solved by shunting it off to a local hospital board. So now what are we engaged in in Australia? A national education curriculum, a national registration system for health

workers, a national electricity market, national training and employment reforms, national reforms for health and hospitals, but wait for it—what is the LNP solution? Local hospital boards. They have no ticker. In fact, the only ticker they would ever recognise is the tikka in an Indian restaurant. Any problem they have will be shunted off to a committee of amateurs. They will shunt off the decisions about specialist neurosurgery to the local baker, the local chemist and the local lawyer. That is what they will do. Re-establishing debt-ridden hospital boards is the one health policy the opposition reliably stick to. They not only contradict national reform agendas; they contradict the Auditor-General's report, which is what you were trading on earlier. That is what they do.

Mr McArdle interjected.

Mr LUCAS: The best that the shadow minister can do is coo like a pigeon. Isn't that wonderful in terms of a constructive policy debate? We have had hospital boards before. Who could forget the Bill Carter report into allegations of medical negligence at Townsville Hospital? Between 1975 and 1987 up to 65 people died as a result of mispractice. When hospital boards were finally abolished in 1991, they left behind \$313 million in debt. There is one thing we need and that is policy leadership in this place. We are giving it. It is of great concern.

Mr McArdle: Not from you.

Mr LUCAS: Your policy demonstration at the last election was a mental health policy relying on volunteers who would do the hospital records for people with mental illness. That is how much they thought through the policy. Who could forget the Sunshine Coast railway line that sat in the middle of nowhere? They were going to pick up the trains and put them on the track like a six-year-old does with a train set. It is a policy-free zone.

(Time expired)

Jobs Squad

Mr NICHOLLS: My question is to the Premier. Some members of the Labor government's jobs squad have publicly opposed privatisation. Will the Premier say when the jobs squad last met and outline what advice they gave on privatisation?

Ms BLIGH: I am very pleased to advise the House that my jobs task force meets monthly and its last meeting was held last Thursday. I attend every one of those meetings and I intend to continue to do so. The agenda at that meeting covered a number of areas. I am very happy to provide a full briefing to the member at some stage if he is at all interested.

Of course, all they have ever done is knock the idea that a government should sit down with the private sector and with the business community. I can advise the member that no member of my jobs task force at those meetings has ever raised the issue or raised any concerns with privatisation. The only serious businessperson I have heard raise any concerns is the LNP benefactor Clive Palmer, who, in his criticisms of it, fails to disclose his commercial interest in it.

I am very surprised to see the member for Clayfield standing up in this place talking about this. What does the *Hansard* record say about the member for Clayfield on this issue? Whenever it has been raised in this parliament he complains that the only problem with privatisation is that we have not privatised enough. He thought it was not enough to privatise Energex Retail. He is on the record saying, 'Why not privatise the distribution network? Why not privatise the generators?' That is his view.

We have questions this morning about reform on the Mount Isa line. The member for Clayfield thinks it should be closed. There is nothing but arrant hypocrisy from those opposite. If you wanted any more evidence than what we have seen over the last three days of preselection fiasco on the Gold Coast that the National Party in Queensland has now completely taken over the Liberal Party, they have even got the member for Clayfield standing here opposing the idea that the private sector is capable of running a transport business. Their transition to the dark side is complete. They stand here now and oppose privatisation but they were very happy to privatise the Liberal Party to the National Party. That was a sell-off they rushed to. Aren't there some now having a moment to sit back and regret?

These are tough issues for government. They are issues that the public have genuine concerns and questions about. We will keep working with the public, with the community and with unions, and we will make sure that, as these changes occur, the workers in these businesses are protected and that the workers and their families get all the information they need. We will create these as businesses that will grow and thrive and create employment, not diminish it.

Population Growth

Ms STONE: My question is to the Treasurer and Minister for Employment and Economic Development. We all know Queensland is the best state in our great country and we would not live anywhere else. Can the Treasurer update the House on population flows from other states?

Mr FRASER: I thank the member for Springwood for her question and for her interest in building the infrastructure for a growing population and a growing economy. We are all aware—and I mentioned earlier—of the strong population growth that our state experiences at present and has done for many a time. What we also know is that a significant amount of that population growth comes from other states. In the context of the current national debate about the proper allocation of who should receive the best proportion of GST allocations to fund infrastructure for the benefit of the nation, it is important to emphasise that two states—New South Wales, which is \$701 million better off per year, and Victoria, which is \$708 million better off per year—which are opposing the Commonwealth Grants Commission process are the biggest contributors to people to our state.

If we look at the population data of recent years we can see that, over the last five years of the population flows from the rest of Australia to Queensland, 67 per cent of that population has come from the state of New South Wales. Coming in at No. 2 with 17 per cent is Victoria. So far from the governments of New South Wales and Victoria complaining about the GST allocation process they in fact should be pinning a cheque to the coats of these people who are leaving their states in droves to come here to be a part of the performance and prospects of our powerhouse state.

Just as I have joined with the Western Australian Treasurer in recognising the national interest in supporting those states and those economies that have contributed to the growth of the nation's economy, so too should the governments of Victoria and New South Wales put aside these petty claims for one moment and focus on what is best for the nation. What is best for the nation is that those states that have led the charge and led the growth, Queensland and Western Australia, are the ones that are funded to provide the growth for the future.

We have been the ones that have lifted up the export performance. We have been the ones that have lifted up the economic performance of the nation and all with the benefit of those population flows. Of course, there are population flows that continue. But one population flow that seems to be heading south is the federal member for Dickson, who hitched his caravan and headed for the Gold Coast. Rejected on that front, he is going to defy the national trend and return.

The word is that the member for Moggill is going to be put to one side so that the federal member for Dickson can have his opportunity in here. And why would he not? It would be a great loss to the parliament. My debates would not be nearly as much fun. The member for Clayfield would certainly support it. The member for Dickson says that he has a view about whether people should be parachuted. What did he say in federal *Hansard* last year? He said—

People do not want to have imposed on them candidates from outside their own area simply because there has been a sort of factional deal stitched up.

We welcome him here with open arms.

Primary Industries and Fisheries Facilities

Mr HOPPER: My question is to the Minister for Primary Industries. Can the minister inform the House whether he or any of his senior advisers have been involved in any discussions regarding the closure of any of the following DPI facilities: at Boondooma, Crows Nest, Goondiwindi, Oakey, Richmond, Taroom or Wondoan? Will the minister guarantee all services at those centres will remain, none will be lost and no front-line positions will be axed?

Mr MULHERIN: I acknowledge the member for Condamine for his question. Once again we are really looking at the Liberal National Party yearning for the past. It is going back to the 1950s. As I said when I outlined Fresh Approach two years ago, we really need to transform the way we go about doing our business, be it in research, extension or biosecurity. That is what Fresh Approach is all about. That is why we have engaged with industry about being part of the design and implementation of how we provide services and research into the 21st century.

The member for Condamine wants to go back to the 1950s. He sees things through rose-coloured glasses. He is getting a bit of a reputation around the state as being a member who has his head in the sand and no policy outlook. Just last week we had a good example of how he behaves when it was announced that the Lesley Research Centre would be sold off as part of the grains industry reinvestment strategy. What did the member for Condamine say? His reaction was typical. He said that it was an absolute disgrace. He went on about industry and attacked AgForce. In his media release he stated—

I am disappointed but not surprised by the lack of outrage from farm group leaders. I am very concerned that those who should be standing up and fighting have rolled over.

What the member for Condamine does not realise is that industry is on board with Fresh Approach, which looks at all the issues around research and development, our extension services and biosecurity. My agency is discussing with industry how we do these things. They will continue to do that. What the member for Condamine does not like is that industry supports our strategy and has come on board.

Let us have a look at his track record from last year. He came out and bagged the budget. AgForce came out and said that it was a responsible budget for primary industries in tight economic circumstances. He was not happy with that. So every time he gets an opportunity he is out there bagging AgForce. AgForce is an apolitical organisation. He expects it to be the mouthpiece for the Liberal National Party. It is about time the member for Condamine got on board with Fresh Approach and worked with industry to ensure we provide the research facilities and the service delivery that is required to take the industry forward in the 21st century. The member for Condamine is typical in his approach. There is no policy coming out of his mouth. He has his head in the sand and yearns for the 1950s.

(Time expired)

Kurilpa Bridge

Ms GRACE: My question without notice is to the Minister for Public Works and Information and Communication Technology. Could the minister please advise the House how the recently opened Kurilpa Bridge will enhance the lives of Queenslanders and visitors to the state?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I thank the honourable member for the question. I also thank her for drawing to my attention a defect with regard to the bridge—an apostrophe. That will be rectified by the people who made the mistake. There is an apostrophe on one of the plaques on the bridge. The manufacturer is going to fix that. What a great project it has been when we consider that the only problem has been one apostrophe.

I thank the Department of Public Works—Max Smith and Jeff Griffin in particular—for all the work they have put into that great structure. People are voting with their feet. I hear that the Leader of the House rode across it this morning. I have ridden across it. I have walked across it a number of times. I have been involved in it over the last two years. It is a great project to have been involved in. It will change the streetscape in Brisbane forever.

What did those opposite have to say about it? Remember in this parliament that they criticised it. On Sunday some 20,000 people thought it was a great idea. We can go up to the Goodwill Bridge, which 53,000 people are using. I used that bridge this morning. What did those opposite do? They criticised it.

Let us go up to Suncorp Stadium. What did those opposite say about that? They said that it reminded them of 1957 at Lang Park. They opposed it and said that it should not be in Milton, that it should not be in that position. I challenge anybody to stand in this place and say that it is not in the right place. Guess what? People are voting with their feet in that regard. What did those opposite do? They opposed it. They did not want it at all.

Let us go across the river to the magnificent Gallery of Modern Art. Do members know what the member for Southern Downs said about that? He said that we should be spending money on exhibitions. Wouldn't it have been great to see Picasso in a tent? That would be the policy of those opposite. The policy would have been to try to bring a great exhibition like that to Queensland and put it in a tent. 'Don't put money into monuments' I think were the words he used.

Let us go down to the Gold Coast. The redevelopment of Carrara Stadium was supported by the member for Mermaid Beach and opposed by the member for Surfers Paradise, and the member for Currumbin was too busy doing over Dutton to have any view about it at all. The fact of the matter is that, again, that was opposed by the member for Southern Downs. Every single bit of infrastructure that this government has put together, whether it is Roma Street Parkland, which is enjoyed by literally hundreds of thousands of people, or our newest bridge, is opposed, opposed, opposed. We could hear the questions this morning. Those opposite would be very comfortable back in 1956.

(Time expired)

Public Hospitals

Mr McARDLE: My question is to the Premier. I refer to reports today that a Mooloolah Valley man has died of a heart attack after his ambulance was diverted from Caloundra to Nambour Hospital because of overcrowding. Is it not a fact that ramping, access block and a lack of hospital beds are killing Queenslanders?

Ms BLIGH: This question relates to the tragic loss of life of a gentleman on the Sunshine Coast. Any loss of life is tragic and I offer my condolences to his friends and his family.

There will be a full investigation into the circumstances surrounding this incident, but let me say this: Queensland Health hospitals accept emergency patients no matter what circumstances are happening at the hospital. If a hospital is on capacity alert or on bypass, every Queensland hospital will still take category 1 emergency patients. What we know is that the circumstances surrounding this unfortunate and tragic death did not involve ramping and did not involve concerns about capacity. It

appears on the face of early reports that there was some communication breakdown between the professionals involved, and that is not good enough. It is unacceptable and I think people are entitled to expect better when professionals from different medical arms are communicating with each other.

This investigation will look thoroughly into how this event occurred, but let me make it absolutely clear that this hospital was ready and able to accept a category 1 patient—as every Queensland hospital is, regardless of whether they are on bypass or capacity alert. In every hospital system in the world we know that from time to time any hospital will have a capacity issue, but our hospitals take category 1 patients in an emergency and Queensland ambulances have a policy of taking category 1 patients to the nearest hospital. It does seem that this patient has unfortunately not been taken to the right hospital and I want to know why, just like every other member of this House. That investigation will find out. If there is anything that needs to be changed in protocols or if there is any need for any change in communication requirements, then those changes will be made because it is certainly not acceptable.

What have we seen in the last 12 months? We have seen Queensland's emergency wait times go from sixth in the country to third. We are making more progress on emergency wait times than anywhere else in Australia, but every hospital everywhere in the world will have capacity issues from time to time. Our hospitals take category 1 patients regardless of their circumstances. If that did not happen in this incident—

An opposition member interjected.

Ms BLIGH: That is not true. I take the interjection. The member is misleading the parliament. This gentleman should have been seen by this hospital, and if he was not I want to know why.

Dam Levels

Ms MALE: My question without notice to the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Minister for Trade. Could the minister please outline for the House the impact of the recent long wet week on Queensland dam levels?

Mr ROBERTSON: It was only two weeks ago that the worst dust storm in 70 years swept through South-East Queensland and through much of the rest of the state. That is why it was only reasonable to give residents and businesses the opportunity to clear away the choking dust and so the Water Commission, backed by the government, implemented a long wet weekend in South-East Queensland. This decision was greeted by the community as a victory for common sense. The long wet weekend allowed residents and businesses to wash away dust from their homes, cars and equipment outside of their usual allocated times and days under medium level restrictions. The exemption was extended to a long wet week to ensure shiftworkers and businesses had the opportunity to clear away the dust.

Our most up-to-date figures reflect admirable restraint in water use during the nine-day exemption. Consumption was kept to under 172 litres per person in the central SEQ area where medium level restrictions are in place and the wet week has had little impact on the combined dam levels, which dropped from 75.15 per cent last Friday to 74.8 per cent this week. I congratulate South-East Queensland residents for showing common sense in using only enough water for what they needed. South-East Queensland's bulk water supplier, SEQWater, has informed me that the dust has had no effect on the quality of treated water.

Where the dust of course has not settled and will not be settling for the next couple of weeks is in the LNP party room as those opposite struggle to deal with the legislation I will be bringing to the House later today on vegetation management—the next level of tree clearing. We have heard a lot of nonsense this morning about election deals and the Premier dealt with that explicitly, outlining the process leading to our very open and accountable election commitment which we now have a commitment to implement. This was exactly what happened in 2004. We went to an election campaign with an announcement to ban broadscale tree clearing. The people of Queensland voted accordingly. We had a responsibility to implement it. The only thing that changed between 2004 and 2009 is that back in 2004 the Liberal Party supported us. The Liberal Party supported us!

What we will see over the next two weeks is the knuckle draggers of the National Party—Callide, Gregory and Warrego—knocking on all of the doors like Aspley, Currumbin and Indooroopilly putting pressure on them. This is the question for the former members of the Liberal Party: we are used to them being hypocrites, but are they also going to be weak? Are they going to stand up to the knuckle draggers from the National Party, or will the boys from the bush win? That is the challenge that we will see here in the next couple of weeks in this chamber when it comes time to vote. The challenge is no longer to be a hypocrite and no longer to be weak.

(Time expired)

Sunshine Coast, Intensive Care Paramedics

Mr ELMES: My question without notice is to the Minister for Emergency Services. Would the minister advise how his answer to a question without notice on 2 September correlates to this roster—the current one for the Sunshine Coast region, and I table it—dated 12 September which shows that between just five and 13 intensive care paramedics were available on any given day to service a population of over 350,000 residents?

Tabled paper: Copies of various roster documents [1002].

Tabled paper: Document titled 'Hansard questions without notice' [1003].

Mr ROBERTS: It is a complicated roster, so I will not even bother responding to that. Issues about determining rosters within the Queensland Ambulance Service—I often get questions like this about police and Fire and Rescue officers—are matters which are entirely the responsibility of the ambulance commissioner. In this House a few weeks ago the member for Noosa was again trying to undermine public confidence in the number of intensive care paramedics on the Sunshine Coast. I explained on the record in the last parliament the numbers of intensive care paramedics that were available, but again the member for Noosa was out there trying to undermine public confidence in that issue.

Handing a minister a roster and expecting a minister to have the detailed knowledge of who is on which roster and how many people should be on it is an absolute joke and just demonstrates the absolute paucity of policy that is coming out of this opposition in terms of ambulance services in this state. The member for Mirani, the shadow minister for emergency services, has not made one positive policy announcement about the Queensland Ambulance Service in the entire time that I have been the minister in this portfolio. In terms of undermining public confidence in ambulance numbers on the Sunshine Coast, the member for Noosa also did the same thing recently in relation to police numbers on the Sunshine Coast when he claimed that the numbers for police were well below those allocated for the area.

I am confident that the Sunshine Coast area has the number of ambulance officers that it requires, both intensive care paramedics and advanced care paramedics. This government has increased the number of ambulance officers. We provided the biggest increase in ambulance officers in the history of the service and over the last three budgets we have funded 555 additional ambulance officers for the Queensland Ambulance Service. We also have the best ambulance officer to population ratio in the country. We have provided the resources to the Ambulance Service. It is up to the assistant commissioners in the areas to determine who goes on to what roster and how many ambulance officers are allocated to each region.

Class Sizes

Mr PITT: My question without notice is to the Minister for Education and Training. Could the minister please explain how principals in state schools determine the make-up and size of classes?

Mr WILSON: I thank the honourable member for the question. I am pleased to say that Queensland class sizes are amongst some of the lowest in the country. This is an opportunity to set straight the misinformation that has been peddled about class sizes in Queensland. If Channel 9 had bothered to attend the five opportunities given for briefings from my department yesterday, it would not have made the errors that it made in its broadcast last night. Unlike its colleagues—the ABC, Channel 7 and Channel 10—which did turn up to a briefing from me and the director-general, Channel 9 chose to stay away. As a result, quite a number of inaccurate claims were made last night.

There was the claim that schools have class sizes over target because there are not enough teachers. What are the facts? All schools are given enough teachers to meet the class sizes. The number of teachers supplied to a school is based on the number of students enrolled. So where the class sizes are under or over the target, it is because the principal has chosen, in consultation with teachers, to structure the classes differently. We trust principals to staff the 69,000 classes that there are in Queensland schools every day.

There was also the claim that there are prep classes with 30 students in them. What are the facts? Out of a total of 1,500 prep classes, there is one prep class in Queensland that has 30 students. That is because a local decision was made by the principal to prevent the need for a split-up of that particular prep class. They did that in consultation with the parents and the school community. They are now supported, and were supported, by an extra teacher and a teacher aide. So there are three adults teaching that class.

There was a claim that at Palm Beach-Currumbin State High School most of the classes are overcrowded. There are 490 classes at this school. Of those, just 11 have three or more extra students, and three of those classes have been structured in that way for particular specialist purposes chosen by the teachers.

It was claimed that at Kenmore State High School there were overcrowded classes. Of the 424 classes at that school, just six have three or more extra students, and two of those have been chosen to be structured in that way because of local decisions made by the principal. It was claimed that there was overcrowding at Holland Park State High School. The principal and the teachers there have made a choice about the structure of class sizes.

One class size does not fit all. That is why 95 per cent meet the target or are under the target and more than two-thirds of those that meet the target are under the target. We make sure that the resources are placed in the hands of principals. That is the best place for them to be.

(Time expired)

Cougar Energy, Environmental Monitoring

Mrs PRATT: My question is to the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Minister for Trade. I refer the minister to Cougar Energy's MDLA 385 pilot underground coal gasification project and the UCG policy under the section titled 'UCG Pilot Phase Proposed Monitoring and Reporting Process', paragraph (c). I ask: how can the government guarantee unbiased monitoring and reporting when the government's nominated monitoring body, the EPA, hands its responsibilities to Cougar Energy to self-monitor?

Mr ROBERTSON: That question is best directed to my colleague the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability, given her direct responsibilities in terms of the former EPA's monitoring of those particular matters to which the member referred. However, if there is additional information that the member requires then we remain quite prepared to provide whatever information—

Mrs PRATT: I rise to a point of order. The document I am referring to was put out by the department of mines and energy and that is what I was referring to.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr ROBERTSON: The member brings up an interesting issue in terms of underground coal gasification as a future, and hopefully cleaner, energy source for the people of Queensland. Environmental monitoring is an important part of any trials that are undertaken to develop these new kinds of technologies, so we treat these issues very seriously.

In terms of decisions on how that environmental monitoring is conducted, it is often the case that we do, in fact, provide overall monitoring while relying on regular reports coming from companies that first and foremost have a responsibility to operate—whether that be mines or other forms of energy production, such as power stations et cetera—in an environmentally responsible manner.

So in general terms, without going into the specifics of this particular question, on the face of it there is nothing unusual about those arrangements that the member has outlined in her question. However, as I have indicated, we are more than happy to investigate that matter further and get back to the honourable member in an appropriate time with the full details with respect to that particular issue.

I return to an earlier theme about the challenges before the members opposite. I use this opportunity to say that I mentioned earlier the 2006 election. I meant to say that in the 2004 election the Liberal Party supported, quite responsibly, our broadscale tree clearing legislation election announcement. That was when Queensland benefited from having a Liberal Party that was concerned about the environment—not the LNP, now dominated by the National Party, which has thrown out all of those principles that the Liberal Party used to hold so dear and so constant over such a long period. It stood up against the Nationals, which wanted to continue the rate of tree clearing that we had seen over the past decade. The challenge is for the former members of the Liberal Party to once again stand up and support this government when the legislation is debated in a couple of weeks time.

Bushfire Preparedness

Ms JOHNSTONE: My question is directed to the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services. Can the minister update the House on the activities of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service during the current bushfire season in Queensland?

Mr ROBERTS: I thank the member for the question. As she well knows, she lives in an area that currently has a very high fire danger and I thank her for her interest in the issue.

As members would be aware, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service—and indeed much of Queensland—has been experiencing one of the worst fire seasons for at least the past five years. Our rural fire volunteers—urban and auxiliary firefighters—have been exceptionally busy over the past two weeks. Just to give the House an indication of the scale of that activity, I point out that since 23 September—over the last two-week period—there have been almost 2,000 bushfires identified throughout Queensland. That has resulted in an average of 152 vegetation fires per day, an average of 288 fire appliances—and I include in that aircraft such as water-bombing helicopters and fixed-wing

aircraft—and an average of around 865 firefighters a day out there fighting fires, protecting communities. In the main, those firefighters are volunteers from our rural fire brigades. On behalf of the House and the people of Queensland, I take this opportunity to thank all of those volunteers and, indeed, the full-time and auxiliary firefighters who work in partnership with them for the work they are doing to protect Queensland communities.

As a result of the prediction of high to extreme fire conditions, particularly in North and Central Queensland, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service has extended fire bans and has included a few other local government areas—there are now a total of 14—through to 12 October. A range of local government areas are affected. The bans in the south-east were lifted last night due to easing weather conditions. However, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service urges people all over Queensland to be particularly vigilant and careful when it comes to anything that could spark a fire.

I take this opportunity to respond to a little bit of media criticism that occurred a week ago of an evacuation warning that was provided to the communities of Mount Fox in Central Queensland. At the outset I want to say that I support absolutely—100 per cent—the decision of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service to issue that warning. On that occasion, the first officer of the local fire brigade contacted the control centre and advised that a couple of houses—including his own, as I understand it—were under direct threat from fire within five minutes. A small number of homes—five—were expected to be under fire threat within the next 15 to 20 minutes and another 15 to 20 homes were expected to be under direct threat within the hour.

Quite understandably, the firefighter hung up and went out to fight those fires. This was in a rural community. Based on the advice that was received, the Fire and Rescue Service issued an evacuation notice through ABC Radio, which is the correct thing to do. One of the great lessons of the Victorian bushfires and one of the recommendations was the need for fire authorities to take notice of what the local firefighters say. In this instance, that is what they did. Again, I support 100 per cent the decision of the fire authorities on that occasion.

(Time expired)

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

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Queensland Economy

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 am): This morning the Premier and other ministers talked about having the stomach and a hunger to provide reform. The Premier is walking away from nearly 20 years of government, saying that she does not want to look at the services that we on this side think state governments are all about providing. As I travel around this state the people of Queensland tell me that they want government to provide the services it is supposed to provide with the \$37 billion income—in this case \$39 billion—that the government is spending. They want the government to provide services and they want accountability, integrity and honesty in government. The Premier did not provide that in the lead-up to the 21 March election.

Let us look at what this Labor government, after nearly 20 years, has provided in terms of services. We are committed to providing better services. The Premier has said that she wants to set targets. She often walks away from those targets and sets new ones. We have seen it in all the portfolios she has been in, especially the Education portfolio. When we look at our economy, we have a \$37 billion income this year and a \$2 billion deficit—something we never had under coalition governments. The people of Queensland expect the cherished AAA credit rating as a given, not an achievement. They do not expect that a government will go bust in a boom, as this government has done, and they do not expect assets to be privatised in a mad panic fire sale.

Between 2000 and 2008 the government received \$34 billion extra into its coffers. That has all gone. We have issues in health where medical doctors are not as important as spin doctors. In the last couple of weeks the Minister for Health suggested that tired doctors should be drinking more coffee. We want roads that are actually for cars to drive on, not just for them to be parked on. In education, under this Premier, who is a former minister for education, our kids have gone from the top of the class to the bottom of the class in Australia. The people of Queensland want reading, writing and numeracy to be more important than slogans. They do not want, as occurred in the last couple of weeks, a situation where Professor Geoff Masters makes recommendations about how to improve those results and suddenly the Minister for Education comes up with a new suggestion that involves flying squads going into difficult areas where results need to be improved. That is not the service provision that the people of Queensland expect.

It is the same when it comes to the environment: we want science, not politics determining policies as to where dams should and should not be built. In terms of vegetation management, in 2004 and 2006 the words were, 'This is a line in the sand for rural producers and the people in the rural sector of our economy.' We supported that, but now we are looking at it in terms of the deal that was done with the Greens before the election and the uncertainty that this has created in the economy regarding issues such as the stamp duty on transactions. The line in the sand has now been shifted for primary producers and people in the rural sector. It is the efforts of the rural sector that have saved us from going into deficit. The contraction of the economy has been assuaged a bit by the primary industry sector.

Queenslanders expect services for those in need, such as the disabled and children, and where the elderly are not compromised by structural mismanagement. We also expect jobs to be created for real Queenslanders, not for the Premier's friends, mates and relatives. Last week, in contradiction of what the Premier said in the lead-up to the election, we had a typical example of the lack of honesty of the Premier who tried to make out that 250 front-line people will be provided in junior positions to make up for 250 bureaucrats. In the lead-up to the election the Premier promised Queenslanders that they could count on her. There was no talk about jobs for jobs and saying, as the Premier said this week, that it is a scheme that will pay for itself as we replace more senior corporate staff with newer, younger front-line service delivery officers. The Premier said in the lead-up to the election that her government would provide more front-line services. There was no talk about sacking people, as is happening in these redundancy programs.

Services are what the people of Queensland want. They are happy to have reforms, but they do not want to see compromised services as a result of those reforms. This government is walking away from the paucity of services it provides. Now it is talking about reform. We had reform in local government in the last term. We now have a local government sector that is in disarray. Labor is once again walking away from what it has created and trying to create the illusion that it is doing something different that will make Queensland better. We are not stuck in the fifties and sixties; we just want services to be provided in this state for people who have paid their taxes and deserve to have those services provided in an economical and efficient way and who do not deserve to be left with a deficit and a debt that their children will not be able to jump over.

Of course, to get those better services we need investment in our economy. That is something we are committed to doing. We are committed to stopping the crisis management of this government and growing the economy, which is something those opposite have given up on trying to do. This Labor government cannot see a way to get out of its \$37 billion in, \$39 billion out. We are committed to growing the economy with the expertise and experience that we have in various businesses. If we were in bankrupt New South Wales looking to invest anywhere else we would balk at Queensland, which has lost its AAA credit rating. We have a AA credit rating, a record debt to last generations, we went bust in a boom and we did not plan for population growth. Of course business is reluctant to invest and create jobs when it sees a Labor government embarking on a panic-stricken fire sale of assets as part of a concealed privatisation agenda. Business questions government competence when it sees this state going through what it has gone through, with billions of dollars worth of deficit over the next four years and, of course, \$85 billion of debt that has exploded in the last few years. Businesses will balk at investing and creating jobs if contracts are based on Labor mateship, not on merit.

The Queensland Treasury Corporation has the sole responsibility for our public sector debt. Its performance is difficult to reproach considering the circumstances the government has placed it in. The chairman's report shows the total borrowings for 2008-09 exceeded \$17.5 billion and it is forecast that this will rise to \$22.5 billion for 2009-10. This compares with borrowings in 2006-07 of \$5.6 billion. It is worthy of note that the 2009-10 state budget forecast government borrowings are \$14 billion compared with the Queensland Treasury Corporation program to raise \$22.5 billion on behalf of the public sector—once again raising more than we need to. No wonder the Treasurer was on a roadshow last week trying to raise funds when our liabilities are reported to total \$92 billion. Reserves have been severely depleted.

The financial report of the QTC is carefully presented to perception-manage vulnerability to a further downgrade in the state's credit rating by Moody's and Standard & Poor's. The chairman and the chief executive of the QTC concede that the agency would face difficulties in executing the state's borrowing program without the Commonwealth's AAA rap on its paper.

The chairman's report implies that the state's credit rating continues to be under sustained pressure. This is a government that went broke in a boom and now the Treasurer, who inherited this financial situation from the former Treasurer and now Premier, has put us into this position of debt and he was out there last week desperately organising funds. That is because this government refused to provide accountability. Legalising lying does not lead to open government; it leads to corrupt government.

We have a green paper that has been set by the government and judged by the government. Can members imagine if Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen had released a green paper on the issues he wanted discussed, set up a panel with people he had appointed and dismissed submissions he did not like?

That is what the Premier is doing now. Every time someone makes a submission, including someone who sits in this House every day who is not a member of the government, the Premier dismisses it. Imagine if Sir Joh had set a one-month time limit and refused to give royal commission powers to investigate deals and appointments? It would have been considered laughable. In this state success fees have replaced brown paper bags and access to government is based on cash to Labor, not based on need and merit. We will grow the economy, we will stop the crisis management and we will provide services for the people of Queensland.

Healthy Living

Mr WATT (Everton—ALP) (11.39 am): In recent weeks around the parliamentary corridors I have heard a number of members ask, 'Who is that incredible looking cyclist coming through the gates of parliament? Is it Cadel Evans or Alberto Contador, the most recent winner of the Tour de France? Is it Queensland's own Alan Davis from Bundaberg?' I have even heard some people ask whether it is Lance Armstrong, the greatest cyclist the world has ever seen. I am very sorry to shatter the illusions of members who have been asking those questions, but I have to report that it is the member for Everton. As a number of members of parliament know, over the past couple of months I have been trying to ride my bicycle to work once every parliamentary sitting week. I have also been walking three mornings a week. Last night I even restrained myself and had only one small serving of ice-cream for dessert.

Members may be asking why this show of discipline? While it is true that I want to be healthier, also I have a new role as the Parliamentary Secretary for Healthy Living. I am sure that all members will be comforted to know that I am happy to lead by example. This change to my role comes in response to a recommendation from the Smart State Council in its recent report to the government into chronic disease. The council makes a number of excellent recommendations, as it always does, and I thank the council for its ongoing work, particularly on this issue. It was a timely contribution to assist the government deal with the biggest health challenge we face, that is, the spiralling rate of chronic disease in our community. Chronic diseases are serious, largely preventable diseases that require lifelong medical care. About three million Queenslanders are living with a long-term chronic condition such as high blood pressure. That is 70 per cent of our population.

This startling fact is why, as part of its Toward Q2 vision, the Bligh government set a target for Queensland to cut the primary causes of chronic disease. Our target is to cut Queensland's level of obesity, smoking, heavy drinking and unsafe sun exposure by one-third by 2020. The sheer ambition of this target is demonstrated when one considers the following: one in five Queensland men and one in seven Queensland women smoke daily; six in 10 Queensland men and about four in 10 Queensland women are overweight or obese; about seven in 10 Queensland men and women exercise very little or not at all; just over five in 10 Queensland men and four in 10 Queensland women do not eat enough fruit and about nine in 10 Queenslanders do not eat enough vegetables. Those are very startling figures. I know that a number of members are not in those groups because they take their own health seriously, but we all have a responsibility to lead a healthier life and to encourage Queenslanders to live healthier lives as well. I am glad to see that the shadow minister for health supports these moves.

Because of these figures the Bligh government and the Beattie government before it have a proud record when it comes to encouraging Queenslanders to lead healthier lives. We introduced healthy tuckshop menus, the Smart Moves initiative that requires a mandatory 30 minutes per day of physical activity in primary school and two hours per week in secondary schools and the new Healthy Queensland Awards. We have the toughest tobacco laws in Australia and we have run a number of successful public education campaigns, including the Dark Side of Tanning and the Go for 2&5 fruit and vegetable campaign. Those initiatives are generating some positive results. We are slowing the growth in childhood obesity, a higher proportion of Queensland women have breast screening than in other states, we are the first state to introduce digital mammography, our smoking rates continue to fall and the number of women dying from cervical cancer has decreased by more than 50 per cent since 1991. However, we need to do more, particularly in the area of obesity as an increasing proportion of Queenslanders are overweight or obese.

It is for these reasons that the government has a number of initiatives underway. My title has changed, but that is the smallest of the initiatives that we have underway. Next week I will be chairing a workshop with workplaces and health providers to see what more we can do to encourage workplaces to become healthier and encourage healthy lifestyles amongst their employees. We have a number of pilots underway to detect chronic disease early. The Social Development Committee is holding an inquiry into chronic disease and the Law, Justice and Safety Committee, of which I am a member, is also holding an inquiry into alcohol related violence that no doubt will have something to say about controlling heavy alcohol consumption. Since my time as parliamentary secretary I have met with a number of organisations concerned with chronic disease, and I am looking forward to working with many of them into the future to ensure that we deliver an economic benefit and a social benefit by reducing chronic disease.

Redcliffe, Infrastructure

Ms van LITSENBURG (Redcliffe—ALP) (11.45 am): I am heartened by the continuous rollout of vital infrastructure by the Bligh government right across the state. On the weekend the high-profile Kurilpa Bridge was opened and recently the Gateway airport bypass was opened, making the run into the city less congested for Redcliffe and northern suburbs dwellers. There is also the duplication of the Gateway Bridge and, of course, in my electorate the opening of the Ted Smout Bridge is an event looked forward to with much excitement. In the past two weeks two vital pieces of infrastructure have been opened on the Redcliffe peninsula. The Minister for Transport, Rachel Nolan, cut the ribbon on the new Scarborough boat ramp. The President of the Redcliffe City Chamber of Commerce, Chris Elder, Jeff Ahchay and Trevor Ward from Sunfish, Vice Commodore Des Thomson of the Moreton Bay Boat Club, representatives from the Port of Brisbane and several people from the business community shared a sumptuous morning tea at the Moreton Bay Boat Club. This is a vital piece of infrastructure that goes to the very heart of the lifestyle in Redcliffe, enabling people to put their boats into the water more quickly and safely, and to get them out of the water at the end of the day in a more timely fashion, saving the long queuing that has been building up over recent years. Moreton Bay is an ever-popular playground in the swiftly growing south-east, so it is vital that people have better and safer access to the bay, which is what the ramp has achieved. Sunfish was pleased that the Bligh government listened to its ideas about what fishers need and incorporated them into the facility. On the morning of the opening, several boats were already using the ramp and communicated their pleasure and thanks to the minister. A year ago the first of these new style boat ramps with safety features was launched at Clontarf, so now our boating community has two such ramps on the peninsula.

Last week the Minister for Emergency Services, Neil Roberts, opened the new Redcliffe Ambulance Station. Commissioner Melville and Assistant Commissioner McNamara headed a long list of dignitaries, including Acting Officer in Charge Ian Roberts, who was standing in for Teresa Powell, and many of the officers from the Redcliffe station, some with their wives and young children. The design of the station allows for more efficient practices that will enable the station to improve its already impressive response times. Similarly, about a year ago the new Redcliffe Fire Station was opened, along with the fire station in Narangba, to complete the fire brigade's strategy in our region to keep down its response times.

The Queensland government is partnering with the federal government to deliver maintenance and new halls or resource centres to schools right across the state. Public transport is a priority for the Bligh government with the Northern Busway to be completed soon and the upgrade to the bus interchange at Kippa-Ring to be upgraded at around the same time. The Queensland government has partnered with local government to do detailed planning for the rail to Redcliffe. Those are only small examples of the infrastructure linking Redcliffe to the rest of the south-east and this infrastructure rollout is replicated right across the state, ensuring not only that there is modern infrastructure across the state but also that Queenslanders right across the state have jobs that will take them through the economic recovery.

The Bligh government's commitment to building vital infrastructure is unsurpassed and will ensure not only that Queensland keeps working but also that Queensland has the public infrastructure to continue to be a modern competitive state at the forefront of the Australian economy. Only the Bligh government has been able to gain this high degree of success in the economic sphere while balancing it with the best social policy Queensland has ever had.

Queensland Health

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—LNP) (11.49 am): Last night, a Mooloolah Valley man died in an ambulance on the Sunshine Coast. Caloundra Hospital was on capacity alert at 1.50 am and the ambulance was diverted to Nambour Hospital, some 10 to 12 minutes away. On arrival the man was declared deceased. Make no mistake: ramping, access block and lack of beds are killing Queenslanders. The Premier's comments today, in essence saying that it was a communication problem, as opposed to accepting responsibility as any Premier in any government would, were a shameful disgrace and showed a lack of understanding of the needs of Queenslanders and Sunshine Coast residents.

Without doubt, this man is reported to have stopped breathing and his heart had stopped beating. That is category 1. That is an urgent situation that required urgent treatment by a hospital in close vicinity—and that was Caloundra Hospital. The question is: why was Caloundra Hospital on capacity alert? Firstly, this government has failed to provide the bed numbers required across this state for many, many years. In fact, in 2008-09 population growth required an extra 230 beds. What did we get? We got 76 beds. We required 230 beds and we got 76 beds.

Secondly, this government has failed to deal with the issue of access block. In 2005-06 it took five hours and three minutes to get a hospital bed in Nambour General Hospital. In the March quarter of 2008-09 it took seven hours and 13 minutes, and in that same time frame an additional 89 medical

officers and 185 nursing staff had been employed at Nambour Hospital. We have multibillion dollar budgets going into the health system and things are getting worse. As I said, ramping, access block and the lack of beds are killing Queenslanders.

Thirdly, let us look at the availability of paramedics on the Sunshine Coast. I thank the member for Noosa for tabling the document that he did in question time this morning. Today, 6 October, there are only nine intensive care paramedics on the Sunshine Coast. There is one at Gympie, one at Cooroy, one at Noosa, one at Maroochydore South, two at the helipad, one at Kawana South and one at Caloundra. There are none at Coolumb, none at Nambour, none at Maroochydore, none at Kawana, none at Buderim and none at Beerwah or Mooloolah. That document alone indicates that the state of the health system on the Sunshine Coast is an absolute and utter disgrace. Combine the factors of access block, lack of paramedics and lack of hospital beds and what do you get? You get a disaster waiting to happen, and it crystallised yesterday morning.

Yesterday's sad development is clearly an indication of a system in crisis. But it is going to get worse because this government is not prepared to put the money in to build the Sunshine Coast University Hospital on time that it committed to do during the election campaign. That new hospital had an ED capacity of 50 bays in 2014-15. That time line has blown out by at least another two to three years. How many more people on the Sunshine Coast are going to die because of this government's inability to provide health services to the residents of the Sunshine Coast?

Let us look at one point in relation to the health minister and how he manages his portfolio. I asked the health minister to advise how many patients had passed away in the EDs across Queensland from 2004-05 to the present day in categories 1 to 5. One would have thought one of the first things the health minister would do is gather the information that he or she needed to ensure the EDs worked effectively. His response was, 'I do not propose to divert Queensland Health staff away from their duties of providing health services to Queenslanders in order to undertake this clerical task for the member.' This clerical task! He does not even know the number of people who have passed away in EDs in the past four or five years. Not only that, on 1 July 2007 it became law in this state for the Health Quality and Complaints Commission to be advised of every person who passed away in an ED in this state. Does this minister not even know the legislation that governs his portfolio? He cannot even advise the parliament or the people of Queensland how many people have passed away in an ED. It is an absolute disgrace.

(Time expired)

Transition From Care Project

Mr MOORHEAD (Waterford—ALP) (11.54 am): The Bligh government is delivering on its Q2 target to build a fair Queensland with the transition from care project. The transition from care project is a joint initiative between the Department of Communities' Child Safety Services and the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation.

I was fortunate to be able to officially launch the project in the Logan and Goodna area on 24 September. It was great to see at the launch the support of many local non-government organisations as well as government agencies that work in this area, whether they be federal agencies such as Centrelink and the Child Support Agency or an array of government departments that are assisting Child Safety Services to deliver the transition from care project.

The transition from care project will support young people by preparing them for exiting care and transitioning to independent life as young adults. The project will see \$500,000 provided to Life Without Barriers to support and mentor young people who are supported by the Beenleigh, Logan and Goodna child safety offices. This project will help 90 young people across this zone through intensive case management.

The program will help young people to access education and training, housing and health services and to overcome personal challenges impeding their success in getting a job, as well as deal with the personal issues around their transition from care. The project will also help young people to develop their sense of independence, purpose, responsibility and self-worth. The program will ensure that young people have practical life skills, are able to build social relationships, find accommodation and receive health and income support with the support of the organisation funded by this project. This project is an intensive, short-term intervention but will help young people reach their goals through individual skills assessments, one-on-one planning and support, as well as group training.

At the launch, Alicia Pont, the team leader of the Life Without Barriers team working on this project, had some inspiring stories about how this program has been able to not only lift the expectations of young people in care but also to support young people to meet their goals, whether that be employment, vocational training or tertiary education. But the best testimony for the program came from two young people in care. These young people have participated in the program and are working towards their financial, employment and social independence. One of the participants said to the

gathered audience, 'Don't feel sorry for kids in care.' In my speech I was proud to be able to say that this program is not about feeling sorry for kids in care but about realising that young people in care have the same potential as other kids who were brought up in their own family environment but with one or two more barriers in achieving that potential.

One key difference between young people who have left care and other young adults is that young people often live at home these days until their early 20s and their movement towards independence usually involves a long transitional period during which they may leave and return home multiple times. This is a safety net of a secure and supportive family and related support network that is not always available to young people who have been in care on a long-term basis, particularly where they have experienced numerous placements during their time in out-of-home care. The program will also support carers by not only helping young people in their care through this time of transition but also providing some break from their normal caring activities.

This program is a recognition by government of two important principles: first, that we need to do more than simply deliver services to people—we need to tailor services to their individual needs and work with them; and, second, that the investment in the potential of these young people is money well spent. This is about early intervention, prevention and support.

I congratulate the Treasurer and the Minister for Child Safety on this program but also recognise that this is an initiative commenced under the oversight of the member for Albert in her time as minister for child safety and the member for Logan, now the Speaker, in his time as the minister for employment and industrial relations. Congratulations to the team at Life Without Barriers on delivering this great project on behalf of the state government. I wish them well.

Sale of Public Assets

Ms SIMPSON (Maroochydore—LNP) (11.59 am): After listening to the transport minister this morning, I am now aware of a new Queensland government tunnel project: Minister Nolan digging a hole for herself trying to explain the inexplicable—her government's asset sales and affected jobs and services in Queensland Rail. The minister's defence of the dismantling of the rail freight system on the Mount Isa line and calling it 'reform' saw her descend even further into her self-made hole. Then she claimed it was all okay because the freight could go on the road, as there was road capacity. Clearly she has not been driving on those roads lately. Then she went on to tell the rail workers who are wondering about their future as these rail freight depots close—and potentially there will be further closures in Queensland under this government—that they have rolled gold conditions, so what should they be worrying about? This comes from a minister who recently refused to guarantee workers' jobs with her own job.

I turn to the issue which has caused this desperate and poorly considered fire sale of state assets against the wishes of Queenslanders and without their consent—the management of the Queensland economy and the poor management of desperately needed infrastructure. It does not matter how much money you give a Labor government; it just cannot handle it, but boy it is good at spin. However, spin will not save South-East Queensland from traffic gridlock or the failure of the rail system as it rapidly approaches the looming 2016 capacity constraint—a constraint that may be reached even earlier. Nowhere is this more evident than the farce which the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan has become. It is a piece of puffery, having blown out in cost by 280 per cent since it was launched in 2005 from \$32 billion to \$124 billion. A significant portion of this is in transport and main roads. These projects have grown from \$25 billion to \$95 billion on paper and delivery times have been pushed out. I will quote a few examples.

The recently completed Bundaberg Ring Road had an initial budget of \$42 million, but within one year this had blown out by \$50 million. Then we saw a blow-out in dates, such as the completion date for the Yamanto-Ebenezer section, which has been put back from 2014-15 to 2018-19. The Tugun bypass blew its budget by nearly \$390 million. I am going to table a list of projects whose costs have blown out in an analysis of the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan. We asked the government when the SEQIPP was tabled to also table a document outlining what had changed in that program, but it refused to do so. It basically said, 'Go and read it.' Well, we have read it and we have added up the figures. No wonder the government did not want to put out any spin in regard to the significant cost blow-outs. This is really what is at the heart of this government's poor management of infrastructure—poor planning. It just cannot manage it. Then what happens is the government sneakily resequences, changes the scope and does not tell the public. Meanwhile Queensland continues to grow, and projects which have not been properly costed and scoped are pushed further and further into the future, without a proper analysis to look at the best way to meet the needs of the growth in a timely way.

The SEQIPP has become aspirational rather than operational. It is testament to this government's failure to plan well. It is also an indication of projects which have significantly blown their costs. Then we see other projects pushed off the agenda without an announcement from the government. I table this document as a piece of analysis of SEQIPP.

Tabled paper: Document listing transport project costs [[1004](#)].

When one water project alone blows its budget by \$800 million, is it any wonder we see other much needed projects, particularly in transport and main roads, pushed off the agenda without a program to bring them on, to do them with the right budget and the right scope so that we have real planning to meet the growth of Queensland?

Older Parent Carers

Mr CHOI (Capalaba—ALP) (12.04 pm): Parents caring for a child with a disability at some point have to come to the realisation that, as they get older, it becomes increasingly difficult to care for their loved one. This is a serious issue within the disability sector. However, it is one that has been addressed by strong leadership and a clear vision from the Bligh and Rudd governments. After years of neglect from the Howard Liberal government, older parent carers in Queensland are now benefiting from almost 20 per cent of the Rudd government's \$100 million commitment to improve access to housing for people with a disability.

In July the Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs paid a visit to my electorate to announce more than \$1.2 million to build accommodation for 10 people with disability who have ageing carers. Share Bayside received \$800,000 and the St Vincent de Paul Society ClareHaven project at Alexandra Hills received more than \$453,000 to build two apartment complexes. The serious challenges faced by our ageing carers cannot be overstated. I have had carers in their late 60s come into my office to tell me they are worried sick about the future of their disabled child—and, on a few occasions, their disabled children. It is, on the one hand, humbling to see the love and sense of duty of the parents doing everything their ageing bodies can to continue to provide the care and minute-by-minute tasks to ensure those they look after receive the best care they can. But, on the other hand, their future prospects are uncertain and, at best, doubtful.

That is why I am so pleased that the Minister for Disability Services again visited the Redlands at a Centacare holiday options respite home facility at Victoria Point last week. Under the \$4.2 million respite for older parent carer initiative, which funds 22 respite service providers across 25 locations in Queensland, Centacare receives \$101,000 recurrently. Of this amount, some \$33,000 is provided to support transitional planning activities for older carers. This is significant in assisting carers to plan for the future of the people they care for. The remaining amount of \$68,000 is provided to deliver in-home respite services to older carers. Up to 20 families are supported under this initiative in the Redlands area alone. The respite house at Victoria Point which I visited with the minister is funded \$321,000 recurrently to provide centre based respite. Up to 40 families receive respite support with this funding.

It is easy to speak to the House about funding announcements, figures and targets. It is much more difficult to convey to the House the impact these initiatives have on the lives of individuals and their families. During the visit a father of one of the holiday options respite home clients told me about the difference the respite house had made not only to his daughter's life but also to his wife's and, his other child's life and to the dynamics of the family. In a period of just 18 months his daughter's passion and enthusiasm for life has changed. She has gained a new level of independence thanks to the Centacare staff and the planning and training programs made possible by the Bligh government's funding. Above all, he is increasingly gaining more peace of mind for his daughter's future.

The minister is currently leading discussions on the 10-year plan for disability services. The plan focuses on driving our community towards one that is inclusive of disability and void of any barriers. The minister said—and I concur—that if we can walk into a house or a respite centre and say, 'I could live here,' then we are on the right track. Centacare has emulated this ambition at its holiday respite home and it is clear it has changed lives for the better. The house is a home for the families who use it, and it is a place anyone could live in comfortably.

Both the Bligh and Rudd governments are committed to improving the lives of people with a disability. Both governments acknowledge the need for better housing options for those with a disability, and in the spirit of cooperation we have been able to make this a reality. As part of the government's Towards Q2 strategy, we are delivering fairer and safer communities, particularly for ageing parents caring for loved ones with a disability.

NAPLAN Results

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—LNP) (12.08 pm): Recently we saw the publication of Queensland's national testing, the NAPLAN, results. Whichever way you look at it, Queensland drags the chain in Australia. If we look at students who are struggling, Queensland can lay claim to being one of the top states. If we look at children who are excelling, we can lay claim to being the bottom state.

I would like to make a few comments in relation to some of the things that have been said this morning. We heard the minister get up and try to justify one of the causes of Queensland children struggling in the way they are—that is, oversized classes—by saying the maximum class size was just a guide and that all of a sudden in Queensland there is an outbreak of teachers and headmasters who

want to teach in oversized classes and choose to expand classes to above the 25, 28 and 25 maximums at the different stages of learning. This is absolute drivel and shows how out of touch this minister and this government is with the people who actually teach our kids.

These are maximum class sizes. They are not just a guide. If we look at the figures for prep year in Queensland we find that there are an additional 1,000 kiddies in oversized prep classes this year compared to last year. It is an explosion of oversized prep classes. It is a load of garbage to suggest that the teachers and the headmasters of this state are asking to have oversized classes and the minister is doing them a favour by allowing them to have them. What a load of drivel.

We should look at something that I know the government will never tell us about—that is, the children in Queensland who achieved the highest levels in NAPLAN. There is a band that denotes the highest performance in NAPLAN for the 20 areas tested across the four years of learning. In 13 of the 20 areas Queensland came at the bottom and in the rest we were second bottom or thereabouts. In many cases, three times the proportion of kids in other states reached the top band than were able to reach it in Queensland.

I have never heard the government mention the kids in this state who perform well or explain why there are so few of them. We need to look at the other end—that is, the kids who are struggling and just reach the minimum standard. I think this minister has a problem understanding what is a maximum, what is a minimum and what is a guideline. If we look at the kids who have either barely reached the minimum standard or are unable to reach the minimum standard, we find that 100,000 Queensland students are at or below the minimum standard. That is between a quarter and a third of the students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9. That is a disgrace however this government chooses to spin it. Then we have the government's response to this problem that is driven by media necessity. Things like flying squads and the like are ill thought out and have no basis behind them.

The government is moving to close quite a number of Queensland schools. I made up a list that it is proposing to close and had a look at their NAPLAN results. This is how far off the mark this government is in terms of education. They are in the throes of closing many of the state's best performing schools. If we look at Blackstone State School, we find that for most criteria 100 per cent of children reached the benchmark. We could also look at Lindum and Richlands state schools. We are sending flying squads into schools that have achieved 100 per cent of the benchmark.

Cannabis Use

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (12.14 pm): I rise today to speak on a matter that always creates public and policy division—a matter which in isolation is dealt with by penalty but which is far more insidious in its consequences, particularly for young people. I speak about the use of cannabis which, as we know, is the most widely used illicit substance in Australia and the drug that is associated with many and varied health and social costs.

As I have said in this place, recently the Social Development Committee attended the National Cannabis Conference in Sydney where we heard firsthand the latest evidence and research into cannabis use. It was actually a national conversation where leading drug and policy researchers, advocates and commentators came to talk about cannabis law and policy. We heard about the challenges involved in formulating cannabis policy, how penalties could be used to reduce harm and a case for ending prohibition despite the fact that there really is no public appetite for a law change.

While the legal status gets the most public attention and discussion, I believe the conversation needs to be much more than that to provide accurate information about cannabis and its harm. We must address the priority issues and the most effective ways to address cannabis harm like looking at drugs in schools, addiction treatment services, youth and health promotion and, importantly, the role of the media in advancing policy discussion.

If we are to reduce demand for cannabis use by preventing uptake we must provide the community with high-quality, evidence based information in order to develop new interventions and improve the capacity of service providers if we want them to be more effective. While there is still limited quantity and quality of research into the health effects, we can still identify probable adverse health effects like an increased risk of motor vehicle crashes if users drive while intoxicated, development of dependence, increased respiratory symptoms, poorer mental health including increased risks of psychosis and the possibility of depression, and poorer adolescent development including early school leaving and an increased risk of using other illicit drugs.

There is less research into the cost and benefits of cannabis policies because internationally a narrow range of policy approaches is available for evaluation. Public debate about cannabis policy has often been radically simplified by the media. The public has been invited to believe either that cannabis use is harmless and hence should be decriminalised if not legalised or that cannabis is harmful to health so it should continue to be prohibited. As a consequence, public debate often presents highly polarised evaluations of the health effects of cannabis. What we tend to do is ignore any alternative explanations.

With this in mind, let me bring to the attention of the House a very positive and progressive project in the Indigenous communities of Far North Queensland. The ongoing Weed It Out program is a collaboration between James Cook University researchers, the Queensland Police Service and Indigenous communities. The first stage has been a great success and hopefully will ultimately lead to a reduction in cannabis supply and usage through education and consultation. Recommendations to combat cannabis use in Indigenous communities will also be produced and sent to the assistant police commissioner for Far North Queensland.

Ten years ago a study by Alan Clough from JCU of remote Indigenous communities in Arnhem Land illustrated 60 to 80 per cent weekly cannabis usage among males aged 13 to 34 years and 35 to 60 per cent weekly cannabis usage among women aged 13 to 34. Preliminary research in Far North Queensland of Cape York and Torres Strait communities yielded similar usage rates. Today, the negative effects of cannabis use are well researched and understood, including issues such as addiction, depression and psychosis. This places cannabis as a very serious issue for Indigenous communities which are also working really hard to try to combat alcohol abuse. Many communities say that cannabis is a cloud over their communities.

The Weed It Out program is the brainchild of Detective Senior Sergeant Mick Dowie of the Queensland Police Service and Associate Professor Alan Clough of James Cook University. The unique program is based upon sound research and comprehensive community consultation.

In the short period I have left I would just like to say that the QPS should be congratulated for taking a proactive approach to minimising harm from cannabis misuse in Cape York and Torres Strait island communities which I believe is unusual, if not unique. Its uniqueness lies in that a lead agency of government has sought to provide or foster the three components of harm minimisation—controlling the supply of harmful drugs combined with demand reduction, prevention and treatment strategies that are population based.

The QPS has also recognised the need for sound research evidence and comprehensive community consultation to provide an evidence base for evaluating this combination of strategies. The consultation that has been held has identified many themes including concerns about the future, what actions need to be taken, combating dealers, future directions and so on. This is a great program.

(Time expired)

Dual Electrical Instrumentation Apprenticeship

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (12.19 pm): During the workforce summit in May 2009, a participant reported that his industrial site was experiencing significant difficulties with the recent changes made to the dual electrical instrumentation apprenticeship, which has been in existence for a number of years with the course 39036 QLD Certificate III in Electrotechnology Maintenance (Systems and Instrumentation). They also expressed frustration with the perceived lack of consultation with regional based organisations prior to the changes.

Through consultation with ESQ, industry and unions had agreed on a Certificate IV in Electrical—Instrumentation qualification to replace the old package. Subsequently, TAFE built the new course under electrical licensing requirements but unfortunately the accreditation group in DET has indicated that it will not accredit the course on the grounds that it does not meet framework guidelines as it duplicates UEE30807, Certificate III in Electrotechnology Electrician.

There is no doubt that the proposed course will duplicate UEE30807 as it is a requirement for the electrical licence. If any units were removed from the course, apprentices would not receive an electrical licence in any state as the qualification would not meet the 66 essential requirements as mandated by the regulator. Also, apprentices would not be eligible for a workers permit and therefore not be able to work on any electrical equipment or apparatus. A local resident advised me—

About 18 months ago a perfectly good apprenticeship qualification which was the dual trade electrical instrumentation 5 year apprenticeship, was thrown out. This was because the whole electrical thing was to become a national qualification and competency based. The first problem is that no-one consulted with industry in Central Queensland and we were just advised that this was happening. Initially there was no replacement package and we were promised one late last year for the sign up in January/February 2009. Unfortunately that didn't occur which has put BSL, QAL, Rio etc in a difficult position as they advertised these dual trade apprenticeships, signed the kids up and then had to cancel them and re-sign them into just a straight electrical apprenticeship.

The dual trade is very important to industry up here—vital in fact!! Also there is a general problem with the electrical trade at the moment (which could have something to do with the uncertainty around the new package). The usual numbers of first years signed up in the first 6 months of any year in CQ are about 150. In the first 6 months of this year we only had 49 signed up! If you extrapolate that out over the next 4-5 years you can see that we are going to have a very serious problem. Added to this is that TAFE are only registered to deliver stage 1 of the new package! Apparently there are problems around stage 2, 3 and 4 and currently I understand that no-one can deliver any more than stage 2. You would think that it would be all locked down before they discarded the old package!! Anyway, the replacement dual trade has gone from 2 certificates 3 to 1 certificate 4 which is ok except that one of the prerequisites for one of the competencies requires you to have your cert 3 in electrical!! So in effect you need to do your 4 year electrical cert 3 trade and then sign into the cert 4 which is probably not going to be funded under user choice and will probably take another 3-4 years to complete at a cost of about \$500 per week each apprentice! So, between QAL, BSL, Rio, TAFE, GAGAL, GEA ... something had to be done. A Cert 4 package has been developed that is acceptable to industry and TAFE

that will deliver mostly what the old package did—a licensed electrical trade and the instrumentation trade. This has been submitted to the accreditation people at DET but not approved on the grounds that there is a certificate 3 embedded in it. Well there has to be for these apprentices to get their electrical licenses!

It wasn't until Energy Skills Queensland came up to Gladstone and visited a group of angry tradespeople from—

and the participant goes on to name the major industries—

who needed this dual trade outcome for their apprentices that they—

that is, ESQ—

fully understood the problem. This trade is also vital for the LNG industry. We (CQ) are going to need to be on the ball with this if our young people are to benefit from the opportunities presented by LNG.

Ideally what we really need is the old qualification reinstated.

This well-informed resident makes a most reasonable recommendation and I would ask the minister to consider this situation closely as it directly impacts on development in Central Queensland and on the ability of apprentices—young and mature age—to achieve their goals.

Gold Coast, Housing Affordability

Ms CROFT (Broadwater—ALP) (12.23 pm): Everyone deserves to live in accommodation that is safe and comfortable and that meets the person's needs, such as proximity to schools, transport and medical services. The Gold Coast offers a lifestyle that attracts many new residents each year. Many move to the Gold Coast because of the availability of tourism and hospitality employment, many move to be closer to family members and many move to Queensland for health reasons.

According to the regional social housing profile developed by the Department of Communities's Housing and Homelessness Services using 2006 data, the number of households increased by 19 per cent between 2001 and 2006. The profile report identified that household numbers on the Gold Coast are expected to increase by a further 63 per cent between 2006 and 2026 which, it states, is a more rapid rate of growth than the expected Queensland rate of 50 per cent.

People need to live somewhere, and the public generally rely on options of purchasing or renting to meet this need. For many Queenslanders, purchasing their own home is not an option that is achievable and renting is the most likely accommodation choice. According to the Department of Communities report, rents on the Gold Coast are between \$40 to \$50 per week higher than other Queensland average rents and are among the highest rents in the state.

For approximately 22,000 Gold Coast residents, meeting rental costs is becoming a weekly struggle, with 30 per cent of wages being spent on accommodation alone. For many people the reality of this scenario is not so clear. Some people think this scenario is only relevant to the unemployed or single young people. What I know is that there are many people in my electorate who struggle in this day and age to find good-quality affordable rental accommodation on the Gold Coast.

For many years now people have been coming to see me at my electorate office for advice in obtaining housing accommodation that is suitable to their needs. The people whom I have met with and continue to meet with are elderly people—couples and single seniors—people with disabilities, migrants, people whose circumstances have changed—for example, they invested their money in money-making schemes and lost everything—people who have suffered workplace accidents and have had to accept lower paid work, single women with children with disabilities, and women who have moved from the convenience of a two-income arrangement due to domestic violence.

The increasing rental costs and the increasing demand for housing on the Gold Coast have impacted on people living in all areas of the Gold Coast, and this problem now impacts on people who previously would not have sought public housing accommodation. To address this issue, the federal government established the National Rental Affordability Scheme in July 2008 to increase the supply of affordable rental housing. The scheme offers incentives for developers and non-government agencies to build new affordable homes for rent at 20 per cent below market rent. The Queensland government supports the NRAS. The state government will provide \$2,000 per dwelling per annum for 10 years for Queensland based projects on the condition that the dwelling funded under the scheme is rented to tenants referred from the housing register. Many tenants referred to NRAS accommodation are people who could meet the cost of private rental some years ago.

For a person to be eligible for NRAS supported accommodation, they must have incomes significantly higher than people who would normally qualify for social housing. Social housing continues to provide for the people in our communities who are in the highest need of accommodation. The government is committed to helping people access safe and affordable housing, and I am pleased that the Gold Coast City Council has finally come on board. The Gold Coast knows that the sustainability of the Gold Coast relies on tourism and hospitality workers being able to live and work in our communities, and it has acknowledged this. The Gold Coast City Council has a bold vision target—that from 2012,

20 per cent of all new housing on the Gold Coast will be affordable. I understand that 158 dwellings on the Gold Coast have now been approved for affordable housing and are expected to be tenanted by June 2010.

It seems that the only person on the Gold Coast who does not approve of NRAS is the federal member for Fadden, whose electorate incorporates Coombabah, which has been identified as one of the areas that has the Gold Coast's highest proportion of rental stress. He recently commented in parliament about a development application in my electorate. Mr Robert does not seem at all concerned with working through the development application, in terms of issues such as traffic access, with the local government but insisted on fuelling the debate and the perception that people who will be tenanted in this development, should it be approved, are not worthy of a roof over their heads or are not worthy of living in a unit that is close to a GP and close to transport. I call on the member for Fadden to outline what he plans on doing for the residents of the Gold Coast when they come to him seeking his support and assistance with finding affordable housing on the Gold Coast.

(Time expired)

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Minister for Trade) (12.30 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend for particular purposes the Land Act 1994, the Land Title Act 1994 and the Vegetation Management Act 1999, to repeal the Vegetation Management (Regrowth Clearing Moratorium) Act 2009 and to make consequential and minor amendments to the Integrated Planning Act 1997, the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (Jurisdiction Provisions) Amendment Act 2009, the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971 and the Sustainable Planning Act 2009. 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: Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill [\[1005\]](#).

Tabled paper: Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, explanatory notes [\[1006\]](#).

Second Reading

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Minister for Trade) (12.30 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Today I introduce the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2009 to deliver on this government's election commitment to consult on and deliver new protection measures for endangered regional ecosystems. It also delivers on this government's commitment to protecting the Great Barrier Reef and will assist in reducing the level of sediments flowing out to the reef.

This bill also modernises and streamlines the operation of the Vegetation Management Act 1999 by providing clear review and appeal rights for vegetation mapping decisions and by simplifying mapping processes. This bill also amends the Land Act 1994 and the Land Title Act 1994 to extend the stay on the registration of tidal boundary plans of subdivision for a further six months. The provisions of this bill relating to regrowth vegetation will take effect from 8 October 2009 immediately following the end of the moratorium on regrowth clearing. This is to make sure there is continuity of protection of high-value regrowth while the bill is considered in parliament.

I have introduced the bill at this time so that the full period of the moratorium could be used for consultation and for development of materials to support rural landholders to understand and apply the new arrangements. The remaining sections of the bill will commence on assent.

In this bill, the government is honouring its commitment to maintain landholder certainty for category X areas on property maps of assessable vegetation, or PMAVs. The new regulations will not affect landholders who have a category X area on a certified PMAV or for category X on PMAVs certified as a result of an application lodged before 8 October 2009. The new arrangements will also not affect clearing regrowth that is a natural and ordinary consequence of valid development approvals and development approvals that are a result of applications made before 8 October 2009.

The new measures will apply to forest quality regional ecosystems on non-urban freehold and leasehold land that have not been cleared since 31 December 1989. It will also apply to all native regrowth vegetation within 50 metres of watercourses in the priority Great Barrier Reef catchments of the Burdekin, Mackay-Whitsundays and the Wet Tropics. This means that areas of younger regrowth that were protected during the moratorium will not be subject to the new regrowth regulations. This responds to concerns of landholders and rural industry groups about land that is currently under production.

To better protect vulnerable landscapes with erodible slopes, riparian areas and essential habitat, the map will show of concern and least concern regrowth as well as endangered regrowth. The new regrowth regulations will cover about 3.7 million hectares of high-value regrowth and regrowth vegetation within 50 metres of watercourses in priority reef catchments. Approximately 1.4 million hectares of this is already locked in as category X areas on PMAVs and, as I have already mentioned, landholders will be able to continue to manage these areas without requiring approval.

Prior to the moratorium on clearing endangered regrowth, less than 240,000 hectares of regrowth vegetation were subject to regulations controlling clearing. The new laws will see an additional approximately one million hectares protected, with a total of 2.3 million hectares subject to minimum standards and best practice management under a code. The code will cover high-value regrowth on freehold land, Indigenous land and agricultural and grazing leasehold land as well as native vegetation along watercourses in priority reef catchments. Other than the reef riparian areas, clearing of this type of regrowth was already regulated on leasehold land. This bill does not change the level of protection for this regrowth on leasehold land. It will make the vegetation that is protected the same on freehold and leasehold land and provide a simpler, less administrative process for lessees.

This bill achieves this through a new regrowth vegetation code. On both leasehold land and freehold land, clearing in accordance with the new regrowth vegetation code will be exempt development, minimising administration and delays for landholders. This means that no permit is required under the new regrowth arrangements. The legislation will require landholders to give notice of the intention to clear in an area. This will be a simple process but a necessary one to assist the government to track the effectiveness of the arrangements and, importantly for landholders, to avoid unnecessary investigations of clearing. Because this requirement to give notice is so important to the ongoing effectiveness of the arrangements for both landholders and for the government, a penalty provision applies for failure to give the notice.

The regrowth vegetation code will protect endangered regional ecosystems, vegetation on erodible slopes, habitat for threatened species and riparian vegetation in areas that have not been recleared since 31 December 1989. On leasehold land it will also protect of concern regrowth areas, consistent with the rules that have applied for many years. It will also protect the most important regrowth vegetation within 50 metres of watercourses in the priority reef catchments. It allows for regrowth clearing in other areas and, therefore, will not impact on landholders who have been doing the right thing for the environment.

The code has been written in a way to make it clear what can and cannot be done and also includes voluntary best management practices for landholders who would like to go above and beyond the minimum requirements. The code also allows for clearing for weed control, thinning and encroachment. It gives certainty about a landholder's duty of care when managing regrowth. Clearing that does not comply with the code will be prohibited development and will be subject to compliance measures.

As with the moratorium, a number of important exemptions will continue to apply to regrowth regulated by this bill. Exemptions include burning vegetation to reduce hazardous fuel loads, clearing firebreaks to protect infrastructure, clearing for mining and roads and clearing in urban areas for urban purposes. Two new exemptions to the regrowth arrangements have also been included, allowing clearing for projects of significant local, regional or state benefit and clearing for extractive industries in a key resource area.

The government has undertaken extensive consultation with peak rural, industry and conservation groups and individual landholders, receiving almost 400 submissions during the moratorium. The government has listened to landholders and this bill will ensure that productive farming and rural industry practices can continue while protecting the highest value regrowth in our landscape. As a consequence of listening to landholders and stakeholders, including the Australian Bankers Association and the major rural lenders, this bill includes three particular provisions related to productivity and practical land management.

The first is a hardship provision. If an agricultural enterprise is demonstrated to have become unviable because of these new protections, the director-general of the Department of Environment and Resource Management will be able to authorise the clearing of regrowth that would otherwise be protected to ameliorate the effect on the business. The second practical provision will allow some small

and isolated areas of protected vegetation to be cleared if a larger area of unregulated regrowth is protected in exchange. This will allow landholders to consolidate areas of vegetation on their properties so that they can be more practically managed.

Thirdly, and as I have already mentioned, the new protection is limited to regrowth that has not been cleared since the end of 1989. Because this vegetation has not been cleared for 20 years, it is more likely to be making a significant contribution to the environmental health of Queensland and it is less likely to be critical to business viability.

New and improved techniques have been used to map this regrowth to ensure the highest value vegetation is protected. These maps are available free of charge from the Department of Environment and Resource Management's website. More than 80,000 maps have been downloaded from this website during the moratorium.

This government has allocated \$2 million to deliver the new regrowth measures in partnership with stakeholder groups such as AgForce. I will be working quickly to discuss with stakeholders the most effective way to implement the new regrowth regulations and help landholders understand their responsibilities. As well, the department has developed guides, fact sheets and website information to help landholders understand and follow the code. Landholders will also be able to talk to departmental staff who can explain the new rules. I have made a commitment to remake the code within 12 months and in that time to work with stakeholders to incorporate industry best management practices.

Protection of the Great Barrier Reef is a priority for this government and this bill will protect riparian or watercourse vegetation in priority reef catchments. These watercourses will also be shown on the regrowth map so landholders are clear about where the regrowth regulations apply.

This bill contains retrospective provisions to prevent pre-emptive clearing of previously unregulated regrowth. Retrospectivity is justified in this case where the protection of Queensland's environment for all outweighs the interest of an individual. This bill does not impose retrospective criminal liability for protected regrowth. It does, however, provide for the department to require landholders who clear protected regrowth during the retrospective period to allow the vegetation to regrow.

In the longer term, restoration of cleared vegetation will be only one of a range of mechanisms to address unauthorised clearing. Depending on the scale and intent of an offence, the department may issue a warning letter or an infringement notice or proceed to prosecution in court. The priority for the department's compliance strategy will be ensuring that information and tools are available for landholders to do the right thing. It is necessary to limit appeal rights during the retrospective period of the bill so vulnerable regrowth remains protected. This bill limits appeal rights of landholders if the chief executive does not agree to make PMAVs during the retrospective period. If the chief executive approved PMAVs that were lodged during this period, regrowth intended to be protected by this bill may be shown as category X areas and be able to be cleared.

Other important parts of this bill are provisions to streamline operation of the Vegetation Management Act. The changes are based on client feedback and experience gained during the last five years of the current framework. This bill will streamline mapping by making PMAVs the only way to amend clearing regulations regarding regrowth identified on the regional ecosystem, remnant and regrowth maps. If a landholder disagrees with the mapping they can submit a PMAV application which locks in areas that do not contain remnant vegetation or regrowth regulated by this bill. This bill removes rights of appeal on the decision to approve regrowth and regional ecosystem maps but does this only because new review and appeal provisions are provided for PMAVs. If a landholder disagrees with a mapping decision, this bill provides for a right of review and for right of appeal on the merits of the decision at the property level.

Other features include providing a clear head of power for all vegetation management codes and policies to improve their transparency and ensure that projects of significant state, regional and local benefit are given special consideration. Amendments will also make the policy related to the provision of vegetation offsets less onerous and more flexible.

This bill also contains amendments to the Land Act 1994 and the Land Title Act 1994 related to the stay on registration of tidal boundary plans. In November 2005, the government stopped the registration of tidal boundary plans of subdivision until November 2008. This was extended in 2008 for a further 12 months, until 8 November 2009. The stay was introduced after concerns were raised about beaches becoming private property and that, as a consequence, public access could be restricted and fragile dune areas could be damaged. The stay was introduced to enable the former department of natural resources and water to research and develop solutions for government consideration and consultation. The stay protects the public interest in tidal lands by controlling the registration of survey plans with a tidal boundary. Extending the stay for a further six months allows for finalisation of the legislative amendments and consideration of key stakeholder feedback in relation to this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Seeney, adjourned.

SOUTH-EAST QUEENSLAND (DISTRIBUTION AND RETAIL RESTRUCTURING) AND NATURAL RESOURCES PROVISIONS BILL

First Reading

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Minister for Trade) (12.43 pm): I present a bill for an act to further restructure the water industry in south-east Queensland and to make consequential amendments to the South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) Act 2007 and the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Regulation 2007 and to amend the Land Act 1994, the Local Government (Aboriginal Lands) Act 1978, the Valuation of Land Act 1944, the Water Act 2000 and the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) 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: South-East Queensland (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) and Natural Resources Provisions Bill [\[1007\]](#).

Tabled paper: South-East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) and Natural Resources Provisions Bill, explanatory notes [\[1008\]](#).

Second Reading

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Minister for Trade) (12.43 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The South-East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) and Natural Resources Provisions Bill 2009 will facilitate the establishment of three council owned distributor-retailer entities which will take over the provision of water and waste water services presently provided by South-East Queensland local governments. This bill is the first step in the second stage of reform of institutional arrangements for urban water supply in South-East Queensland. The first stage of reform involved the establishment of the bulk water supply, transport and manufactured water entities and also the SEQ Water Grid Manager making the SEQ Water Market operational on 1 July 2008.

In May this year I challenged councils to come forward with a model that provided for reforms in the retail and distribution sectors of the urban water sector in South-East Queensland that would deliver on the government's core objectives including improved region-wide service delivery to customers; economic regulation ensuring the lowest possible prices; asset regulation ensuring high-quality service; efficiency gains through economies of scale; and the establishment of commercially focused entities accountable to council owners, ratepayers and customers.

The model put forward by councils meets these objectives through establishing three vertically integrated, commercially focused entities that will be created to provide water and waste water services across the following three clusters of South-East Queensland local governments: the first being Brisbane, Ipswich, Scenic Rim, Somerset and Lockyer Valley; the second being Gold Coast, Logan and Redlands; and the third being Sunshine Coast and Moreton Bay. The state supports the model put forward by South-East Queensland councils, and this bill ensures the timely delivery of that outcome.

This bill will facilitate establishment of the three entities. It provides that the entities will be owned by South-East Queensland councils and establishes a framework under which the rights and obligations of councils are clearly defined.

The assets will continue to be owned by councils through the entities. However, the reforms will ensure that they are managed efficiently and effectively and support delivery of the South-East Queensland regional plans and South East Queensland Water Strategy. This bill will enable the transfer of functions, assets and liabilities for water distribution and waste water treatment from the current 10 South-East Queensland local governments to the new distributor-retailer entities. This bill also gives legislative recognition to the employee framework which will protect the interests of South-East Queensland local government employees who may be affected either directly or indirectly by the reform process.

The commencement of this bill will enable South-East Queensland councils to continue to take steps necessary to enable the entities to be established and to take over South-East Queensland local government functions related to water reticulation, sewage collection and treatment and water retail and to allow these entities to become operational by July 2010.

When complete, the reforms to South-East Queensland's water market will significantly simplify the way in which water is managed in the region by reducing the number of organisations involved in managing our water supply from 21 to seven specialist entities. It will deliver for customers regionally consistent and guaranteed service standards, consistent billing and improved complaints handling and independent dispute resolution.

Another important amendment in this bill is to amend the Local Government (Aboriginal Lands) Act 1878 which will extend the Aurukun and Mornington shire leases until 2059. This amendment is being made so that these communities can secure significant housing funding from the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing. Both communities are priority cases for assistance but were precluded from offering 40-year subleases to the Australian government because their own leases expire in 2029. The change also gives these councils the ability to attract other services and investment to their communities.

I will now outline the cost recovery provisions and other amendments to the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008 that are contained in this bill. Among other things, the Water Supply Act regulates drinking water service providers and recycled water entities primarily to protect public health. These provisions will enable the regulator to recover reasonable costs of an investigation from a drinking water service provider or recycled water entity if there has been noncompliance with the Water Supply Act. The retrospective provisions of this bill enable the recovery of the cost of the fluoride investigation at the North Pine water treatment facility.

These amendments will also enhance the ability of the regulator to respond to drinking or recycled water quality issues. This will be done by increasing the regulator's powers for obtaining and sharing information and dealing with potential, real emergency and non-urgent water quality issues which may have an adverse effect on public health. These amendments will enable the regulator to recover reasonable costs when direct action is taken in dealing with an adverse health matter for an emergency or non-urgent water quality issue. These amendments will also allow more comprehensive reporting by the regulator and make minor refinements to the Water Supply Act.

This bill will also amend the Valuation of Land Act 1944 to give the Department of Environment and Resource Management an additional year—to 31 August 2010—to continue to issue valuations based on pre-amalgamation local government boundaries. As members are aware, the department's State Valuation Service provides statutory valuations as a basis from which local governments can set rateable values, for the Office of State Revenue to calculate land tax and for the department to determine state land rentals. The whole state is not valued each year, and valuations are based on what the property market reflects at a particular point in time.

When local governments were amalgamated in Queensland, many of the new local government areas were made up of existing areas on different levels of value. This was to have been corrected over the next two annual valuation cycles. However, the second annual valuation was postponed this year because increases in property valuations would have been an unreasonable burden on landowners already affected by the global financial situation and extreme weather conditions in Queensland.

Of the 17 local governments identified for annual valuations this year, four were amalgamated entities: the Western Downs, Southern Downs, Moreton Bay and Rockhampton regional councils. The earliest these local governments can now be valued is next year, but present legislation only authorises the department to operate on the old boundaries until the end of August 2009. This retrospective amendment will allow the department to value the remaining old local government areas that have been amalgamated in 2010, with no gap in the coverage provided by section 75M of the Valuation of Land Act.

Finally, this bill will amend the Land Act 1994 to enable the establishment of renewable energy projects such as wind farms on state leasehold land. In the present climate, more and more electricity companies are turning to wind power as a clean energy source that does not involve burning fossil fuels. Although wind farms can consist of several hundred individual turbines and cover large areas of land, many land uses such as agriculture and grazing are compatible with their use. These amendments will enable the broadening of the lease conditions on large rural leasehold properties, such as pastoral leases, to allow wind farms to co-exist with grazing and agricultural uses of state leasehold land. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Seeney, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 12.52 pm to 2.30 pm.

HEALTH PRACTITIONER REGULATION NATIONAL LAW BILL

First Reading

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for Health) (2.30 pm): I present a bill for an act providing for the adoption of a national law to establish a national registration and accreditation scheme for health practitioners. 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: Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Bill [1009].

Tabled paper: Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Bill, explanatory notes [1010].

Second Reading

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for Health) (2.30 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Bill 2009. Since 2005, Queensland has undergone an exhaustive process of significantly strengthening health practitioner registration in this state. The Bligh government is committed to patient safety and promoting a more flexible, sustainable health workforce. The health and wellbeing of the public is extremely important to this government. We can now boast the most rigorous registration standards in the country. That is why Queensland is pleased to be hosting the legislation that will create the scheme. The strongest elements of all jurisdictions will come together, for the first time ever, in a consistent set of national standards and processes for registering individual health professionals.

This bill represents a quantum leap forward in improving Australia's healthcare system for the better. The most significant amendments seek to boost public safety protection by ensuring health practitioners are suitably trained and qualified to practise in a competent and ethical manner; cut red tape to allow health professionals to work anywhere in Australia without requiring additional registration; establish a single national register for each profession that will be publicly available; simplify registration processes which currently require a person to be registered in each jurisdiction in which they wish to practise; establish nationally consistent standards for registration applying to each profession; require all registrants to have suitable professional indemnity insurance during the period of their registration—the national boards will determine minimum standards of indemnity insurance required and the insurance industry will provide the products it considers commercially necessary; require mandatory reporting of professional misconduct across all professions; and require criminal history checking of all new applicants for registration in all professions and auditing of criminal histories of existing registrants.

The national scheme proposed in this bill will commence on 1 July 2010 for 10 health professions, including: medicine, nursing and midwifery, pharmacy, physiotherapy, dentistry (consisting of dentists, dental prosthetists, dental therapists and dental hygienists), psychology, optometry, osteopathy, chiropractic and podiatry. In addition, the inclusion of a further four professions will commence on 1 July 2012, including: medical radiation practitioners, occupational therapists, Chinese medicine practitioners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners. Dental technicians and speech pathologists are currently registered in Queensland and have not yet been included in the national scheme but will continue to be registered on a state basis in Queensland. Queensland has strongly advocated for their inclusion. Further consideration of their inclusion is being given by all jurisdictions. I strongly believe in the significant benefits to practitioners and the public alike from national registration and will continue to advocate for the inclusion of dental technicians and speech pathologists in the national scheme.

It is proposed that the Health Practitioner Regulation (Administrative Arrangements) National Law Act 2008 will be repealed from 1 July 2010 and replaced with the national law scheduled to this bill. Subject to consideration by this parliament, other Australian states and territories will introduce adopting or corresponding legislation into their respective parliaments for passage in time for the national scheme to start on 1 July 2010. The third stage of legislation will be a bill that I intend to introduce into parliament early next year, which will repeal existing registration legislation and provide for all necessary consequential legislation needed to implement the national scheme on 1 July 2010.

The development of a bill such as this involves extensive consultation with stakeholders. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those stakeholders who were involved in the development of this bill. The national consistency in registration and accreditation arrangements in this bill will help to improve the availability and flexibility of the provision of health services and also will protect the public, by using the highest possible registration and accreditation standards nationwide, from potentially

harmful health outcomes. Before commending the bill to the House, therefore, I wish to reassure all members that I intend to move a motion during the consideration in detail stage of the debate seeking to suspend standing orders to allow for each of the clauses contained within the schedule to the bill to be comprehensively examined and debated. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Dr Flegg, adjourned.

EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

EDUCATION AND TRAINING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

Education Legislation Amendment Bill resumed from 16 September 2009 (see p. 2325) and Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill resumed from 4 August 2009 (see p. 1337), on motion of Mr Wilson—

That the bills be now read a second time.

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—LNP) (2.36 pm): I am pleased to rise to speak to these two bills in a cognate debate. My intention is to deal with the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2009 first and the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill 2009 subsequently. The Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2009 amends a number of existing acts of this parliament. Firstly, the amendment to the Child Care Act deals with the publication, for a three-year period on the internet, of details about child-care providers under certain circumstances. It represents a muscling up by the government against the child-care industry and child-care operators. I look forward to hearing the minister's comments in his summing-up about why the government concluded that such a muscling up was necessary and in what way the existing legislation was failing to deliver a satisfactory standard within the child-care sector.

There are two sets of circumstances under which child-care providers will be named and shamed. The first one is under circumstances where there is action against their licence as a licensed child-care provider. That would be a suspension, a modification or, in the worst cases, a cancellation. I do not think anybody would have any concern about information on those sorts of matters being made publicly available. The other group, which is going to give the industry a great deal more angst, is naming and shaming on a website for a period of three years where there have been issues involving compliance notices. Although much of the terminology in the minister's bill relates to the singular, it is my understanding that there would be a requirement for two compliance notices to be issued, notwithstanding the singular tone within the bill. The minister might confirm that in his summing-up.

Child-care centres are inspected from time to time. The authorised officer will make a judgement whether a breach for which a compliance notice is to be issued is, in the terminology of the bill, 'minor' or 'more than minor'. This seems to be a very subjective assessment. We would be very pleased to hear the minister, in his summing-up, give some additional clarity on top of what is in the explanatory notes. If two such compliance notices are issued, subject to the right of child-care providers to require a review of those notices, then they will be published as having received those compliance notices.

The sorts of infringements that are nominated in the bill as being more than minor—which for simplicity I might refer to as 'major', being the opposite of minor—would include tripping hazards, such as tree roots, and oversized classes. There can be quite a grey area in relation to some of these matters. The time frame for fixing, for example, a tree root that would be considered a tripping hazard is very short indeed.

One issue that has been raised with me by child-care centre operators is that, if a particular operator is unfortunate enough on the day of their inspection to have a staff member away ill and there is not an available staff member to replace them, they may well be breached for having oversized classes due to the illness of one of their staff members. So we would be looking for a bit of clarity from the minister in relation to whether some common sense is going to prevail, and one would hope so.

The opposition will not be opposing this particular measure. I want to make that clear. Our overriding principle is that we want to ensure the maximum level of safety for children in child care. But we are particularly concerned to see that this legislation operates in a realistic and practical way and in a way that is fair to the many people in our community who are involved in the provision of child care.

One issue that has caused a bit of angst within the child-care industry in relation to kindergarten funding is that religious denominations are not allowed to use their name in the name of the kindergarten. So you cannot refer to a kindergarten as a Catholic kindergarten, an Anglican kindergarten or a Lutheran kindergarten. This is a rule being applied by the C&K association in its dispensation of public moneys. That is not something that most people would support when a church

group operates a kindergarten. I think it is unreasonable. One would expect that if they go to the trouble and expense of providing such an important service they should be entitled to designate it with their name. But it has been raised as a concern with me that that could be considered a breach. Hopefully, in the shake-up that is coming in early childhood, that sort of thing will not continue. The minister may wish to comment on this.

The second act to be amended by this bill is the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 in relation to overseas schools being approved as 'recognised schools'. This provision will ensure that schools who apply to the Queensland government to be recognised and who teach the Queensland curriculum and presumably its successor, the Australian national curriculum, will be able to bestow Queensland qualifications. I think that in general, particularly in this day and age when so many Queenslanders work in global industries and many of them have to work in Asia or Europe or elsewhere around the world, this sort of provision seems to be a reasonable one to me.

The next act that is amended by this bill is the Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act 2002. These are, I think it would be fair to say, technical adjustments to facilitate the appropriate integration of kindergarten guidelines into the current work that the QSA does on syllabus. For example, the wording of that 2002 act is revised to give the QSA authority over syllabuses, preparatory guidelines and kindergarten guidelines. Once again, that looks to be appropriate given the changes that are happening within the kindergarten sector.

The QSA, perhaps somewhat more controversially, will be given the responsibility of documentation to implement the introduction of kindergarten education programs in existing child-care centres. I say 'somewhat more controversially' not because I see anything wrong with that—quite the contrary, I think it is an appropriate way to go. But given some of the actions and statements of the government, there is an enormous amount of confusion out there about exactly what is happening with kindergartens.

For example, the government has announced the rollout of 240 kindergartens on state school sites. Only some 20 or so sites that I have observed have actually been nominated. We have in this bill provision for the QSA to commence preparation for kindergarten education programs within child-care centres, many of which are just across the road from state schools that will also have publicly funded kindergartens built on their premises. I am strongly of the view—and perhaps the minister would care to attempt to dispel me of it—that there is considerable confusion in the government's position.

There is no clear indication of not only where the 240 kindergartens will be built but whether in fact many of those communities need a new building, given that many of them already have substantial numbers of child-care centres, some of which have excess capacity. There will, in essence, be a competition between kindergartens constructed at taxpayers' expense on state school grounds and nearby child-care facilities. So that whole area of government policy looks to me to be very confused. I must say that, in this day and age when the government's budget is extremely tight, were I the minister I would have been very tempted to audit the resources available within the existing child-care sector to see whether in fact we need to be spending taxpayers' money on new buildings on state school premises in some of these areas.

There is obviously a significant amount of confusion in relation to the introduction of universal access to kindergarten. Teachers are certainly very anxious about the qualification levels that will be expected of kindergarten teachers. There is also a fair bit of angst amongst teachers about the uncertainty of coverage of the workforce—whether it will be a teaching based union, such as the independent Teachers Union, or whether it will be an industrial union, such as the miscellaneous workers union—because, along with the uncertainty about the coverage of those teachers, there is uncertainty about what their wages and conditions will be.

Another area of considerable uncertainty in relation to the rollout of universal access to kindergarten for 3½- to 4½-year-olds is what happens to those kids after their 15 hours a week. Kindergarten, which is otherwise referred to as pre-prep, is not like prep year, where you go to school Monday to Friday. It is a 15-hour-a-week program. Currently, only about 29 per cent of children in that age group are accessing such a program. It is fair to say that a large number, perhaps even a majority, of the remaining 70 or so per cent would be in some sort of child-care arrangement at present and it is quite unclear to me who is going to have responsibility for looking after those kindergarten enrollees outside of their 15 hours and whether they will be pulled out into state constructed kindergartens and then have to deal with a second organisation for their care.

I hope that we will see some clarity, because there is a great deal of concern in the industry. One of the serious problems with this level of concern is that there is no ability to plan the future for the people who currently provide our child care and who will in many, if not most, cases be providing our kindergarten education program. If they cannot plan for the future, if they cannot plan the capital requirements they have for their centre, we will start behind the eight ball in the rollout of that program.

The other area which I have to admit I am pretty confused about—not just the kindergarten sector, and from all accounts the minister may be just as confused as I am—is the area of DECKAS funding, which is the funding based on payroll that goes to community kindergartens and C&K association kindergartens. The following statement appeared on the website of the Office for Early Childhood Education and Care—

The Office for Early Childhood Education and Care will develop a new funding model to support the implementation of universal access to kindergarten in Queensland. This work will be undertaken in collaboration with the Creche and Kindergarten Association of Queensland and other key early childhood education and care stakeholders. The model will fund access to a kindergarten program for all 3½- to 4½-year-olds with a focus on areas of high educational need and disadvantage. This will ensure all Queensland children have the best possible chance of future success at school and beyond.

The funding model will be gradually implemented commencing with all new community kindergarten services that become operational from 1 July 2009 and a selection of child care centres that engage a qualified teacher to deliver an educational program. Implementation of the new funding model is dependent on funding negotiations with the Australian Government.

1 July has come and gone and we certainly do not have a new funding model for kindergartens. Operators within the sector at this point in time have no idea how it is going to be funded, they have no idea who is going to be providing it, and they have no idea how many centres in their local area will provide a kindergarten program. I know that the minister has made some clarification that this funding model is delayed and we may hear what it is next year. The industry needs to know how the rollout of kindergarten is going to be funded. It is not acceptable to keep postponing the release of that information because that is the information on which future planning in this sector will be based.

The opposition supports the principle of universal access to kindergarten as it has been espoused in theory by the government. We want to see Queensland children get the best possible start on their education, but it is not a good start for the program when we cannot deliver any sort of certainty—in fact, even reasonable clarity—to the industry about any of the aspects that it will be going forward with. How, for example, can an independent school—of which there are currently many—which provides unfunded kindergarten programs plan their future enrolments, their future fees and their future programs when they have no idea how kindergarten will be funded? They have no idea who will be providing it in their area. They have no idea whether or not a state constructed kindergarten will be built at their local state school. It is a recipe for complete confusion.

The QSA, according to the bill, will develop resources and services for the professional development of child-care workers in centres moving to provide kindergarten programs. This is another aspect of the bill that I hope the minister might give me and the industry some clarity on, because it seems to suggest—and, again, I am hopeful that the minister will be able to dispel my fears—that child-care workers will be upgraded to being kindergarten teachers. If that is not the case—and I hope that the minister can dispel that fear—he might then explain what the professional development of child-care workers with a view to introducing kindergarten programs means.

There is a very big difference between a university trained early childhood teacher and somebody who is trained as a child-care worker. There is a difference in their training. There is a difference in their roles and what they set out to achieve for families and children. Certainly the opposition respects the professionalism and the role that both groups of child-care workers carry out, but as in so many other areas it is important to understand that there is a difference in the role and it is an important difference. We are very keen to see that kindergarten teachers who are university qualified are suitably recognised, rewarded and treated as teaching professionals in their role. I would be concerned if this role was to be watered down and the professional standard of early childhood teachers was in some way diminished.

The rollout of access to kindergarten—from the current 29 or so per cent of Queensland's 3½- to 4½-year-olds that have access to an educational program at the moment to 100 per cent—is something that is supported on this side of the House, but it certainly raises some pretty big challenges, not the least of which is where the workforce of skilled university trained early childhood teachers is going to be obtained for that sort of massive rollout. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am sure you will be aware that other states such as Victoria have high levels of participation in kindergarten programs. I think Victoria has about 85 per cent. This is one area in which Queensland is a long way behind. It is, without doubt, one of many factors in Queensland children's literacy and numeracy lagging behind other states in Australia. This is a big and very serious catch-up. I would be very interested to see that this big challenge is met in an appropriate way and not by cutting corners.

The other act to be amended by this bill was referred to in the minister's second reading speech as a minor amendment to the University of Queensland Act. When I initially looked at the bill I accepted at face value that it would be a minor amendment. But then, like other members, I received the *Legislation Alert* and read the legal advice provided to the committee from DLA Phillips Fox in relation to the so-called minor amendment to the University of Queensland Act. I have to say that I was pretty amazed by what it said. Having read a few letters of legal advice over the years, I found this letter to be couched in very strong terms. The legal advice to the government is that the two statutes that the

University of Queensland has been operating under expire and cease to exist from 1 September. The legal advice from Professor Dennis Pearce is lengthy and makes a number of key points. He says that the facts are that the statutes have expired. He says in very strong terminology—

The fiction that section 72 creates is that they have not. However, this does not mean that on 1 September 2009 the Statutes did not expire. On that day they ceased to have effect because of the operation of section 54 of the Statutory Instruments Act.

He goes on to say that he does not believe the current bill before the House adequately deals with the expiration of these statutes. They are pretty major statutes for the University of Queensland. One relates to the conferring of degrees or the withdrawal of degrees and the other relates to the levying of fees. In a whole series of very strongly worded what can only be described as criticisms of this bill the special counsel advises—

We are even more concerned about the effect of the expiry of the Fees Statute on the fees scheme contained in the rules made under that Statute.

Despite the enactment of this bill and it ultimately receiving royal assent there will still be a question mark over the legality or the ability to challenge the levying of fees under that statute. Again the special counsel goes on to warn the government—and it is a warning—by saying—

Again, we think that the wiser course would be to deal with this expressly rather than leave it to the possibility of uncertain outcome following a challenge in a court.

The legal advice obtained by our own parliamentary committee says that this bill is not watertight. A court may find with regard to a challenge to either of these statutes—that is, in relation to the levying of fees or the granting or cancellation of degrees—that this bill does not adequately deal with that. I will listen with great interest to what the minister has to say in relation to this. As Professor Pearce goes on to say—

We think that this is more than a case of being abundantly cautious.

There is considerable legal concern. As a member whose electorate has many people from the University of Queensland in it and as one of my sons has graduated from that university and as we have a very high regard for the University of Queensland, I would not like to see a situation where, because of inadequately drafted or inadequately prescriptive legislation in this place, the conduct of the University of Queensland's business in such major areas as the raising of fees and the conferring of degrees is left open to court challenge and possibly some sort of forced additional legislation to countermand that court challenge at a future time.

The warning is on the table to the minister. We on this side of the House will be looking forward with some interest to the minister's explanation of this. It may be well worth the minister's while to take that legal advice on board and start to think about drafting some amendments that would meet the concerns about the legal deficiencies within the bill.

The second bill that we are dealing with in this cognate debate is the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill 2009. It deals in the first instance with pre-prep programs in some state and some non-state schools. The minister pointed out in his second reading speech on this bill—and I point out that, although we on this side of the House will only be making one speech in this cognate debate, there are second reading speeches for both bills—that his department administers 21 acts and that it is necessary from time to time to make minor amendments to a number of those acts, some of which are contained in this bill. Naturally enough, we do not have any dispute with that comment or the action taken.

I note that there is a minor amendment to the accreditation of the act related to non-state schools, for example. Some of these minor amendments are to be expected with the passage of time and given the extent to which the environment around schooling and education is changing. I am sure it will not be the last time the minister has to amend some of these acts. I am sure we will see quite a few in relation to the national curriculum.

The amendment in relation to the pre-prep program in state and non-state schools applies, as I understand it, principally to Indigenous communities and predominantly to state schools. I think there are about five non-state schools that are involved.

This bill also amends the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005. In the explanatory notes it states that this particular piece of legislation has been in operation for three years and that the government is not surprised that some finetuning of the act would be required after it has seen how it has operated for those three years. The opposition is certainly not surprised either.

Currently, a teacher facing disciplinary action whose registration lapses and ceases to be a registered teacher cannot have that disciplinary action taken against them on the grounds that they are not a registered teacher. We would naturally not have any problem with an amendment to rectify that. It is a little bit surprising that it was not in there. There is very much the circumstance that applied recently at the Bundaberg Hospital where disciplinary action was avoided by public servants on the basis of their resignation from the Public Service and therefore the disciplinary provisions no longer applied to them. It appears that the same oversight occurred in the construction of the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act. We would naturally support the amendment.

Other amendments to that act reflect changes that occurred as a result of the Melbourne declaration on educational goals for young people which was produced on 5 December 2008. One of the other adjustments made within the bill is to give the Queensland College of Teachers the right to charge a fee to teachers who misplace or have their card stolen. I am sure teachers will not be pleased to hear that they are now going to have to pay to get a new card if their card is stolen but that probably brings them into line with many other professions.

There are a range of other acts which are amended such as the Grammar Schools Act and the James Cook University Act 1997. These look to be relatively minor adjustments and appear to be common sense in their nature, and I am not aware of any concern about those amendments. Another act being amended is the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 2000 that can give the power to cancel qualifications in some circumstances. Again, I do not think that is a change that is causing any concern on this side of the House. The most significant changes contained in this bill relate to the Education (General Provisions) Act, which alter that act to allow a pre-prep—pre-prep is the terminology for kindergarten for a 3½-year-old to 4½-year-old—learning program at some state and non-state schools.

For anyone not familiar with this set-up—and no-one could blame them because it is a very complicated one—currently schools are not allowed to provide educational programs in that age group and it is necessary to pass this amendment to allow certain schools to do so. This applies, as I said earlier, principally to Indigenous communities and principally to state schools, although there are some five or so non-state schools in these communities. The rationale given by the government is that these communities generally are not viable for private sector operators or community kindergartens and that they have very limited infrastructure and the infrastructure that does exist is principally in the local state schools. Therefore, the government proposes to make an exception for those state schools so that the school itself can provide that education program, unlike the rules that will prevail throughout the rest of the state. The amendment makes it clear that those students in the kindergarten program being provided by the school are in a program provided by the school but are not enrolled students of that school. Obviously that is so that some of the provisions that apply to enrolled students will not apply to pre-preparatory students.

Other amendments contained in the bill relate to a tightening up to prevent a child-care operator from using the terminology 'prep' in their name in a manner that might mislead people to think that they were providing a prep program or some sort of equivalent program. For example, it would not be permissible to use the word 'prep' in any form. The optimist in me would hope that there would not be too many people who would want to create a deception in that manner, but perhaps in government it does not always pay to be an optimist so possibly the government's concern is justified. In any case, we certainly do not see any problem in making it clear that such a matter must not be misrepresented and I do not have a problem with that.

The amendments also have provisions for precompulsory school age other than prep. As I said before, some of these areas are fairly complicated and this is indeed one of them. In 2006 the Education (General Provisions) Act allowed for, but only allowed for, children with disabilities to be catered for so that a child within these age groups that we are considering could be taken into a program under the Education (General Provisions) Act because of the nature of that child's disabilities. However, at the time this was not extended to any other group of children—notably not to Indigenous children—and this amendment is seeking to redress that. As I say, the opposition has a deep concern about lifting the educational standard of Indigenous students. I hope that the provision of pre-prep for Indigenous students will be part of lifting the educational standard for Queensland's Indigenous students. I think it is a terribly important objective. We certainly accept that the government is acting in good faith in this matter and we are supportive of the government in ensuring that all of these communities do have a program that pre-prep children of Indigenous origin can access. There is in relation to this a review clause at five years. That is not, strictly speaking, a sunset clause but, given that the nature of the circumstances of some of these communities might change, I would also view that as appropriate.

The Education (General Provisions) Act specifies that pre-prep is not child care, and I think this is pretty important. It is particularly important to the parents of 3½- to 4½-year-olds and the university qualified teachers who teach them. There is a very important role in our community for both kindergarten—pre-prep—and child care, but they are different roles. Pre-prep is an educational program. It is not designed to take the place of child care, partly because it is only 15 hours a week. I think it is important that the difference is specified clearly and I do trust that that differentiation, particularly in terms of the qualifications of and recognition given to pre-prep teachers, will be carried on throughout the rollout of kindergarten. I am very much looking forward to the minister's comments in that regard.

There are a range of other amendments that basically deal with these pre-prep students in the 35 or so communities to which the exception is being made for schools to provide their educational programs. I do not see any particular problem with those provisions. One of them is that when a state school provides a pre-prep program that program should be free, and we would be strongly supportive of that, particularly in Indigenous communities where we want to see no disincentive to participation in

education at this early childhood level. It does perhaps raise the question, given that funding for kindergartens is not yet settled, of exactly what these programs might cost or what fees might be provided in government constructed kindergartens, in kindergarten programs provided by the commercial child-care sector and in kindergarten programs provided by the likes of churches and so forth. So we have clarity, at least for the 35 Indigenous communities, that those programs will be free. We look forward to clarity for the rest of the industry.

The provisions contained in this bill also, and rightly, extend the mandatory reporting of things such as child abuse or sexual abuse to cover children in pre-prep programs provided by schools, even though of course they are not enrolled students of those schools. Once again, we think that is important and that certainly has the support of the opposition.

These are important measures by which to define the direction of education and, most notably, early childhood education. I have given a fairly open and frank account of my view, particularly in relation to early childhood education, in the hope that that will open the opportunity for the minister to be equally forthcoming and frank in clarifying some of the areas about which I have raised concerns.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—LNP) (3.19 pm): It is with much pleasure that I rise to speak to the Education Legislation Amendment Bill and the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill. These bills might be technical legislation that make adjustments to the act, but they are very important because they relate to children, who are our most important commodity. All of us have a responsibility to ensure that our children have equality of education.

I want to applaud the minister for aspects of this legislation, especially as it relates to Indigenous education, because I believe that it will make some changes. It is very important to recognise that whatever education is provided to a child during their infancy is always fruitful if it is provided in a safe environment so that the child feels nurtured and wants to learn.

There are aspects of this legislation that need to be canvassed. I refer firstly to child care. In the minister's second reading speech he stated—

The results of the visits revealed a high level of compliance, with only 76 compliance notices issued to 66 services.

In the areas that I represent there are many private homes that provide child-care facilities for young children while their mums and dads go off to work. A lot of the people who carry out these operations are mothers and fathers themselves—and most times they are mothers—who provide a high degree of discipline, love and care to these children in question. I think it is fantastic to see the great work that these people do, because not everybody has child-care centres in their communities.

That brings me to the 200-odd kindergartens that the government is looking to set up in the near future. I believe that 20 of those have already been announced. That also brings me to Barcaldine, in the central west. That is one town that is crying out for one of these facilities. There is certainly ample ground—and I know that the minister has had representation made to him about this issue—at the Barcaldine P-12 school on which that facility can be built. Today, I appeal to the minister and to the government to see that one of those 200 kindergartens that are proposed is built in Barcaldine.

As is the case in a lot of other places throughout Queensland, professional people go to Barcaldine to work—whether it is for the education department, for the department of main roads, for local authorities, for the department of health or whatever it may be. A lot of times these people have partners who also find employment in those communities in a professional capacity. I believe it is very important that we have child-care facilities available for these people. That way, we can retain them in our towns because they know that their children are being cared for in a safe environment after school hours or in long day care centres. The one at Longreach is no exception. It is a magnificent facility. For bigger towns such as Emerald and other places right around Queensland, child-care centres are very important facilities.

Many of us might think that one parent should be at home providing care for their child, but times have changed and our demographics have changed. It is paramount that we recognise the child-care needs of people as they go about trying to create a future for themselves by way of bettering themselves in their workplaces or taking advantage of their professional training while their the children are being cared for in a safe environment. I say to the minister today that I hope Barcaldine is high on his list of towns in which to place these centres. It is an issue that I will certainly be following up because, at the end of the day, Barcaldine is worthy of having one of these facilities.

The shadow minister for education, the honourable member for Moggill, canvassed many aspects of these bills during his contribution. I want to touch on the area of funding for kindergartens, which are available to 29 per cent of Queensland children. I have just referred to the 200 schools. The shadow minister made reference this afternoon to those individuals or private schools who want to make application to receive kindergarten funding and that they cannot name the school or the person in question. I find that a little concerning, and I would like the minister to say why he cannot do that.

Some 30 per cent of our kids in this state are educated in facilities that are provided by church groups and non-denominational groups. I think it is very important to recognise the contribution that the private sector makes to education in Queensland. If we did not have the private sector providing that education, the government would have to provide the resources to meet the educational needs of those 30 per cent of children who currently are educated in private institutions.

At the same time, recently there has been a lot of hype and innuendo levelled at the state system about literacy and numeracy which I find deplorable. I believe that education starts in early infancy when, in a safe environment, mum and dad teach their child how to talk, how to play with toys or how to look at a book. I really think that if many parents today took particular notice of the needs of their little ones, the role of teaching children in our school system would be made a hell of a lot easier. We have television and other things that kids can watch. There are books that kiddies can take advantage of.

When it comes to giving a child a good grounding in literacy and numeracy, I have to say that the old basics of learning how to spell and learning the times tables are absolutely paramount. I know that when I was a child at school we learned our times tables off by heart. You wonder why I have busted knuckles. It is not from what you think it is; I had a few cracks across my knuckles with those tin-backed rulers by the nuns. Probably other members in this House know what I am saying. It did not hurt me and I learned my times tables. I think it is fair to say that today there are people of my age who cannot read or write. That is a sad indictment on society at large. We certainly do not want to see our young people subjected to that.

That brings me to the area of Indigenous education. The pre-prep program—the year 1 and year 2 preschool course—in Indigenous communities is designed to give these children a head start. It is catch-up time in these areas. All the time we see criticism levelled at Indigenous people that they are not pulling their weight and they are not having a go. It is up to us to make certain that the resources and specialist teachers are in place so that they have the opportunity to have a fair go along with the non-Indigenous children of this state. This is also applicable to non-Indigenous children. There are many non-Indigenous children not going to school when they should be. The issue of truancy is not only applicable to Indigenous communities but also to non-Indigenous communities. I heard the numbers that were mentioned last week by the Minister for Local Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships. School attendance rates are up in those communities. They are to be congratulated on that. An extra one child at school every day is a win. I believe that is what the operation of education is about.

Noel Pearson has been working behind the scenes. My old dad always used the quote, ‘You’ve got to be cruel to be kind’. When it comes to education those aspects of discipline are certainly applicable regardless of where we are. If we are going to bring our Indigenous communities to the stage where we give these children the opportunity to rise above what they have been subjected to over the last 50, 60 or 70 years, we have to give them a good, fruitful, viable education, one with direction and purpose so that we can produce young people who can go on and be the leaders of this state, the leaders of their local communities, and who will be people who young people will look up to and say, ‘Look at that person and their family. I want to be like them.’

Most young people want to follow the example of their elders. That example can be set not by criticising but by being positive and showing the way rather than putting the unfortunate few down. People should not continue to slander Indigenous people on a daily basis by saying they are a lazy lot or whatever. I know plenty of non-Indigenous people who are lazy and could not give a continental. That is happening in our community today through ignorance and not wanting to understand and conform with what society is all about. Our prisons are filling up with that element of society because they were shunted, shoved and pushed aside and were not given any opportunities.

Whilst I stand or sit in this place I will be standing up for that section of our society, whether they are black, white or brindle, to get equality of education and the opportunities that they deserve so that they can progress through life, whether they want to be schoolteachers, doctors, lawyers, carpenters, fitters and turners, or whether they want to be shop assistants in their local communities or work with the local authority. The important fact is that they get that education. I know that the minister, the shadow minister and everybody in this House is on the same wavelength.

This is our opportunity to collectively make it happen. This is an area of major concern to me because I see it on a regular basis. Some people in my own electorate are falling into this category. I believe that together we can make that difference. Forget about political parties and what side of the House we are sitting on; it is about making a difference and giving those people a common goal, a common objective. At 16, 17 or 18 some may want to go into a trade and some may want to go to university, but all have reached their goal. We will do it together through a caring, loving way of promotion of that individual in question. That is an integral part of this legislation.

Recently I attended the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association state conference in Winton, along with my colleague the member for Mount Isa who was there for both days and the minister’s representative, Mr Bruce Kimball. Those meetings are very fruitful meetings. The people who live in

isolated remote communities know better than most what the needs of remote and rural education are. Many issues came out of that conference. No doubt the minister has been briefed on the responses to some of those resolutions.

A motion was moved that the ICPA continues to strenuously lobby Education Queensland to increase the funding for teacher aides to allow a full-time teacher aide to be with a prep year group in every class where there are prep students. This is a very important motion. Of equal importance is the request that Education Queensland review its policy of staffing of small schools to ensure that it, not the principal, is responsible for sourcing staff and ensuring that no principal is left in a situation where they have no relief teacher for administration of non-contact hours. In one-teacher schools in these remote areas we see all too often, when teachers have to go away for in-service training or meetings, whether they be in Brisbane or some other major centre around the state, those small schools left without a teacher for three or four days. I believe that this is a totally unfair situation and one that cannot continue. In some cases the administration officer or the teacher aide is left in charge. I do not care whether they live in Birdsville, Bamaga or Brisbane, equality of education is paramount. Young people who live in remote communities should be given the fair treatment of knowing that there is a teacher there at all times. I know that it is a difficult situation and that time and money is of the essence. I think I speak for all Queenslanders when I say that the most important and sacred thing that is not negotiable is the education of our young people. I know that the minister is au fait with this situation.

Another important issue at the conference was the recommendation of Professor Masters that the number of hours spent teaching literacy and numeracy be increased and consideration be given to the allocation of additional teachers to one-teacher schools to be determined by enrolment size and cohort distribution. I think this is a very important resolution. To teach at a one-teacher school where there are 22 or 23 children from grades 1 to 7 is a very big ask for any teacher. If there are four or five in grade 1 and another four or five in grades 2 and 3, those little ones certainly need specialist assistance. It is very important that we get literacy and numeracy right. As I mentioned earlier, as a small child at the convent school in Quilpie the one thing that we had ripped into us was our tables and spelling. It is so very, very important that this is an aspect of early education. If we are going to address the issue of literacy and numeracy we have to make certain that these schools, regardless of where they are, are resourced so that the teachers and the support staff are able to meet the needs of those children.

My time is up, but I make a plea to the minister and Education Queensland to recognise some of these needs in rural and remote Queensland. It is not only applicable to rural and remote Queensland, but right across Queensland. I plead with the whole parliament that we get it right by making certain that we take the needs of every child in this state forward and eliminate poor literacy and numeracy standards as a scourge on our society by a productive, meaningful policy that will unite and drive this agenda to give it purpose well into the 21st century.

Dr DOUGLAS (Gaven—LNP) (3.39 pm): Education's purpose is to replace an empty mind with an open one. Education is not always about outcomes, and the unpredictability of outcome is what leads to change in our communities and lives. These bills are to be broadly supported by the LNP. I will discuss them largely as one but will highlight important issues raised by the education and training component in the second part of my speech. As two previous speakers have indicated, the Education Legislation Amendment Bill has four objectives: compliance notices regarding child-care centres; allowing students at overseas schools who are studying Queensland syllabuses to be eligible for Queensland school qualifications; conferring the Queensland Studies Authority with additional functions regarding kindergarten guidelines; and extending by one year the expiry date of two university statutes that expired on 1 September 2009. I will not go into the bills in depth as the member for Moggill did, because I think he has covered them fairly comprehensively.

The product of education beyond the transfer of knowledge is arguably everything from a progressive community to a more complete individual. Learning starts from the very first moment of life, whatever that can be defined as. We can thank all those who went before us for showing us the way towards a more enlightened life. It is only in the past 100 years that education has become so comprehensive and universal in First World countries. It is no doubt a continuing tragedy that in many neighbouring countries children, women and the disabled receive little or no education. All manner of excuses are used to defend those decisions, from finance and religion to a lack of physical resources. Every group in our society, in our First World environment, gives exactly the same reasons for their own impediments to the delivery of service to a variety of people within our own communities.

Often it is said that the government is delivering equivalent standards of education throughout the states. Note those key words 'delivering', 'equivalent' and 'state'. A continuing major issue is a lack of national agenda. The strange concept of equivalence in delivery seems to imply that the government thinks it has all the answers. Queensland seems to be 50 years behind New South Wales in kindergarten and child care in the areas of service provision, syllabus and a state role. This utterly ridiculous idea of equivalence seems to be completely at odds with the idea of excellence. For years in New South Wales they have had special high schools catering both to the gifted and talented and to those choosing to study science. Often it is scientists we lack. Every one accepts that this is the norm.

After years of spending excessive amounts of media time criticising all others for doing this, our state has embraced this concept, at least getting its toes in the water at the Griffith University High School Academy. The reality has been that for years very gifted intellectuals and sportsmen have been able to access the Brisbane State High School, be they male or female. This GPS true state funded public school has a long history of scholastic, academic and sporting excellence. Students pay no fees for a magnificent education.

The move to close the gap in pre-prep is correct. What is arguably wrong about the move is, again, delivery, equivalence and universality, this time within the state. In this bill the government is making amendments to the Queensland Studies Authority, via the Education (General Provisions) Act 2002, that seek to amend provisions to the guidelines to curriculum for kindergartens. What seems quite incredible is that only 26 per cent of the cohort of 3½- to 4½-year-olds are currently receiving this kindergarten care. Certainly many of those children are in family day care and no doubt this will massively shift into kindergarten when the universal agenda is adopted. What has not been mentioned is that children will receive only 15 hours of service delivery weekly, finishing at 3 pm when the majority of their parents do not finish work until 5.30 pm or later if they are commuting long distances to and from work. There will be a fee for this and the program will be delivered in stages that look very much like pork-barrelling into Labor electorates or into areas that do not need any more kindergartens. Strangely, there do not appear to be any proposals that allow or provide for existing service providers to tender for services to the state. Extraordinarily, this is so where these currently staffed accredited centres often lie directly on the fence lines of our local state primary schools.

Without doubt this pursuit of universality, equivalence and bloody-mindedness will deliver a result, whatever that may be. What generally comes with such an approach is excessive costs, massive bureaucracy and a fragmented result. For those who do not understand the word 'fragmented', generally it means that it will provide very little pure excellence, a lot of mediocrity and some downright appallingly bad results. A lot of the time, in education the worst examples of what should not be done tend to get hidden from view and the mediocre tend to be assumed to be the mean result. The overall strategy is often a combination of dumbing down and financial strangulation.

In the real world currently, as families shrink and incomes rise, the trend is for children to be educated privately, moving from public education. The reasons given by parents are overwhelmingly that they are chasing values that they wish their children to live by. Parents who have children in public education also choose to pursue the same values, but they have to battle the state to allow their chosen school representatives—and that is headmasters down to individual teachers—to deliver their values to their children. Robert Halvighurst's famous quote summarises this aspiration: 'The two basic processes of education are knowing and valuing.'

In part, what is happening externally seems to be reflected in the changes proposed by the government in kindergarten policy, but the exclusion of private providers and a determination to site all the kindergartens within school grounds seem overtly ideological, nihilistic, financially imprudent, impractical and, most of all, ignorant. Ignorance is the enemy of the educational system. It entrenches mediocrity and myopia.

When the principles of a proposed kindergarten are set up potentially with this type of background, very little good will come from anything that flows from it. A more enlightened approach would be to embrace all those known things that are currently available and existing models in other states and—heaven forbid—other countries. Those examples might provide a firm basis on which an ideal series of models might be based. What is currently known is that the Steiner approach and the Italian Montessori model have been shown to produce not only happy, contented children with inquiring minds but also children who go on to educational excellence. I believe there is a Steiner school in the minister's electorate, as there is in mine.

No state system that has excluded itself from this area for many years—when times were good and there was every reason to become involved in kindergarten education—can expect to catch up those years quickly and deliver a perfect system. This is egocentric, ignorant and overly ambitious. Ambition is a good thing, but some are so blinded by it that they cannot see the mistakes they make until it is too late. In this era of short electoral cycles, it is all very well for an incumbent government to be so vain that it says, 'If the system fails then so what?'

Education is for life, and opportunities squandered at a critical stage in the early years are sure to have a massive impact in the following years. Intrinsically, this leads to the issue regarding the primacy of the Queensland Studies Authority to have additional functions to be involved in the guidelines regarding kindergartens. I wonder if this is the appropriate body to have this function. Currently I worry that the Queensland Studies Authority is in the business of setting guidelines and syllabuses, so its business is to generate changes that enhance its own usefulness. That would seem to be opposed to what is useful to a student, a parent or even a government. What a parent and even a government, by default, should be interested in is the outcome of that educational intervention. The Queensland Studies Authority is creating a lot of business if it changes syllabuses and guidelines regularly. Equally, if it is to both respond to and embrace a national standard it becomes increasingly irrelevant and its staff redundant. It is no wonder they are seeking newer greenfield areas and experimentation.

I do not agree that the chosen group is the correct vehicle to develop and direct guidelines. Equally, it has no charter, no history, no corporate history and, I believe, no mandate to assume such a role. In this era of questioning where we went wrong with our children's education, there needs to be a real questioning of all parts of that environment. I put to honourable members that the Queensland Studies Authority has some responsibility here and must equally share blame for many of the failures in the educational outcomes of all of our children. It is not appropriate to merely blame the schools, the children themselves and the parents for the poor messages we are giving children from an early age. We must also question those very institutions that grade the children, set the syllabus and make incessant changes to that syllabus.

Of particular note is the years spent avoiding the need for children to learn to read, to write, to spell correctly, to use correct grammar, to learn a balanced history of our world and to be assessed on what was learned and what gaps there are in our knowledge. Education is for everyone and it is particularly good to see that children studying accredited Queensland syllabuses will become eligible for Queensland senior school qualification—this then implies eligibility for TAFE, university entry, an OP score and, for many, hope for the future for, without hope, for many there is no future. It was Aristotle who said, 'Those who educate children well are more to be honoured than parents, for these only gave life, those the art of living well.'

Education is an industry that not only Australia has excelled at for many years, especially in post World War II Australia, but also has earned the nation enormous amounts of overseas income to drive our national economy. Following on from the Colombo Plan, we here in Australia have seen a massive increase in the enrolment of students not just from Asia but also from Scandinavia and other parts of Europe, South America and the Middle East. We have a cost advantage over mainland USA and the UK. We are English speaking and our educational standards and outcomes are internationally accepted. It follows that our own students, if educated overseas, by virtue of having an accredited educational standard can gain entry via an OP to our own educational institutions. In this way we do not lose the best and brightest children of our expatriate workforce living temporarily overseas.

Children who have been educated to our standards, and who have resided here for a significant part of their lives, will naturally become part of our mainstream and add to our intellectual pool and drive interest in our educational institutions for future generations. For those who are unaware, a vast number of young Australian graduates leave our shores immediately after graduation—some to escape paying HECS, others in search of greater opportunities, some in search of adventure and many because their visa ends. It is no secret that many young students doing courses here in Australia and paying high prices for those courses are merely attempting, or their parents are attempting for them, to gain permanent residency. Many still no doubt see this as a means of escaping entrenched poverty and a lack of opportunity in their own countries. The population cohort that this issue seems to be associated with is largely those from India and China. Despite these new economies becoming enormously diverse with massive growth rates, the vast populations are exporting people at a massive rate. It is no doubt a global phenomenon, but proportionally we are receiving many of these people. The growth rate of the Indian population continues to grow at a rate just below that of Afghanistan, where on average the number of children in each family is 6.7; ours is 1.8.

It is critical that for our influence educationally to continue we as a nation must actively encourage students to return to their home countries once educated and trained. Additionally, it is extremely important that the courses we provide for them are based on outcomes we are seeking as a nation. Currently, there is far too great an emphasis on providing education that drives revenue and supplies weak academic courses that may increase overseas students' chances of gaining permanent residency and pools of poorly educationally equipped students doing preliminary courses to facilitate entry into other institutes and simultaneously putting 'bums on seats' in institutions that are in need of review.

Some non-government educational groups appear to be too closely related to migration lawyers, lobbyists and its industry. They are too frequently being reported as not delivering courses for payment but the courses seem very frivolous in many cases. Equally, too many overseas students do not seem to be students and far too much money appears to be repatriated back to foreign countries. There is a strong whiff of suspicion that overseas owned and operated businesses are employing those students as cheap labour while they are here. The consequences of these decisions range from racial disharmony, as has occurred in Melbourne with Indian student leaders claiming racism and xenophobia, to images of young Brazilians and Scandinavian students doing a form of university gap year, doing trivial courses that add nothing to academic growth but improve their tans and surfing ability.

Interestingly, this issue regarding university then leads to the next provision raised within the bill where it is clear that an error has been made regarding the expiry of the statute relating to the university act. The implication of the statute expiry is that fees raised by the university, most likely from the students, may be illegally raised. Most of the services they would provide by default would be unable to be charged for. Universities have to be self-sufficient. They tend to be more reflective of the demands of educational outcomes demanded from them from families seeking education for their children. They currently, despite charging high HECS fees, still rely on government grants and increasingly close association and links with both business and overseas groups.

No doubt business is mercenary in the promotion of these links because they are chasing those brightest students who are produced from the institutions that the companies have links with. It is absolutely critical that the institutions deliver the graduates to our society that we need for continued growth. They must not have one set of standards for one overseas group and a higher set or another set for Australian born students. There are too many reports of double standards and too many overseas full fee-paying students that effectively exclude HECS-paying Australian students.

In medicine this has become a major problem here recently. It has subsequently led to the demand of an overseas ban on funded students seeking equal footing for placement in Australian hospitals for internship immediately after graduation. As tragic as it seems, there are limited positions available. Recently New Zealand born students have claimed that they were being treated as second-class citizens in this process. The dilemma remains unresolved.

One pointer to future problems could be an example of an overseas born student, rejected by their home country for medical school entry, who pays to attend a medical school here and then demands equal access to internship on graduation. Few students ever fail their courses and this is especially so after medicine was changed to a postgraduate course. It is difficult to not be sympathetic to these overseas students, but it is imperative that we get them to return home. Our courses will only continue to be in demand, yet we need to realise that the progression to permanent residency for these graduates only decreases educational opportunities for our own students and thereby diminishes the integrity of the system. But these non-returning graduates increase the demand on Medicare for service provision to a slowly growing population. Ironical as it seems, small changes to these laws will lead to significant changes to what occurs at the output end of the education equation.

To return to child-care centres, the compliance notices for the centres would seem to be draconian and inappropriate for the breaches that would be the norm in the industry. The idea that a website listing of a centre that has had a breach for three years seems to be a disproportionate penalty for the offence. Such an action in this internet world can lead to financial ruin of a business. The opposition intends to submit some very realistic amendments which will deliver a much fairer, tolerant and financially responsible bill.

The second part of the cognate bill relates to a series of process issues and the preliminary path preparation for the state Labor government's plans for pre-prep and kindergarten, as it commonly known. This has been well addressed by both the member for Moggill and the member for Gregory, and I do not intend to discuss that further.

This fear of the department of education is not based on a legitimate concern. The education system is highly regulated and many of the checks and balances already remain in place. I believe the government is attempting to cover its tracks in a 50-year delayed journey to join other mainland states in closing the gaps in childhood education. As I said earlier, the current Bligh Labor government needs to learn from the mistakes of others in this area and should not just dive in and make the same mistakes that others have long recovered from.

In Gaven, we have 11 primary and secondary schools. They are catering for what is the fastest growing area in the nation. The proposed SEQ plan proposes that over 40,000 will move to this region as infill in the next 11 years. We have 15 child-care centres and kindergartens but some are linked to schools, and there would be up to 23 if you count the different campuses of some of these. One Catholic school, St Brigid's, provides extensive after and before school care to our state primary schools, and it would appear to be excluded from the changes that will be made. I think this is irrational and it does not make sense to me. We have also lost some failed ABC centres, and unfortunately zonings are difficult on the Gold Coast. 'Education is that which discloses to the wise and disguises from the foolish their lack of understanding,' Ambrose Bierce said.

It would be totally inappropriate for there not to be some discussion about Indigenous education perspectives. Noel Pearson's comments were noted earlier by the member for Gregory. Noel Pearson correctly states, 'Aboriginal disadvantage in employment, housing and ultimately life expectancy can be improved only if education is fixed up. Patently it is the key to inclusion in the real economy.' Further, he states that 'reform agenda that our younger generations achieve their full potential, realise their talents and creativity, and have the confidence and capacity for hard work to enjoy the best of both worlds'. We need this to be available for all children. I have left this as my concluding comment because it is so apt in embracing all the issues raised within the bill.

(Time expired)

Ms BATES (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (3.59 pm): I rise today to contribute to the cognate debate on the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill 2009 and the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2009. The Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill seeks to make minor amendments to legislation administered by the Department of Education and Training to remove redundant provisions and to correct deficiencies or omissions and clarify existing provisions. In addition, the bill seeks to amend the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 to enable the minister to provide, or assist in providing, a pre-preparatory learning program at certain state and non-state schools for children aged at

least 3½ years of age and to prohibit a licensed child-care provider from using a term that indicates, or could reasonably be understood to indicate, that the licensee is purporting to offer education in the preparatory year of schooling.

In the electorate of Mudgeeraba I have 24 child-care centres in areas such as Mudgeeraba, Tallai, Gilston, Merrimac, Worongary, Robina, Reedy Creek and Bonogin. I have recently visited, or am in the process of visiting, each of these centres so that I can represent their views in parliament. I share their concerns over proposed changes to legislation relating to the ratio of children to teachers and the process of standardisation to bring Queensland into line with other states.

In Queensland, babies and toddlers are required to have one staff member for each four children with two staff members per room. These child-care centres have been constructed to Queensland standards and cater for this age group, currently accommodating eight children and two staff members. New requirements will see these staff ratios lowered to one staff member for three babies and toddlers. Child-care operators are concerned that they will lose money on each child. Combined with the need to increase staff, the total staff cost per child would increase by 25 per cent. Under these new regulations, it is estimated that the cost to parents of each child would rise by \$20 per child per day.

It is also noteworthy that other states do not have restricted room sizes in the same way that Queensland has. Unfortunately, the size of rooms that currently operate in Queensland means that centres will have to downsize the number of children or increase their capital expenditure to upgrade their current facilities. These issues are of great concern to owner operators, particularly in this current economic climate. New federal agreements arising out of COAG that change the staff to child ratios and room sizes threaten to have a dramatic impact on Queensland child-care providers and on the cost to parents of provision of child care. In addition, a new model of funding—DECKAS funding—is due to be announced that may also significantly impact community and C&K kindergartens.

The other changes in early childhood education revolve around a government commitment to allow universal access to kindergartens for all Queensland children aged 3½ to 4½ and the associated commitment re-announced by the government in the recent election to build 200 kindergartens on state school grounds but would not be operated by the state school. A C&K community kindergarten was announced for Mudgeeraba State School. This announcement was greeted cynically by the private operators, who saw this as nothing more than political pork-barrelling to save a Labor marginal seat.

I recently visited the C&K centre and was informed that they have been waiting to move for the past five years and that very little maintenance and upkeep had occurred in that time. This was justified by the carrot being dangled that they would indeed move. They are still waiting. Whilst I understand there is a need for child care for those families in my electorate, there are already 27 centres. My understanding is that the C&K centre is to commence building in 2010. There remains enormous uncertainty and lack of detail which is of great concern to all early childhood education and long day care which currently has them in limbo.

The bill enables the minister to provide, or assist in providing, a pre-preparatory learning program in certain state and non-state schools. Again, this program will focus on literacy and numeracy, and will be provided to pre-preparatory age children—that is, children who are at least 3½ years old. In addition, the bill makes minor amendments to the Child Care Act 2002 to provide that the provision of a pre-preparatory learning program is not child care for the purposes of that act. The bill also strengthens the prohibition on the use of certain terms by child-care providers to ensure that child-care providers cannot describe the care they provide in any manner which may suggest that they are providing preparatory year education. The government needs to engage all public and private child-care and preparatory school facilities so that they understand the concerns of each and not only take into consideration the educational and child-care needs of families and children but also seek to ensure that private operators are not disadvantaged by any new legislation being considered.

The Mudgeeraba electorate is a fast-growing electorate, with over 65 per cent of the electorate under 45 years of age with school age children. Many more children are preschool level and under, and this rapidly growing young community needs the services that it deserves. The electorate has eight feeder state primary schools and additional private schools which cater for preparatory year to year 12. Unfortunately for this young and vibrant electorate, we are yet to have a state high school west of the M1. Until the recent redistribution, we were the only electorate on the Gold Coast with no state high school. With over 35 per cent of the students at Robina, Merrimac and Varsity state high schools residing west of the M1, it is high time that this government took its head out of the sand and provided Mudgeeraba with much needed infrastructure now, not in 20 years time. I commend the bills to the House.

Ms FARMER (Bulimba—ALP) (4.05 pm): I rise in support of the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2009. This bill amends the Child Care Act 2002 to provide parents, guardians and the wider community with access to information about certain child-care services that failed to meet minimum legislative standards. I know that a number of the child-care providers in my electorate are very excited about many of the changes proposed and are looking forward to working in a profession that is taken more seriously by the community.

These amendments affirm early childhood in particular as a critical time in children's lives and recognise the fact that we need to give our kids the best possible start. We know that here in Queensland a vast majority of child-care providers provide quality care to children and meet requirements under the act. The Department of Education and Training works closely with the child-care sector to ensure that providers meet standards. It is this collaboration that allows centres to continually improve their practices without the need for issuing compliance notices or for more serious action to be taken.

The government already sets high standards by monitoring centres through the Office for Early Childhood Education and Care. In 2008-09 government officers made 8,334 monitoring visits across the state. This by far exceeded the department's performance target of 2,496 visits for that year. The results of the visits revealed a high level of compliance, with only 76 compliance notices issued to 66 services. However, despite the department's strong monitoring and compliance work, there are a few services that expose children to serious risks to safety and wellbeing or demonstrate a continual disregard of child-care laws. It is these services that are the focus of this bill.

These changes are about giving parents better access to important information when making decisions about who should care for their children. The choice of a child-care provider is one of the most important decisions a parent can make. I still remember my own angst as a first-time parent going back into the workforce, hoping that my husband and I were making the right decision about my daughter's child-care centre—

Mr Watt: I am sure you did.

Ms FARMER: I did; I take that interjection. When I was back at work I wondered whether she was all right; whether there were things I did not and could not ever know about that centre. When constituents talk to me about their own forays into the child-care world, many of them show that same angst.

The Bligh government believes parents have a right to know that centres are meeting standards and providing top-quality care. That is why we are amending the law to allow the publication of information about services which are not meeting standards. These amendments will allow the Department of Education and Training to publish information on the internet from 1 February 2010 about serious noncompliance. The chief executive can decide to amend, urgently amend, suspend, urgently suspend, revoke or refuse to renew a licence for a child-care service. Such a decision can lead to the publication of information about the centre on the web. Some examples of cases in which this action may be taken are where there are allegations of harm of a child at a service, or a building used to house children is structurally unsound.

The department will also be able to publish information about repeated noncompliance. Repeated noncompliance is where an operator receives more than one notice within a three-year period for contraventions that posed more than a minor risk to the wellbeing and safety of children. This bill will apply to, firstly, licensed centre based services such as kindergartens, limited hours care and long day care; secondly, all home based child-care services—that is, family day care—and, lastly, stand-alone care services—care provided to not more than six children of which not more than four children are under school age.

To ensure natural justice prevails, operators who disagree with the department's decision to give a serious sanction or to give a compliance notice for an issue that is not minor in nature can apply to have this decision reviewed by an independent tribunal. The specific details that would be published on the internet will depend on the type of sanction. In general, however, it would include the name and address of the service, except for stand-alone services which will only include the name that the service is conducted under; details about the enforcement action that was taken; the reason the enforcement action was taken; and any action the person must take or has taken to remedy the problem.

Information about services that seriously breach the act will be published on the website for three years. In comparison, services that demonstrate repeated noncompliance, where the risk is more than minor in nature, will have details published for one year. The publication scheme offers greater certainty to parents about the quality of a child-care service and the extent to which a service meets minimum legislated standards.

Not only will this bill benefit parents and the wider community; it is anticipated that these changes will also benefit the sector. Publishing information about non-compliant child-care services will likely encourage greater sector accountability and drive a culture of continuous improvement. This is anticipated to increase the overall standard of child care in Queensland, strengthening parents' confidence in child-care services.

I do believe it is important to reiterate at this point that the overwhelming majority of child-care services are doing an excellent job. I have been fortunate that my own personal experience has been this way and I am also fortunate to have met so many of the excellent child-care providers operating in the Bulimba electorate.

The Bligh government believes that the amendments proposed in this bill achieve a balance between what information parents expect to be available to secure the safety and wellbeing of their child and what is reasonable in terms of information about an individual service. I congratulate the minister for his work on this bill and commend the bills to the House.

Ms van LITSENBURG (Redcliffe—ALP) (4.12 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Education Legislation Amendment Bill and the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill, which we are debating cognately. A good education is the one tool a family, a community and a government can bequeath a child or an adult that has the ability to impact on their lives in a positive way for the rest of their lives. A good education gives a person the skills that will enable them to gain the employment they desire and set the basis for the lifelong learning that will enable a person to respond to the challenges life puts before them right through their life. Education starts from the time a child is born. Through play and exploration children learn vital skills that will enable them to understand and profit from their formal learning. Children building with blocks learn the vital spacial concepts that are the prerequisite to learning measuring concepts.

The amendments to the QSA Act enabling the QSA to develop Queensland-specific accreditation guidelines to focus kindergarten programs on the early learning of literacy and numeracy are positive for the education of Queensland children. The guidelines will provide opportunities to maximise continuity of learning between kindergarten and prep programs.

To enable children to begin reading, all the prereading skills need to be developed. The focus on the early learning of literacy and numeracy means that kindergarten children will be learning the prereading skills such as understanding which way to hold a book and which way to turn the pages, that the words as well as the pictures tell the story and that a written word corresponds to a spoken word. These skills are learned by the regular handling of books and having the opportunity to read the story themselves or with a friend as well as having it read to them.

Many children do not get these opportunities at home so focusing the kindergarten programs on preliteracy and prenumeracy so that children can start their literacy and numeracy learning before reaching prep is important. This will enable our Queensland children to display literacy and numeracy skills earlier than in the past which will render better outcomes in the NAPLAN testing.

Even though I believe that Queensland children gain as good-quality an education as those anywhere in Australia and the evidence is in our tertiary results, the changes in this bill will focus on learning at an earlier age. They will also ensure that children from less advantaged homes have an earlier opportunity to develop the vital skills they will require to perform well in prep and further formal education. I believe that the focused learning at kindergarten will give children greater confidence as they transition to formal education because they know that they have the skills they need. Confidence enables children to learn without fear and ensures better quality learning.

I support the bill's prohibition on child-care centres providing the prep year, because their core business is caring for children. Many centres no doubt provide quality programs, but few have four-year trained, registered teachers with early childhood qualifications. If child-care centres are able to provide the prep year of education it will not have the same value in the eyes of parents as it does currently, as the first year of a child's formal education. Many parents will see it as a voluntary program rather than the first vital step in their child's formal education.

I have been heartened to note when visiting the schools in my electorate that the primary, secondary and independent schools not only offer a quality education but are increasingly providing specialist and targeted programs for their students. Teachers and school staff are working hard to achieve the best outcomes for their students. The outcome for young children resulting from these bills will be to ensure students start school with better skills so they will be able to learn the skills taught at school more quickly and have better results sooner. I commend the minister's commitment to optimal educational outcomes for Queensland children because the future of Queensland is in their hands. I commend the bills to the House.

Mrs MENKENS (Burdekin—LNP) (4.17 pm): I am happy to address the bills before the House today—the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2009 and the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill—in this cognate debate. Between them, these bills amend a raft of existing acts which have been outlined by the shadow minister, the member for Moggill. As he has stated, we will be supporting this legislation. Child-care centres and kindergartens have recently been added to the education portfolio by this government. A significant part of this legislation before the House today does deal with child-care centres.

In these days of both parents having to work to not only support their family but, of course, to pay the increasing power bills and rising registration costs, child-care centres have become an almost essential part of people's lives. We have seen in the past some centres that may not have been up to standard subsequently suspended. Concerns were expressed that parents who may be intending to use those centres were never really told why.

The Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2009 deals with child-care centres and how any contravention of legislation by them will be dealt with. The current section 49 requires a child-care service licensee to notify regular parents and guardians of the suspension or revocation of their licence. However, clause 4 of the bill currently before the House will amend that provision to ensure the licensee also includes the reasons for the suspension or revocation of their licence, leaving parents and guardians fully informed.

Another clause will enable the publication of information about child-care services—that is, those services that may have actually contravened the legislation. Changes to those licences, whether they be refused, revoked or suspended and repeated non-compliance notices, will now be posted on the department's website for three years. While I think these changes will keep parents and the public aware of the status of our child-care centres, the processes appear to be almost an overreaction by this government and I certainly hope that they do not impact on centres that have only very minor infringements.

In 2007-08, while child-care centres were still under the jurisdiction of the Department of Communities, there were 67 full-time employees who were employed in licensing and monitoring child-care services and those staff members made 8,370 visits to child-care services. In that same year there were 832 complaints made about child-care services and, as a result, there were 56 compliance notices issued. For the previous year, the 2008-09 year, the number of visits was 8,334, resulting in 76 notices being issued against 66 services. Though the number of visits to the centres fell, there were more compliance notices served.

It is important that a vigilant eye be kept on these service providers as they do care for a very important state resource—our children. However, these changes no doubt will bring some peace to parents of children using those centres by having access to whether the centre they have chosen to send their children to has any compliance notices issued against it. As I say, I do hope that this does not impact greatly against child-care centres. Some issues that could breach compliance are having too many children in groups, inadequate staffing levels and inadequate softfall and playground hazards such as tripping hazards. But, as I say, there could still be questions that will be hanging over the industry in Queensland following the implementation of national guidelines and transitional arrangements for the child-care industry.

Under the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill 2009, we see the government moving to ensure that child-care providers cannot use any terms which may be connected with the term 'prep' in the provision of non-prep services. Under clause 12 of the bill there is the introduction of a new chapter which provides for a process of registration of pre-prep children. These children, aged older than three years and six months—they are getting younger and younger in the education system, aren't they?—would attend school approved by the minister. Currently, these would be 35 schools in Indigenous communities. It is a good program and the aim of this program is to focus on literacy and numeracy in preparation for their prep year. Children in these courses are not technically students of the school, but the other amendments in the bill provide for their inclusion in protective courses. Registration must be in the best educational interests of the child, including cancellation if the principal believes the child is too mature for pre-prep classes and would be better served by the prep class.

This bill also provides that the pre-prep schooling in a state school must be free and brings the students under the same provisions as other students in that particular school. These new services, however, must be backed up by adequate resources and staffing. We do not want to see some of the problems that occurred with the introduction of prep. We do not want to see those sorts of problems repeated. Clause 15 of this bill deals with the collection of demographic information and states that the chief executive may collect demographic information about school students and registered pre-prep aged children at a state school and their parents if the only purpose of the collection is to give effect to or manage an educational funding arrangement. Demographics also of course are important in keeping our schools viable and, in terms of the numbers game, in keeping those schools open.

Last year my electorate of Burdekin saw the closure of Majors Creek State School and Jarvisfield State School was put on notice. These are smaller schools. Again this year there is one school in my electorate, Maidavale State School, which has been doing some very special things for children who have difficulty learning in larger schools, whose viability is at this very moment also under the microscope. Maidavale school will actually reach its centenary next year and is under threat of closure. This school has a very interesting history which has been documented by a group of quite dedicated local people. I must also add in that history that that school's longest serving principal—I think it was 26 years—was none other than a predecessor of mine, Mr Arthur Coburn. He left his teaching career to become the Independent member for Burdekin and served from 1950 to 1969. He was a very well-respected member, both locally and in the House.

I recently attended the opening of the Maidavale centenary mural. This mural was funded by a state government Q150 grant and it was designed and executed by local artist Linda Hoey. She has recreated the school's history in the mural and in the process has involved all of the current students in its creation. It really is a magnificent piece of art that spans a width of about five metres and took about

six months to create. Every time I visit this school I am really taken by the passion that the children's parents and teachers have for their school, and you can also see how well these children are responding. This school excels in looking after students who thrive in the caring environs of a small school, and it would be an absolute shame for the Burdekin to lose this facility.

Though a small school, Maidavale is one of the Burdekin's educational shining lights. This school truly is a special school in that it provides a service to students who find it difficult to reach their full educational potential in larger schools. The remedial work done by the current staff at the school is turning the lives of these children around, and not having that schooling available would impact on these children and their families considerably. Principal John Eade and his team are an inspiration to primary education. Some of these children are driven many kilometres to the school from Ayr as parents can see how well their children are responding to the schooling offered by the current staff.

The school's viability report was to be delivered to the Minister for Education on 21 September and I can only hope that the minister is able to see the benefits that this school brings to the Burdekin community and leaves its doors open. If it should close, there will be nowhere that could meet the standard of care that the staff at Maidavale gives these students and I fear that their future in larger schools would see them falling behind. They would most likely fall through the gaps that we find in our schooling system, and that is not what their parents want. This school currently offers prep classes and there are a number of incoming preppies who are currently excited about starting there next year. If the government wants to keep the good work going in schools such as Maidavale, then its doors must remain open. I put to the minister that the economic cost of keeping this smaller school open is totally outweighed by the outcomes that may occur for some of these students should they be redirected into larger and more mainstream schools.

Clause 16 deals with the prohibition on the use of the term 'prep' or other terms that suggest prep education by a non-prep organisation. This will impact on those child-care service providers who specialise in educational based programs rather than just care services. The current scheme of administration for kindergartens and such is through Creche and Kindergarten. This itself raises issues of conflict of interest in assessing, licensing, funding and service provision of child-care services. In the Allen Consulting Group's final report on the DECKAS program, it found that C&K's central role in the implementation of DECKAS policy and dominance in the community kindergarten sector generally drew comment from focus group participants of conflicting interests that needed to be resolved.

C&K has responsibility for affiliation, quality assurance, monitoring and reporting, support and consultancy services, processing funding requests, distribution of funding, running C&K branch kindergartens, establishing new kindergartens and child-care centres and provides an advocacy service for affiliated kindergartens. The Allen Consulting Group found that there were written submissions from organisations saying C&K's role in strategic policy and the administration of the DECKAS program should be separated from its role as an operator of kindergartens and a provider of consultancy services. These arrangements disadvantage non-C&K providers, especially those run by denominational groups.

Although there was consultation with different organisations on different sections of the bill, such as the Queensland Catholic Education Commission, the Creche and Kindergarten Association, the Queensland Teachers Union and the Queensland Association of State School Principals, quite a number of groups had no input into the amendments. They included the state's peak private long day child-care body, Childcare Queensland. I certainly find the situation rather deplorable that this government would not seek input from Childcare Queensland.

Another section in this bill that I would like to address is the amendments to the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act relating to eligible criteria. These changes will affect any teacher who wants to apply for registration in Queensland. As a still registered teacher myself, I particularly noted those changes. I welcome the move to change section 8 of the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act, which is used to determine eligibility for full registration as a teacher. Instead of just showing a contribution to education, applicants will now have to show demonstrated abilities, experience, knowledge and skills. That is important. This criteria aligns more closely with what the college is looking for in our teachers: experience and demonstrated ability.

However, ultimately, the success of education in Queensland depends not only on the quality of teaching staff but also on the resources that are made available to them by this government. The needs of students must come first. The recent disappointing reports of Queensland's literacy and numeracy result demonstrate that a much higher priority must be placed on educational outcomes and not on the processes. I commend the bills to the House.

Mr POWELL (Glass House—LNP) (4.32 pm): I rise this afternoon to contribute to the cognate debate of the education and training bills. The Glass House electorate has some truly fantastic schools, some fantastic teachers and certainly some truly outstanding students. Over the past six months I have had the immeasurable pleasure of visiting nearly all of the education establishments in my electorate.

Unfortunately, not on all occasions have those visits been for positive reasons. I recall with some sadness the memorable service for the chaplain at Palmwoods State School. Fortunately, most of the visits to the schools have been very positive.

A particular highlight has been the numerous 'grill a polly' visits I have had with the year 6 and year 7 classes. In that capacity I have visited Mount Mee State School, Conondale State School and also the Ananda Marga River School—an independent school located just north of Maleny. These visits provide me with a great opportunity to mix with the young kids. They certainly come up with some fantastic questions. Although I have not been a minister or a shadow minister, I liken these visits to question time. I certainly leave the classroom feeling rather exhausted, having answered questions ranging from my views on Traveston Dam right through to my income and what sort of hours I put in as a politician. These visits are great fun. They certainly provide me with a great opportunity to chat with the kids. Also, they provide with me an opportunity to identify some real future political talent. I am pretty confident that we should rest assured that our future is in very good hands if these kids end up leading our state in the coming years.

I have also had the opportunity to go to functions such as the Beerwah State High School fundraising hospitality dinner. This is a fantastic event that serves two purposes: to showcase the hospitality skills of the senior students and to raise funds for the students' graduation celebrations later in the year. I think the function is a fabulous mix of skills and celebration. I have also had the joy of presenting many athletic medallions to students from Elimbah State School and Conondale State School. As do many other members in this House, I also attend fairs in my electorate, including the Chevallum Strawbfest. As we all know, we are coming into the wonderful time where we attend graduation dinners for year 7 students and year 12 students.

When I attend these superb events and interact with the students and teachers throughout my electorate, I am staggered that this government continues to show such disrespect to the teaching profession. I support the teachers' call for higher pay and the government should, too. It should respond by making the highest interim offer possible under its own funding guidelines and that offer should be more than the four per cent it is currently offering this year. Teachers are at the front line of our future. Their commitment to the education of our children—our future generations—needs to be suitably recognised. Having had teachers in my immediate family, I know firsthand that many teachers continue to have to fork out for the necessary resources that they need for their classroom activities—resources that should be funded by the government. Teachers are professionals and should be seen as such. That recognition starts by being rewarded with professional rates of pay.

If that is not enough, the government continues to short-change primary schools as a whole. There has been no acknowledgement that the government is pilfering the funds so hard fought for by the AGPPA. Principals are still expecting to see as little as 20c in every dollar of the money they secured from the federal education minister. No wonder teachers have to delve into their own pockets to cover their own school expenses. The government talks about Queensland being a Smart State, but that will never truly eventuate until we focus our funding not on central office bureaucracies or fancy media-grabbing state-wide programs but on the schools and the teachers themselves. The government cannot continue to apply a one-size-fits-all approach to school programs. It needs to allow principals the financial flexibility to implement local solutions to the needs of their students.

I turn now to the specific aspects of the bills we are debating this afternoon. Firstly, I would like to comment on the amendment to the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006, which I understand enables the minister to provide or assist in providing a preparatory learning program at certain state and non-state schools for children aged at least 3½ and to prohibit a licensed child-care provider from using a term that indicates, or could reasonably be understood to indicate, that the licensee is purporting to offer education in the preparatory year of schooling. This is a very welcome amendment and I give my support to it. I think it is very important that we distinguish between education and child care. But I would have hoped that we could have potentially taken this amendment a bit further. I am very supportive of its intent to assist Indigenous communities, but I ask that the minister also enable certain non-state schools—independent schools in particular—to offer a pre-preparatory educational year.

I would like to use two examples to illustrate my point. The first is Nambour Christian College, which is the school my children attended during the introduction of the prep year. At that time, the school was already offering a prep year on a trial basis. It also offered a pre-prep year, or a kindergarten year. Unfortunately, with the introduction of the prep year, the school was left with one of two choices: either to convert that pre-preparatory year to a C&K kindergarten or to apply for a child-care licence. Being an independent school, the school did not want to sign over the authority of its program to C&K. So it was left with no other choice than to go down the child-care path. That was an extremely tortuous and rigorous process and in the time that was left to the school, it meant that a lot of changes had to occur that impacted negatively on the teaching staff as well as the students who were already enrolled in that pre-preparatory year.

This process has also had a negative impact on the Caboolture Montessori School and other Montessori schools through the state. As the minister may know, the Montessori schools operate on cycles. Ideally, their first cycle would commence at the age of 3½. The schools operate on very strict guidelines. In fact, the guidelines that they impose upon themselves are stricter than we see currently under the Child Care Act. It is a mandatory requirement of such schools to only accept children at that age who are toilet trained and who, more importantly, can demonstrate some level of interaction with both adults and their peers.

They have a very well-established curriculum that includes elements in four main areas such as practical life, sensorial, language and mathematics. Considerable emphasis is also placed on creative arts, music, science, geography and cultural studies, and the acquisition of one's own first culture as the child's central development drive in this first cycle of development.

I understand that when the move to the prep year was occurring Independent Schools Queensland and the schools themselves did write to the then minister, Minister Welford. I draw the minister's attention to some comments made by Dr John Roulston, the Executive Director of Independent Schools Queensland. In a letter to the minister he wrote—

I bring to your attention legislative provisions in Western Australia whereby care provided to a child enrolled at a school who has reached three years of age and where the care is provided in the course of the child's participation in an educational program under the Educational Act is exempted from the child care regulation. The relevant extract from the act is attached.

I would like to refer to that extract from the Western Australian Children and Community Services Act 2004. I am happy to table these if so required. Clause 198 of that act talks about the meaning of a child-care service. It states—

- (1) A 'child care service' is a service for the casual, part-time or day-to-day care of a child or children under 13 years of age, or such other age as may be prescribed for the purposes of this subsection, that is provided—
 - (a) for payment or reward. Whether directly or indirectly through payment or reward for some other service;
 - (b) as a benefit of employment, or
 - (c) as an ancillary service to a commercial or recreational activity.

It goes on to state that the term 'child-care service' does not include, specifically under subsection (e)—care provided to a child enrolled at a school if

- (i) the child has reached 3 years of age; and
- (ii) the care is provided in the course of the child's participation in an educational programme under the School Education Act 1999.

I understand that this information was provided to then Minister Welford, who responded to Dr Roulston along these lines—

At our meeting at Parliament House on 28 March 2006, you referred to this issue and outlined an approach being taken in Western Australia. I examined that approach and came to the view that the circumstances between the two states are sufficiently different as to warrant a different situation in Queensland.

The Schools Education Act 1999 (WA) provides that a child can receive two years of non-compulsory education at schools. The first year of non-compulsory education is in a kindergarten program and the second year is in a pre-primary program.

Unlike Western Australia, Queensland's education legislation does not specifically provide for education programs to be provided by schools to children as young as three. Primary schooling in Queensland will begin with the preparatory year.

The Children and Community Services Act 2004 (WA) regulates child care. This Act provides that care provided to a child enrolled at a school is not considered to be child care, for the purposes of that Act, if the child has reached three years of age and the care is provided in the course of the child's participation in an education program under the Schools Education Act 1999. Because of the different situation prevailing in Queensland, I have reservations about following this strategy.

My department and the Department of Communities have resolved to work together to explore the interaction between the regulatory regimes for child care and education. This work will attempt to identify strategies that may ameliorate the present compliance issues identified by Montessori and Steiner schools—

might I add other independent schools as well—

and reduce the administrative burden where providers operate co-located school and child care services.

Time has certainly moved on to the point where today we now see that this legislation is addressing the fact that in certain schools, albeit Indigenous schools and I applaud that, we are now offering a second year of non-compulsory preparatory education. We have also seen that the Minister for Education has responsibility not only for education legislation but also for child-care legislation. I think the time has come to address this misnomer in our legislation. Unfortunately it appears that this has not been the case. I note that the independent schools were not consulted regarding this part of the amendment bill. There is a suggestion that a minor tweaking could potentially lead to a wider beneficial outcome. I refer to a recent email from David Robertson, who is the Director, Strategic and Government Relations of Independent Schools Queensland. He acknowledges that he has looked at the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill and states—

In theory, it does open up a possible model whereby Montessori and Steiner schools could provide an educational program to 3 and a half year olds as part of the school provision rather than under the regulation of the Child Care Act.

However, the legislation is very specifically targeted at Indigenous pre-school provision (as outlined in the Explanatory notes)—it is really about formalising what has been happening in the Cape area for many years whereby state schools have been running Indigenous pre-schools.

There is one particular clause which probably prevents at this stage, a Montessori school seeking to use the provisions in the Bill—namely, a prescribed school is defined that one that ‘immediately before commencement of this section was providing a program’.

David Robertson reads this to mean that the new provisions will only apply to where schools are already providing this particular service rather than a system whereby schools can apply to provide it into the future. Perhaps there is opportunity to look at this, if not now then in the very near future, to broaden that slightly one step further to allow independent schools such as Montessori or, as I mentioned previously schools like Nambour Christian College, that have accredited educational programs that they could offer to 3½-year-olds. We might be able to expand this legislation to apply to them as well. These schools certainly offer meaningful education and also a positive start to the educational career of these students.

Moving to the Education Legislation Amendment Bill, I focus on the point that it makes a technical amendment to the University of Queensland Act 1998 to extend the expiry date for two university statutes by one year to 1 September 2010. From the outset I support the concerns raised by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee’s *Legislation Alert* and the shadow minister. It is worth highlighting a couple of those concerns again. Being a member of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee, we did identify—largely due, thanks again, to Julie Copley, our research director—some concerns around the clear meaning of clause 40 in particular and called on some specific advice from Emeritus Professor Dennis Pearce, Special Counsel for DLA Phillips Fox. In short, his answer was—

- (a) The legal effect of the expiry of the UQ Statutes is that, in the absence of validating legislation, no action can lawfully be taken under those Statutes after 1 September 2009. The effect of the expiry is that the statutes are no longer in force.
- (b) We have substantial doubts whether the proposed section 72 to be inserted in the UQ Act will have the effect set out in the explanatory notes of restoring UQ to the position that existed prior to 1 September. We think that the position is more complex than the section recognises. We suggest that greater detail should be spelled out of the effect of the negation of the expiry of the Statutes in respect of:
 - action taken under those statutes after they have expired; and
 - the rules made under the Fees Statute establishing the fees scheme.

That is an important point. We are talking about statutes that relate to the fees structure of the school. Professor Pearce states—

We have two concerns about this. First, what is the effect on actions taken between 1 September 2009 and the commencement of the Act? Second, what is the effect of the expiry of the Fees Statute on 1 September on the scheme of fees contained in the rules made under the Statute?

This is quite a considerable issue and in raising this we hope it does not lead to legal action, which is why we are raising it with the minister today. Professor Pearce continues—

The facts here are that the Statutes have expired. The fiction that section 72 creates is that they have not. However, this does not mean that on 1 September 2009 the Statutes did not expire. On that day they ceased to have effect because of operation of section 54 of the Statutory Instruments Act. While at some time in the future section 72 will say that the expiry is to be taken legally not to have occurred, the fact that the Statutes did expire cannot be denied.

He goes on to state—

In short, what we are suggesting is that the simple device of stating that the Statutes are to be taken not to have expired may well not be sufficient to restore the UQ to its original position. We think that additional provisions need to spell out explicitly what the effect of the deeming provision is to be in regard to actions taken in the interim period between the expiry and its retrospective cancellation.

Professor Pearce continues—

We are even more concerned about the effect of the expiry of the Fees Statute on the fees scheme contained in the rules made under that Statute. The Fees Statute is the source of the power to make the rules establishing the scheme. When the Statute ceases to be in existence, so do the rules made under it. This means that from 1 September 2009 the scheme no longer exists. It is dependent upon rules that are made by the Senate. We think that there is real doubt whether the revival of the Statute carries with it the revival of the rules previously made under the Statute.

I understand that the committee has invited the minister to comment on the concerns raised in the *Legislation Alert*, but obviously, given that we are debating this today, the time frames will not permit such a response to be received. Like others, including the shadow minister, I am keen to hear the minister address these concerns in his reply speech and in any amendments that he may put before the House during consideration of the clauses. I thank the House for the opportunity to raise some matters in relation to the education and training bills. I commend them to the House.

Mr McLINDON (Beaudesert—LNP) (4.50 pm): I rise to speak to the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill and the Education Legislation Amendment Bill. In his second reading speech on the Education Legislation Amendment Bill the minister refers to one of the department’s auditing processes for child-care centres, citing that in 2008-09 the department made 8,334 monitoring

visits across the state. We have to acknowledge and congratulate the department for exceeding its performance target of 2,496 visits for that year. By and large, the results of that process reveal the high level of compliance and we need to applaud those centres for doing the right thing. KPIs for departments are a very practical and accountable measure for governments and Queenslanders.

However, reference to the Auditor-General was notably absent from the minister's speech. Only a few months ago the Auditor-General delivered his third damning report in as many weeks to the Queensland government. He labelled the government's auditing processes 'immature and inadequate'. Amongst other things, the report highlighted a lack of leadership to provide direction to public sector agencies and this resulted in a failure in policy and coordination. The report also specifically pointed out the inadequacies in the government's OneSchool project, the flawed computer program to be shared across all schools, the cost for which blew out from \$45 million to over \$97 million. I fail to understand how the minister could say that this cost blow-out was within acceptable boundaries if he intended to accept the Auditor-General's recommendations. It was a flawed process and definitely a flawed project.

The Auditor-General has repeatedly attempted to bring attention to this government's lack of planning. Given that both Beaudesert State High School and Veresdale Scrub State School are over capacity—102 per cent and 106 per cent respectively, both with increasing numbers into the future—and the fact that there are schools that the minister intends to close, I would have hoped that the minister would give due attention to the Auditor-General. The minister has declined to come out and meet the community at Maroon, where the school is under threat of closure and must provide a viability report. Where is the planning for a growth region like Beaudesert when some schools are already over capacity?

To give another example, only last week I was speaking to a mother from Canungra. She and her husband are based at the military barracks there. Their second child is coming of age for the pre-prep program. Unfortunately, there are no placements and for the next few years the waiting list is excessive. Therefore, they will have to put in for transfers. Examples like that will become more prevalent across Queensland, particularly for single parents and two-income households, which would cover most Queenslanders.

The Education and Training Legislation Bill makes a number of technical amendments. Whilst I appreciate the prohibition amendments to assist in distinguishing the prep year from child care, I must stress that greater access to preschool learning programs and more qualified schoolteachers are among the measures that must not drop off the government's radar, as they are central to boosting children's literacy and numeracy skills and would help to address the tragic situations we see in our Indigenous communities. How will those amendments affect early-learning programs like those run by Save the Children Australia group? They have an interesting idea to limit the gap in literacy and numeracy levels for children in remote and very remote areas. Whilst this is not just an issue of Indigenous children, the simple fact is that Indigenous children make up the bulk of the child population in those areas.

A 2008 report by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs found that the literacy gap widens significantly for students, primarily Indigenous, living in remote and very remote areas, with only 54 per cent and 30 per cent respectively achieving the minimum reading standard for year 3. The minimum numeracy standards for all Indigenous students fell by the time they reached year 9. This is more pronounced for Indigenous students in remote and very remote areas—60 per cent and 38 per cent respectively, compared to 79 per cent for Indigenous students living in metropolitan areas. This is totally unacceptable, and I urge the government to get behind the idea of accessible early education and pre-preparatory programs for regional communities as soon as possible, as suggested by organisations like Save the Children Australia.

The agreement reached by the Council of Australian Governments, COAG, to ensure all Indigenous four-year-olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years is a welcome step in the right direction. However, this target also means that children who are not yet born will be condemned to disadvantages. That is the reality of these aspirational 2015 and 2020 targets. We must never forget that investment in early childhood development for children in remote areas is an investment in our community, now and into the future, as it leads to greater participation in society later on.

It is undoubtedly the case that more teachers, pre-prep and otherwise, are needed in rural and remote schools and Indigenous communities. This means more role models for students in remote areas, and this needs to form part of COAG's plans to halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade. However, as with so many issues, it is very easy to cite the problems but what are the solutions? For example, working in remote townships must not be seen as a vetting process for teachers, doctors or any other public servants which they must simply survive for a brief period until returning to the city. It is in such a fundamental cultural change that the solutions lie. There must be incentives, both financially and professionally, in order to achieve those solutions.

Policy makers must actually acquaint themselves with the reality of Aboriginal communities and townships. The rhetoric of social justice rings hollow without this action. The importance of childhood education in the most vulnerable and impressionable years should never be underestimated. The need for dedicated teachers to ensure they are equipped for life is quintessential. HG Wells stated that history is a race between education and catastrophe. I implore the government to do everything it can to avoid the catastrophe we are currently heading towards if we do not treat education as one of the highest priorities for our young and our youth.

Dr ROBINSON (Cleveland—LNP) (4.56 pm): I rise to contribute to the cognate debate on the Education Legislation Amendment Bill and the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill 2009. I note that the policy objectives of the legislation are to amend legislation administered by DET to remove redundant provisions, correct efficiencies or omissions and clarify existing provisions in several acts; to amend the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 with respect to the provision of pre-preparatory and preparatory learning programs and to give the minister power to approve an overseas school as a recognised school; to amend the Child Care Act 2002 to enable the publication of certain information about child-care services that contravene the act; to amend the Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act 2000 with respect to various functions of the QSA; and to amend the University of Queensland Act 1998.

In general terms, I support the overall objectives of the legislation with respect to improvement in the education of our children. However, it concerns me greatly that, even with these amendments, the children of Queensland are not getting the very best education that should be afforded them.

Honourable members may recall me speaking in my maiden speech about the importance of education. I am grateful for the education opportunities that I have had—attending fine state primary and state high schools and three Queensland universities: James Cook University of North Queensland, where I completed a Bachelor of Science in marine biology and zoology; Griffith University's Nathan campus, where I completed a Master of Arts in international studies; and the University of Queensland's St Lucia campus, where I recently completed a PhD in cultural studies.

I note the amendment of the University of Queensland Act is one of the objectives of one of these bills. From my own studies I have learned the value of a good education. I believe that the good education and training of our children, from kindergarten to year 12, is critical to the future. It is also important that Queenslanders have further education and training opportunities, such as via the TAFE system, to enter into a trade, a university or a profession. Further, I believe that our children are best served by a system that allows for choice between public, independent, Catholic and other private options. I note that in the Redlands 60 per cent of children attend public schools and 40 per cent attend independent and Catholic schools. I am committed to standing up for the education rights of all of the children of Cleveland.

Sadly, this government continues to fail our children from kindergarten to university, providing them with limited opportunities to excel. It concerns me that this government has taken its eyes off the ball when it comes to the education of our children, delivering them the lowest quality education in Australia.

I am also grateful for the various opportunities that I have had at different times to work in the education sector as a tertiary lecturer, part-time TAFE teacher, researcher, tutor and chaplain. As a past educator, I acknowledge the importance of teachers in providing a good education for our children. As such, I am committed to the teachers of Cleveland and commend them for their service to our children. I receive regular inputs from teachers about the education of our children and their roles as teachers through visits to schools and delegations to my office. Unlike the current government, I do not blame teachers for the low education standards of our children and I agree that they have not been adequately remunerated for their critical work.

My electorate of Cleveland is home to some excellent schools. I acknowledge the fine work of the principals, teachers and other staff of the kindergartens and schools of my electorate which provide the best possible education for our children. I acknowledge the primary and secondary schools of Cleveland State School, Ormiston State School, Wellington Point State School, Birkdale State School, Thornlands State School, Bayview State College—if the new name is confirmed—Dunwich State School and Secondary Department, Cleveland District State High School, Wellington Point State High School, Redland District Special School, Star of the Sea Catholic Primary School, Mary MacKillop Catholic Primary School, Ormiston College and Redlands College. I also acknowledge the schools neighbouring my electorate that are attended by children from my electorate, for example Carmel College and Faith Lutheran College.

In representing the needs of these schools and in the context of these two education bills, I want to make several points. Regarding kindergartens, I support the concept of the universal availability of kindergarten for all Queensland children. However, I am concerned that the rapid rollout that will occur to take our participation rate from 29 per cent to 100 per cent will be botched by this government. Second, some kindergartens are very concerned—and some in my electorate have expressed these concerns to me—about their future financial viability under the proposed changes. Their concerns

originate from two aspects of the legislation. They are worried about potential competition arising from new kindergartens built on state school premises in close proximity to their current kindergarten. They are also unsure about the security of the DECKAS funding. Kindergartens from my electorate have expressed concern that they may lose funding critical to their survival in already very difficult times. One particular kindergarten is very concerned that the current changes may bankrupt them in the next 12 months. Third, banning the use of religion in the names of kindergartens in my view is an unwarranted attack on the freedom of religion in this state. What terms will be banned? Does the minister plan to ban or censor the word 'Catholic' or 'Christian'? How far will this go? I seek clarification from the minister on that point.

Regarding primary and high schools, the current levels of overcrowding of classrooms in Queensland schools, including some schools in the electorate of Cleveland, are unacceptably high. Despite the Premier's view that there may be good reasons for this, I agree with the teachers in my electorate that this is entirely unacceptable. Neither children nor teachers should be deliberately placed in such situations. The government needs to provide more teachers and better conditions for teachers to begin to resolve this problem. I note that in one report Cleveland District State High School, a fine school in my electorate, is set to have 45 classes that are oversized. Should this report be accurate, as it appears, that is completely unacceptable. I seek the immediate involvement of the minister to resolve the situation at this school.

This year's national literacy and numeracy report card confirmed Queensland's position for two consecutive years as one of the lowest achieving states when it comes to education. While the Bligh Labor government is in charge of education we are still floundering at the bottom of the class with little hope of recovering. That 100,000 students scored below the minimum standard is clearly unacceptable. Teachers also expressed concern that pressure applied from Education Queensland for students to do well in the NAPLAN test produced a temptation in some schools to teach to the test rather than to the curriculum. While our hardworking Redlands school principals and teachers are passing their test, the government has again failed Redlands students.

Teachers are hamstrung in their work when our schools are under-resourced and teachers are underpaid. The recent EB round has been painful for many teachers, and many teachers have expressed their dismay to me personally about the stinginess of the government. The government's poor treatment of our state's teachers has resulted in low morale amongst them and caused some to reconsider their career choice as a teacher. This is detrimental to the education of our children.

Many principals and teachers have also expressed concern that some of the stimulus funding for schools was poorly spent. Problems experienced included a lack of flexibility about what the funds could be spent on, resulting in low-priority items being built in some cases, and high administration fees being charged for some simply designed buildings.

My final point is that I am concerned about the future viability of TAFE programs in the Redlands. The viability of the Alexandra Hills TAFE—the only TAFE in the Redlands—is rumoured to be under the microscope. If the Alexandra Hills TAFE is closed down, where will students from all over the Redlands study? They will have to travel large distances and be unfairly disadvantaged. I propose that the government begin now to assess the establishment of a TAFE college at Cleveland in close proximity to the Cleveland railway line.

In summary, while I support the overall intent of the bills to improve the quality of the education of Queensland children, I remain deeply concerned about the failure of this government to deliver a decent education to our children.

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (5.06 pm): I rise to participate in the cognate debate on the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2009 and the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill 2009. I will be focusing my remarks today on the latter.

The Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill makes a number of important amendments to legislation within the Education and Training portfolio, including some critical practical amendments to the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006. The 2006-07 budget identified 35 Indigenous communities for the provision of a pre-preparatory learning program for 3½- to 4½-year-olds. The Queensland government is spending more than \$40 million over four years to enhance existing early childhood education programs across these 35 communities.

Research has shown that giving our children a head start by investing in the early years makes the biggest difference to a child's future life chances. This is particularly important for children living in the most disadvantaged families and communities. COAG has recognised this by including early childhood as one of its six targets for closing the gap in outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

Currently, some 600 children are participating in the pre-prep learning programs across the 35 communities in 28 state schools and one non-state school. Without school provision of these learning programs, many of these children would not have access to a quality early childhood education experience.

The recent Productivity Commission report *Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage: key indicators 2009* identified the pre-preparatory program as one of the 'things that work' in increasing Indigenous preschool attendance and learning outcomes. It was considered necessary to deliver the pre-prep learning program in these schools as there is limited capacity or viability for private providers in the communities, which these schools service, to deliver sustainable early childhood education and care services where the pre-prep program can be provided.

Investigations have shown that using school infrastructure in these communities to provide pre-prep learning programs, where the early childhood education and care market has been unable to provide consistent quality services, is the only cost-effective approach at this time.

The pre-prep learning program being implemented in these schools is *Foundations for success: guidelines for an early learning program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities*. This program was released in October 2008 and is currently being implemented by teaching teams across the 35 communities. Under the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006, programs delivered to children below prep age who are younger than 4½ years old are not considered as 'schooling'. Consequently, providers of pre-preparatory programs are subject to the licensing requirements of the Child Care Act 2002, which regulates child-care services. It is not appropriate for the state to issue itself a licence under the Child Care Act 2002 as a child-care service. Therefore, there is a need to address the legislative gap in relation to the provision by schools of pre-prep programs in some Indigenous communities.

The bill creates a legislative head of power for the minister to provide an approved pre-prep learning program at prescribed schools to children aged at least 3½ years old. A 'prescribed' state or non-state school is a school that, immediately before commencement of the relevant sections, was providing a pre-preparatory learning program and approved by the minister for the school. The schools are located in the communities of Bwgcolman Community School at Palm Island, Cherbourg State School, Doomadgee State School, Kowanyama State School, Lockhart State School, Mornington Island State School, Northern Peninsula Area State College campuses at Bamaga and Injinoo, Hammond Island Campus of Our Lady of Sacred Heart, Pormpuraaw State School, Tagai State College campuses at Badu Island, Darnley Island, Dauan Island, Horn Island Kubin, Mabuiag Island, Malu Kiwai, Mer Island, Poruma Island, Saibai Island, Stephen Island, St Pauls Thursday Island, Warraber Island, Yam Island, Yorke Island, Western Cape College campuses at Aurukun and Mapoon, and last but certainly not least Yarrabah State School.

In speaking about Yarrabah State School, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the teaching staff at Yarrabah for their hard work and commitment which has led to the school being named one of the 60 most improved schools in the state in this year's NAPLAN test. Yarrabah State School has gone from 17.5 per cent of students performing at or above year 3 writing national benchmarks in 2008 to 61.3 per cent—a lift of 43.8 per cent. I am proud of these students. This is a significant result and confirms that the school is heading in the right direction. All of the schools I mentioned, including Yarrabah, have been providing pre-preparatory learning programs for many years, and it is expected that Hammond Island will be the only non-state school which will be providing a program at commencement.

The Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill also allows further state schools to be prescribed by regulation. This is necessary in case a private provider within a remote discrete Indigenous community providing the program at commencement is not able to continue and there is no alternative private provider able to deliver the program. If this were to occur, a state school could deliver the program.

Legislative coverage of these programs under the Education (General Provisions) Act is intended to be a short-term measure until Queensland's approach to universal access to early childhood education is further clarified—for example, through the review of the Child Care Act 2002. For this reason, the bill provides that these provisions must be reviewed within five years after commencement to ensure that they remain relevant and necessary. While pre-prep children will not be formally enrolled, they will be registered on the school's computerised management system and issued with a unique education identification number. As a consequence, pre-prep children will be counted for the purposes of staffing and other resource allocations. This does not differ from the present system, where students are counted for staffing purposes.

The bill will provide that a pre-prep aged child who is provided with a pre-prep learning program at a prescribed state or non-state school is not a student of the school or enrolled at the school. This is necessary to ensure that a range of provisions in the Education (General Provisions) Act that are not deemed appropriate for these children will not apply to them, such as the imposition of an inappropriate behaviour management condition on a child. Instead of enrolment at school, the bill will provide that the child will be registered for the program.

The bill also applies specific provisions of the Education (General Provisions) Act which are appropriate to apply to pre-prep children. For example, sections 365 and 366 of the act, which oblige school staff to report suspected sexual abuse of a child by another employee of the school, will apply to pre-prep, as will section 426 of the act, which provides that personal information about pre-prep age children must be treated confidentially.

Section 429A of the act prohibits the use of certain terms by child-care providers. The intention of the prohibition is to distinguish the prep year from child care and to limit confusion for parents, because the use of those terms by a child-care provider could lead to an assumption on the part of parents that the child-care provider is able to provide education in the prep year of schooling. However, since its introduction it has become clear that the prohibition as it stands is not sufficiently broad to achieve this policy intention. Therefore, the bill amends the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 to expand this prohibition and ensure that child-care providers must not describe the care they provide in any manner which may suggest that they are providing prep year education—for example, by using the acronym 'PREP'.

Under this important government initiative, pre-prep or kindergarten programs are being delivered across 35 discrete Indigenous communities, resulting in more than 70 per cent of four-year-old Indigenous children across Queensland's remote areas accessing a quality early childhood education. I congratulate education and training minister Geoff Wilson on this bill. These amendments support that crucial delivery, and it is hoped that improvement in the early years can create a flow-on effect for these students as they progress through their school years, providing much better educational outcomes and improved pathways to employment in the longer term.

Ms JARRATT (Whitsunday—ALP) (5.14 pm): I rise to speak in support of both bills before the House and, in particular, to speak to a number of amendments contained in the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill 2009. As a former teacher, I continue to take a keen interest in the delivery of education in this state. While many of the amendments contained in this bill are minor in nature and will probably not make the front page of any paper, they are nonetheless important to the continued smooth operation and delivery of education and training in Queensland.

As a case in point, the Education (Capital Assistance) Act 1993 mainly provides for the grant of capital assistance for capital projects to non-state schools that have been granted eligibility for government funding. Presently, the administrative procedure as outlined in the act requires an approved authority of a non-state school to make an application to and receive the grant from the body that makes the payments. This requirement preceded the framework established by the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2001, which requires each accredited non-state school to have a governing body.

In practice, since the commencement of the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act, the approved authority for any non-state school applying for and being granted capital assistance is always the governing body of the school. Therefore, the provision of an approving authority is now redundant, and its presence in the act is unnecessarily confusing and will be removed.

On another issue addressed in the bill, the Queensland College of Teachers has now been in operation for over three years, working to ensure Queensland schools are staffed by quality teachers. I understand there is a provision in the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005 that has allowed some teachers involved in disciplinary proceedings to prematurely end the investigations and to avoid the consequences of any negative findings. The problem arises when a person who is an approved teacher when disciplinary proceedings against themselves commence ceases being an approved teacher prior to the completion of the disciplinary proceedings. This can happen simply by failing to pay the annual registration fee.

The state government supports good teachers but must have an effective mechanism to discipline those who have breached their obligations under the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005. It is in everybody's best interest to address this issue to ensure that Queensland school students are able to learn in a safe, sound, supportive education system. That is why an amendment contained in the bill clarifies definitions to ensure that, if a person was an approved teacher at the start of a disciplinary proceeding but ceases to be an approved teacher during the action, the proceeding can continue.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you will be aware that this government has recently debated legislation establishing the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal as part of its wide-ranging public sector reforms. The intent of the establishment of the new tribunal is to streamline and improve consistency of administrative decision-making processes across the Queensland government. The Professional Practice and Conduct Committee, or PPCC, is established to deal with matters where minor disciplinary action is likely to be appropriate, such as the issue of a warning or reprimand, or requiring an undertaking by the teacher. However, some disciplinary matters are of such a serious nature that the relevant disciplinary action could result in an order that only the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal has power to make.

In instances where the PPCC believes that the seriousness of a disciplinary matter may warrant an order beyond its power to make, an amendment inserted via this bill will allow the PPCC to refer the matter directly to the tribunal without first having to authorise an investigation or conduct a hearing. This amendment enables serious teacher disciplinary matters to be referred to a jurisdiction which can deal with the matters effectively without unnecessary imposts on the resources of the PPCC.

As I alluded to earlier, the teacher registration process is important to the maintenance and provision of quality education in Queensland. Each year the Queensland College of Teachers undertakes considerable effort in replacing lost, stolen, damaged or destroyed teacher registration cards. It is reasonable to enable the Queensland College of Teachers to charge a small fee to cover or defray the costs it currently absorbs in providing this service, and this allowance is established through amendment in this bill.

The Grammar Schools Act 1975 provides that, in order to stand for or to vote in elections for a grammar school governing body, a person must be a donor or subscriber to the school. An unintended consequence of the current provision is that once a person has been a donor or subscriber to the school they remain eligible to stand for or vote in governing body elections whether or not the person maintains an association with or an ongoing interest in the management of the school. The amendment in the bill before the House is to enable voluntary relinquishment from a school's roll of electors.

The government is constantly working to improve the clarity, efficiency and effectiveness of its operations. I congratulate the Minister for Education and Training on bringing amendments to the House that go to improving the operation of education and training legislation, including that pertaining to relevant statutory bodies. Any bill that achieves these ends is worthy of the wholehearted support of all members of this House. I therefore commend the bill to the House.

Mr EMERSON (Indooroopilly—LNP) (5.20 pm): Quality education is the greatest gift we can give Queensland children. I am fortunate to have some excellent schools in my electorate. The combination of hard work by students, the encouragement of parents and the professionalism and dedication of teachers means that my local schools do achieve excellent results. But to continue to achieve that quality education and the best possible outcomes there needs to be adequate resources directed to this area. Whether it is the prep year or older school years, there needs to be appropriate planning to ensure class sizes are not overcrowded and facilities are not under constant pressure.

Over the past six months I have spoken to many parents and staff from state schools in my electorate. They have repeatedly told me of concerns about pressure on existing class sizes as more people move into the area, especially with increased developments, more townhouses and split blocks.

At some of these schools, demand for prep places for 2010 already exceeds available spaces. This will clearly have a flow-on effect to older classes in later years. Where catchments exist, the numbers within these catchments continue to grow. These parents and staff would therefore be shocked to hear the Bligh government's view on demand for school places in their area including prep places.

When I questioned the education minister about this issue he claimed that student numbers in the Indooroopilly electorate had not increased. The minister asserted that while there has been a significant rise in the number of homes, those moving into the area have not been families with young children. Well, that will be news to those many new families who have moved into my electorate. That will be news to school principals battling to ensure that there are sufficient places to meet demand for those young children from those families. That will be news to teachers watching class sizes rise. The government is clearly ignoring the reality of schools in the Indooroopilly electorate today. If it cannot deal with the issues today, how will it cope with the growth challenges of the future?

Under the recently revised Bligh government's South East Queensland Regional Plan, Brisbane is forecast to require an extra 156,000 dwellings by 2031. The plan targets areas of my electorate for high-density residential development including 20-storey towers. I have no doubt that many of the people moving into those residential developments will be families with children, despite what the education minister and the department may believe. Those families will be expecting their children will have schools to attend; schools with classrooms that are not jammed packed; schools with sufficient oval space.

So what does the South East Queensland Regional Plan outline for dealing with this issue? Where will the classrooms come from? Where will the new schools be? The education minister's response when asked about this is a 'don't you worry about that' approach. The minister says the department will provide suitable classroom facilities should the numbers of enrolled students exceed the school's capacity. Given the department seems to be ignorant of the rising demand already existing at schools in my electorate, no-one can have great confidence in its ability to assess the situation.

The issue is not just about putting more classrooms on the same school site, whether they are for prep years or older class years. Children deserve adequate green space to play in. More classrooms on the same site means existing ovals and open space will be cannibalised for buildings or, at the very least, the ratio of students to oval space will worsen.

Forward planning is necessary but it seems woefully absent when it comes to prep and older school years both in my electorate and across Queensland. Already more than 3,250 Queensland children are attending overcrowded prep classes and missing out on individual attention at critical times. How is it that there are 109 classes of more than the maximum recommended number of 25 students?

The number of overloaded prep classes is continuing to grow every year. In 2007, three per cent of prep classrooms were overcrowded. Last year it was six per cent. Now eight per cent of prep classes have more students than these recommended target.

If the minister is serious about improving education standards in Queensland schools, he would ensure that our students are given the best possible start. That Queensland continues to languish at the bottom of the class in national literacy and numeracy testing is not a failure of students and is not a failure of teachers; it is a failure of the state government.

Between a quarter and a third of students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 are achieving only the bare minimum standard or lower for literacy and numeracy. That means at least 100,000 Queensland students do not have a grasp of the basic literacy and numeracy skills they need to function in today's society. It is hardly surprising Queensland is performing so badly when our schools are underresourced, our classrooms are overcrowded and the curriculum has not been geared to teaching students the basics.

During the budget estimates hearings earlier this year the Bligh government confirmed it was stripping \$77 million in direct federal funding from state primary schools as it tried to pay for its budget bungling. These additional federal funds were meant to deliver an extra \$100 per year for the next three years to each of Queensland's more than 300,000 state primary school students. That meant that if a school has 500 students it would get an extra \$50,000 a year in discretionary funds. Speak to any school principal, any P&C member or any parent and you would know how much of a real difference that money would make. Principals and staff, working with their P&Cs, know where this money can best be spent to achieve the best education outcomes in their individual schools. The federal minister wanted the money to go directly to the schools. The school principals wanted it to go directly to the schools and parents expected it to go directly to the schools. Sadly, the Bligh government has kept the money for itself.

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—LNP) (5.26 pm): I rise to join this cognate debate on the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill 2009 and the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2009, as introduced into this House on Tuesday, 4 August and Wednesday, 16 September 2009 respectively by the Minister for Education and Training, the honourable member for Ferny Grove. As members have already heard from my colleague the shadow minister for education and training, the honourable member for Moggill, we will be supporting these amendments with some reservations.

The debate focuses on two separate bills introduced into this House in a short space of time. The first is the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill 2009, which aims to provide the legislative basis for a pre-preparatory learning program in certain state and non-state schools. It also removes redundant provisions, corrects deficiencies or omissions and clarifies existing provisions in the following acts: the Education (Capital Assistance) Act 1993, the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005, the Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act 2002, the Grammar Schools Act 1975, the James Cook University Act 1997 and the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 2000. The second bill, being the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2009, amends the Child Care Act 2002, the Education (General Provisions) Act 2002, the Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act 2002 and the University of Queensland Act 1998.

These amendments are being rushed through because the government requires retrospective action to 1 September this year for the University of Queensland Act amendments. A clerical error has meant that the expiry of the statutes passed without being renewed. These amendments also introduce a blame and shame approach to child-care centres that do not comply with legislation by allowing the government to display on its webpage their name and non-compliance issue or whether their licence has been suspended or cancelled as well as making it possible for students studying Queensland syllabuses at overseas schools the opportunity to be eligible for Queensland senior school qualifications. The amendments enable the Queensland Studies Authority to develop, purchase, revise, approve and accredit kindergarten guidelines.

The amendments that this speech will focus on are primarily the pre-preparatory learning program and universal access to kindergartens and the publication of information about child-care services that contravene this legislation. I turn to the pre-preparatory learning program aspects of this bill. Prior to the commencement of a preparatory year, preschool education meant education that was provided by a school to children in the year immediately before year 1. The amendment of the Education (General Provisions) Act 1989 during 2004 and 2006 enabled the delivery of programs and services to children below the compulsory school age other than the preparatory year. This was to capture services provided to children with a disability and preparatory services to children in Indigenous communities. However, as we have heard from other honourable members, only services to children with disabilities were included. The government is now playing catch-up and including providing services to children in Indigenous communities. I note that these children will be excluded from the requirements of the Child Care Act 2002. Currently there are 35 communities that assist Indigenous children to get a head start by providing pre-preparatory schooling. Five of these are run by non-state

schools and the rest by state schools. These children are not technically enrolled in school but are instead classed as being registered for the program. They are, however, covered by the same conditions as those enrolled in schools such as reporting of abuse and collection of information.

The Education Legislation Amendment Bill provides for universal access to kindergartens, but I echo the shadow minister for education's sentiments that more certainty and clarity is required, and I ask: on which schools will the 240 kindergartens be built? What will the qualifications of the teachers be? What happens to the children after they complete their 15 hours per week? What is the rollout of funding? I do hope that these issues will be debated, if not in the summary, once we get to the consideration in detail stage. Current child-care centres have no ability to plan for the future as the government has no idea what the rollout will be and how it will be funded. How can child-care centres plan their enrolments, fees and programs if they are not told if the school across the road from them will suddenly have a kindergarten built?

Mr O'Brien interjected.

Mrs STUCKEY: These are serious issues indeed for parents and it really is a shame that some members of this House do not seem to take it the same way. This is yet another example of the Bligh government jumping feet first with no idea of where it will land. The child-care industry and the community have a right to know what is happening and what the level of service will be in their area.

The Premier is always beating her 'jobs, jobs, jobs' drum, but one does have to ask exactly where her government plans to find qualified kindergarten teachers to teach in the 240 new kindergartens. While child-care workers do an excellent job and certainly fill a niche in our community, simply giving them professional development training will not turn them into qualified kindergarten teachers, certainly not at the same level as our university qualified teachers. There is a growing trend to dumb down prerequisites and training required for tertiary positions and it really scares me. As sections of our society seem hell-bent on self-destruction and also self-interest, it is critical we place due importance on the skills of those who care for and educate our children. After all, these early years set children's behaviours and attitudes for adult life.

In addition to issues with appropriately trained workers, there is the matter of overcrowding. Almost one in 10 prep schools have more than their recommended class size of 25. That is a staggering 124 prep classes with too many children. Teachers are struggling to provide an adequate learning environment for our children and say that even one extra student has a detrimental effect on learning. The Early Childhood Teachers Association President, Kim Walters, has recently stated that the quality of the education process drops with every extra child and it has a major impact on both the quality of the program and the quality of the interaction.

While Education Queensland adamantly states that schools were allocated enough funding to meet class sizes, this is obviously not true, with many schools having to find extra resources such as teacher aides to cope with the larger class sizes. Due to this government's neglect, Queensland students are lagging behind other states in literacy and numeracy standards, with Queensland being ranked sixth out of eight in Australia. Granted, this is an improvement on last year's ranking of seventh. However, it is still an appalling ranking. In Queensland there is currently only 29 per cent of children in kindergarten compared to almost 85 per cent in Victoria. Once again, Queensland is playing catch-up to the other states. Sadly, though, it is with the education of our young children.

A program known as STEP—Supporting the Transition for Entry to Prep, which is an extension of Mission Australia and Griffith University's crime prevention Pathways to Prevention program—is being trialled in Queensland's lower socioeconomic areas. This program teaches parents and children in prep school basic etiquette. It aims to tackle bad behaviour and improve academic success. This program was initiated because of the rise in violent behaviour in prep classes, with Education Queensland introducing suspensions for four- and five-year-olds. Undisputedly, overcrowding in these classrooms contributes significantly to the children's behaviour and makes it almost impossible for teachers to spend extra time with those who may need it.

These bills contain provisions that will allow for the publication of noncompliance. Previously, the publication of child-care centres with notices of noncompliance was not issued by the government. Therefore, parents of children who were looking for suitable child care for their young ones had no way of knowing the past history of the child-care centre. These amendments will allow the government to post certain information about licensed child-care services and stand-alone services, including home based services known as family day care, that fail to comply with the Child Care Act.

The publication of information will only occur if a child-care centre and the contravention pose more than a minor risk to the wellbeing and safety of children. The information will be published on the department of education's website and recorded in the register that is kept by the chief executive. The name of centres will be displayed along with the action taken by the department when serious non-compliance sanctions are applied to a child-care service. These include when a licence is amended, suspended, revoked or refused. Types of incidences that may invoke this would include if a centre had harmed a child or a building is structurally unsound due to termite damage or if they have a history of

noncompliance that amounts to a disregard of child-care laws. This information will be published for up to one year, or three years if it is for repeated noncompliance. If the child-care centre is transferred to a new owner then the noncompliance may be removed.

The publication of noncompliance does raise concerns but may give parents more confidence when choosing a suitable child-care facility. There obviously needs to be a balance between the rights of the child-care provider and the rights for full disclosure to parents on the child-care centre's compliance. The LNP will be keeping a close eye on this to ensure it is not being abused or that old information that is no longer relevant is not published which would cause unnecessary harm to the child-care centre's reputation.

A local child-care centre in my electorate has concerns about the inflexibility of non-compliance issues when they relate to staffing levels. While I agree that staffing levels are important and noncompliance should be treated seriously, isolated special cases do occur. If, for example, a child-care worker calls in sick only a few hours before their shift, it is almost impossible for the centre to find a replacement, as casual employees are hard to find because of the limited hours to be offered. If an inspection occurs during this period of being short-staffed, the authorised officer can issue a non-compliance notice.

The concern that has been raised with me is whether this will then be published on the department's website. Surely if it is a noncompliance that can be fixed then appropriate times should be given and, if corrected, the noncompliance should not be published. I would ask for some clarification on that from the minister at a later stage. I do, however, strongly believe that if the noncompliance is severe enough to have the licence suspended, revoked or cancelled this should be readily available for the public to see, and this bill moves in that direction.

The overall squeeze on our schools is exacerbated not only by the Bligh government's lack of attention but also by the Rudd government's delays of broadly advertised and much touted facilities to thousands of schools across Australia. One school in my electorate, after intense community consultation, applied for stimulus money to enable a gymnasium to be built. However, the Rudd government decided that it was to have a new library instead. The school already has a library, but it was told that it was not state-of-the-art so it had to have a new one and the P&C was expected to foot the bill for thousands of dollars of new modern furniture. Surely teachers at the grassroots working at the school every day and involved parents know what is needed for their children. While libraries are an essential resource for children, is it really necessary to build a new library when the teachers and school community do not think it is? Gymnasiums provide countless benefits to our children, promoting healthy activities that can be enjoyed away from our damaging sunshine. One would have thought a move to encourage physical activities, especially with the growing number of children with obesity, would have attracted support.

State schools in Currumbin and elsewhere in Queensland are regularly being allowed to fall into derelict conditions by this Labor government, with grounds needing attention, overcrowded classrooms, literacy and numeracy problems as well as a growing concern about violence being committed by four- and five-year-olds. Education is something to be cherished. Without it, our children will not be equipped for the challenges that lie ahead, nor will they be able to develop emotionally or intellectually in a manner that permits them to utilise their potential as best they can.

Some years ago I collected a mountain of unwanted books from one end of the Gold Coast to the other and shipped them to Fiji for distribution to schools there. When I went over and visited some of the local schools, I remember the sign on one little village school in Nadi Town that simply said 'Enter to learn'. The message has stayed with me. We must always place priority on the provision of education for all children, no matter their circumstances or their geographic location.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—LNP) (5.40 pm): I rise to make some brief comments in the consideration of the two bills that are before the House, both of which deal with education and training. As is the case with other members who have spoken already in this debate, the importance of education to my constituents cannot be underestimated. It is common across the state that no matter where people live in Queensland, the provision of a high-quality standard of education is one of the core requirements of any community and any family. As I have indicated in the House before, within the electorate that I represent there are a large number of small communities. Because of that, within my electorate there are a very large number of schools. I think there is something approaching 60 schools within the electorate of Callide. Those schools range from very small one-teacher schools through to the larger schools in centres such as Murgon, Biloela and Gin Gin, through to the P-10 schools, which are unique educational facilities that members who represent city electorates probably would not be aware of. A P-10 school goes from the prep year to year 10 and presents a unique set of challenges to teachers and school communities that operate within a school like that.

I also have in my electorate a number of what would be considered to be reasonably large high schools—in Gin Gin, Biloela and Murgon; the larger communities within my electorate—that deal with the same issues that the larger high schools in urban areas deal with. Also within the electorate of Callide there is a very strong private schooling system, with St Joseph's school in Biloela, St Joseph's in

Murgon as well as St Therese's school in Monto. They are well recognised for the quality of education that they provide. All of those schools are important parts of their communities. All of them will take a very keen interest in any education legislation that passes through this House.

I want to touch on an issue that I have raised in the House previously and an issue that I have raised directly in representations to the Minister for Education. I refer to the PCAP funding, which is the Priority Country Area Program funding, which provides an important source of funding for country area schools in order for them to provide the extra opportunities that larger schools take for granted. It has been an issue in my electorate for quite some years. Unfortunately, in the latest review some schools that previously were able to access PCAP funding found themselves, because of the new model, not able to access that funding any longer. Conversely, some of the schools on whose behalf I had been lobbying for quite a number of years found themselves included in the new funding model.

It is unfortunate that any small country school should be denied that relatively small amount of funding that made it possible for them to provide the extra curricular activities that are so important in ensuring that a standard of education is available to students in relatively remote areas. The schools within the Callide Valley cluster were the ones that were excluded in the latest round of funding. Small schools such as those at Jambin and Goovigen suddenly found themselves without that funding—and at very short notice, I might add. Those schools found themselves without the funding that allowed them to have their computers maintained, that allowed their students to go on school camps, that allowed them to access the Queensland Arts Council and extra things such as that. To take away that small amount of funding has caused an enormous degree of angst within those school communities. Conversely, I would say that I am pleased to see that small schools at Durong, which is a rather isolated area between Kingaroy and Mundubbera, were at last recognised as being deserving of being included in this funding.

I say to the minister today, as I have done previously, that the model that is used to determine the allocation of these PCAP funds has to be flexible enough to take into account the particular situations of small country schools. We cannot allow a rigid model to be put in place that provides outcomes that are clearly and demonstrably unfair and it is, I would submit, clearly and demonstrably unfair for small schools such as those at Goovigen, Jambin and Prospect Creek to suddenly have that funding cut from their school budgets. I once again call on the education minister to ensure that that relatively small amount of funding in the whole Education budget, but a significant amount of funding for the students and families who depend on these schools, is once again reinstated.

I also want to reinforce the comments that have been made by other members on this side of the House who have spoken in the debate about the importance of ensuring that the teachers who work in our schools are paid properly. I know it is a political issue—and I have listened to the debate in this House this afternoon and I have heard some of the comments and the interjections across the chamber—but any visit to any of these small isolated schools that I represent would reinforce to any reasonable person the need to ensure that the men and women who work in those schools are properly recompensed for their efforts. It is heart wrenching at times to see the diversity of roles that those teachers play in small, isolated schools. The responsibilities that those teachers have in those small, isolated schools would be almost unimaginable to teachers who work in big city schools. It is something that they just do. They play a whole lot of roles just to make the school work, just to make sure that the kids who come to those schools have the best educational opportunities provided to them with the resources that are made available.

A big contributor to the standard of those educational opportunities is the efforts that those teachers go to over and above what they could reasonably be expected to be paid for to make sure that their schools work properly. This issue was brought home to me when I visited a small school in Proston in my electorate—a very small community. The teachers there made the point to me very forcefully over a very nice morning tea that they were paid less than teachers who worked in a big school in the centre of Sydney, where teachers would be able to access a range of support services that the teachers in Proston could only dream about. But not only did those teachers in Proston fulfil their obligations as professional teachers, they also played a whole lot of roles that would never be considered to fall within the responsibility of teachers in those large city schools. For Queensland teachers as a whole not to be paid as much as their interstate counterparts is inexcusable, but for teachers who work in those small, isolated rural schools and who perform duties far and beyond what is required of teachers in larger centres where they are better supported not to be recognised and financially compensated for their efforts is a situation that this government needs to address and address very quickly.

I say that without trying to inflame the political situation; it is just a fact. It is a core responsibility of any state government to ensure that educational facilities are as good as they can be. I appreciate more than anybody the difficulty of delivering educational services to small rural areas. An essential part of ensuring that they are as good as they can be is to ensure that the men and women who give their professional best to work in those places are properly compensated financially for their efforts.

There is a constant battle in my electorate for capital funding for school facilities. While the federal stimulus package has been welcomed in many schools, it is very difficult for school communities to accept the amounts of money that are being quoted to build what are modest facilities indeed. Some of

the costings that have been put forward for things such as libraries, assembly halls, shade structures and shelters are quite phenomenal in terms of the value for money that the school community is getting. I have had a number of examples brought to my attention where schools have been investigating the construction of certain facilities, they have received quotes and have sometimes moved a fair way through the process of establishing fundraising targets and so forth. Then they have had the project taken over by the federal stimulus package only to find that the project is suddenly going to be completed but at a cost of four or five times the amount, and sometimes even more than that. Some of the amounts of money are quite extreme, but such facilities are certainly well overdue in many of those schools and will be welcomed. I only hope that the money that is being made available by the federal government is properly used and that those school communities get the most value for it.

The legislation before the House also deals with child-care services. In an electorate such as mine with so many small communities there are a very small number of opportunities where the more traditional established child-care services can operate economically. By far the most common method of delivering child-care services is through the family day care system. While there are established child-care centres in Biloela and Gin Gin, there are a large number of people in those communities who operate a business as a family day care provider. It is a very important part of the child-care options that are available to my constituents.

I am pleased to see that in the minister's second reading speech he mentioned family day care services, along with the more mainstream child care. Too often family day care has not been recognised whenever child care is talked about in this place and in broader community debate. While that may be understandable in communities where family day care is not a significant part of the child-care market and is not significantly relied upon, in the communities that I represent family day care is extremely important. Family day care is identified in the minister's second reading speech as being subject to the amendments that are included in the bill, the same amendments that will apply to the larger day care centres.

I put on record here today the great service that family day care providers provide in those communities. They, like the teachers that I spoke about earlier, very often provide services far beyond what they are paid for. They do it because they operate in small communities and in many cases they have a personal knowledge of the people for whom they provide the family day care and they do it with the intention of ensuring that it is a valuable community service.

While family day care providers are paid through government funded schemes, to a very large extent there is an element of community service involved. Some of those family day care providers have been providing that service for a long time and are well recognised in the small communities that I represent. For a number of the communities that I represent there has been an issue with accessing family day care coordinators. Family day care coordinators need a level of qualification that is sometimes hard to access in small communities. I am pleased to have been able to work with some of those people to access those qualifications through the TAFE system. The department and the minister need to be aware of this and to ensure that there are opportunities for people in those small communities to access the qualifications that have been identified as a basic standard so that the family day care service providers can continue to provide the valuable services that they do in small communities.

As the shadow minister has indicated, the legislation before the House will not be opposed by the opposition. I am sure that the reservations that the shadow minister has alluded to in his speech on the second reading will be explored in some detail in the consideration of the clauses of the legislation. I will listen with interest to that debate. When legislation comes before this House that deals specifically with education, it behoves all of us to recognise the important role that education plays in every community and every family. I believe that it is one of the main motivators for families when they choose where they will live and where their children will go to school. It determines a great many other things in their life. For communities that are struggling and have issues with economic development, the provision of high-quality education opportunities is one of the things that will help to attract people to small communities and ensure that those communities remain viable.

I welcome the opportunity to point out again some of the education issues that are relevant to my constituents. I urge the government to provide the resources that are necessary to ensure that our education system, not just in Callide but right across the state, is of the highest quality and that the men and women who work in that education system are properly compensated for the great work that they do.

Mr CRANDON (Coomera—LNP) (5.58 pm): I rise to contribute to the cognate debate incorporating the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2009 and the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill 2009. The Education Legislation Amendment Bill amends the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006, the Child Care Act 2002, the Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act 2002 and the University of Queensland Act 1998. One of the policy objectives of the bill is to amend the Child Care Act 2002 to enable the publication of certain information about child-care services that contravene the act—the use of a stick, if you like, to ensure compliance. I certainly understand that of

the many, many child-care facilities right across this state there are very few issues that come forward, but they do no doubt come forward. I accept that there is a need for a control device, something sufficient to keep the child-care industry in check to ensure that there is no contravention. That stick is probably warranted in a few cases.

I point out that at this time the industry is stressed over issues around competition. Unfortunately, that competition comes from the government through its plan to locate 240 new kindergartens on school grounds. I understand that currently about 20 kindergartens have been situated on school grounds but it is still to be determined where the other 220 will go. No doubt some of those facilities are needed, and I support and acknowledge that. However, they are not needed when existing private facilities are located nearby. This is the concern expressed to me by my constituents who run day care and child-care centres. I am sure many members—I would not be on my own—have had people from the child-care industry talk to them at length about having another 240 competitors coming into the industry. Of course, the danger is that some of those new centres will be built near existing child-care facilities.

I wish to point out that this is not about profit; it is about profitability. Some people have invested fairly heavily in those facilities and for them this is about survival. People from a wide range of areas—not just from the for-profit organisations but also from the not-for-profit organisations such as church groups that have decided to take on these sorts of facilities to provide a service to the community—have indicated to me that this is about their survival. Those organisations have indicated that, once they face greater competition and have to move into the education framework, the cost per child going forward will be something like \$20 a day per child. That cost has to be borne by someone. At the end of the day, child-care facilities are not a licence to print money. Not by any stretch of the imagination are they in a position to absorb that sort of cost per child per day. Therefore, that cost has to be passed on to the parents.

I am not sure they are going to be entirely happy about that. Of course, in turn that causes the families to give consideration to where to send their children. Perhaps they will take the cheaper route and move their children to the new facilities on school grounds and find some other way of filling the gap. There is pressure either way. There is pressure on the existing facility to absorb an additional \$20 per child per day, and there is a pressure created by the increased numbers of children wanting to access the new facilities. Parents will have to give consideration to the quality of the care versus the cost and the affordability of the care.

On that basis, I urge the minister and the government not to build new centres around existing facilities. In the state electorate of Coomera, down the road from my office is the Coomera State School and I know of two child-care centres within 500 metres of that school. It would beggar belief if the government built another child-care facility, calling it a young child education facility, on the school grounds which would then compete directly with two existing facilities that are not 100 per cent full. Not by any stretch of the imagination are they so full that they cannot take more children. For goodness sake, I ask the government to give serious consideration to where those new facilities are going to be placed.

I ask the government to be very selective and provide the physical facility where it is needed. The member for Callide talked about country areas. I implore the government to give serious consideration to providing facilities in areas in the country where a facility is not already available and give them a break in that respect. In some towns a for-profit or not-for-profit child-care facility would struggle to make ends meet. Even not-for-profit facilities have to cover their budget and their costs. I ask the government to give consideration to placing facilities in such areas, thus giving 3½- to 4½-year-olds early education opportunities in the country.

For a moment, let us give consideration to that point and think about where we are going with this and what we are achieving. I put it to the government that this is a partnership. We need to think about current child-care facilities and proposed government child-care facilities working in partnership with the government. That partnership can be a win for all concerned. I will explore that idea.

The government would win by saving the cost of infrastructure in areas where services are already being provided. If child-care facilities already exist in an area, there is no point in building new infrastructure just because the school has room for that infrastructure to be built. The cost of that infrastructure could be redeployed and spent somewhere else, such as in a country area. Alternatively, perhaps we do not need to build 240 new facilities; perhaps we need to build only 180 and could save the cost of building 60 facilities where child-care facilities are already in place.

The existing child-care facilities would win by not losing a large tranche of the children that they need to retain in order to be viable. This relates to both the for-profit privately owned facilities as well as the church based not-for-profit organisations. Earlier I spoke about the need for those facilities to remain viable in the changing times that are ahead of us.

Our young children would win by being able to stay at the centre that they have always gone to. This is a very important point that also relates to child-care facility operators. The infants and younger children that they look after actually cost them money. They make up that money as time goes on and the children get older. Then the child-care facility can make a profit sufficient to cover the losses incurred

when the children were younger. That is because far more people are required to look after infants and smaller children than older children. I think the ratio of children to carer is 11 to one in the 3½- to 4½-year age group. Therefore, that 3½- to 4½-year age group is vitally important to the profitability of child-care facilities.

The facility is also important to the children who have been attending it, in some cases since they were infants. I know of recent cases where mums have faced the burden of having to go back into employment after having three months off with their babies. They would love a lot more time with their babies, but economic circumstances demand that they go back to work. From about three months of age young babies can attend child-care facilities and, of course, they grow up in those facilities with all their mates. They roll around the floor together and smile at each other. As time goes on, they start waddling around together, falling over each other and having a bit of fun that way. Some of those children would go through a bit of trauma if they had to move to an educational facility at 3½ years of age. Therefore, it would be a win for those children. They would be able to stay in the facility that they are used to. One could imagine that then they would all go on to prep and school. If they had a good memory, they would be able to say, 'We've been mates since we were two.'

Our young children win by having the facility available to them in the centre. The parents win because they do not have to find ways to move their children between facilities. I am not sure that this has been thought about too much. We are talking about 15 hours of education being provided to a 3½- to 4½-year-old through the week. That is all very well if that is provided in a facility in the school grounds. However, what do we do with them then? Where do they go? Do they toddle off to the child-care facility 500 yards down the road? If that is the case, how do they get there? Who looks after them while they travel to that other facility? Does mum or dad have to come along and pick them up and take them there? These are the things—

Ms Male interjected.

Mr CRANDON: I take the interjection.

Ms Male interjected.

Mr CRANDON: But what about if you are at work? I take the member's interjection, but there is a reason these child-care facilities are there and there is a reason people have to go to work, which is that they have a commitment to bring home the bacon. All of these things need to be well and truly thought through. Serious consideration needs to be given to where these new facilities will be placed relative to other child-care facilities. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MOORHEAD (Waterford—ALP) (6.11 pm): I rise to speak to the two bills before the House. I wish to spend most of my time dealing with the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill 2009. Before I do, I want to deal briefly with some of the contributions to the Education Legislation Amendment Bill.

I want to point out to the House the lack of policy leadership that comes from the LNP. Sometimes I wonder if it can stand for anything. I sat here in 2006 and 2007 as the member for Burdekin criticised and attacked the member for Mundingburra, who was then the minister for communities, for not releasing details of complaints made against child-care centres. I remember there was even a debate about whether the statutory provisions preventing release would stop the minister releasing the information through questions on notice. Despite the fact that the then shadow minister for the LNP roundly criticised the government for holding this information and not giving parents the information they needed—

Ms Nelson-Carr: That was while the review was being conducted.

Mr MOORHEAD: I take the interjection from the member for Mundingburra. The member for Moggill, the member for Currumbin and many others from that side of the House have come here today and raised their concerns about the release of that information. They talk out of both sides of their mouth.

This bill includes a number of amendments to the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 2000. The VETE Act established the Training and Employment Recognition Council, a body whose functions include regulating the issue of qualifications and statements of attainment in Queensland. As part of this function, from time to time the council encounters situations where qualifications or statements of attainment have been issued in an inappropriate manner.

A qualification or statement of attainment may have been inappropriately issued if it was issued by a registered training organisation outside the scope of that RTO's registration; the RTO that issued the qualification did not fully provide the training or assessments for the issue of the qualification or statement of attainment; or the RTO did not, in issuing the qualification, comply with the conditions of registration as provided for in the act. When qualifications or statements of attainment have been issued in an inappropriate way, the potential for a harmful outcome is exacerbated if a person subsequently relies on the qualification or statement of attainment to gain employment in a high-risk industry, and that may include mining or the construction industry. Relatively recent examples include a situation in

Brisbane where, during a routine audit, an RTO was found to have issued statements of attainment to a large number of students for training it was not registered to deliver. While this organisation was successfully prosecuted, the act in its present form could not ensure actions to cancel or recover these inappropriate statements of attainment. This bill amends the VETE Act to give the council the power to declare invalid a qualification or statement of attainment issued inappropriately.

Fundamental to this act is the protection of the integrity of trade qualifications, both those that are being issued and those that have been issued. The integrity of the trade qualifications issued now is just as fundamental as maintaining the integrity of those qualifications that were issued many years ago. Central to our trade system is industry portable skills. We need to be able to trust qualifications on their face as proof of the skills held by the person who holds that qualification. To ensure workers are treated fairly, show cause provisions and appeal rights are included in the bill. Section 45 of the act currently enables an RTO to cancel a qualification or statement of attainment issued by it in certain circumstances. However, in cases where that RTO has lost its registration or refuses to take action to cancel an inappropriately issued qualification or statement of attainment, there is currently no capacity in the act to cancel or recover those documents.

These amendments will benefit all Queenslanders by further enhancing the integrity of Queensland's vocational education and training system and ensuring that people can have faith in the qualifications issued by Queensland's RTOs. But there are also safeguards written into these amendments. The Training and Employment Recognition Council must apply fair procedures in activities which may lead to the cancellation of a qualification or statement of attainment. This will ensure the holder of a qualification or statement of attainment is fully informed of the cancellation being considered by the council and affords that holder the opportunity to put his or her case as to why cancellation should not occur. The amendments also include a right of appeal by a person aggrieved by a decision of the council to cancel a qualification or statement of attainment.

A further safeguard lies in the council's obligation to establish and make publicly available a list of qualifications and statements of attainment cancelled by it. The council may make the list available, for example, by publishing it on the council's website. The council may also give notice of the cancellation by publishing a notice in a newspaper circulating in the state or by giving written notice of the cancellation to other registering bodies or industry bodies to whom the information is relevant. The amendment also makes it an offence for a person whose qualification or statement of attainment is cancelled under section 45A to claim to hold the qualification or statement of attainment.

While these safeguards are necessary, I also ask the minister and the TERC to do everything within their power to ensure that people are not put in the position of undertaking training that is not being appropriately conducted by the RTO. This option should be a last resort. The first option is always to make sure that qualifications are appropriately issued and can be trusted by the community.

While relatively administrative in nature, these amendments are important to the effective and efficient operation of the highly regarded world-class vocational education and training system operating in Queensland and nationally. For that reason this bill should receive the support of all members of this House. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms MALE (Pine Rivers—ALP) (6.18 pm): I rise in support of the two bills before the House and particularly to speak to the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2009. This bill introduces very important reforms to Queensland's child-care sector. The key reforms will ensure more accountability across the child-care sector through enabling the publication of certain information about child-care services that do not comply with the act. The bill proposes that people will be able to check a website to find out whether their local child-care service is meeting its obligations. Any person will be able to check the website and find out whether their local child-care service has failed to meet the legislated standards for child care in any way that is serious or more than minor in nature. As a result, parents will be in a better position to make decisions about which child-care service they ultimately choose to provide care for their child. The types of child-care services that will be subject to this new publication framework are licensed centre based services, such as kindergartens, limited hours care and long day care; all home based child-care services, that is, family day care; and stand-alone care services, where care is provided to not more than six children of which not more than four children are schoolchildren.

Information that will be published includes the name and address of the child-care service, except for stand-alone services which will only include the name that the service is conducted under; details about the enforcement action that was taken; the reason enforcement action was taken; and any action the person must take or has taken to remedy the problem.

The Bligh government is committed to reforming the early childhood and care sector in Queensland. We are delivering on our election commitments to ensure universal access for all 3½- to 4½-year-olds. Early intervention is key to switching on young minds to give our children a flying start for school and for life. We are investing up to \$300 million in establishing an extra 240 kindergarten services across Queensland to cater for approximately 12,000 children not currently attending any early childhood education and care centres.

The Pine Rivers electorate has an estimated population of children from zero to four years of age of almost 2,000, of which over 400 are four-year-olds or in the eligible kindy cohort. We have four kindergartens and 11 long day care centres servicing the area from Strathpine to Dayboro. I have visited many of these services and they are doing a fantastic job with their young charges.

As part of Queensland's strategy for achieving universal access to kindergarten, long day care services will be supported to embed an approved kindergarten program delivered by a qualified teacher in their services. A new Queensland kindergarten funding scheme will be gradually introduced from 2010, with up to 100 long day services able to access this funding from 2010. Details of this new funding are being finalised and will be released shortly.

The Minister for Education has a Kindergarten Implementation Reference Group, which was established in December 2008 and which meets regularly. This reference group has representatives from across the early childhood sector including independent and Catholic education, C&K and long day care centres, and representatives from employer and union authorities. The focus of this group has been to provide advice and information to the minister through the Office for Early Childhood Education and Care to inform the rollout of Queensland's strategy for achieving universal access for 3½- to 4½-year-old children to an early learning program for 15 hours per week across the state by 2014.

This reference group also provides the opportunity for the sector to exchange information and views on a variety of topics including the state and national early childhood reform agenda standards; workforce and performance measurement issues; workforce planning and other emerging issues and trends. I have been fortunate to meet this reference group and appreciate the depth of experience that it contains and its goodwill in assisting government to analyse and implement early childhood educational reform.

The other significant reform contained in this bill is the proposal to enable the Queensland Studies Authority to develop, approve, purchase, revise and accredit kindergarten guidelines. The Queensland Studies Authority is ideally placed to develop the kindergarten guidelines, as it already has substantial expertise in curriculum development and experience in working across education sectors. The kindergarten guidelines will set clear expectations for children's learning, as well as age-appropriate teaching practices. They will also include a key focus on early literacy and numeracy skills, which as we know will develop across the years and will improve the outcome for all students. The guidelines will therefore provide a firm foundation for future learning and schooling outcomes as well as boost the delivery of quality early childhood education in Queensland.

The Queensland kindergarten guidelines will also complement and align with the national Early Years Learning Framework—known as the EYLF—released by the Council of Australian Governments on 2 July 2009. By enabling the Queensland Studies Authority to develop the kindergarten guidelines for use by Queensland child-care services, services will be well placed to comply with the national Early Years Learning Framework.

I am also pleased about the other amendments in this bill which will enable Queensland to take advantage of opportunities to generate additional revenue by enabling students in overseas countries to study the Queensland senior curriculum and have the chance to receive Queensland senior school qualifications. Queensland's senior school curriculum is highly regarded in the international market. Overseas schools have expressed a desire to deliver it to their own students, in some cases preferring Queensland's curriculum over what is available in their own countries. The bill facilitates this, but it goes further. It also enables students at overseas schools to become eligible to receive Queensland senior school qualifications such as the Queensland Certificate of Education.

Where a school meets and continues to meet certain benchmarks, it is only fair that eligible students at those schools should also receive the same Queensland senior school qualifications that their counterparts in Queensland receive. This supports Queensland Smart State initiatives to broaden Queensland's engagement with the world through education and training. I commend the minister for bringing these bills to the House and for the hard work that he, his department and his staff have done. I commend the bills to the House.

Mr DOWLING (Redlands—LNP) (6.24 pm): Tonight I rise to speak to the Education Legislation Amendment Bill and the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill. I support the bills but I do have some questions. I was able to get together with a number of teachers to discuss all the issues and implications involved in this legislation. I do not come from an education background, so I find it comforting to confer with those who do have knowledge in this area.

I met with teachers to discuss these bills with them and to hear their concerns. Initially it was more of a slag-off of government, because they were at great pains to point out to me their distrust of anything that this Queensland Bligh Labor government has to offer education—any plans that it has for education. Believe me, they were scathing in terms of the way they have been treated and the disrespect they feel they have received at the hands of the Labor government through the EB process.

In balancing the Labor spin and the reality, I read through the minister's second reading speech and compared the aspiration of the bills with the substance of the bills. Do the bills deliver a better outcome? According to all the teachers that I talked to, they believe that it is a better outcome. They believe that it is a step in the right direction. Is it perfect? No, it is far from perfect. Has it been clearly articulated? No, there are some opportunities for improvement. Are there unanswered questions? According to the teachers that I met with, yes. In the assessment by educators that I talked to, they advised me that it is a step forward. They do, however, have issues that they believe need to be raised and need to be addressed. They have concerns and questions that need to be answered. It may be that during the debate some of these questions are answered, but just in case I will put them on the agenda. I hope that the minister is able to address some of them in his summing-up.

One of the questions put to me relates to amendments to section 80 of the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act in relation to notification of disqualification orders to the college by courts and the Police Commissioner et cetera. It touched on a range of offences. We are talking about indictable offences, but the teachers had some interesting comments and I will share them with the House. The range of offences that they raised were things like drink driving, with the consensus that it probably did not warrant notification. However, again, I brought them back to the indictable offences issue, or disqualification of registration, because they felt that those sorts of issues were probably best dealt with through the normal judicial processes. However, the issues that did jump out were offences of violence and sexual preference and sexuality. There were obvious concerns about paedophilia and guarding young people from any risk or danger from any source.

It surprised me that they raised the issue of drug offences and questioned issues of theft and handling of stolen goods. They also talked in terms of mechanisms for teachers to perhaps be rehabilitated or teachers that are rehabilitated and what mechanisms there might be to enable them to re-enter the workforce. Obviously there were some riders, but it was interesting that they raised those issues. As we value teachers in Queensland—or we should value teachers in Queensland—it is important that they are not consigned to the scrap heap. We do struggle for quality teachers in Queensland.

They also commented that much of the documentation was technical or mechanical in nature, and that is quite rightly pointed out in the various support information. They also pointed out that it had the ability to create some uncertainty. One of the questions they raised was a technical question relating to the recognition of prior learning and how they should or could be recognised. But they also questioned the validity of registered training organisations if privately owned. So they put a question mark around the validity of those accreditations when, in their words, it was like the fox guarding the henhouse or Caesar judging Caesar. The obvious question from them is: what safety mechanisms are proposed to ensure a competent level of delivery and a creditable system?

This also gives rise to clause 49 in new section 45A(1), which allows the council the ability to cancel a qualification or statement of attainment on a range of grounds. This raised some very real issues in their eyes around compensation for the aggrieved student who, now no longer qualified, is the victim in this. It fails to close the circuit by addressing the issues of prosecution et cetera to the RTO. I know there are some clauses that touch on that, but they felt there were still some opportunities missed.

The clause also failed to address the issue of the school now no longer being able to deliver a program. The onus must be on the RTO and on the provision of other arrangements so that the students are not disadvantaged. It could be that another teacher or industry professional et cetera could be brought into the breach.

Sitting suspended from 6.30 pm to 7.30 pm.

Mr DOWLING: Clause 49 fails to address the issue of schools no longer being available to deliver a program. The onus must be on the RTO to provide other arrangements so that the students are not disadvantaged. At the end of the day, it is the students that are key in all of these issues. It is imperative that they are not disadvantaged. It could be another teacher or an industry professional or someone else who can fulfil the role and continue delivering that particular curriculum.

Further to that, clause 30 adds the provision in subsection 175(1) that the college can appoint an investigator. But it does not set out any specific qualifications. It simply allows the colleges to determine the qualification that they deem necessary or relevant. There was a measure of concern about that particular clause raised by the teachers that I talked to. Again, I am hoping that the minister will be able to touch on that in his closing remarks.

Another question relates to new section 419A(5), which very specifically mentions state schools. It does appear silent on non-government schools. Is there any other section that relates to non-government schools or does it automatically apply to the non-government school sector? Again, I was not able to find anything that tidied that up for me.

Section 50 relates to the pre-preparatory learning program in state schools that must be provided free. Does the government intend to provide the funding for this or will schools be forced to cut budgets in other areas and for other resources and other service delivery to enable the delivery of that part of their curriculum? Does the introduction of the provision of a pre-preparatory program pre-empt even more pressure on school facilities and overcrowding?

As I understand it, we are potentially talking here about children 3½ years of age being in our primary schools free. This begs the question: what impact could that have on the day care industry and the early learning centres? Are schools equipped to accommodate such young children and cope with the increased school populations? In terms of the pre-preparatory program, I am advised that the national average for attendance is 86 per cent. I have heard other speakers refer to differing figures in this regard. The information I have is that in Queensland the attendance rate is 22 per cent. Again, I have heard other figures from members.

Most teachers support the concept and the strategy but they are very concerned about whether it will be managed in the same way the state has been managed—that is, dismally and incredibly poorly. Will this further erode teaching conditions? We know only too well how poor the conditions are that teachers are working under in certain circumstances. They are conditions unlike those of railroad workers, which we heard about earlier today. They have a rolled gold set of conditions. I would very much hope that those conditions could be rolled out to educators in the future. I was also reminded that prep is not a compulsory year of schooling.

Other questions came out of my discussions with teachers. There were questions such as: who would legislate the pre-preparatory program—the state or Commonwealth governments? Who determines and measures the staffing qualifications? What will the staff-to-child ratios be? These were all questions that came out of the many discussions I had with teachers.

It was interesting that some of the interjections before dinner—and I did not take them—were about how many teachers I had talked to. I could not give members a number, to be perfectly honest. I can tell members that I directly or indirectly represent 15 schools—that is, primary and high schools. When I calculate those numbers, probably more than a thousand teachers work in my electorate with my community and my constituents. A large number of them come from my community and are my constituents. They touched on the question of funding for teachers' wages. The C&K pre-preparatory programs receive 80 per cent of teachers' wages in funding. Is that likely to roll on to schools?

I will run through the schools that I represent, because I think it is important that I acknowledge all of the schools in my area because there are a few. The schools in my area are: Victoria Point State High School, Victoria Point State School, St Rita's, Carmel College, Faith Lutheran—which has two campuses, a junior and a senior—Chisholm College, Redland Bay State School, Carbrook State School, Mount Cotton State School, Sheldon College—

Ms Stone interjected.

Mr DOWLING: I take that interjection. Chisholm College is on the border. It is one of the honourable member's schools. I actually pride myself on the fact that we share that school and we have a commonality of interest when it comes to schools on the border. The other schools are: Calvary Christian College—again, I will concede I share some representation with the honourable member—Kimberley College, Macleay Island State School and Russell Island State School.

That is a full round-up of the schools in my area. Obviously I take great pride in the work that the teachers within those schools do. Obviously teaching and education are moving feasts and we will need to amend legislation from time to time. That is an absolute given. But we need to ensure that teachers are not left behind and that they are valued. Training is essential in delivering what we all want—that is, better education for our children. They have for too long been at the back of the pack. I acknowledge that they are moving forward but not quickly enough. It is for all of those reasons that we need to work together and ensure that we have the best possible teachers.

It is critical that the system that has brought our teachers to their knees is corrected and amended and that the teachers in it are valued. We need to encourage the best and brightest minds in the classroom. I am referring here to the teachers in the classrooms; I am not referring to the students. If we have the brightest and best minds in our classrooms teaching our children then we certainly will have the best and brightest minds in the future. Maybe the mirage that was the Labor policy of the Smart State will become a reality. Let us hope that it does.

We need to halt the systemic breakdown in the education system that sees teachers leaving in droves. We need to ensure that teachers are valued. They are certainly valued by those on this side of the House. It is about career attraction and career development and career certainty. They are the three issues that came out loud and clear for me when talking to the teachers in my electorate and those who represent or educate the students from my electorate.

I will be supporting this bill not because it is perfect, but because it is supported in the main by the teachers I have consulted with and represent. They felt it was worth supporting. They felt that is a way forward. Not all of the boxes are ticked—not by a long shot—but it is a step in the right direction.

These same teachers are teachers who are struggling with poor facilities. These are the teachers who are struggling in overcrowded classrooms. These are the schools, such as Redland Bay State School, which are bursting at the seams and yet we want to add more. Victoria Point State School is almost at 100 per cent capacity and yet we want to squeeze more in. Mount Cotton needs elastic sides in the classrooms to keep up with the enrolments there. What we have is underfunded and overcrowded schools. It is not good for the teachers, it is certainly not good for the students and it will not be accepted by the parents of those students.

On the bay islands asbestos is still a major issue. The minister can deny that all he likes, but it is the parents and the teachers who are concerned about this. They are in the classrooms teaching while the students are learning in not ideal circumstances, and we really need to fix the system. I will be supporting the bills and I commend the bills to the House.

Mr MALONE (Mirani—LNP) (7.39 pm): I rise to briefly make some comment on the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill and the Education Legislation Amendment Bill. Obviously given the speech by our shadow minister, we will be supporting this legislation before the House. This legislation gives me the opportunity to rise to talk briefly about the absolute admiration that I have for the teachers who teach in schools across my electorate. With the 45-odd state schools that make up part of my electorate, plus the Catholic and other schools, there is a significant representation of education across the seat of Mirani. There is a range of different sorts of schools—quite large schools like Sarina and Walkerston and fairly large high schools like Mirani, Sarina, Mount Morgan, Dysart and Middlesbrough. That certainly gives some understanding of the depth and the variability of Education Queensland.

Like the member for Callide, I have absolute admiration for those teachers who teach in those very remote areas. I am not just saying that because I am married to a schoolteacher and have some real understanding of their trials and tribulations as my wife taught in schools for many years after we were married. It is with some knowledge that I understand the issues before teachers across Queensland and more particularly in my electorate.

Mr Wilson: She's still trying to educate you, Ted, is she?

Mr MALONE: Indeed. I will not take that comment.

Mr Wilson: You just did!

Mr MALONE: She has given up on me, mate! On Tuesday next week I plan to visit some of the more remote schools in my electorate. I will be leaving from Sarina and travelling to St Lawrence, which is about 130 kilometres away. After meeting people at the school and dealing with other issues I will be heading up over the range for another 130 or 140 kilometres to Clarke Creek, travelling another 120 kilometres further south to Mackenzie River, travelling about 180 kilometres north to Valkyrie and then travelling 120 kilometres back to Sarina. If people add up the kilometres I will be travelling in one day to visit just four schools in my electorate they will get some idea of the isolation that those teachers face.

As the member for Callide indicated, the challenges that teachers have in those small communities—some of them single-teacher schools—are beyond comprehension, and they are the do-all and be-all of education in those small communities. Indeed, in many cases they are expected to go beyond the call of duty. Last week—most members would realise that last week was school holidays—I rang the school at Clarke Creek but the principal was there to answer the phone. Whereas many other teachers had taken the two weeks off, she indicated that she was still doing work at the school during the holidays. That gives members some idea of the issues that they face on a daily basis and the work that they have to perform in those smaller communities. Most members would realise that in those smaller communities the school is the hub of the community. Many of the organisations and the social functions centre around the P&C committee and the school.

Indeed, if we look at the rural fire brigade, the SES and most other organisations in the area we see that most of the members are from the school community, and basically there is a simple transition from being a member of the school P&C who spends a Saturday mowing the oval and/or doing some work at the school as a volunteer to donning the yellow uniform of the rural fire brigade or manning the highway with speed signs because there has been an accident. These are the issues that face small communities, especially since the amalgamation of the shires. More and more volunteers are being asked to go out and do that sort of work because no longer do the councils have the local council workers close by, and even a local councillor can step in to help out. That is one of the hidden consequences that nobody appears to have thought about when we went through the horrific amalgamation of shires.

That is fairly typical of St Lawrence, where there was a major workforce with the headquarters for the Broadsound shire council. With the amalgamation of the shires, the headquarters were moved to Middlesbrough and a large number of the staff have left St Lawrence. Yet they are still expected to front up to accidents on the highway which happen almost on a daily basis—there has been something like eight

or nine fatalities on the highway this year—because there is nobody else around. Volunteers have to turn up until the professionals arrive, and it is 150 kilometres or more from Mackay and 130 kilometres from Sarina to get the police and ambulance there.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): The member should just bear in mind the title of the bill.

Mr MALONE: I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker. I did get carried away a little bit in explaining the virtues of teachers operating in small communities, where volunteers become part and parcel of life. Of course, the school principal along with her husband are just two of the volunteers who work in that community. I do not intend to go on to any great extent. With those few words, I support the shadow minister and the legislation.

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—LNP) (7.46 pm): The education and training cognate debate is a wide-ranging and broad debate in this chamber, as we heard from the member for Mirani. The minister notes in his second reading speech that the department administers 21 acts. I congratulate the shadow minister, the member for Moggill, on his detailed examination and assessment of the technical aspects of this bill.

On behalf of the parents and children of the Burnett, I congratulate and thank all of the teachers. Sometimes under very difficult circumstances they work miracles every day. I particularly want to congratulate the teachers employed by Education Queensland in our state schools. Given the lack of political support and the lack of on-the-ground front-line resources provided by this state government—or not provided by this state government—they do a fantastic job.

I want to give the House some statistics from the Burnett electorate. There are a total of 26 state schools in the Burnett electorate and three non-state or private schools. The total number of state school students in the Burnett electorate is just under 4,000—it is 3,893—and that figure will grow into the future, when we consider the 35 million people who will be in Australia in coming years. I believe that many of those people coming to Australia and migrating north to Queensland will end up around the Burnett electorate. Therefore, we have to be very mindful of the infrastructure that we provide for state school education.

I want to share with the House tonight some of the great state schools we have in the Burnett electorate: Agnes Water, Alloway, Avondale, Bargara, Booyal, Bororen, Burnett Heads, Childers, Cordalba, Elliott Heads, Givelda, Gooburru, Goodwood, Isis High, Kalkie, Kolan South—a school that I attended when I was a young fellow—Lowmead, Miriam Vale, Moore Park, Oakwood, Rosedale, Sharon, Wartburg, Winfield, Woongarra and Yandaran. All are vibrant schools with vibrant P&Cs and a fantastic crew of teachers.

There is a general perception within the broader community that private schools provide a better education for children. When one looks at state-wide figures on a percentage basis, the statistics are showing that parents are voting with their feet in many areas of the state and finding that extra money from their ever-shrinking family budgets—budgets which are being eaten into by state government charges and taxes and in the future, if the ETS comes in, they will be paying extra money for that—and sending their children to private schools. This is a trend that I believe we should acknowledge and also try to reverse. I am a big believer in the public school system, especially the public school system in regional and rural areas.

The Burnett is receiving its fair share of the 2,000-odd people who come across the border every week to settle in Queensland. But unfortunately, I do not believe that we are receiving our fair share of new infrastructure. In speaking in this cognate debate on the Education Legislation Amendment Bill and the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill, I would like to talk about new educational infrastructure and also the feedback that I have received about our Burnett state schools and teachers from parents who probably barrack for New South Wales during the State of Origin. I can say that that feedback is enthusiastic and overwhelmingly positive. According to those people I have spoken to who have recently emigrated from colder climates down south, we in the Burnett are giving their children an education experience that exceeds the public and also the private standard of education in New South Wales. In that regard they were talking about the standard of education offered in the city.

I think one of the best educational experiences any child can ever have is to grow up in a regional Queensland school. I cannot speak from personal experience about city schools. I have reservations about big city schools and the culture that develops within them. But all of those small regional schools—the schools with 140 kids, or 200 kids, or 60 kids, or 15 kids, or the one-teacher schools—certainly provide quality teaching and learning experiences for our students.

I have spoken about the following issue with the minister tonight. There is an emerging public health issue that could affect and may well have adversely affected the health of schoolchildren at two Burnett state schools: the Bororan and the Miriam Vale schools.

Mr Wilson: And I can indicate I have actioned that through my department. Thank you for raising it with me.

Mr MESSENGER: I thank the minister very much for that. By way of explanation to the House, Bororan State School is a small country school that is situated approximately 14 kilometres north of Miriam Vale. It caters for prep to year 7 students. The total number of students there is 45 and the principal is Ms Jane Van Der Weide. The principal of the Miriam Vale State School is Mrs Margie Burrell, and I had a chat with Margie today. It has been recently brought to my attention that, unbeknown to the residents of the township of Bororan, they have been drinking—possibly for years—unpotable water, or water that is not suitable for human consumption. This is an ongoing issue. It obviously has relevance to the schoolchildren there.

The Mayor of the Gladstone Regional Council, George Creed, told me on Monday morning that the residents should now boil their water before drinking it. The community is only now being warned about the dangers of drinking their water supply. Unfortunately, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that, without proper warning, the residents of Bororan, including their children, have been allowed to drink contaminated water.

Just to give the House an example of the nature of the potential health threat facing students, teachers and families in Bororan and Miriam Vale, I have been contacted by a young Bororan mum who has three children and a husband. They have all had health complaints. Their family doctor is now questioning whether their ill health has been caused by their council's supplied drinking water and has asked for it to be tested. I have asked the health minister to be involved in this issue and also to make sure that independent tests are carried out. To give an example of the threats that are being faced by the schoolchildren, this young Bororan mum told me that her two-year-old boy had a long history of stomach and internal bleeding. His skin cracks and weeps. He can barely walk when he gets up of a morning. His skin flares and goes red, dry and scaly after a shower.

Mr Lawlor: What's this got to do with the bill?

Mr MESSENGER: I am very disappointed really to hear the little snickers around the chamber tonight saying, 'What's this got to do with the bill?' I can tell members what it has to do with the bill. It is to do with the health of schoolchildren because there are some doubts about the water supply and the water that is drunk by the children at the Bororan school. As we know, today the schools encourage the children not to bring to school drinks with a high sugar content. One of the things that the children then do is rely on water supplied by the school. So I am surprised that those members would fail to find the relevance of the issue I am raising, which is a serious public health issue for schoolchildren.

Government members interjected.

Mr MESSENGER: I find their interjections moronic, insensitive and uncaring, which is what I have come to expect from most of those members on the opposite side of the chamber. After speaking with the mayor, I can say that there is also a small possibility—probably larger than a small possibility—that the Miriam Vale State School may be facing a similar danger.

The community of Agnes Water/1770 have been crying out for a high school or a middle school to be established in their area. There are a lot of Agnes Water children attending boarding schools and, therefore, living out of the area, because there is no high school in their immediate community. They are not being accounted for when the education department calculates and considers whether they should build a secondary facility at the Agnes Water school. Of course, the cost of their education is subsidised by the federal government. So, in effect, this state government is shirking its responsibility and cost-shifting the students' educational fees.

Community advocates and parents alike are really perplexed as to why this government keeps on insisting that they do not have the numbers to warrant a high school. I know that the minister has been approached by a delegation in Bundaberg and wonderful community advocates in Agnes Water/1770 such as Dr Ali Black. She has pointed out that, as shown by the 2006 census data, the percentage of children living in Agnes Water aged between five and 14 years is 15.7 per cent, which is greater than the national average for that age bracket of 13.5 per cent. That is one pertinent statistic. Dr Ali Black also states that the government should not be allowed to have it both ways. There is quite a push by the government to recognise the growth in the Discovery Coast area by saying that, because of that growth, the people there will need a desalination plant and that the government is prepared to throw \$30 million at it, but the people there cannot have secondary school options.

In the past I wrote to then education minister Welford stressing the importance of constructing a secondary school at Agnes Water, but those pleas fell on deaf ears. I am hoping that this minister realises that the need for a secondary school is becoming a critical issue for the families who are constantly moving to the area. The need for this school has an overwhelming amount of community support. The provision of a school in the area would allow parents to be more involved in the school community and in their children's education.

In the media of late there has been much attention focused on the serious issue of schoolyard bullying, which is on the increase. It is evident that there has been a frightening growth in violence and disruptive behaviour in Queensland's schools. It is obvious that bullying is still rife in schoolyards and

has a major impact on the learning ability of students. The issue of schoolyard bullying desperately needs to be addressed. Students should not have to put up with bullying. It is their basic right to feel safe and to be provided with a safe learning environment.

It continually puzzles me to find that there is an imaginary line drawn at the boundary of the schools. An assault committed over that boundary in the wider community is considered to be very serious whereas horrific injuries can be inflicted on students by other students and it is not treated by society in the same way. Similarly, in relation to drug offences, there is an invisible line. If you move into the schoolyard, you are in the twilight zone, whereas on the outside, it is 'Welcome to the real world' and if you are found with drugs and illicit substances you are treated in a very serious way.

Earlier this year I received a letter from a local teacher whose thoughts and words deserve to be heard during this wide-ranging cognate debate on the Education Legislation Amendment Bill and the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill. I will not identify this teacher, because I know how vindictive this government becomes to public servants—

Mr Lawlor: You already read anonymous letters.

Mr MESSENGER:—who speak out and blow the whistle about waste, mismanagement, dysfunction and the corruption of this Labor government.

Mr Moorhead: You name them in the parliamentary record.

Mr MESSENGER: We all know that all of those members opposite who were here in the last parliament actually voted to let off the hook a convicted, corrupt former member, so when I hear their protestations and their crying out about anonymous voices it is like water off a duck's back; it really means nothing. The teacher writes—

I am a State School teacher and have been for 20 years.

The State School system is totally falling apart because of gross neglect from many previous Governments, both State and Federal.

This Government is certainly greatly contributing to the disaster.

I am at a school where the teachers are just fantastic and we are doing the absolute best that we can. You wouldn't get a better education anywhere.

I wholeheartedly agree with that. The teacher continues—

However, many of our teachers are close to retirement. Most of the teachers I speak to can't wait to retire because they have had a gutful of the lack of funds, remuneration and respect.

Last term two of our experienced teachers retired basically the day they turned 55. This was a huge loss to our school community.

Why aren't these teachers being encouraged to keep teaching!?

The Government has even periodically been offering \$50 000 to entice experienced teachers out of teaching. Why? The only reason is to save money because these teachers are replaced by graduates who are paid much less and the Government saves loads of money.

If the Government and the public think that education has problems now, wait another 10 years. By that time most of the experienced teachers will have either retired, resigned or gone to teach somewhere else.

Many of the graduates who are replacing them have OP's of 15-19!!!!

My daughter is in Grade 12 and is going to get an OP of about 2 or 3. Several of her friends are also very academic.

They laugh hysterically when anyone talks about becoming a teacher. It is absolutely the bottom of the ladder of choices. Basically the only students who stoop that low have no other options.

These are the teachers of the future. Good luck to our grandchildren.

What that teacher has said might grate on some of those opposite. I believe that this person is speaking the truth and speaking from the heart. His comments need to be recognised and listened to by all policy makers on both sides of the parliament. I have given an undertaking to my local teachers that I will be lobbying and advocating on their behalf so that Queensland teachers become some of the best paid teachers in Australia.

Mr Moorhead: How much would you pay them?

Mr MESSENGER: I have actually had the library carry out research on some of the best paid teachers in the world. Finland is one of the places where educational standards are recognised world-wide as being the best. I commissioned the research after I bumped into a newly graduated teacher from Finland in Agnes Water. He and his girlfriend were travelling around Australia before going back home to work. We had a nice conversation about the comparisons between the different teaching systems. I think that it is time that we compared our teachers with not only the Australian standard but also the international standard.

In Finland there is a system where to become a teacher one almost has to have a masters degree. According to the library brief, teachers are considered pedagogical experts and are entrusted with considerable independence in the classroom. They also have decision-making authority as concerns school policy and management. They are deeply involved in drafting the local curricula and in

development work. Furthermore, they have almost exclusive responsibility for the choice of schoolbooks and teaching methods. Teachers continuing professional development is regarded as essential and is organised extensively.

The OECD Program for International Student Assessment, PISA, carries out surveys of key exercises of 15-year-old students. Commencing in 2000, the PISA surveys are administered every three years in the OECD member countries.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Pitt): I ask the member to come back to the intent of the bill. I think we have given a fair bit of latitude.

Mr MESSENGER: In relation to the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill in this cognate debate, I am actually trying to compare education standards in Finland to Queensland.

Mr Lawlor: It has nothing to do with the bill.

Mr MESSENGER: I know that members opposite think that there is no relevance there, but they are of very limited intelligence, you would have to agree with me, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The Australian Council for Educational Research has produced a report on PISA, comparing the results of schools in each Australian state. This gives some comparison between Finland and Queensland in 2006, with Queensland, along with other states, performing at the OECD average in science and above the OECD average in reading and math. The mean results for Queensland in 2006 compared with Finland were: in science, Finland rated 563 and Queensland rated 520; in reading, Finland rated 547 and Queensland rated 510; and in math, Finland rated 548 and Queensland rated approximately 520.

I have never been able to understand why a system which prides itself on teaching our children the logic that if they further their education and qualifications they will be rewarded unfortunately fails to follow its own advice. After talking with many teachers and friends, if a person chooses to spend their time furthering their qualifications to a masters level, there is no guarantee that the Queensland government will reward them with increased wages or better conditions. In fact, a teacher friend of mine said that there was a clear disincentive for her to further her academic qualifications because she would be out of pocket. At the very least our education system should provide a clear incentive for teachers to further their own education because everyone wins: the children win, the teachers win, the parents and the community win. I support the bill.

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (8.06 pm): The Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2009 is one that I am very happy to support, particularly the first objective which is to enable the publication of information about child-care services that contravene the legislation. In the not-too-distant past I was the minister responsible for child care. We conducted a review into the Child Care Act 2002. One of the areas of concern raised by various submissions was the information made available to parents about the child care that their children were receiving. Openness and transparency is vital if parents are to have access to the information about school services and child-care centres. This is equally true when services do not meet their obligations under the law or children are exposed to risks to their safety. These are the very centres which will be targeted in this bill.

Let us not forget that we already set very high standards by monitoring centres through the Office for Early Childhood Education and Care. Authorised officers have a range of powers. For those very serious offences of noncompliance, the CEO has the power to renew, amend—including immediate amendment—revoke, refuse to renew and even suspend a licence. Where possible, officers work with the service to avoid these more serious enforcement actions. But, at the end of the day, the number of monitoring visits across the state grew considerably during 2008-09, far exceeding the target visits. Whilst most services complied and provided safe and suitable care for children, there are still those licensees who commit serious breaches and/or repeated breaches. Clearly this is not acceptable.

Therefore, when services have contravened the legislation the information will be published. They will remain published on the website for 12 months to three years depending on the seriousness, unless the licence has been transferred to a new owner which will mean that the information will generally be removed from the website.

It is interesting to remember that when this review was being conducted the opposition was baying for full publication of details, citing the rights of parents to know all details even before the review outcome was available. Now it has changed its tune to suggest that a child-care service's reputation must be considered and privacy has to be sought for various levels of noncompliance. What we must ensure is a balance between viability, safety and access to important information regarding our children.

The Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill 2009 makes a number of changes, including amendments to the James Cook University Act 1997. As I was a member of the university council for many years, it is with pride that I acknowledge this university as one of the best in the world, particularly in its internationally recognised research in areas such as marine science and biodiversity, tropical ecology and environments, tropical medicine and public health, to name just a few.

JCU campuses have spread throughout the state as well as overseas. The amendments include streamlining the election of convocation members of the university council and extending the term of office of the academic board. The amendments will generally reduce costs associated with convocation elections and safeguard those who do vote, and they will align the JCU Act with the authorising acts for the other two Queensland universities—that is, QUT and UQ. Whilst I have not had the privilege of working on a council with Professor Sandra Harding as vice-chancellor, I commend her leadership and representation, both in Queensland and internationally. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (8.10 pm): As has been mentioned, these bills cover a range of aspects of the minister's portfolio. Tonight I wish to direct my few remarks to three aspects of the bills, the first being the Grammar Schools Act. The amendment of that act relates to the eligibility of persons seeking participation in the election of board members—that is, the individual boards that are responsible for the running of each of the grammar schools. It appears that the changes are being adopted pursuant to the recommendations of a steering committee that was set up a few years ago. Therefore I presume that the industry—that is, the grammar schools and those associated with them—are happy with the legislation that is before the House tonight.

In dealing with the Grammar Schools Act I would mention that, as a result of the recent redistribution of electoral boundaries in Queensland, the Toowoomba Grammar School is now within my electorate of Toowoomba North. In a sense I inherited it from the honourable member for Toowoomba South.

Mr Horan: Glennie.

Mr SHINE: Yes. Along with the great Toowoomba Grammar School, I have inherited and he has lost the well-known and highly regarded Glennie Anglican School, which is a sister school to the Toowoomba Preparatory School that is also run by the Anglican Church, and, of course, the very well-known and great St Mary's College, which is a successor to St Mary's Christian Brothers College, well known throughout Queensland for its sporting prowess, particularly in rugby league but also generally. One of the school's old boys was a Labor Prime Minister, Frank Forde.

Mr Horan: Also Vince Lester.

Mr SHINE: St Mary's is very proud of its former Prime Minister, and that is all I can say. My good friend will speak after me and at that stage he can say what he wishes.

The Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill refers to grammar schools, and on this occasion it is appropriate to mention the outstanding work being done at the Toowoomba Grammar School. Headmaster Peter Hauser is to be congratulated on his efforts over the past five or six years that he has been the headmaster of that school, as is the college board, chaired by a legal colleague of mine, Glen McCracken. I know that the member for Toowoomba South would wholeheartedly agree that Toowoomba Grammar has an extremely good reputation for its academic, cultural and sporting life. Since its founding in 1875 the school has been an integral part of the social and educational fabric of Toowoomba.

In terms of education in Queensland generally, one of the very important aspects associated with Toowoomba Grammar is that a significant proportion of its students are boarders. This is important, because boarding schools are not as prolific as they were a generation or two ago. This is a vibrant part of Toowoomba Grammar, and the school is to be congratulated on having a healthy boarder component.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Pitt): Order! I ask the member to return to the purpose and intent of the bill.

Mr SHINE: Yes. I was referring to the Toowoomba Grammar School as the bill amends the Grammar Schools Act. I move on to the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act, which is also to be amended by this legislation. I note that the main purpose of the amendments is to ensure the maintenance of proper standards. The body called the Training and Employment Recognition Council, TERC, will be given additional powers to regulate and maintain proper standards with respect to the qualifications that are given out by registered training organisations.

I refer to the experience that a relative of mine had a few years ago with Shafston College. The problem did not relate to the standards of the qualifications that were given out; the problem related to the financial stability of the whole organisation. Numerous young people and their parents lost considerable amounts of money as the college was unable to fulfil its part of the contract—that is, to deliver what it promised. In the case that I am aware of, the qualifications related to an enrolled nursing course. The minister's predecessor took action to ensure, as best we can, that registered training organisations do have the wherewithal and the capacity to carry out the contracts that they make with young and often vulnerable people, who may be local students or those from overseas.

Finally, I refer to the Education (Capital Assistance) Act that is also being amended. Members would be aware that Toowoomba City has extraordinary educational assets. It is a very significant industry in terms of the economic welfare of our region. Interestingly enough, it is said that our proportion of state and non-state schools is the reverse of the state proportion. That is, in Toowoomba about 70 per cent of secondary schools are non-state as opposed to state schools. That is the reverse of the state average. Through the Education (Capital Assistance) Act the government has contributed

greatly to those schools, and I have mentioned a few already. Other non-state secondary schools in my electorate include the Toowoomba Christian College, Downlands College, Fairholme College and St Ursula's. All of those schools and the myriad primary non-state schools have benefited under the Education (Capital Assistance) Act. If I can give some statistics in that regard, I think it would be informative.

In the electorate of Toowoomba North there are 14 non-state schools. Since the election of the Beattie government in 1998, a total of \$28.9 million has been expended on capital projects in these schools and, of this amount, \$11.56 million has been provided by the state government. The state government supports capital projects in non-state schools through two main capital assistance schemes: the first being the state Capital Assistance Scheme, which assists eligible non-state schools to provide, convert, refurbish and upgrade educational facilities or boarding accommodation; and the second being the External Infrastructure Subsidy Scheme, which is used to meet external infrastructure costs associated with capital works projects.

On this occasion I will not go through the list that I have been supplied by the minister. Suffice to say that this form of assistance is of great significance and is highly appreciated by the schools that have received it. I am very proud that this government—since the beginning of the Beattie government and carried on through the Bligh government—has been very positive in contributing to the education of so many of our students in the state.

I also take the opportunity to commend the minister for his tireless efforts in carrying out his duties in relation to this very demanding and extensive portfolio. He has done a sterling job and is under a lot of pressure in terms of what we know is going on with respect to teachers' claims et cetera. Notwithstanding that, he is an extremely capable minister who is dedicated to the task, and I wish him well with it.

Ms CROFT (Broadwater—ALP) (8.21 pm): I am pleased to rise to support the Education Legislation Amendment Bill tonight. Education and training is Queensland's fourth largest export, generating around \$2 billion each year. In Queensland we export a range of programs to countries around the world. It is a chance to offer high-quality and relevant education and training while showcasing Queensland's capabilities, expertise and learning facilities and services.

The education department currently has curriculum licensing programs in Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates and in Lihir in Papua New Guinea. It is also in negotiations to provide programs to Morocco, Indonesia, Vietnam, Papua New Guinea, China, Korea and even Port Vila, Vanuatu. Through researching this legislation, I am pleased to have learnt that the education department also runs a Unilearn program in China and Korea. This is a VET accredited, three-certificate, university preparation program. There is a year 10 offshore program in China and Korea and a preparation program for students transitioning to years 11 and 12 in Queensland. The education department also provides consultancy services to the United Arab Emirates, and around 1,200 overseas students are using the education department's programs. More than 900 of these are in Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates, 90 are in Lihir in Papua New Guinea, 163 are in the Unilearn program and another 44 are in the year 10 offshore program.

In 2007, 67 students graduated from the year 10 offshore program. Of these, 61 students transitioned to year 11 in 2008 and 59 moved to year 12 in 2009. In 2008, 47 graduated from the year 10 offshore program and 44 of these students transitioned to year 11 in 2009. A total of 103 graduates of the year 10 offshore program from 2007 and 2008 transitioned to years 11 and 12 in Queensland.

As honourable members can see, Queensland's system is well regarded throughout the world and is seen as having a high level of integrity in terms of the level of education, registration and compliance requirements and quality. Nations actively seek out our curriculum programs, along with the expertise of our educators—fantastic educators—whom we have here in Queensland. Many students come to Queensland in order to benefit from a level of education they would not normally be able to have received at home. By exporting our systems we are giving these students more options.

Currently, the law does not allow for offshore students to attain the Queensland Certificate of Education on completing the Queensland senior curriculum. This amendment in the bill is a natural step, allowing offshore students to progress into their senior curriculum with an assurance that they will receive the best of the appropriate senior certification. It also clarifies the position that Queensland's curriculum can be sold commercially only by the government, not by statutory authorities such as the Queensland Studies Authority. Queensland is providing an opportunity to generate additional revenue to support our state schooling through these programs. This bill will see that opportunity turn into reality. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (8.25 pm): I rise to participate in the debate on the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2009 and the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill 2009. I commence my contribution by noting that one of the schools in my electorate, the Blackall Range Independent School, is currently endeavouring to change its accreditation to include years 11 and 12. I note that in one of the bills before the House some of these matters in relation to approvals relate to non-state schools. In particular, the Blackall Range Independent School currently has an application for

that extension. It was in an almost identical situation last year when it submitted that application. From the information I received from the school yesterday afternoon, I understand that year 10 enrolments now stand at 15 and all of these students wish to continue next year into years 11 and 12. I understand that the Blackall Range Independent School's enrolments for years 8 and 9 have also increased to 16 and that the school is continuing to receive regular inquiries about enrolments for next year.

I understand that the Queensland Studies Authority has approved the senior studies plan submitted for approval, and this matter is with the minister. I use this opportunity to urge the minister to seriously consider the application of the Blackall Range Independent School. It is a great school in the hinterland of the Sunshine Coast. It certainly provides schooling to students who would otherwise fall between the cracks. There are no other independent schools in the hinterland which cater for the types of students that the Blackall Range Independent School caters for. Although I note that there are a number of other alternative schools, some of which are Christian schools, the reality is that the students who are catered for by the Blackall Range Independent School would not be received at some of those other alternative private schools. I use that brief opportunity, Minister, to urge you to find ways, if possible, to support their application for enrolments—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Pitt): Order! I ask the member to make comments through the chair.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. So that is in relation to one of the bills that is currently before the House.

The schools in the electorate of Nicklin range from the small Federal State School, which is about to be relocated to the other side of the highway in the near future, in the north, to Palmwoods State School in the south, Kenilworth State School to the west and Bli Bli State School to the east. Unfortunately, this time last year Kenilworth State School was going through a very challenging time when the school was rebanded and they lost the high school. This school now faces a ridiculous situation. It sits on approximately seven acres that in the past was maintained by a groundsman employed for five days a week. Because the school has been rebanded to a lower band, now the school will have a groundsman for one day a week. I think that is so ridiculous that the education department will fund one day a week for the school to maintain seven acres. I think that is totally unacceptable. I understand that school has come up with a compromise for the department. Kenilworth State School and the neighbouring school of Conondale are proposing to share a groundsman, so effectively they would have a groundsman for 2½ days a week each.

The reality is that the dollars have to come from somewhere, and I understand that it is for the P&C or the community to fund the additional time which the groundsman is required to provide at that school. This is a direct result of the school being downbanded. I use this opportunity again, Minister, with respect to say: can you please support the continuation of the groundsman at Kenilworth school? Please support the compromise put forward by the community for the groundsman to be allowed to continue to operate at Kenilworth for 2½ days fully funded by Education Queensland. The community should not have to raise money to fund the groundsman. The reality is that we have seven acres of Education Queensland land that has to be cared for properly. I think it is a disgraceful situation that the standards now say once the school is downsized the school is expected to maintain the same level of care of its grounds as it previously did.

Mrs Pratt interjected.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you, member for Nanango, for sharing that concern with me. In coming back to the bills before the House, another issue I would like to touch on is some of the challenges that our teachers face. I refer to clauses 21 and clause 22 and the amendments to the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005. It speaks about the requirements for the eligibility for full registration. You need to demonstrate the abilities, experience, knowledge and skills, and you need to be able to demonstrate that you possess these skills. The concern I have is that, once you have demonstrated those skills, what guarantee is there from Education Queensland that the teachers are required to demonstrate those skills in the classroom?

Recently on the Sunshine Coast we had a teacher reveal to the media and to the public some real concerns that are present in our community about teachers, once they are in the schools, being called on by that school to teach in areas where they have no effective qualifications. Yes, the teacher has to pass the accreditation standard and has to demonstrate in their training that they have all these skills, but what happens when they get out into the real world and lo and behold, for whatever reason, a school is not able to source an appropriately qualified teacher? I understand there have been occasions where teachers have been called on to teach in classes where the reality is that they have no skills or not the appropriate level of skills that the community would expect those teachers to have, notwithstanding the principal has deemed the teacher to have the skills.

Again, I use this opportunity to ask the minister in his reply to reiterate the standards that are required not only for the training of teachers to make sure they have the abilities, experience, knowledge and skills to perform their role but, more importantly, once they are teaching, the standards that are applied by the relevant principals to ensure that those skills are demonstrated.

I also note that another school in my electorate, Burnside State High School, is in a ridiculous situation. A number of years ago it lost the opportunity for free bus travel from some of the feeder primary schools to that school because it was deemed under a new formula that Nambour State School was a closer school than Burnside State High School. Bear in mind that there is only a few metres difference between Burnside State High School and Nambour State High School. But because of bureaucracy the department of transport all of a sudden said that all the students who previously chose to go to Burnside State High School now had to go to Nambour State High School because Nambour State High School was a closer school.

That has certainly had an impact on the Burnside State High School. I note that after the last election the Premier's director-general made comments to the effect that, if concerns are raised with one department, it is deemed that those concerns would be shared by other departments and that there would be a whole-of-government response. I use this as another opportunity to urge the minister to take this matter up with the department of transport. I understand that the minister's senior bureaucrats are very much aware of this ridiculous situation where students are not able to attend freely under our public transport system the Burnside State High School because of this bureaucracy. We are a few metres short and so they are now required to attend Nambour State High School.

We have a ridiculous situation where the department of transport says that they have to go to Nambour High, and yet a previous state government spent a lot of money in building Burnside State High School on the assumption that there would be certain students attending that school from a certain catchment area. All of a sudden the department of transport changes the ground rules and lo and behold no longer can the students attend free of charge. It is a ridiculous situation. I believe the department of transport needs to come to the table and common sense needs to prevail. Otherwise, what may happen is we may simply go to the neighbouring Burnside State Primary School and say, 'Let's call this the entrance to Burnside State High.' Who knows? Maybe the P&C will support that. We will build the entrance on Burnside State School so we can then meet the travel requirements. Isn't that a ridiculous situation that the community is forced to go to so that we can meet the red-tape requirements of the department of transport? It is a ridiculous situation. Perhaps the minister might take this matter up with his senior departmental staff. They are certainly aware of this predicament. The department of transport is certainly aware of it. But at the moment no-one in the government is prepared to let common sense prevail. The reason I use this opportunity in the discussion of these two bills is to again raise this matter for the attention of the minister and his parliamentary colleague the Minister for Transport and the government.

There is no doubt that the teachers in our schools have some real challenges, especially the teachers in our public schools. One of the concerns often raised with me by teachers is that, when they ring parents about a student who has misbehaved, often they are abused by the parents. Sometimes the parents say, 'You certainly should have reprimanded my son or my daughter,' but on other occasions parents say, 'If he said that, well he is right,' and they hang up on the teacher. I do not believe our teachers should have to put up with that. We need to look at new ways of putting parental responsibility on those parents who are not prepared to make sure their children do the right thing. There is no way in the world that our teachers should have to put up with some of the behaviour that I know they currently put up with.

One of the great initiatives I have seen in many schools is the encouragement and the support of our school gardens. Originally I thought this was simply about trying to teach our young boys and girls about healthy eating, healthy lifestyles and enjoying garden activities. But one of the secret success stories that has been shared with me by a number of schools is how some of our disruptive students who have not been able to concentrate in class almost overnight have become different students because of their involvement in the school garden program. Their powers of concentration and their enjoyment of school has almost changed overnight because of the success of the school garden program.

I again use this opportunity to share with the minister my passion and my support for the school garden program. Many of the schools in my electorate, both public and private, have school gardens and the success stories speak for themselves. This is a wonderful program, and I urge the government to support it where possible.

I note that one of the bills talks about the requirement of teachers to reveal if there has been any sexual abuse. At the moment clause 10 refers to changing the heading to say: 'Obligation to report sexual abuse of persons under 18 years at state schools'. Clause 11 refers to amending section 366, which relates to obligations to report sexual abuse of students under 18 years attending non-state schools. My question to the minister is why can we not delete the words 'by another person who is an employee of the school'? At the moment the government is proposing—and I quote from clause 11—

Subsection (2) applies if a staff member of a non-State school (the *first person*) becomes aware, or reasonably suspects, that any of the following have been sexually abused by another person who is an employee of the school ...

Why can we not delete 'by another person who is an employee of the school'? Why do we need to limit it to only people who have been employees of the school? Why can we not say, more specifically, if a staff member of a non-state school or a state school becomes aware or reasonably suspects that

any of the following have been sexually abused, action is taken? Perhaps the minister in his reply might like to respond to that. Otherwise I will certainly be taking this matter up in the consideration in detail stage. I believe those words should be deleted. They are not necessary. I believe it is incumbent upon all teachers, if they become aware of issues involving inappropriate sexual behaviour by anyone, to report that and to take the appropriate action.

That brings me to the great role that school chaplains perform in our schools. Our school chaplains are able to reach many students who others are not able to reach and provide wonderful support and encouragement. On behalf of many students in my community, I would like to thank the minister for his recent public comments about our school chaplaincy program in Queensland. I would hope that this government and future state governments would find ways of continuing the program. More importantly, I would hope future state governments will be able to improve and build on current funding arrangements for our schools.

The final issue I would like to touch on in relation to our teachers' qualifications is the real concern I have—and I raised this with the previous minister for education—about the high number of people who are in acting roles. In my time as a member of state parliament I have been able to identify very clearly schools that have succeeded because there has been strong leadership from a permanent principal and from a permanent deputy principal and there has been certainty in the school. One of the real concerns I have is with schools that have had a number of acting principals—and I will not mention the schools here, but I know that the education department will be aware of the two schools in particular. We have had acting principal after acting principal and then principals who come in from outside, are there for a while and then move on to something else. We see no continuity, no certainty and no strong leadership, and unfortunately the student numbers reflect that. The behavioural issues reflect this lack of leadership.

I use this opportunity to urge the minister to review the arrangements with the union or to simply do something to try to ensure we have full-time principals in our schools. We need to reduce the number of people acting in these roles. I commend the bill to the House. I look forward to the minister responding to the specific issues I have raised in the consideration in detail stage.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—LNP) (8.41 pm): There are a number of issues covered in the bills being debated cognately. They range from the kindergarten and child-care stage right through to the university stage. They are very important bills. A lot of members have spoken about the education issues in their electorates. The Education Legislation Amendment Bill amends the Child Care Act, the Education (General Provisions) Act, the Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act and the University of Queensland Act. The Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill deals with the terminology that can be used in relation to the term 'prep', excludes pre-prep years in Indigenous communities from the definition of the Child Care Act, provides that pre-prep in a state school must be free and makes a number of other amendments.

I will make some observations about these bills. There are issues regarding the development of syllabus or regulations that apply to the content or the type of education that is provided to children who are in kindergarten or pre-prep. The thought crossed my mind that I certainly hope we are still allowing these little kids who are 3½ to 4½ years of age to be children. We are talking about syllabus and regulations. When the prep year was brought in it was to be a play based learning arrangement. If we have children another year younger it should certainly be less demanding on the children.

Many of these kids would in normal circumstances spend a lot of time with their mothers at home and have that closeness with their mothers and learn that way. They then go on to prep or to year 1 at school. With the changing demographic and with many families faced with both the mother and father having to work, it has very often become the norm that children are spending time at kindergarten or pre-prep. It might only be 2½ days a week, but for the rest of the week they are often in child care.

These children need security, happiness and enjoyment so that they go into their prep year with confidence and like school. As a philosophical comment I make the point that I hope we are not getting too demanding and too structured with little children. At that age they have to go along to where they are going and be happy and enjoy life.

Certainly if there is an opportunity through a play based system to start out learning literacy and numeracy it could be an advantage. I note that that is mentioned in one of the second reading speeches, particularly with regard to those in Indigenous communities. We have to try to give them a good start in life so that they can handle the literacy and numeracy that they will come across in years 1 and 2 and so on.

Whilst on the subject of education and teachers, I point out that I recently asked a question on notice, which the minister has responded to, about manual arts teachers. Despite the fact that the minister said that there is no substantive shortage of manual arts teachers in Toowoomba, I am aware that throughout the state there is a real issue with manual arts teachers. This year Griffith University had to cancel the course it provides to train people in manual arts.

In about the year 2000 I remember speaking about this issue. We started to become aware that there are many kids at our schools who were pushed on to university to do arts or marketing or business when they might have been better off doing any of the good trades that are around such as the carpentry or electrical trades. Consequently there has been a need to upgrade the status of trades within our schools.

I think that has been done through school based apprenticeships. Schools like Harristown State High School in Toowoomba identify in year 8 those people who have talent in academia and those who have talent in the trades. Hopefully when the trade students get to the end of year 12 they are only six months away from completing their apprenticeship. They need only six months and they are qualified. Likewise, the academic students should have done two or three units towards their degree. They are identified in year 8 and nurtured through the system.

The manual arts situation in the state is important. I have talked to some very experienced manual arts people who are very genuine in wanting to see that commitment to well-trained manual arts teachers. It is now a four-year course. Once if a person was a carpenter they could do six months and then move into teaching. It is important that we have well-trained manual arts teachers. I think it is important that they have a proper background in manual arts. We do have people teaching and relieving in manual arts in our high schools who do not have that proper background. I think it is something that the minister should look at because it is a very genuine concern amongst the experienced and dedicated manual arts teachers throughout the state.

The member for Toowoomba North mentioned our education system and industry in Toowoomba. We are very fortunate to be a true education city. We have 15 high schools in our area plus another three on the Downs. There are one or two others that go to year 10. Within the city of Toowoomba we see the opposite of the Australian average. In Australia about 34 per cent of people go to a non-government school. In Toowoomba it is in the order of 65 or 68 per cent because of the sheer number of boarding schools.

We have three wonderful high schools—Centenary Heights, Harristown and Toowoomba—within the city itself and 12 other schools ranging from grammar schools to Catholic schools to independent schools to Christian schools. A couple of years back a number of teachers and principals formed the Toowoomba Education Coalition which was an indication of how the secondary school education system within the city has always worked together for the betterment of education and the betterment of our pupils. It provides greater expertise and the sharing of knowledge, whether it is in education or in sport or in culture.

This year has been a tragic year in the city for four of the schools. Three boys were tragically killed in a car smash, another boy was tragically killed in a farm accident, another boy was tragically killed in a football game and another boy was seriously injured from the car crash I mentioned. For the students of the city who suffered devastating grief, they pulled together and supported each other. The girls' schools supported the boys' schools and vice versa and the parents, the P&Cs and the whole community pulled together because it was a tragic loss and young people feel it so keenly. The grief was amazing and many of those young kids in grade 12 will never forget it.

I want to compliment the son of the member for Condamine, Ray Hopper. Ben Hopper was elected co-captain of Christian Outreach College, a college that has come into my electorate with the redistribution. He is typical of many young Toowoomba children who take on leadership roles. Ben is a big, lanky country boy who is a good campdrafter and good at breaking in horses and he took on the role of co-captain in a wonderful way. When the boy at the school was killed after a football match, Ben stepped forward and spoke to the school. He is typical of many of the school leaders throughout the city. He demonstrated the maturity of these 16- and 17-year-old kids in year 12 who are able to accept responsibility and accept the new-found things that happen in life like grief and that he could look after and care for his fellow members. One of the wonderful things about education is that when our kids come out of school it is not just how well they do academically or how well they go at footy or how well they go in the rock eisteddfod and all the rest of it. If they come out of school caring for each other and looking out for each other, that is important and will stay with them for life. With schoolies week coming up, it is important that these kids can go away and think, 'We'll look after each other. We'll protect each other. We'll make sure we do the right thing so nothing goes wrong.'

I want to congratulate the Rangeville State School in my electorate which celebrates its centenary this year. It has been a magnificent school throughout that 100 years. Once upon a time it was on the outskirts of the city. It is a very big school and for many years has been in one of the main south-eastern suburbs of the city. It is a wonderful thing for it to celebrate, and it is a school that has developed a great tradition in music. Music in both primary and secondary school does a lot for schools in bringing boys and girls together and in getting kids through those difficult adolescent years because it enables them to stand up and perform and to develop new talents. I commend the music teachers of the state for what they do. Rangeville State School has had some very special teachers over a number of years and that school excels in its choirs, its band and its music, which really adds another dimension to it.

Much of this bill is about young children. There are little kids who board at schools in Toowoomba who are as young as prep age and certainly grade 1. Little kids have to leave home and board at school because their families live in rural and remote areas or their parents work overseas or because of family breakdown. It is wonderful to see the care that can be provided for these little children, because often times it must be tough on them and they must get homesick.

In terms of the syllabus for kindergarten and/or pre-prep years, it seems to me that it must be an incredibly busy time for parents with kids, particularly if both parents are working. They have to take their kids to kindergarten, which is 2½ days a week. They then may often have to take them to child care and juggle their hours around in terms of picking them up, bringing the kids home and taking them to child care and so on. One of the challenges for us as members of parliament or a government—whether it is this government or us aspiring to be in government—is to make that whole area as convenient as possible and as simple as possible so that children are able to access the opportunity to mix with other kids, the opportunity to learn to play and to be away from their parents for a little time. However, we also have to keep in mind that for many parents the juggling of work hours in terms of the husband's job, the wife's job and picking the kids up and taking them to child care is extremely difficult. That is one of the real challenges that exist.

I was appalled tonight to hear our shadow minister say that the system of funding that goes through to the kindergarten system means that those organisations that may be religiously based which provide for kindergartens are not allowed to have that religion mentioned in their title or their name.

Mr Wilson: That's a claim that has been made and it's not true and I'll explain it when I get the chance.

Mr HORAN: I hear what the minister is saying—

Mr Wilson: So don't assert that it's a fact until you know that it is.

Mr HORAN: I hope that the minister can address that in his response—

Mr Wilson: So don't repeat it as if it's a proven fact.

Mr HORAN: I hope the minister can address that in his response because it is what our diggers fought for. It is what Australia is about—freedom of choice and freedom of religion. If there is any restriction on what sort of title or names—

Mr WILSON: I rise to a point of order. There is no substance to the claim that was made earlier. I have had that checked out, and I will speak further on it. I do not want any members here to have any anxiety whatsoever about that claim. There is no basis to it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, that is a not a point of order. I call the member for Toowoomba South.

Mr HORAN: I appreciate the minister's concern about that. As I said, I ask that he address that in his response. I hope that these changes that are being supported by the opposition go a long way to improving the quality of education, particularly for young people. With regard to education capital assistance, I would hope that in new schools that are being constructed we can start to look at proper set-down areas. At many of the older schools there is pandemonium in front of the schools which is quite dangerous, because times have changed radically from when many kids walked to school. Now they mostly go by public transport or are dropped off by their parents. It is essential that in capital funding of schools, whether they are state schools or whether they are non-government schools, there can be established a proper bus set-down area and a proper safe area where cars can pull in to drop kids off without being out on the road where all of the other traffic is, where kids are crossing the road and where mums and dads are trying to take the kids across the road in a panic while they try to get to work themselves. We have to ensure that in this day and age schools are supported in that area. As I said, I hope that all of the changes that are mooted in these two bills which we are supporting go a long way to assisting the education of our children, particularly in those very important and formative years of pre-prep, prep and kindergarten, and also in the area of child care which forms a part of that system.

Mr WATT (Everton—ALP) (8.58 pm): I also rise in support of the Education Legislation Amendment Bill and the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill. The Bligh government is determined to give all Queensland children the flying start to education they deserve. We know the early years are critical to a child's future success at school and in life. That is why we are working closely with the federal government and investing up to \$889 million in early childhood over the next five years. We want all 3½- to 4½-year-old children in Queensland to be able to access a quality kindergarten program. At the moment, only 30 per cent of Queensland children attend early childhood education delivered by a qualified teacher. This compares to around 85 per cent in the rest of Australia. Just as this government tackled Queensland's lack of a prep year of school, we are now tackling this low rate of participation in quality early childhood education. In fact, our commitment to provide all 3½- to 4½-year-old children in Queensland with access to a quality kindergarten program is one of the 10 targets to be achieved by 2020 as part of the Bligh government's Toward Q2 vision.

It is also why the Bligh government is committed to providing an extra 240 kindergarten services in Queensland. This commitment marks the single largest development in kindergartens ever made in Queensland's history. Indeed, one of these new kindergartens will shortly be underway in the electorate

that I represent. The Prince of Peace Lutheran College at Everton Hills is very excited about the fact that it is in the first group of new kindergartens, which was announced by the government during the March election campaign. Planning for this exciting new kindergarten is underway and it is expected that the construction will be completed next year.

The first aspect of the bill that I would like to touch on is the publication of information about child-care services that breach the Child Care Act. This is a fantastic move for Queensland families. In Queensland, private child-care centres are regulated by the Child Care Act 2002. It sets out the various requirements that child-care centres must comply with to guarantee the safety of children attending those centres and the quality of care received. Centre compliance with these requirements is monitored and centres that breach the act can be punished in a range of ways—from being sent a notice to comply, to having their licence amended, suspended or even revoked.

While the majority of services comply with the legislation, there are some services that repeatedly fail to meet child-care laws or expose children to serious risks to their safety and wellbeing. As a parent of a child who attends child care, I would certainly want to know if my son's child-care centre had consistently breached the Child Care Act. But, under the law as it stands, this information is hidden from me, as it is from all parents. This bill opens the door to this information, ushering in a new era of transparency that will benefit parents, child-care providers and, most importantly, children.

The bill amends the Child Care Act to provide parents and guardians with access to information about licensed child-care services that demonstrate serious or repeated moderate noncompliance with the act. This information will be published on the Department of Education and Training website from February 2010 and in future will be recorded in the child-care licence register. The kinds of things that would be published would include the suspension of a licence because of allegations of torture or harm of a child at a centre, or if a building that is used to house children is structurally unsound due to termite infestation. Also to be published would be things like the repeated receipt of compliance notices for less serious things, such as uneven ground in outdoor play areas, staff with insufficient qualifications or poor hygiene practices that could present a risk of infection. Child-care operators will be given an opportunity to have compliance decisions reviewed prior to information being published on the department's website.

Providing transparent information about the quality of a service helps parents to make informed decisions about a child-care service that is providing or would potentially provide a service to their child. These amendments balance parents' expectations of being provided with information about services that provide care to their child with the business interests of a child-care operator. As I have mentioned, I would certainly want to know whether my son's child-care centre is regularly in breach of the act. I am pleased that this bill will provide that information.

The Bligh government has led the way on transparency in its provision of information on how schools are performing. We were one of the first governments in Australia to publish information about the vocational and academic performance of secondary schools. We have also required primary schools to publish their students' results in the NAPLAN tests for literacy and numeracy so that parents can make informed decisions about the appropriate school for their child. We did that against the wishes of certain interest groups, but we understood that parents had a right to know this information. Now we also understand that requiring the publication of balanced information on the performance of child-care centres provides an incentive to perform better.

I am astonished that the opposition has at times voiced concerns about the transparency ushered in by this bill. I am staggered that members of the opposition have asserted that the privacy and business interests of child-care operators are superior to the rights of parents to know about the quality of their child's child-care centre, let alone the rights of a child to be cared for in a safe environment. Why any member of parliament would question a parent's right to know whether their child's child-care centre has committed breaches of the act such as those that I have mentioned is beyond me. Why any member of parliament would argue that the business interests of child-care operators outweigh parents' interests is beyond me. But that is what we have heard from a number of speakers opposite.

Mind you, the shadow minister for education also questioned the location of the 240 new kindergartens and whether they are, in fact, needed in those locations. I suppose that is no surprise, given his party at the federal level has consistently besmirched the biggest funding injection into our schools in the nation's history, the Building the Education Revolution program. So not only do the LNP at the federal level oppose new school halls and libraries under the BER program, at the state level they also oppose new kindergarten services in areas of need. Then the LNP has the hide to lecture this government—which introduced prep, which cut class sizes in the middle years of school, which introduced the learning or earning reforms and which is now providing access to quality kindergartens to all Queensland children—on education. I am pleased that the Bligh government does not take the LNP's approach. We are serious about empowering parents and children when it comes to information about child care and schooling. We recognise that the knowledge that their breaches of the act will be published will encourage child-care centres to ensure that they do not breach the act in the future.

The second aspect of this bill that I would like to talk about is the kindergarten guidelines. Another way that this bill delivers on the Bligh government's commitment to lift the quality of early childhood education is by amending the Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act to enable the QSA to develop, approve, purchase and revise and accredit kindergarten guidelines. With the QSA's expertise in curriculum development and experience in working across education sectors, it will be tasked with developing the kindergarten guidelines. The QSA already has the authority to develop, approve, revise, purchase and accredit years 1 to 12 syllabuses and prep guidelines. Extending the QSA's authority to include kindergartens will ensure that there is a clear progression in the learning that occurs in kindergartens through to prep and on to year 12.

The kindergarten guidelines will set clear expectations for children's learning as well as age-appropriate teaching practices. It will also include approaches to monitoring and assessing children's learning and development, with a key focus on early literacy and numeracy skills. These early years guidelines will lay the foundation for future learning and schooling outcomes and will help deliver quality early childhood education in Queensland. It will ensure that there is consistency in curriculum across the full range of early childhood education and care settings in Queensland. That means that, no matter where a child attends kindergarten in the state, families can expect the same high quality and standard of education for their child.

The guidelines will also provide models for recording and reporting children's progress. These models will help early childhood teachers communicate meaningful information to parents about a child's learning and development. This will lead to more successful transitions from early childhood services to school and promote greater communication between these settings.

The Queensland kindergarten guidelines will also complement and align with the national early years learning framework, known as the EYLF, released by the Council of Australian Governments on 2 July 2009. At the end of this year, COAG is expected to consider mandating the EYLF through a national quality standard. If mandated, Queensland child-care services will need to adopt this national framework. This bill will help services that use the Queensland kindergarten guidelines to comply with the national framework.

In conclusion, the initiatives that I have discussed and which are contained in this bill are central to the Bligh government's Toward Q2 commitment to provide all 3½- to 4½-year-old children with quality early childhood education that will ensure that the child care and kindergarten education that our children receive is provided in a safe manner and at a high standard. For that reason, I commend the bills to the House.

Ms JOHNSTONE (Townsville—ALP) (9.07 pm): I also rise to speak in support of the Education Legislation Amendment Bill and the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill. I want to make a couple of points in relation to the James Cook University Act, but before I do so I also want to support the comments made by the member for Everton in relation to the changes to child care. As the mother of a child in child care, it is very important to me to be able to make informed choices about the level of care that my child receives, and I support those amendments.

The Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill makes a range of amendments to legislation administered by the Department of Education and Training to remove redundant provisions, correct deficiencies or omissions and clarify existing provisions. It includes a number of amendments to the James Cook University Act. James Cook University is one of the world's leading institutions that focuses on the tropics. It might be surprising to some to learn, but the tropics are home to more than 50 per cent of the world's population and 80 per cent of its biodiversity. James Cook University is uniquely placed in its location to allow students to study in a diverse physical environment that is unparalleled by any university in the world. The university conducts nationally significant and internationally recognised research into marine science, biodiversity, tropical ecology, global warming, tourism, tropical medicine and public health, particularly in the areas of underserved populations. Since its establishment in 1970, JCU has expanded into a multicampus institution, with large campuses in Townsville and Cairns and smaller centres in Mount Isa, Thursday Island and Mackay and campuses in Singapore and here in Brisbane.

The relevant amendments in this bill are designed to achieve the following: streamline the university's processes relating to the election of convocation members of the council of the university whilst safeguarding the rights of the convocation members to vote should they opt to do so; extend the maximum term of office of the chairperson of the academic board from two years to three years; and clarify that the powers of both authorised persons and security officers may be limited under a condition of appointment, or by written notice of the vice-chancellor given to the authorised person or security officer. The bill also makes other minor amendments.

Clause 41 of the bill amends section 15 of the James Cook University Act. Currently section 15 provides that all the members of the convocation may vote for the two members of the university council who are members of the convocation. According to the JCU statute that sets out information about the convocation, this includes graduates, members and past members of the council, members of the academic staff and general staff who have been employed at the university for at least two years

continuously as at the date of commencement of the statute and who indicate that they wish to be members of the convocation, and other persons who accept an invitation from the council to become members of the convocation.

Presently the university is required to send voting material to all convocation members regardless of whether they wish to vote. This imposes significant costs on the university. The amendment will provide that each convocation member of council is to be elected by a ballot at which all the persons eligible under a university statute may vote. A statute will then provide that only those convocation members who indicate that they wish to be an active member of the convocation for the purpose of receiving voting papers are eligible to vote. This amendment will reduce the costs of conducting convocation elections whilst safeguarding the right of convocation members to vote should they opt to do so.

Clause 44 amends the JCU Act to clarify that the council may make a university statute about the membership of the convocation and the voting rights of members of the convocation. This amendment and the amendment to subsection 15 in this bill will materially align the JCU Act with the authorising acts for the other two Queensland universities that elect graduate members onto their governing bodies; namely, the Queensland University of Technology and the University of Queensland.

Clause 42 is aimed at clarifying the government's position for the university. It puts beyond doubt that the deputy chancellor is to act as chancellor when there is a vacancy in the office of the chancellor or the chancellor cannot perform the functions of the office. Clause 43 provides that the chairperson of the academic board holds office for the term, not longer than three years, decided by the council. This longer term will be consistent with the three-year academic plan cycle and otherwise optimise the effective contribution of that chairperson. The proposal for a term not longer than three years is also consistent with the equivalent term for most other Queensland university academic boards.

Whilst relatively technical in nature, these amendments are important to the effective and efficient operation of a highly regarded, world-class educational and research institution in North Queensland. We need to support our universities. Every dollar counts. Being able to make these minor amendments will allow universities such as JCU to undertake groundbreaking enterprises. Just last week JCU launched a \$21 million cooling project that it is now able to cool its different campuses with. This investment will cut greenhouse gas emissions by up to 12,000 tonnes per year, which is the equivalent of taking 2,600 cars off the road. I am pleased to be part of a government that supports our educational institutions to involve themselves in these kinds of progressive and environmentally sustainable initiatives. It is for that reason that this bill should receive the full support of members of this parliament and I commend the bills to the House.

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (9.13 pm): I rise to speak in this cognate debate on the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill and the Education Legislation Amendment Bill. These two bills cover kindergarten right through to university. When I think of children 3½ attending facilities I find it quite distressing to think that they spend such a lot of time away from their parents or their mother at that particular time of their life; they are just babies.

Most members would know that the electorate of Nanango is quite large. There are many small schools in the area. Slowly and surely, one by one they are closing. This is quite distressing for those who live in those areas. In rural areas children have to travel quite a distance to schools. Because these areas are mainly farmland, the school may be the only hub where people can meet at any particular time. When schools are closed it becomes quite an impost on families to get their kids to the neighbouring school. Fairly recently Cooranga North closed prior to the boundary redistribution, as did other schools in my electorate. It is a huge impost on the pockets of people because there is no public transport in rural areas. Whoever is the minister at the time should take that into account. Children do have to get up and travel quite a distance. More often than not parents have to take them because there is no transport. It decimates the community.

We have heard it said tonight that education in Queensland is a valuable asset to the state, and it is. Education should be our primary focus because it is the children of tomorrow whom we are endeavouring to educate. The quality of the teachers has to be taken into consideration. I note that many teachers have left the education system over the past few years. Some will say that that was caused by the payouts that were given to try to get teachers who were not interested or older teachers out of the system and many will say that it is because of their wages. Everyone in this House would have been approached by teachers wanting parity of wages. They are not asking for more; they are only asking for parity. It is necessary that we ensure that they feel they are being treated in an equitable way in comparison with other states.

I wholeheartedly believe that teachers are the key to the success of the state in the future. The member for Nicklin mentioned that teachers who are trained in one field are being asked to go into classes that they are not qualified for and in a sense the children are being babysat by teachers who are not qualified to teach them and they are not getting the full benefit of that lesson. They also do parades and go around playgrounds to ensure that bullying does not occur and they are often the brunt of bullying themselves. A lot is asked of teachers. They end up being the brunt of many people's anger. I honestly believe that their wages should achieve parity with those of teachers in other states.

Another thing I would like to mention is permanent principals. In my own electorate we have a school which has had a number of principals over the years. Three or four years ago the school got a new principal. She is dedicated to that small school. She has stayed and persevered. She has suffered in many ways. When a school is suffering the community suffers, and the backlash usually comes back to the principal. She has stuck it out and I admire her for that. I believe that she is improving the standard of the school and the confidence of the students is showing that she is succeeding.

In many small single-teacher schools the teacher has become dogsbody for everything. Recently I was at a very small school in Haden. I commend the teacher there. She was at the school in the holidays willingly working there, with her family assisting her, keeping the grounds tidy and clean. I commend her for her interest in that school. Many teachers at small schools do exactly the same thing.

There is another thing that I want to mention in relation to small schools in my area, but I will not mention these schools by name because their numbers are getting fairly low and I do not want to draw undue attention to them. Perhaps the local government minister and the education minister can work together on this. In small communities the number of school students is always an issue when considering whether or not the school will close. However, in very small communities, if people want to move to the area and build a home, there is no land for sale. Therefore, there is virtually no hope of improving numbers. Although the schools are little, they are worth keeping because in many instances a child who goes to a small school gets some degree of individual teaching—that is, one-on-one teaching. I have heard of many cases in the South Burnett of students who were having problems in the bigger schools moving to small schools. They picked up their work rate within three to six months, simply because they were able to concentrate and were given a bit more attention, or they have got away from the bullying system that was their lot at other schools.

There are only a couple of things I will mention. It is getting late and I do not want to keep going for too long. I am concerned about the sexual abuse clause. I cannot see why it was framed in the way it was. I have been made aware of cases in a couple of schools where very young children have made sexual advances to other students. I, too, would ask that question with regard to those two clauses in the bill. Other than that, generally I support the bill. Other members have raised issues that I will not repeat. I will wait for the minister to respond to those. I commend the bills to the House.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (9.21 pm): I rise to speak in this cognate debate and thank the minister for the briefings on each of the bills. I thank the staff who generously gave of their time. It was greatly appreciated.

Mrs Pratt: Me too.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: The member for Nanango does too. Education is a serious matter. Certainly it equips our young people across the spectrum, from prep to year 12, for their future. A couple of the speakers from this side of the House have talked about the inability of Christian schools to use certain words in their titles. There was a bit of crossfire on that issue. I am assuming that is about the prohibition in the education and training legislation on using PREP. I cannot see anything else in either of the bills that would give rise to that concern. I will be listening very carefully to the minister's reply. I hope that in no way would we try to impede schools that are faith based from proclaiming the basis of their teaching and their focus. I took the prohibition on the use of certain terms purely to mean that those more manipulative individuals or companies in our community would not be able to imply that they provided an educational standard when, indeed, they did not. I look forward to the minister's response in that area.

The Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill introduces a number of issues, one of which is the requirement for the prosecuting authority to notify colleges about committal and conviction information about a particular teacher. It is incredibly important that a fulsome report is available to the school hierarchy and those who are responsible for hiring and firing. Usually that is available on a confidential basis. In our state most of the incidents in the community that have involved complex behaviours that have spilled over, impacting on individuals in the community, have come about because of a breakdown in communication. I am thinking of things such as the Bundaberg Hospital issue and other similar issues. Whether it is in education, health or any other area, a lot of the time problems occur because there is a breakdown in the transfer of information. In particular, if people who should not be teaching are teaching, it is incredibly important that the authorities know as soon as possible about any unacceptable conduct.

The bill also introduces the ability for disciplinary action to be taken against a teacher, even if that person ceases to be an approved teacher during the period of the disciplinary proceedings. There are a number of instances where a person, not necessarily in the teaching profession, has acted inappropriately and has been able to remove themselves from the environment and then cease to be accountable for their behaviour. I believe that this is a healthy amendment to ensure that people are accountable for their actions.

The bill also amends the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act to allow for the cancellation of a qualification or a statement of attainment where the RTO is not appropriately registered to provide that accreditation. My only comment is that it is inappropriate for an RTO to teach outside its

scope of registration. However, I think we have to be very mindful of the impact on people who, in good faith, enrolled in that RTO's facility expecting that their qualifications would be acceptable, legal and appropriate. It would be devastating to have spent time achieving that statement of attainment or qualification and then have it taken away. Those people would have to be dealt with very carefully. I hope that there would be some recognition of prior learning and a genuine attempt by government to place those students in an approved training regime so that they could fully qualify in the area that they had thought they were training in and then achieve the qualifications that they have worked so hard to achieve.

The Education Legislation Amendment Bill is also a very important one. I commend all the teachers as well as the teacher aides and all those who work in various staff positions at the schools in my electorate. There are quite a number of state schools in my electorate. As other members have, I would like to quickly list those state schools: Gladstone Central, Gladstone South, Kin Kora, Gladstone West, Clinton, Calliope, Benaraby, Boyne Island, Tannum Sands, Ubobo, Nagoorin, Builyan, Mount Larcom and Ambrose state schools, Gladstone State High and the ATC that is now attached to the state high school, Toolooa State High and Tannum Sands State High, and the Central Queensland University.

There are also our TAFE and private schools, including the Catholic schools Star of the Sea; St John's; Chanel College, which is a high school; St Francis at Boyne Island, which is a primary school; and the independent Christian schools St Stephens; Trinity College; and Faith Baptist Christian School. On the weekend Faith Baptist Christian School celebrated its 25th anniversary. I commend the small band of people who have worked tirelessly to provide quality education for the students in my electorate.

Rosella Park School is our supported learning or special school. I ask the minister to consider the possibility of giving all of the special schools throughout this state—those that are still called 'special schools'—a more dignified name. At the time that the Rosella Park School changed its name, the principal was David de Villiers, a lovely man dedicated to the education of young men and women with learning disabilities and intellectual disabilities. At the time the minister was the Hon. Bob Quinn.

There were some bureaucratic obstacles that were put in the way. There were comments made such as, 'Unless they are called a special school they will not get their funding.' David de Villiers said that is nonsense because the schools have a number that identifies the type of education that they provide. There are ways of acknowledging the needs of the educational stream that those schools provide and the extra support that they require while still giving the students their dignity when they are asked, 'Where do you go to school?' I saw the kids' faces lift. They used to say, 'Gladstone Special School,' but now they say, 'I go to Rosella Park School.'

The renaming also had the advantage that it reinforced some of their learning, because the name of the school came from the names of the roads that the school fronts: Rosella Street and Park Street. So immediately they were able to identify geographically where they went to school. I feel strongly that that name gives those students dignity and the opportunity to have pride in the same way that other school students say, 'I go to Kin Kora,' or, 'I go to Clinton.' They can say, 'I go to Rosella Park School.'

Other speakers have talked about equity in terms of teachers' pay. I have certainly had a very active Queensland Teachers Union in my electorate who have been concerned about the inequity in their pay scales. The teachers I deal with are very genuine. They go above and beyond the call of duty in terms of the hours that they work, both paid and voluntary, in the schools and also their willingness to step outside their teaching comfort zone and to cover subjects in which they perhaps have not had specialised training.

As an electorate, Gladstone certainly needs more early childhood places. We have a burgeoning population, and many of those coming to the region are young families. I often have conversations with young parents who say that their family members have a long wait to access child-care places.

The Education Legislation Amendment Bill also introduces the spectre of publication of information about those early childhood establishments that have received notification of non-compliance. The bill gives examples of minor risks, which are inadequate play equipment, minor build-up of dirt and grime or minor irregularities in record keeping, for example, out-of-date records of names, addresses or telephone numbers of some of the staff. Examples of more than minor risks include uneven ground in outdoor play areas that may pose a significant tripping hazard, significant breaches in group sizes or staffing levels or inadequate or compacted soft fall in play areas.

It is really important that, if we as legislators are going to place obligations on private providers, those obligations should also be met in our schools. They should be met not just because they are legislated but because morally all educational facilities should have to meet similar standards. It is important that the schools that our young people attend also meet those guidelines. I can think of one high school in my electorate that has a snowball's chance in hell of meeting the requirement about uneven ground in outdoor play areas that may pose a significant tripping hazard. One of the more-than-minor risks for an early childhood facility in this legislation includes uneven ground in outdoor play areas that may pose a significant tripping hazard. I acknowledge that the students attending these facilities are

much younger, but if members cast their minds to the schools in their own electorates they will understand that the topography in some of those state schools would not meet that requirement. We need to be very careful that the requirements are equitable.

During my considerable time in this chamber I have been privileged to go on two missions—and they are the only two I have been on—where overseas education and the provision of educational facilities from the Queensland state education framework were marketed, for want of a better word, in other countries. One was in China and one was in South America. We do have product that is desirable to other countries. The product that was being offered was a pathway to providing a good educational standard for young men and women in other countries, and I note that this legislation also allows for intellectual property recognition by the state government.

The bill also deals with the publication of information about child-care facilities that fail to meet their standard of operation, and I do not have a problem with that. What I would like to raise with the minister is the clause in this bill that allows for protection against actions for defamation or breach of confidence. I would not say that I oppose this particular section. The bill states—

- (1) This section applies if information is published on a publicly accessible website of the department in the genuine belief that publication is required under section 50C or 143A.
- (2) No action for defamation or breach of confidence lies against the State or a person acting on behalf of the State because of the publication.

I understand in theory the need for that clause, but it should not be used as an excuse for complacency or apathy. All care must be taken by the officers who are empowered to place on a public website information that could be devastating to a child-care facility—or any educational facility for that matter—if it is inaccurate. The caveat in this legislation that allows for no action for defamation or breach of confidence is a significant caveat. I believe that the department has to be constantly vigilant to ensure that no child-care facilities, if it all possible, are entered inappropriately.

The only other issue that I want to raise relates to the development and purchase functions. The bill states—

The authority has the following functions—

- (a) to develop and revise 1–12 syllabuses, preparatory guidelines and kindergarten guidelines;

Again I go back to that comment about setting standards and obligations for entities that are not state government entities that are practicable, achievable and have input by those entities in their formulation. It is critically important that parties that will be bound by this legislation have an opportunity to have input into the formulation of the legislation. In the briefing we were advised that the group that will feed into the implementation group includes representatives from this educational sector. I believe it is very important that the minister in particular but also others who advise the minister have a practical understanding of what they are considering imposing on educational institutions and child-care facilities to ensure that it is achievable, practicable and fair. I am not for one minute saying that there should not be care at all times in environments where children, especially young children, congregate and learn—that is very important; I would never devalue or underestimate the importance of that—but it is important that the obligations that we place on these entities, many of which spend a lot of money to provide the facilities, are practicable and achievable and that representatives of all of those groups have input into ensuring that the end result is something they can happily abide by.

I certainly commend the minister working in a difficult portfolio. Education is critically important to our community now and in the future. I support the legislation.

Mr DEMPSEY (Bundaberg—LNP) (9.39 pm): I rise to speak in relation to the two cognate education bills before the House. I also recognise the attempts to refine the administrative procedure in relation to the education community ranging from child care to university studies. In relation to refining administration procedures, I note a comment from the Queensland Chamber of Commerce. It noted that throughout the Commonwealth there were 188,000 pages of red tape and that Queensland had 70,000 pages of red tape. I hope that, by moving these amendments, they go some way to reducing the red tape, especially in relation to education.

A lot of speakers have highlighted the importance of education to our community. I believe it is front and centre to the future of Queensland and front and centre to the aspirations and future of our young generation now and into the future. A number of speakers tonight have alluded to administration and its effects on the education community. I have talked to many teachers and the fact is that administrative procedures and accountability have taken a number of teachers away from their core business of education and away from assisting Queensland children. We must always look at ways of reducing that administration. I hope these bills tonight go some way to reducing that administrative red tape.

Tonight I want to speak to perception versus reality—the perceptions of the role of education and the reality of it on the ground. We need to keep in context—and this has also been highlighted in members' speeches—that education is one of the biggest money earners in Australia and in

Queensland. Because it is one of our biggest industries, we have to make sure that we do all our tasks properly to achieve our goals for maintaining the quality of education and highlighting Queensland as a centre of excellence for future generations.

I would like to speak about some of my own experiences within the education department and the influences of education on my life while growing up. I grew up in both state schools and private schools from Goodna State School, to Bundamba, to Sacred Heart, to St Peter Claver, to Brisbane State High, to Xaverian college in Manchester playing Rugby League and Rugby Union. A number of members have made comments on the bill, but I think one thing we can all agree on is that education is not just about education; it is about memories. It is the same as being on those sporting fields. We walk off and we cannot remember the scores in years to come, but we have fond memories. For me, I remember sweeping verandas, picking up rubbish in the yards, mowing the grass for the nuns and helping out in the canteen. I also remember the cane, the leather strap and the timber rulers. They were all experiences—some good and some bad but at the end of the day they were experiences that moulded many young Queenslanders to go forth and become great citizens of this great state.

Some of those memories were sad, some were happy and some were even joyful because you had a friend and someone to help you. The role of a teacher can range from holding a student's hand, or a giving cuddle in times of difficulty, to helping students through their emotional needs. We should not be fearful of saying these words in today's context, because the reality is that teachers and education staff have our young children for a considerable amount of time. The teaching staff we have in Queensland are of such a high quality and they have attained so much training that we should not be fearful of being able to say that teachers provide a loving, caring and safe environment for our students. Because they provide so much, we have to be able to compensate them for the work that they do, not just on the educational side but for bringing up young people with confidence and self-esteem. I believe that young people are like a piece of coal. If we rub the dust away, we do not know what the diamond is going to be inside. We need to give them the same opportunity to be able to turn from pieces of coal into sparkling diamonds and shining lights for Queensland.

My own experience is that I used to always enjoy the library. Libraries were a place of knowledge. They were a place to go to where you could have great respect for your teachers. They were also an environment where you could maintain a conscious level of study. For me that left a lot of memories. It was not just being able to go into a class and do an exam afterwards; it was having the opportunity to be able to participate within the school environment. What I am saying is that it is not just the education; it is the holistic approach. Teachers do so much for the development of a child. Particularly now with preschool and prep school, there is more and more responsibility on teachers within our schools. We as a community have to make sure that we support them in every which way possible.

I know from the many teachers I have spoken to when growing up, and even now, that they certainly did not enter the teaching profession for monetary reasons. They entered it because it was a calling. They wanted to help young people and they wanted to be able to impart their knowledge to young Queenslanders. Again, we have to ensure we have the proper environment to give them the proper respect that they deserve.

Teachers seem to have to constantly justify their existence in the present education system. We still see an ever-increasing workload within our teaching environment and their responsibilities are increasing. As an example, I spoke with the previous education minister, Mr Welford, in relation to the Bundaberg Special School—it was not just that special school but it was special schools throughout Queensland—and the checks and balances that a young person with a certain disability has to go through. There is a small minority of children who may change their physicality or have some improvement in their mental abilities from prep to 18 years of age. However, some children do not change their special needs but the sad fact was that each new teacher had to undertake evaluation and determination processes. When another teacher took over, they would have to do the paperwork again. It seemed like there was constant appraisal. In the words of the previous minister, it was for the satisfaction of the bean counters. They had to justify their existence all the time to the people who were going to provide the money. More effort seemed to be going from our educators into that role than assisting young people within the schools.

I know that the present minister is a very caring person, but I believe he would be frustrated by the financial restrictions facing this state government. This is the case not just with education but across the whole state. When we look at the recent headlines we see that we will be going into a \$85 billion deficit in the future. We have lost our AAA rating and now have a AA rating. We are paying almost \$12 million in interest per day. These are all things that impact on the enthusiasm of not just teachers but all people throughout Queensland. We have 26,000 children in oversized classes and 3,250 prep students in oversized classes.

Mr WILSON: I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The member is misleading the House. Those figures are not correct and he knows that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wendt): Order! That is not a point of order. What I will say, member for Bundaberg, is that it has been a rather wide-ranging speech. I know everyone has been given a lot of latitude today, but I would ask you to come back to the clauses of the bill.

Mr DEMPSEY: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. What I was alluding to there is the impact of this legislation on the teaching community. When we look at the perception of an unethical culture within this parliament, whether it be in relation to ex-ministers going to jail or legislation about lying in parliament and so forth, it sends a negative message to teachers in terms of their motivation. We should be trying wherever we can to turn that around so that we have positive attitudes. I will not go into asset sales and so forth. A lot of teachers would love to see that money being pumped into education instead of being squandered in other ways.

I get back to perception versus reality. Teachers have the right to be properly paid and compensated for the hard work they do in the community. Teachers do not just contribute to their school communities but contribute to the wider community in terms of the social fabric that blankets not just the Bundaberg community but the whole of Queensland. We have to make sure that these respected people are properly compensated.

There is a small group of people who I would specifically like to mention that do a lot for Bundaberg. They are the primary school sport teachers. We all have these champions within our communities. I specifically mention Ross Morrell, Noel Stitt, Jason Shears, Graham Power, Greg Kruger, Mark Craswell, Matt Plumb, David Boge and a legend in terms of the Wide Bay sporting program, Justin Lane. He does a magnificent job in coordinating all the sporting programs throughout the Wide Bay area. These guys are symbolic of the quality of teachers we have. These primary school teachers go above and beyond their duty not just in their primary schools but in the wider community. We would like to see these valuable members of our community recognised for the hard work they do in our community.

I would also like to acknowledge, as previous speakers have, the teachers, the staff, the teacher aides, the volunteers and the school chaplains for their hard work and dedication to our school communities. We have some excellent school principals in Bundaberg. They contribute not just to their own schools but I see them attending many secondary school presentations. They do this in their own time and because of their hard work and dedication to their role as educators. They must be complimented for the work they do. Principals like Raelene Fysh, Shirley Johnson, Mark Bensley from the Christian college and Michael Kiss need to be complimented. I acknowledge Gary Kirk, who will be retiring shortly. Ms Caroline Wood retired only last year. These people are not just great teachers and administrators in our schools but legends. Young people not only look up to them now but have looked up to them in the past. They will leave a legacy in our schools for many years to come.

Michael Fay is from Walkervale State School. Michael has been there for a considerable time. These teachers are the heart and soul of our schools. We have school facilities that could be improved, but quality teachers like Michael Fay, Stephen Dale and Madonna Davitt are the heart and soul of not just their schools but the whole community. We need to make sure that we not just have a perception of what they do but recognise the hard work they do and give them the proper pay and conditions for that hard work.

Mr Schwarten: How much?

Mr DEMPSEY: I implore this state government to be realistic in its approach and make sure that it pays teachers adequately in comparison to teachers elsewhere in Australia for the hard work that they do.

Mr Schwarten: How much? What's the offer from the opposition?

Mr KNUTH (Dalrymple—LNP) (9.56 pm): In speaking to the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill, I acknowledge the minister's intention to streamline—

Mr Dempsey: How much is enough?

Mr Schwarten: How much?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Bundaberg.

Mr Schwarten: Just gratuitous waffle.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Minister!

Mr Schwarten: No offer.

Mr Dempsey interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am on my feet. I will ask the member for Bundaberg to withdraw that unparliamentary comment.

Mr DEMPSEY: I withdraw that comment.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Minister, the member for Dalrymple has the call.

Mr DEMPSEY: I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. What was the word—parrot? Was it parrot or was it to do with brains because if brains were rubber bands they could be wrapped around a parrot's ankle.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Bundaberg.

Mr DEMPSEY: I withdraw.

Mr Hinchliffe: It's a bit too late to come back at that point.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr Schwarten: No wonder the coppers got rid of you.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Schwarten: No offer; no guts.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Minister!

Mr Dempsey interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Bundaberg, you leave me no option but to warn you. This is it. The member for Dalrymple has the call. Any further interjections will be treated that way.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr DEMPSEY: I rise to a point of order. I take offence and I ask the minister to withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, he has asked you to withdraw.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I withdraw, Mr Deputy Speaker. I don't like him winking at me.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, withdraw unreservedly.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I withdraw. I ask him to stop winking at me across the chamber. It is quite embarrassing.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, I will ask you to withdraw again unreservedly.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I withdraw unreservedly, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. The member for Dalrymple has the call.

Mr KNUTH: I acknowledge the minister's intention to streamline early childhood education to the universal high-quality system that advantages all Queensland students. The prep program at 35 schools in Indigenous communities approved by the minister allows children older than 3½ years to be registered in the program and provides a foundation of literacy and numeracy in the prep years.

The prohibition of the term 'prep' in any presentation by child-care providers would remove the assumption that child-care providers are able to provide formal prep year education. It is encouraging to note that registered children in both the pre-prep program and children with disabilities provided with special education who are not prep students will be included under the program available to other students. I am familiar with children with disabilities such as cerebral palsy, spina bifida and short stature. These are vulnerable children who are capable of achieving academic heights and strong life skills who can become major contributors to our community.

Debate, on motion of Mr Knuth, adjourned.

MOTION

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (9.59 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That, notwithstanding anything contained in standing and sessional orders for this day's sitting, the House can continue to meet past 10 pm to consider government business until the adjournment is moved to be followed by the 30-minute adjournment debate.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (9.59 pm): I move—
That the House do now adjourn.

Gympie Electorate, Road Deaths

Mr GIBSON (Gympie—LNP) (10.00 pm): Youth is a time of immortality. It is a time for many who steal up to the edge of the abyss and then peer over the brink. But we do not expect our youth to pass into that abyss. For many in their youth, death is as abstract a concept as trigonometry or indeed marriage. It is hard to appreciate its terrible finality or the havoc that it wreaks on those who entrust the deceased with their hearts. Yet in the electorate of Gympie, unfortunately in the past few weeks we have seen too many young people die on our roads.

Brian McGrath, aged 18, passed away on Monday, 14 September on Tagigan Road at Goomboorian. Brian died from injuries sustained in a crash with another vehicle driven by a 20-year-old female. On Wednesday, 30 September 2009 Laura Milner and Samantha Yates, aged 18 and 21 respectively, were involved in a horrific three-vehicle crash. Jodie Santowski, who was a passenger in the vehicle, is in a stable condition in the Royal Brisbane Hospital. The two girls, Laura and Samantha, were killed when their vehicle collided with a fully laden B-double timber truck. Jodie was extracted from the vehicle wreckage by fire crews and transported by the AGL rescue helicopter with non-life-threatening injuries. When one looks at Tin Can Bay Road one sees about 100 metres of black tyre marks burnt into the asphalt. They stand as evidence of the truck driver's efforts to avoid the smash that took those two young women's lives.

In the Gympie electorate we have the unfortunate reputation of having the worst and most dangerous stretch of highway in Australia, but neither of these accidents occurred on these roads. These accidents that took the life of Brian McGrath, Laura Milner and Samantha Yates occurred on our country roads. They took away young people from our midst who had a bright and safe future. Samantha left behind a young child.

It has been my unfortunate responsibility far too often to attend events in my electorate that are associated with road carnage—memorials on the side of our highways, memorials that exist in homes and even just recognising on Facebook those sites that are established to remember our young people. As I said, youth is a time when we believe that we are immortal. It is a time when we look at the abyss and we are willing to do things that we would not do at other stages in our lives. For these young people, that time has passed and the loss is felt strongly in our electorate.

Feast of St Francis of Assisi

Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Infrastructure and Planning) (10.03 pm): The Feast of St Francis of Assisi is a widely celebrated day on the Christian calendar, but last Sunday was very special for the Catholic community of Kedron in my electorate. It was my pleasure to join parishioners of the community of St Therese and St Anthony, widely known locally as the Little Flower Church, for a mass to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the establishment of the Franciscan Order. In 1209 St Francis was granted approval by the Pope to establish an order dedicated to a life of simplicity, peace and respect for creation. Some 800 years later, this tradition is embodied by the Order of Friars Minor, as the Franciscans are more formally called, and is a tradition richly shared on the north side of Brisbane at the Little Flower Church.

For more than 50 years now the Franciscan sisters and brothers have been the basis of three schools on that craggy hill at Kedron. St Anthony's, Padua College and Mount Alvernia College are all very well regarded schools where Franciscan traditions have been experienced and promoted by generations of students. Indeed, students from the schools were an integral part of the liturgy at Sunday's mass. The Archbishop of Brisbane, His Grace John Bathurst, who celebrated this mass in fact remarked especially upon the involvement of the very large number of children in the service and particularly the beauty of the singing voices of the St Anthony's students.

Without wanting to enter into a theological debate and discussion where I am well and truly out of my depth, I will note that the archbishop did suggest that St Francis might well be the greatest of all saints. This was of course very well received by the Kedron parishioners. This suggestion was also supported by the attendance at the mass of members of the Anglican Franciscan community from across the city of Brisbane. The celebration was a great credit to the whole of the Kedron Catholic community, but I would particularly like to acknowledge the parish priest, Father Peter Clifford ofm. Father Peter is a well-respected figure in the community and—

Mr Johnson: Stand up for us Catholics!

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I am always trying to do that. I acknowledge the member for Gregory's interjection. Father Peter is a well-respected figure in the community and especially around those Franciscan schools. Whenever I am around that Turner Road precinct, I inevitably see Father Peter at the schools, at events at the Little Flower Church hall, or at Delamore. I have spoken in this House before about my support for pluralism as a cornerstone of our society. The fact that some 800 years after devout men began following the rules of St Francis of Assisi these traditions continue to be valued and weaved into utterly modern lives is a testimony to our pluralistic ability to draw on a wide range of world beliefs.

(Time expired)

Woodford Correctional Centre

Mr POWELL (Glass House—LNP) (10.06 pm): Last week I had an unforgettable experience in touring the Woodford Correctional Centre. To call the tour confronting would be an understatement. It left me mentally exhausted. So from the outset let me applaud the management and staff of the Woodford Correctional Centre for the outstanding job they do day in and day out. How they achieve it without it impacting on their personal lives I simply cannot comprehend. It is an intense and constant job, and I think it is fair to say that their duty goes largely unacknowledged and unrewarded. So to Mr Scott Collins, the general manager, his management team and each and every individual correctional officer, program officer, dog handler or health worker: you have my utmost respect and gratitude. Thank you for the work you do.

Mr Collins and Commissioner Kelvin Anderson arranged an exhaustive tour. As they said, they did not shield me from any element of the operation of the centre. The tour took in the new but relatively vacant secure MCR 2 block. I got to see firsthand the cells and exercise yards of some of our most dangerous prisoners and have begun to appreciate the loss of privacy and day-to-day variation that confronts them when they are sentenced to time in a correctional facility. I was shown the various industry workshops where prisoners who arrive, often with little to no educational or training attainment, are taught trades and skills. These workshops have real potential, particularly when it comes to giving prisoners a future, so I look forward to working with industries manager Brian Martens and the department to identify suitable industries for operation in the centre.

The tour also included the detention centre; the safety unit, where prisoners at particular risk of self-harming are sent for treatment and stabilisation; the programs area, where they are taught literacy, numeracy and other life skills; and the residential facility, where some six to eight correctional officers oversee more than 200 prisoners in a campus type layout. It included the intelligence unit, the master control area and the Dog Squad. As I said, nothing was held back. Thanks to Mr Kidd for keeping a watchful eye over me throughout.

The tour has filled me with pride that I can serve these servants of the people and I look forward to representing the staff of Woodford Correctional Centre in every possible way as their state member in parliament. Unfortunately, though, the tour has left me with several questions, not least of which is why this facility is only half full. Why is the department building more facilities and expanding others when this modern, fully equipped and fully staffed centre is sitting underutilised? Most importantly, what will be the impact on staff? Yes, voluntary transfers to other centres throughout the state are on offer, but what about those who cannot or will not move? What about the casual staff? I am not surprised that these questions are also giving the centre's general manager sleepless nights. I believe that he is genuine in his concern for his team. I only hope that his superiors, and ultimately this government, share his concern.

Staines, Mr LJ

Mr WENDT (Ipswich West—ALP) (10.09 pm): Tonight I wanted to let the House know of the death of Leslie John Staines—however, to everyone here he is probably better known as plain old John Staines. It is with the deepest sadness that I inform the House of the loss of one of my electorate staff only a couple of weeks ago. I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

It is with the deepest sadness that I inform the House of the loss of one of my electoral staff only a couple of weeks ago. My sympathies go out to John's wife Marlene and the entire Staines family. Mr Speaker, John has been a great mate of mine for over 15 years, being one of the first people I ever ran into when I joined the Labor Party. And since that time, Mr Speaker, I can advise that I don't think I have ever had the pleasure of meeting a more honest and committed person.

Mr Speaker, not only was John a great personal friend but he was also an inspiration to many people in the Labor movement, particularly in Ipswich, but in many other areas as well, as a number of other members in this chamber would attest. John's dedication and commitment, in unison with his wife Marlene, has set a unique standard for everyone to follow, but I believe which few could match.

Mr Speaker, John gave 110% in everything he did, but nothing pleased him more than when election time came around, because John was in his element with a continuous smile on his face. Whether it was discussing strategies for the following day, where we were going to get the campaign funds from, or how we were going to man all of the polling booths on election day, John just loved it. And I should also mention that the rougher the campaign got, well, the better he liked that as well.

Mr Speaker, it is important to acknowledge that John has worked in my office since I was elected but also worked for the previous member, Don Livingstone, and as such his death will leave an enormous hole to fill. But I also know that John would want us to carry on as usual.

Both John and Marlene are life members of the party and this gives you some indication of the level of commitment both of them had for the movement.

Mr Speaker, John like many of us thought he had his life mapped out. Work until 65 and then travel around Australia. Unfortunately this didn't happen because due to osteoarthritis John had to have two knee replacements which resulted in an early retirement. It wasn't long after this that John was diagnosed with chronic renal disease, and although it was expected that he would require dialysis after 5 years, this hadn't happened even after 12 years.

Mr Speaker, in the middle of last year John fell ill and had doctors stumped as to the cause. However, after much testing it was finally traced to the terminal lung disease silicosis. You see, Mr Speaker, John was only now suffering from the results of 31 years of working in the foundries around Ipswich where silica dust, sand and asbestos were used as part of the daily routine.

Mr Speaker, if honesty and commitment was an Olympic event, John Staines would have been a gold medal winner. As such, Mr Speaker, on behalf of my family and my office staff I would like to formally pass on my condolences to John's wife Marlene and his entire family.

John, you will never be forgotten and you will stay in our hearts forever.

Goodbye old mate.

Sunshine Coast, Greenfield Development

Mr DICKSON (Buderim—LNP) (10.10 pm): This House has been debating the Sustainable Planning Bill, which will replace the Integrated Planning Act and will determine how development in this state is managed in the future. In my speech during the debate on the bill I spoke about the importance of infrastructure and the need for development to be planned in accordance with the provision of infrastructure. I pointed to the need for the state government to play its role in providing that infrastructure. I spoke about the government's determination to fast-track development in greenfield areas like those on the Sunshine Coast without first ensuring that infrastructure is in place to support those new communities.

Of greatest concern is the government's decision to put back by two years the delivery of the new public hospital on the Sunshine Coast. That is the single most important piece of infrastructure in my region. Existing Sunshine Coast residents are already often forced to travel more than 100 kilometres to Brisbane to access public hospital beds that are not available on the Sunshine Coast. But this government wants to fast-track development that will bring another 75,000 people to my region without delivering the Sunshine Coast University Hospital. This is madness.

The government is now saying that the hospital will be ready in 2016 instead of 2014. The delivery of an improved public transport link through CAMCOS is even further away. There is nothing in the next five-year roads program for an upgrade to the Bruce Highway between Caloundra and Sippy Downs. In a local newspaper article reporting on my speech, the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning is quoted as saying that the Sunshine Coast region will benefit from \$19 billion in infrastructure spending in the next 17 years. I do not think that the people in my electorate are prepared to wait 17 years. They are fed up with being treated as second-class citizens compared to the people of Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

The minister was further quoted in the article as saying that greenfield development must go ahead regardless of the new hospital and public transport improvements so that we can have affordable housing on the Sunshine Coast. That new housing will be affordable only if people do not have to get into their cars to commute to Brisbane every day. It will be affordable only if there are the hospitals, the health services, schools and public transport to support it. It will be affordable only if there is local employment.

We are already putting people's lives at risk by not providing a new hospital, but the minister wants more people to be forced to compete for the existing public hospital beds that are available. I call on this government to be accountable and to take seriously the name of the new legislation, which is sustainable planning. I call on the government to make growth in this state sustainable by providing the infrastructure to support it instead of leaving it to local government and developers. Only then will we have affordable housing and sustainable communities.

We also need to look at what type of developments are allowed on the greenfield sites on the Sunshine Coast that the government is looking at developing. A lot of them are below flood levels. This issue needs to be looked at as well as the transport links that are available from the Bruce Highway. This development can work, but it depends on the sort of planning that is approved on the Sunshine Coast. I ask the minister to take that on board.

Woorim Beach Dune Stabilisation Project

Mrs SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (10.13 pm): Bribie Island is unique. Its special and fragile environment is a sanctuary for its residents as well as attracting many visitors who come to enjoy the island's natural assets. My family and I have lived there for 25 years.

In July 2007, a committee of proactive, caring Bribie Island volunteers applied for an Australian government grant from the Natural Heritage Trust Fund for a special purpose coast and marine round of the Envirofund. The committee proposed to stabilise the identified at-risk, fragile Woorim Beach frontal dunes, which I am saddened to say are continually being degraded for water views. It was perceived that this community-initiated Coastcare project would complement and enhance state government protective environmental legislation and help protect Bribie's coastal environment.

These heritage grants provide the opportunity for community building at the grassroots level by harnessing the community's energy, skills and knowledge to undertake projects that tackle important local problems. The project is specifically for conservation, not for beautification or amenity. The funding addresses Australia's fast-declining natural environment, especially the necessary ecosystems and habitat along coastal regions that provide protection for not only Australia's unique and vulnerable wildlife but also many migratory species that travel long distances annually to our shores.

Bribie Island's environs host and sustain dugongs, dolphins, migratory whales, endangered turtle species and birds which, along with their habitat, are protected by international conservation treaties. Australia is an intergovernmental signatory to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, which is for national action and international cooperation for the conservation of wetlands of international importance. It is also a signatory to the United Nations International Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals. The island's eastern dunal systems, including Woorim Beach, provide habitat and sanctuary to these animals during their arduous migrations. Not only do Woorim's dunal systems provide protection for human habitat and infrastructure on the landward side, they provide nesting sites and respite for migratory birds and the endangered loggerhead turtle.

The Friends of Woorim Beach application passed all levels of scrutiny and was successful in obtaining \$49,930, the highest grant ever awarded to a community group in South-East Queensland. With in-kind contributions, the total project budget was \$172,000. The volunteers, sponsored by the Bribie Island Community Association Inc., have so far contributed 2,700 man hours to the dune stabilisation project. Their technical consultant on native dune plants was the Hon. Associate Professor John Harden AM. They use their skills and knowledge in natural resource management and will be constructing specially designed fencing to protect three kilometres of dunes in the Woorim area as well as implementing interpretive signage at beach access locations. They will also promote community awareness in local schools, community groups and the library.

In 2007, the Friends of Woorim Beach were supported in the Envirofund by the Bribie Island Community Association, South East Queensland Catchments, the Bribie Island Chamber of Commerce, the Bribie Island Environmental Protection Association, the Bribie Island State School, Gubbi Gubbi, the Caboolture council and their local councillor, the Wallum Action Group, the state government's Environmental Protection Agency and me and, since 2008, the new member for Longman, Jon Sullivan. Jon and I recently visited the site. I congratulate the Friends of Woorim Beach for their initiative and wholeheartedly support their efforts.

Queensland Justices Association State Conference; Music Beneath the Stars; Orchid Society Show; Emergency Services Open Day

Mr DOWLING (Redlands—LNP) (10.16 pm): I would like to fit four events into one speech. I call it Saturday in Redlands. I would like to draw the attention of the House to a conference that was held in the Redlands to celebrate 150 years of JPs in Queensland. I would like to recognise the chairman of the QJA Redland City Branch, Mr George Dodds JP (Qualified), and his assistant, Ray Burrows, and the warm welcome that he gave not only to me but also to Redlands Mayor Melva Hobson, who welcomed the delegates; Michael Choi, the member for Capalaba; Mark Robinson, who was the host as the conference was held in Cleveland in his electorate; the Hon. Peter Applegarth, a Supreme Court justice; and the Hon. Cameron Dick, the Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations.

It was a terrific event that celebrated 150 years of JPs working in Queensland. It was interesting to note that a number of the speeches made reference to the judicial system and legislation generally. But it was a fantastic day that was enjoyed by delegates from all over Queensland.

The other event that I went to on the weekend was Music Beneath the Stars, which was held at Ormiston House. It was a fantastic night. It is a fundraising event that is held outdoors and is designed to generate funds to maintain Ormiston House, which is a historic building in Redland City. I should also point out that all four of these events were held within the electorate of Cleveland, which is in the wider Redland City area that the three members who represent that area call their own. It was a fantastic night. On that evening I was privileged to have the company of a number of people, including the member for Surfers Paradise, John-Paul Langbroek, the Leader of the Opposition, and the member for Cleveland. As I said, it was a fabulous event that has been held for a number of years. Ormiston House is owned by the Carmelite order of nuns. They manage and maintain the house with a committee. The committee is to be commended for the funds that it raises.

Also, the orchid society held its annual show. It is a fantastic show that is well recognised throughout Queensland. The money raised through that show goes towards the hospital's auxiliary. I congratulate the organising committee on the show.

The fourth event that I attended on Saturday was the emergency services open day down at Cleveland. The open day incorporated a number of services: the fire services, the ambos, the police, the SES and the surf life savers—all working together and demonstrating what volunteering is and how these services interact with each other and provide a service to the community. It was absolutely fantastic to get a tour firsthand—to look through the fire station, to have a look at the SES equipment at Cleveland. That service covers the whole of the Redlands. I look forward to the SES expanding into the southern bay islands. It was a fantastic day in paradise.

Mental Health Week

Mrs SMITH (Burleigh—ALP) (10.19 pm): This week is Mental Health Week. The theme for 2009 is 'Be active, get connected, stay involved'. Mental health is a state of wellbeing. It is not just the absence of illness but also the ability to maintain relationships, cope with stress, contribute to the community and enjoy life. Good mental health helps us to more fully enjoy life and the world around us. We respond better to the stresses and challenges of daily life, are more creative, use our abilities to the fullest and make the most of opportunities when our mental health is good.

Unfortunately, not everybody experiences good mental health all of the time. Mental health is an increasingly important issue, with one in five Queenslanders likely to experience a serious mental health issue at some point in their life. We need to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness. Improving public knowledge about mental health is an important goal. Research indicates that we need to increase awareness, improve interventions and develop research aimed at reducing the incidence of mental illness.

During this past week I have had the pleasure of opening not one but two art exhibitions with all the works having been created by people with mental illness. The first was called *A Thin Line*, supported by the Currumbin Clinic. The 'thin line' refers to the difference between normal and not travelling too well. 'Normal' is a word we use often, but it is hard to define. What is normal to one person may be quite bizarre to another. I thank those clients who shared with us on the night not only their artwork but also their stories of loss of good mental health and the journey to recovery. All agreed that the creative outlet provided at Currumbin Clinic was a key to recovery, and they acknowledged that the support and encouragement of staff was linked to their wellbeing.

The second exhibition was staged by clients of the Gold Coast Mental Health Rehabilitation Service. This is the 14th year that the exhibition has been held on the Gold Coast. The first art exhibition was held in 1995 and since that time it has greatly grown in scope to become one of the major Mental Health Week events to be held on the Gold Coast. It is supported by Gold Coast Hospital clinicians and staff, many of whom were at the opening.

Although I am not artistic, I understand that creating artwork is very therapeutic. It can convey emotions that we may be reluctant to show and speak to us about things we do not want to say. The artwork on display at both exhibitions was a collage of beauty, imagination and emotion. There were works to which I could relate and others that were much deeper and required time to ponder.

As with any serious illness, one of the most difficult phases of recovery from mental illness is rehabilitation and reintegration into the community. Recovery is all about resilience and building on inner strength. Both art exhibitions will allow the wider community to see and hopefully appreciate the artwork of those who have contributed. It will also help to promote better understanding of mental illness within the community.

Gaven and Gold Coast, Construction Industry

Dr DOUGLAS (Gaven—LNP) (10.22 pm): The construction industry is the biggest industry on the Gold Coast and is very exposed. We must have two years of stabilised interest rates or the market will slide back to where it was six months ago. I agree with HIA Chief Economist Harley Dale's comments today in a *Queensland Business Review* article stating that the initial pick-up in new housing activity has been influenced by the combination of lower interest rates and the First Home Owners Boost. However, both these key drivers are now in reverse.

The first home owners grant has been slashed to \$14,000 and will soon drop to \$7,000 and interest rates are moving upwards, with the RBA raising the cash rate by 0.25 per cent to 3.25 per cent today, with rises anticipated in each month to follow. On an average \$400,00 to \$450,00 Gold Coast home loan, that is an increase of \$30 weekly. The federal Treasurer has said that the current official cash rate is unusually low for reasons associated with the global financial crisis. He says that it will most likely rise, despite the banks having taxpayer guarantees to prevent a run on deposits. But liquidity remains extremely tight. The banks are doing loans at two per cent above the variable rate if the equity is there and if the customer will do the business. Their attitude is that they are heading back to a higher variable rate.

By driving up rates last year and continuing now to refuse to commit any stimulus funding to interest rate reduction in Australia we risk a new market collapse. If construction stalls, compounding GST revenue slumps because only new home construction drives that progressive tax revenue. Queensland's economy will hit the wall. We are seeing for the first time in Australia's recent history demands for equity in housing and commercial investment that exceed those ever before requested. Generally cash flow has been their guide. This has changed. Company tax receipts have fallen, as have capital gains tax and personal income tax receipts. For Queensland, our GST revenue from construction is at risk. The resale market does not provide compounding GST. I am ringing alarms here. Many who were going under have long gone. Builders are just turning over, treading water, and are at 30 per cent of their former levels. They did buy new utes for tax reasons but income is massively down.

Builders, developers, tradespeople and labourers are all holding their collective breath to see what happens. They are asking for stability of finance, media and the industry itself. This is especially so in my electorate of Gaven, where 50 per cent of those working full-time derive their income from construction. Many are very concerned, knowing that it is 15 per cent cheaper to build in Melbourne. In Queensland there is an effective shortage of land, but the population is growing and affordability is going to be lower over the next three to four years.

Construction is one of the major lifelines on the Gold Coast. It attracts workers from all over the country and the world to live here in Queensland. For many a builder and tradie, as the member for Rockhampton has put it, providing loans which are to be repaid over time can save jobs in small business construction, stimulate our local economy and ultimately support individuals and families of Queensland.

(Time expired)

Chatsworth Electorate, Volunteer Groups; Youth Parliament

Mr KILBURN (Chatsworth—ALP) (10.26 pm): I would like to take this opportunity to talk about a number of volunteer groups in the Chatsworth electorate. On 12 September I was happy to attend a Neighbourhood Watch annual general meeting along with the member for Bulimba, Di Farmer, and Shayne Sutton, to hand out a number of awards to people in the Morningside 1 Neighbourhood Watch group. A number of people in the group received their 20-year service certificates, and I would like to mention them. They are Paul Cooper; Doug Cowan; Elva Connors; Ted Honnery; Joy Honnery, Jim Mackay; Anhna Martin; Bill Purcell; Esme Purcell; Dolores Reay, whose son is a firefighter in Mount Isa and has been for the last 15 years; Phyllis Ralston; and Gwen Schramm.

I would also like to mention Mr Robert Chester-Master, who is a stalwart of the Morningside 1 Neighbourhood Watch group, which covers areas in both the Bulimba and Chatsworth electorates. He has held the positions of block coordinator, zone coordinator, secretary, treasurer and newsletter editor and up until August was the area coordinator. Robert is still a member of the Neighbourhood Watch group and is going strong at the ripe old age of 84. Congratulations to all of those people. It is a testament to the Morningside 1 Neighbourhood Watch group that there are so many people in that group who have given 20 years service. It is a very important organisation.

I would also like to talk about the Bulimba Creek Catchment Coordinating Committee, which recently won an Urban Landcare Award for its work with the Bulimba Creek catchment. The people who work there do a fantastic job in my electorate and over the last 10 or so years have planted approximately 60,000 native seedlings, of which 60 per cent are propagated in the nursery in the Chatsworth electorate on Old Cleveland Road. About 5,300 people a year go through their community centre on open days, corporate tree-planting days and environmental education programs. They engage with at least one in every 22 people who live in the catchment area. They have created 362 hectares of habitat for wildlife and have protected 462 hectares of urban bushland. For an area as close to the city as the Chatsworth electorate is, it is a great testament to the people who work for the Bulimba Creek Catchment Coordinating Committee that they have managed to keep the urban bushland area as pristine as they have.

Just before I finish, I congratulate Miss Ellen Desmarchelier, who was the Chatsworth representative at the recent youth parliament. I was fortunate to spend some time listening to the speeches that were made by all the members of the youth parliament in relation to alcohol-induced violence that the Law, Justice and Safety Committee is looking at. They made a wonderful contribution and I congratulate all the members of the youth parliament.

Question put—That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 10.30 pm.

ATTENDANCE

Attwood, Bates, Bleijie, Bligh, Boyle, Choi, Crandon, Cripps, Croft, Cunningham, Darling, Davis, Dempsey, Dick, Dickson, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Farmer, Flegg, Foley, Fraser, Gibson, Grace, Hinchliffe, Hobbs, Hoolihan, Hopper, Horan, Jarratt, Johnson, Johnstone, Jones, Keech, Kiernan, Kilburn, Knuth, Langbroek, Lawlor, Lucas, McArdle, McLindon, Male, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Mickel, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nicholls, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Powell, Pratt, Reeves, Rickuss, Roberts, Robertson, Robinson, Ryan, Schwarten, Scott, Seeney, Shine, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Spence, Springborg, Stevens, Stone, Struthers, Stuckey, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wellington, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson