



RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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Subject **FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT** Page
Wednesday, 1 September 2010

PETITIONS	2953
TABLED PAPERS	2953
MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS	2953
Premier's Literary Awards; <i>The Pacific</i>	2953
Brisbane Festival; Cairns Indigenous Art Fair	2954
Department of the Premier and Cabinet, North Queensland	2954
Salisbury-Beaudesert Rail Corridor Study	2955
Railway Stations, Renovations	2955
Teleradiology Services	2956
Cairns, Economy	2957
National Broadband Network	2958
Water Supply	2958
Masters Review of Primary School Education, Progress Report	2959
Volunteer Bushfire Investigators	2959
Traffic Congestion	2960
Sport and Recreation, Funding	2960
Lutwyche Busway Station	2961
TravelSmart	2961
Tourism, Cruise Shipping Industry	2962
Chill Out Zones; Youth Week Competition Winners	2962
Acquired Brain Injury	2963
ABSENCE OF MINISTER	2963
NOTICES OF MOTION	2964
Sale of Public Assets	2964
Bundaberg Base Hospital; Cameron, Ms C	2964
SPEAKER'S STATEMENT	2964
School Group Tours	2964
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE	2964
Labor Party, Leadership	2964
Cost of Living	2965
'Walk a day in my shoes' Program	2965

Table of Contents — Wednesday, 1 September 2010

'Walk a day in my shoes' Program	2966
CSG to LNG Industry	2967
Economy	2968
Health Services	2968
Connecting SEQ 2031	2969
Papua New Guinea, Trade	2970
Connecting SEQ 2031	2970
Gold Coast, Construction Industry	2971
Innisfail Work Camp	2972
Gold Coast, Road Infrastructure	2973
Crown Land, Leases	2973
Population Growth	2974
Strategic Cropping Land	2974
Woodridge Fire Station	2975
PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS	2975
Bligh Labor Government	2975
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Extracts from press releases dated 18 May 2010, 16 April 2010 and 7 April 2010 by the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning, the Hon. Hinchliffe, containing the word 'reassessed'	2975
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Extract from transcript of speech made by the Premier, the Hon. Bligh, to the Queensland Growth Management Summit on 30 March 2010 containing the word 'reassessment'	2975
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Extract from press release, dated 17 July 2009, by the Minister for Main Roads, the Hon. Wallace, containing the word 'reassessment'	2975
Pine Rivers Memorial Bowls Club	2976
Connecting SEQ 2031	2977
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Copy of extracts of a Powerpoint presentation titled 'Salisbury-Beaudesert Rail Corridor Study (Stage 1 and 2)'	2977
Public Transport	2977
Beaudesert Hospital	2977
Mount Ommaney Electorate, Public Transport	2978
Child Care, Fees	2978
Acquired Brain Injury	2979
Lockyer Electorate, Powerlink	2979
Kindergartens	2980
Water Supply	2980
Cairns Indigenous Art Fair	2980
Boyne Valley	2981
Ambulance Week	2981
Queensland Health, Allegation of Assault	2982
LAND VALUATION BILL	2982
First Reading	2982
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Land Valuation Bill 2010	2982
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Land Valuation Bill 2010, explanatory notes	2982
Second Reading	2982
CHILD PROTECTION AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL	2984
Second Reading	2984
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Document titled 'Early intervention and prevention programs for Department of Communities'	2995
Division: Question put—That the bill be now read a second time	2997
Resolved in the affirmative	2997
Consideration in Detail	2997
Clause 1, as read, agreed to	3000
Clauses 2 to 6, as read, agreed to	3000
Clause 7, as read, agreed to	3004
Clause 8, as read, agreed to	3005
Clause 9, as read, agreed to	3005
Clause 10, as read, agreed to	3008
Clauses 11 and 12, as read, agreed to	3008
Clause 13, as read, agreed to	3008
Clause 14, as read, agreed to	3009
Clause 15, as read, agreed to	3009
Clause 16, as read, agreed to	3010
Clause 17, as read, agreed to	3011
Clause 18, as read, agreed to	3011
Clauses 19 to 21, as read, agreed to	3011
Clause 22, as read, agreed to	3013
Clauses 23 to 25, as read, agreed to	3013
Clause 26, as read, agreed to	3013
Clauses 27 to 30, as read, agreed to	3013

Table of Contents — Wednesday, 1 September 2010

Clause 31—	3013
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Explanatory notes to Mr Dempsey's amendments to the Child Protection and Other Acts Amendment Bill.	3013
Non-government amendments (Mr Dempsey) negatived.	3014
Clause 31, as read, agreed to.	3014
Clause 32, as read, agreed to.	3015
Clause 33, as read, agreed to.	3015
Clause 34, as read, agreed to.	3015
Clause 35, as read, agreed to.	3015
Clause 36—	3015
MOTION	3016
Sale of Public Assets	3016
Division: Question put—That the amendment be agreed to.	3027
Resolved in the affirmative.	3027
Division: Question put—That the motion, as amended, be agreed to.	3027
Resolved in the affirmative.	3027
REPORT	3028
Study Tour to Japan, Russia and United Kingdom	3028
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Overseas travel report: Report on overseas study tour by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr Langbroek) to Japan, Russia and the United Kingdom from 19 July 2010-1 August 2010.	3028
CRIMINAL CODE (SERIOUS ASSAULTS ON POLICE AND PARTICULAR OTHER PERSONS) AMENDMENT BILL	3028
Second Reading	3028
Division: Question put—That the bill be now read a second time.	3045
Resolved in the negative.	3045
ADJOURNMENT	3046
Bentley, Mr B	3046
National Meals on Wheels Day	3046
Confidential Information	3047
Proserpine Citizens Band	3047
Caloundra Aerodrome	3048
Seniors Week	3049
Horse Riding, National Parks	3049
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Non-conforming e-petition regarding horse riding in national parks.	3049
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Non-conforming paper petition regarding horse riding in national parks.	3049
Tertiary Place	3050
Victoria Point State High School; RedFest	3051
Legacy Week	3051
ATTENDANCE	3052

WEDNESDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER 2010

The Legislative Assembly met at 9.30 am.

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

PETITIONS

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

South-West Priority Country Area Music Program

Mr Hobbs, from 761 petitioners, requesting the House to retain the South-West Priority Country Area Program's music program in its current form [[2862](#)].

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

Sunshine Coast, Underground Power Network

Mr Dickson, from 234 petitioners, requesting the House to instruct Energex to place their energy corridor in the Sunshine Coast underground [[2863](#)].

Petitions received.

TABLED PAPERS

MINISTERIAL PAPERS TABLED BY THE CLERK

The following ministerial papers were tabled by the Clerk—

Minister for Infrastructure and Planning (Mr Hinchliffe)—

[2864](#) Extract from Queensland Government Gazette No. 136, dated 27 August 2010: Department of Infrastructure and Planning Notice—Statement giving reasons why the Governor in Council approved by Gazette Notice on 26 August 2010 the Australia Pacific LNG Facility as an infrastructure facility that is of significance, pursuant to section 125(1)(f) of the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971.

Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability (Ms Jones)—

[2865](#) South East Queensland Koala Conservation State Planning Regulatory Provisions

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Premier's Literary Awards; *The Pacific*

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.32 am): Last night it was my pleasure to recognise 14 outstanding Australian writers at the 2010 Queensland Premier's Literary Awards. I was pleased to be joined by the shadow minister for the arts, the Leader of the Opposition, who I am sure would agree with me that these awards celebrated the work of some of Australia's most talented writers. The 14 winners were selected from 62 short-listed entrants, and once again this year the judges had a hard time choosing a winner from a very high standard of nominations. JM Coetzee took out the top prize of \$25,000 for his novel *Summertime*. This is the third instalment of fictionalised memoirs which detail the life of this very well-known international author from the perspective of five people who have known him.

Emerging Queensland author Noel Mengel was awarded \$20,000 and will be offered a publishing contract with the University of Queensland Press for his manuscript *RPM*, a fictional portrait of small-town life and its challenges. Jeanine Leane took out the Unpublished Indigenous Writer—Arts Queensland David Unaipon Award and was awarded \$15,000 for *Purple Threads*, a sad, hilarious and moving yarn of a house full of strong Aboriginal women. Authors Mark Tredinnick, Sally Murphy, Richard Yaxley, Sonya Pemberton, Peter Boyle, Karen Hitchcock, Clive Hamilton, Ian Hoskins and script writers Shirley Barrett, Rick Viede and John Misto were also winners. I congratulate all who won last night and shared in a total prize pool of \$225,000. Their winning stories are an important reflection of our culture, our history and our modern Australian identity. I urge members of the House to look at the list of winners and short-listed authors and buy one of the books to read.

The Premier's Literary Awards are the Emmy Awards of the book scene in Queensland, and I am pleased to advise that our winning status as Emmy award winners had not ended there. *The Pacific* television series was awarded outstanding miniseries at the 62nd Primetime Emmy Awards on Monday night. Those from North Queensland will know that *The Pacific* is a 10-part miniseries filmed in North Queensland that follows three US marines across the Pacific during World War II. It aired in Australia on the Seven Network in April. It is *The Pacific's* second Emmy award. As well as showcasing the beautiful scenery and beaches of North Queensland, *The Pacific* has created over 1,700 jobs and has invested \$87 million into economic benefits in Queensland. When we watch these programs on our televisions it is easy to think of them as mere entertainment and recreation, but this is big business and big dollars, and in an economy like North Queensland you can really feel an injection like that. That is why our government will continue to do what we can to attract these sorts of efforts in the film and television sector right across Queensland. I congratulate Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks, but I particularly congratulate all of those talented Queensland film workers who have made this miniseries such a success.

Brisbane Festival; Cairns Indigenous Art Fair

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.35 am): Continuing on with the arts, I am pleased to advise the House that the Brisbane Festival will open this Saturday, 4 September. It is now one of Australia's largest and most diverse arts and cultural celebrations. My government proudly invests \$5.3 million in this annual event, and we are very pleased to be joined by the Brisbane City Council as major funding partners. This year's festival boasts five world premiere productions, seven Queensland premieres and 10 Australian premieres. The program includes a host of free community events so that absolutely everyone can get a piece of the action. This year the festival is taking community access one step further through an online blogging project that will allow festival goers to share their own reviews of the shows that are on during the program. One of the highlights this year will no doubt be the Australian premiere and exclusive to Brisbane season of *Don Quixote* by the Cuban National Ballet. I encourage everyone to get in and book fast. I also welcome the festival's new artistic director, Noel Staunton, who has put together a terrific program of contemporary theatre, dance, live music and visual arts.

While I am on the subject of festivals, I am very pleased to inform the House that the recent Cairns Indigenous Art Fair, or CIAF to its friends, was a total triumph this year. It is only in its second year, but the arts fair was a success, attracting around 11,000 people, including some very serious art dealers and art buyers from around Australia and other parts of the world, and it got sensational national coverage. I was particularly pleased to read this review in the *Australian* newspaper last Monday that hailed the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair as—

... a triumph of Arts management and entrepreneurship, and a striking demonstration, dramatically against the flow of much Australian experience, that Governments can intervene intelligently to promote culture and husband Indigenous creative energies.

Ms Boyle interjected.

Ms BLIGH: Thank you to the member for Cairns. I congratulate all of the artists and organisers, but I particularly thank and congratulate the city of Cairns. This is potentially now a big international event. It has risen to the challenge and it deserves our credit for it.

Department of the Premier and Cabinet, North Queensland

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.38 am): As Premier of the most decentralised state in the country, it is critical that I spend as much time as possible in all parts of Queensland. That is why in the second week of October this year I will base my office in Townsville and govern Queensland from our state's north. As many members will be aware, the Department of Premier and Cabinet maintains a North Queensland office in Townsville and I will base my office there between 11 and 16 October. Even though the office will be my base, I do not intend to spend a lot of time behind the desk. I intend to be out and about in the region as much as possible, including a trip into Cairns, talking and listening to locals so I can gauge firsthand the issues that are of importance to them.

With modern technology I will have everything I need at my fingertips to receive all the briefings that I normally receive to convene cabinet agenda meetings, planning meetings, budget review committee meetings and undertake the other normal responsibilities of a working week. Communications technology now allows major companies to do business globally on a daily basis. Our government is grabbing these new technologies and we are making them work in the business of government. That will play a large part in governing from North Queensland.

It is critical that, as our state's leaders, we all get out of the south-east corner when we can and engage with Queenslanders state-wide. I know that in the state's north people can sometimes feel a long way away from government, even though as Premier I make every attempt to get out and about. I

think we all know from our experiences at regional parliaments that spending a week living and working in a regional city is very different from visiting for a day or less. Putting down roots in the state's second capital for a week will give me an even greater opportunity to engage with people at every level.

I am very anxious to spend a decent amount of time to see our infrastructure program in motion and I am keen to hear what locals think of the big issues for them. I look forward to hearing from North Queenslanders. They are never shy about coming forward and I am looking forward to getting out and meeting as many as possible during that period in October. My ministers will be doing similar programs and we will certainly be looking—

Opposition members interjected.

Ms BLIGH: I do not know what they have against North Queensland, but we are right behind it.

Mr Wallace: No frappuccinos up there.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable the minister.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Both sides will come to order. Those on my left will cease interjecting.

Salisbury-Beaudesert Rail Corridor Study

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.41 am): Yesterday, I announced a 20-year plan for a rail revolution in South-East Queensland. *Connecting SEQ 2031: An Integrated Regional Transport Plan for South East Queensland* maps a clear way forward for transport in our region. It outlines our vision to tackle congestion and to deliver truly world-class public transport for the fast growing region of SEQ. Under this plan our passenger rail capacity will nearly triple by 2031.

I can inform the House today that we are already getting on with the next steps of realising this vision. Today, we move to the next phase of detailed planning for a new double-track passenger rail line from Salisbury to Beaudesert to service the south-west growth corridor. This will take the concept from a line on a map to a project that is ready to preserve rail corridor ready for the future. The Salisbury to Beaudesert rail corridor study will plan a future passenger rail line to service an area where more people will live and work in the future, including the new city that we are planning for Flagstone. The proposed dedicated passenger rail line—

Mr Rickuss: I mentioned it in 2004.

Ms BLIGH: I would expect that those who represent people in and around this area would take an interest in this study. The proposed dedicated passenger rail line would generally follow the route of the existing interstate freight rail line down to Flagstone before connecting to Beaudesert. Our current planning tells us that this future passenger rail line would need to be built after 2026 to accommodate projected population growth, but we are planning now so that we will be well placed to get this line operational. Just as we planned for the rail for the city of Springfield, which we are now delivering, we will do the same for Flagstone, which could be home to more than 100,000 residents and 50,000 jobs.

This future passenger rail line will help to boost long-term economic growth by helping people travel to and around the area. The planning that I announce today will nail down exactly where the rail line will be located. It will begin the process of identifying where the new stations will be located. Possible station locations include Acacia Ridge, Algester, Hillcrest, Boronia Heights, Greenbank, New Beith, Flagstone, Undullah, Gleneagle, Gleneagle North and Beaudesert. Many communities potentially stand to gain not only from a line but also a station that will connect them to the urban train network.

A future passenger rail line will help to better connect people to goods, services, jobs and facilities. At the same time, the proposed line will help to take pressure off Beaudesert Road and the Mount Lindesay Highway. So far we have assessed environmental factors and this next step will allow the public to have their say about precise locations. Public consultation on the draft alignment for the Salisbury to Beaudesert rail corridor study has now begun and public forums will commence from Monday, 27 September and run until Friday, 29 October. Community information displays will be held to give the community the opportunity to speak directly with the study team and to ask questions. A list of public information sessions is now available on the department of transport website. I would encourage all members who represent constituents in this corridor to take an active interest and to ensure that their constituents know about the process.

Railway Stations, Renovations

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.44 am): I am pleased to advise the House that our government is currently undertaking the biggest clean-up blitz in the 145-year history of Queensland passenger rail. The \$200 million Rail Station Renovation Program—

Mr Dempsey: Like the asset sales.

Ms BLIGH: They really do not care about people who catch public transport. We know that. This side of politics cares about people who need public transport. We are investing in passenger rail and we are going to invest in it at unprecedented rates, because we have had the guts to make the decisions necessary to put the money in. What are people going to see? The passengers on our rail system will see a \$200 million Rail Station Renovation Program. It was announced in this year's budget and we are now in the final planning stages. Passengers will see around one-third of train stations in South-East Queensland receive a massive facelift. Upgrades will range from major works, such as new lifts, ticket offices, expanded car parks and fixing up the basics like new toilets, seating and LCD screens displaying service information. I can confirm today, for example, that we will spend \$7 million to upgrade the heritage listed buildings at South Brisbane station. This station was last upgraded in 1988 for Expo. It is a great heritage building in the city and the renovations will include refurbishing the subway, platform upgrades, the installation of new lighting, landscaping and electronic train information displays. This is the sixth busiest station inbound in mornings and outbound in afternoons, with more than 3,500 passengers using it during the two peak periods during the day.

If we want to see patronage increase on our rail network, we need modern stations and that is what this renovation program is all about. Eagle Junction station will be virtually unrecognisable after a \$10 million revamp, which is now in progress. The station is not only one of the busiest on the suburban network but also the first station seen by visitors arriving in our city by the Airtrain. So it is important that it reflects the vibrancy of our capital city. This will not simply be a makeover; it will be a transformation of an ageing station into a modern, user-friendly facility that delivers what passengers want.

Ipswich commuters will also reap the benefits of our commitment to station upgrades. Work will be carried out at the Bundamba, Dinmore, Ebbw Vale and Riverview stations. An amount of \$1.1 million will go to Bundamba station for work such as painting of the heritage listed shelter on platform 2 and the drop-off zone. The Morningside station is also in line for a \$1 million upgrade.

Since 1 July this year, when the old Queensland Rail split into two separate entities, the new QR has been an entirely passenger focused organisation. They have been out on platforms talking to their passengers about what their passengers want and these sorts of upgrades are important to the people who are the clients of Queensland Rail. I am delighted to see them taking such a passenger focus and I look forward to seeing this first step in a new era of passenger rail take shape over coming months.

Teleradiology Services

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for Health) (9.50 am): Many times I have stood in this House to discuss the challenges posed by distance to the delivery of health services across this vast state. Creative and innovative use of modern technology is allowing us to reduce that distance in many instances, enhancing the level of patient care for Queenslanders in regional and remote areas. Let us not forget that our 150 hospitals are servicing an area six times the size of Victoria. That is why the Bligh government has made a \$243 million investment in the e-Health Strategy. QRIS is a significant part of that.

Late last week Queensland Health achieved an industry milestone when it delivered its 50,000th validated teleradiology report using the Queensland Radiology Information System, QRIS. Make no mistake, this is a significant milestone in medical imaging and it demonstrates how effectively QRIS is enabling clinicians to work together to improve patient outcomes in the rural and remote areas of Queensland.

Radiology, using X-rays and other radiation to diagnose disease, is not a new medical specialty. In days gone by, X-ray films—and, more recently, digital images burnt on to a CD—were mailed from remote facilities to radiologists who then faxed back their diagnostic reports. This took time, and all too often time can be the critical factor in first diagnosing and then delivering a positive outcome to the patient. By harnessing the speed of the internet, the images are sent through QRIS by the referring clinician and reported on by the radiologist from wherever they may be based and returned in a clinically relevant timeframe. That is why the Bligh government is investing in this vital infrastructure; that is why we remain steadfast in our commitment to our \$7.33 billion investment in health infrastructure; and that is why we remain steadfast in our commitment to building more hospitals, delivering more technology and delivering more services to Queenslanders. We believe more people should be able to access more health services closer to home.

Imperative to the success of such e-Health initiatives is a high-speed broadband network. I was interested to see again in yesterday's *Australian* AMA president Andrew Pesce's opinion that 'e-Health is an investment, not a cost. It saves us money if we invest wisely.' I am sure that there is no need to remind the members of this House, or indeed the federal member for Kennedy, which side of the political spectrum is committed to a high-speed national broadband network and which would instead take us back to the Dark Ages.

Prompt radiologist reports being available to the treating doctor improves patient treatment planning and helps keep those same patients in their local community. What is more, clinicians are able to share medical imaging reports if they require a second opinion, there is a reduction in administrative

costs and time tracking the status of previous exams and there is reduced duplication of data entry. The milestone QRiS report on Friday was a non-urgent wrist injury delivered back to Moranbah Hospital in Central Queensland by Dr Andrew McLaughlan at Mackay Base Hospital. A day earlier, and just down the road at Dysart, the 49,999th teleradiology exchange shows just how swift the system can be. The exam finished in Dysart at 9.04 am, with the report completed and returned in 25 minutes. If there was that sort of turnaround in the city we would be pretty pleased. To put things in perspective, Dysart to Mackay is about 250 kilometres, something like a six- to seven-hour round trip.

In 1896 a chest X-ray taken at St Thomas's Hospital in London took 30 minutes of radiation exposure. In 2010, a digital chest X-ray can be sent over 200 kilometres to a radiologist and a report returned in less than 30 minutes. Some of the distances involved—say, for example, patients on Thursday Island having their X-rays examined by a radiologist in Townsville—are distances that many Australians would find hard to fathom. We have come a long way since the first teleradiology report was sent to Ingham Hospital in March 2007 and there will be many more milestones and positive outcomes to follow.

There are 40 sites that now have teleradiology services. Queensland Health is working to deliver teleradiology services broadly across the network to hospitals that do not have a resident radiologist. It means patients in the vicinity of towns such as Hughenden, Cooktown, Coen, Emerald, Taroom and Wujal Wujal need travel no further than their local medical service for their initial appointment. Planning is well underway to implement QRiS at rural and remote hospitals in the Central West Queensland and Darling Downs-West Moreton health service districts in the near future. Queensland is the nation's standard bearer in this field and we should be proud of it.

Cairns, Economy

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Employment and Economic Development) (9.53 am): Ahead of today's national accounts, data continues to point to a fragile recovery—one at risk globally and domestically. As I said yesterday, I expect that the data today will show that our economic rebuild is not a completed task. Governments around the world need to maintain their commitment to continuing to build and guide the economic recovery. Across our state it is no revelation that some parts have been hit harder than others. An area of priority for our government is Cairns and the Far North. That is why this government put forward an economic stimulus plan for the region in an effort to strengthen and diversify the local economy. The \$116 million Cairns Economic Future Plan was announced last November and included new and brought-forward funding for infrastructure projects and a strategy to attract greater business investment. It was about activities in the near term—employment programs, Green Army initiatives, local government capital works projects—and in the long term a strategy to diversify the Cairns economy.

Tourism—overseas tourism and, more particularly, Japanese tourism—has long been the wellspring of the Cairns economy. The challenges of the last couple of years have shown clearly that Cairns needs more strings to its bow. As I said yesterday, that includes engagement in the tropical economy, in the opportunities in the broader region. Part of our plan involves strengthening trade and business opportunities between Papua New Guinea and Cairns. We also resolved to appoint a Cairns based special trade representative to Papua New Guinea. PNG is already an important trading partner for Queensland, with new ABS data showing Queensland's merchandise exports to Papua New Guinea were valued at \$699 million in the last financial year, up 20 per cent from \$575 million in 2008-09.

Importantly, our northern neighbour is also about to experience major economic growth through the exporting of LNG and we want Cairns to make the most of the economic opportunities that the boom in the region will bring. Today I can announce that the government will appoint Jeremy Blockey to the position of special trade representative. As well as running his own consultancy firm, Mr Blockey is the president of the Cairns Chamber of Commerce and a director of Advance Cairns. Mr Blockey is well known to the Cairns community and will bring his skill and his contacts to the role of developing new economic opportunities for the region. He joined me on the trade mission I led earlier this year and has been a regular visitor to our nearest neighbour.

Mr Blockey's appointment in Cairns will help further strengthen the Cairns region's position as a gateway for companies seeking to take up the opportunity and the advantages of new export opportunities in PNG. Mr Blockey will play a key role in developing strategies to expand export opportunities and pressing the interests of Cairns and the Far North in PNG. As the special trade representative, Mr Blockey will also be a member of the new Queensland-PNG Business Group, set up to advise Trade and Investment Queensland on business relations with PNG. This group is chaired by Simon Wild, a well known and respected businessman and chairman of Airlines PNG based out of Cairns.

While we drive the diversification of the Cairns economy, we are also striving to build on its traditional strengths that have made it such a special part of this state. Through the Business and Industry Transformation Incentives Scheme the government will also be providing a \$250,000 grant to

Far North Queensland tourism operator Frankland Island Cruises. This company will transform its vessel's engine from diesel to electric, reducing its reliance on fuel and using a combination of power sources, including solar sources, to recharge. This will ensure that emissions are reduced along the river and out to Frankland Island, enhancing the tourist experience of some of our best natural assets. I met with the company last week in Cairns and they anticipate savings of up to 90 per cent on diesel fuel and to greatly reduce their maintenance costs.

The government members from Cairns have been strong advocates for their region. They have worked closely with a business community that has a commendable focus and cohesion, along with a council that is committed to playing its role in the economic development of the city and the region. Cairns needed government to step up and step in. We listened, we acted and we are delivering. These initiatives are investments in the Cairns economy, its future and in jobs—delivering jobs, not job cuts, just like we said we would.

National Broadband Network

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Information and Communication Technology) (9.57 am): Queensland will press for a state-of-the-art broadband service no matter which party eventually takes office in Canberra. There is no doubt that the world-class NBN proposal from Labor is vastly superior to Tony Abbott's scheme from the pedal wireless age. The NBN is strongly supported by the ICT industry and by industry in general. In fact, both of these groups are scathing about the alternative. In particular, the bush in Queensland is strongly behind the proposal which could end the tyranny of distance for our most isolated regions.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: This was reinforced to me last week when I was in Jundah and Birdsville by the mayor, Bob Scott, who gets it. He understands the need for high-speed broadband for his citizens. It is a pity that the member who was interjecting from a position of ignorance does not understand that, because he used to be a member of the National Party which used to stand up for the bush.

I note that the federal members for Kennedy, New England and Lyne have all identified decent broadband services in the bush as a central issue in their negotiations. On 24 August the member for Kennedy had this to say about Tony Abbott's broadband plan—

It seems to me that it's got an awful lot of private ownership associated with it and you can't go down that path. Most certainly a privatised system is not where I am going to.

I am sure that the member for Kennedy will continue to express those sentiments forcefully, no matter what type of government is chosen for this nation. I warn the technophobes opposite, who voted against the NBN in this House two weeks ago, that the government will continue to press for the best broadband service for Queensland, especially the Queensland bush. It is about time that those opposite remembered that they are members of the Queensland parliament and not members of the Canberra group led by Tony Abbott, as they sycophantically bow to his views on this. I will make sure that the government does not let the LNP forget how former Liberals ratted on former Nationals and forced them to defend the broadband donkey proposed by Abbott. This government, and especially the Department of Public Works, stands ready to work with any federal government on a rollout of broadband. However, the best system for Queensland must be a system based on the maximum use of fibreoptics. Also it must ensure that the best possible technology for the Queensland bush is based on equity and not on a profit motive.

Water Supply

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Minister for Trade) (9.59 am): In recent weeks, a lot of attention has been focused on water reforms in South-East Queensland. Therefore, it is important that once again I put on the record some of the facts. South-East Queenslanders know the importance of water security and have shown they are world-leading water savers. While our dams may now be close to full, it is worth reminding the House that only two years ago they were at a threatening 17 per cent. The millennium drought proved that individual council owned bulk water supply systems were not diverse enough or large enough to provide water security for the region. To address this problem, the state stepped in and built the award-winning South East Queensland water grid. The water grid will eventually increase water supply from 350,000 megalitres to 545,000 megalitres per year. The Tugun desalination plant has already supplied over 27,000 megalitres of water and the western corridor recycled water scheme has provided more than 37,000 megalitres of water to power stations and industrial customers. All of this takes pressure off our dams. At the same time, water quality has improved with over 18,500 water quality tests undertaken throughout South-East Queensland each month.

The state and councils worked together in the water reform process. The Council of Mayors, South East Queensland, proposed the establishment of the three retail and distribution water businesses: Unitywater, Queensland Urban Utilities and Allconnex Water. The state accepted the proposal. The water reforms introduced by the state will deliver long-term benefits for South-East

Queensland residents. For the first time there will be coordinated infrastructure and service standards. To limit water prices to around \$1 per week, the state has introduced a 10-year bulk water price path and has supplied water to the council owned water businesses at a loss of \$407 million this year. The government also increased the pensioner water rebate to \$100. However, the fact remains that council owned business charges make up to 75 per cent of the average household water bill.

Therefore, again I encourage councils to take strong steps to ease the impact of any increases in their water charges. Councils are not powerless to act, as some mayors have claimed. They can provide strategic direction to their retail distributors, they can have staff on the water business board, and they can offer rebates and subsidies. Councils can also choose not to take dividends from their water businesses, but where they choose to for the first time they have been required to be transparent and open with their ratepayers. In the grip of the worst drought on record, the state and councils worked together to secure water supply and infrastructure for the future. Now I think it is time to refocus on working together for the benefit of the community.

Masters Review of Primary School Education, Progress Report

Hon. GJ WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Education and Training) (10.02 am): This government is committed to improving the educational outcomes of all Queensland children and giving them a flying start in learning and life. In December 2008, the Queensland government commissioned Professor Geoff Masters of the Australian Council for Educational Research to begin a review of primary school education in the state. In response to this report, the government committed to all recommendations. As part of the Bligh government's commitment to education improvement, we asked Professor Masters to review the progress of our actions.

I am proud to say that Professor Masters has reported good to excellent progress in implementing his recommendations, improving the literacy, numeracy and science performance of the state's primary school students. He has found excellent progress has been made in increasing specialist literacy, numeracy and science support in state schools. This has been achieved through the appointment and training of more than 90 literacy and numeracy coaches, 100 full-time equivalent primary science facilitators and 15 regional science managers. Professor Masters reports very good progress by the Queensland College of Teachers in establishing a new structure for advanced professional learning in literacy, numeracy and science teaching and assessment. Very good progress is also reported in establishing the legislative framework for the preregistration tests for aspiring primary teachers. Professor Masters also notes good progress has been made towards advanced professional learning. This has been achieved through the establishment of the Queensland Education Leadership Institute, co-hosting the new Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, and the introduction of the teaching and learning audit of all state schools in 2010.

Parents can be assured that the state government will continue to stay focused on these initiatives to ensure we provide a world-class education system for Queensland students. It is a pity that the Queensland Liberal National Party does not take education and training seriously. When was the last time we heard the member for Surfers Paradise or the member for Moggill say something positive about state education? In fact, when was the last time we heard the member for Surfers Paradise discuss his party's education policies? The answer is never, because the Liberal National Party has a weak leader, no plans, no policies and no ideas.

Volunteer Bushfire Investigators

Hon. NS ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services) (10.05 am): Queensland's bushfire season has arrived and by now residents should have started their preparations to reduce the risk of harm to themselves and their properties by preparing their bushfire survival plan. Last year was one of our most intense bushfire seasons on record, with more than 4,000 vegetation fires flaring up around the state in a four-week period. We know that some of those fires were deliberately lit. In fact, the Australian Institute of Criminology suggests that approximately half of Australia's 45,000 to 60,000 vegetation fires each year are deliberately lit. In the interests of reducing the number of deliberately lit fires and catching those individuals responsible for that dangerous and irresponsible act, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service is developing a network of qualified volunteer bushfire investigators to supplement its team of full-time investigators. Volunteer bushfire investigators will investigate smaller fire incidents and support qualified QFRS staff in the investigation of higher level incidents. Those volunteers will work to determine the ignition source of bushfires and, if it is found to be suspicious, they can then elevate the incident to the QFRS Fire Investigation Unit.

This initiative strengthens the Queensland arson prevention program, which has already been incorporated into the current QFRS community education programs through its Prepare.Act.Survive. initiative. Volunteer bushfire investigators will be additional to the 46 full-time qualified bushfire investigators who work to determine the ignition source for any fires occurring across Queensland. The QFRS hopes to have up to 30 volunteer bushfire investigators operational over the next 12 months.

However, this is dependant on the level of interest expressed by prospective volunteers. The deliberate lighting of fires is a serious offence with serious consequences, including hefty fines and/or imprisonment. My clear message to any would-be firebugs is that the police and the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service take this issue seriously and are increasing their capacity to identify offenders and bring them before the courts. With the proposed expansion of the network of bushfire investigators, offenders have a stronger chance of being caught.

On Monday, I welcomed to Queensland three water-bombing helicopters and their pilots. The helicopters are contracted initially for three months and are another string in the bow of the impressive fire-fighting capabilities of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. QFRS also has access to numerous other aircraft for air observation and/or water-bombing activities throughout the state through a call-when-needed register of aviation operators. Both of those measures form an important part of the fire service's preparations for this year's bushfire season.

Traffic Congestion

Hon. CA WALLACE (Thuringowa—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads) (10.08 am): Can I start by saying as a proud North Queenslander how happy I am to see the Premier basing herself in Queensland's premier city for a week. It is great news for Townsville and great news for North Queensland.

It is lights, camera, action this month as our new webcams go live.

Mr Johnson: Get in your car and drive around the roads in north-west Queensland and see how good they are! I'll drive, if you like. I'll take you where you haven't been.

Mr WALLACE: I drive those roads plenty of times, brother. I am out on the roads all the time, and I will keep driving because we are spending a record amount on our roads. I am happy to drive on the roads of Queensland. We spend \$732 for every man, woman and child on our roads in Queensland. Compare that to the Tories in Western Australia who spend just over \$200. I will continue to fight for better roads.

But what are we doing across the state? It is lights, camera, action this month as our new webcams go live. We have doubled the number, rolling out 50 new ones. I know that my colleague the police minister has seen them in action and he supports this initiative.

The cameras stream live vision to the traffic website so motorists can plan the best route for their journey before they leave home. It is about slashing travel times and easing congestion, and it works. Today, I can inform the House that there were more than five million hits on the website for the month of August. We have webcams on the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and the Darling Downs, and in Brisbane, Townsville, Cairns, Roma and Wide Bay. The Bligh government is serious about tackling congestion and making life better for motorists. We have made tough choices but the right choices. That is why we have been able to deliver the best road infrastructure money can buy.

The Ted Smout Memorial Bridge, a great piece of infrastructure—Australia's longest bridge—is open to traffic and easing congestion for motorists travelling to and from the beautiful bayside. That is \$315 million well spent. The new Sir Leo Hielscher Bridge, part of our \$2.5 billion Gateway corridor—

Mr Johnson: You told us that last week.

Mr WALLACE: And I will keep telling the member for Gregory about our spend on roads across the state. There will be six lanes all the way from Nudgee to Nerang. There is the \$1.95 billion Ipswich Motorway upgrade from Dinmore to Goodna, and \$910 million to upgrade the Pacific Motorway between the Gateway and Tugun, giving motorists a smoother, swifter and more seamless run.

We are delivering for Queenslanders, tackling congestion, slashing travel times and generating all-important jobs. We will stick to our building program—it means better roads, jobs and a stronger economy for Queensland. This year alone we have created around 30,000 jobs for road workers across the state. That is why it simply beggars belief that the LNP wants to 'reassess' building projects—to undo all our good work.

We are rolling out a massive building program from the Gold Coast to the gulf. We are doing it with our eyes firmly fixed on the future—to make our economy stronger, to make life better for motorists and to protect the jobs of Queensland workers. We are about jobs; they are about cuts. That is the real difference between Labor and the LNP—jobs, not cuts.

Sport and Recreation, Funding

Hon. PG REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport) (10.12 am): Late last year I ordered a review of all sport and recreation funding programs to ensure they better meet the needs of all Queenslanders. I wanted to make sure that sport and recreation funding programs not only created jobs and built first-class facilities throughout Queensland but also were targeted at those people and clubs who needed the most assistance. By any measure, these new funding programs have been an outstanding success.

The new Sport and Recreation Active Inclusion Program was developed to overcome financial, cultural, physical and social barriers for people wanting to access sport and recreational activities, and I am pleased to inform the House that I recently announced the recipients of the first funding round. More than \$4.58 million was allocated to the program, with \$2.7 million going to community projects to enable groups who face the greatest barriers—including people with a disability, children and families at risk, Indigenous peoples and multicultural groups—to access sport and recreation opportunities.

Another new program was the Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Program, which delivered \$11.96 million worth of funding to clubs in the first round. Ninety-one projects were funded throughout Queensland in many small communities and, while the individual funding allocations were not substantial amounts, it did generate work for many local businesses and tradespeople in regional centres. This funding is also making a real difference for local clubs and organisations to deliver extra sport and recreation opportunities for their communities. This is just further proof that the Bligh government governs for all Queenslanders.

As the members opposite have yet to develop any policies for sport and have opposed a number of stadium funding announcements in recent years, it is unlikely that the LNP would support the extension of these funding programs. Since the members opposite would 'reassess' projects, the most likely outcome would be that these programs would be cut.

As I said, the response to these new programs was overwhelming and, as a result, I have decided to announce an extra round for the Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Program where \$8 million is available. It opens today for a month, and all unsuccessful round 1 applicants will be considered in this new round and are not required to resubmit their applications.

In addition, the next round for the active inclusion program also opens today and will run until 15 October, with \$4.2 million available. These new funding rounds only emphasise the fact that the Bligh government provides more funding to sport and recreation clubs than any other state or territory in the country. The tremendous response to these new programs has shown that the Bligh government is serious about improving sport and recreation facilities throughout Queensland no matter where you live.

Lutwyche Busway Station

Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Infrastructure and Planning) (10.15 am): The Bligh government is committed to building tomorrow's Queensland. Work is well underway on the Northern Busway Windsor to Kedron section as a key element of the combined \$4.8 billion Airport Link projects. To minimise traffic disruption, a section of Lutwyche Road was recently transformed into a bridge during construction of a new Lutwyche bus station. To transform the road into a bridge, the traditional bridge construction process was reversed and the reinforced bridge deck constructed before excavation began.

This bridge structure creates the opportunity for a state-of-the-art station, sitting below road level and incorporating an underpass for pedestrians and cyclists to avoid crossing busy Lutwyche Road. On completion in 2012, the Lutwyche bus station will become a vibrant urban centre, connecting both sides of Lutwyche Road and the nearby shopping centre, with new open space connecting through Bradshaw Park to Kedron Brook. With an additional busway station at Kedron and eight new high-quality bus shelters, the three-kilometre Windsor-Kedron section of the Northern Busway will provide residents of Brisbane's northern suburbs with fast, efficient public transport from mid-2012.

By 2016, it will cater for 47,000 public transport trips per day—more than five times the current number. The Northern Busway Windsor-Kedron section is the latest demonstration of the government's implementation of our public transport commitments. The South East Busway, the Inner Northern Busway and stage 1 of the Eastern Busway are already used by an estimated 250,000 commuters a day. The Bligh government remains committed to building tomorrow's Queensland—and only a future focused government like ours will deliver the vital transport infrastructure Queensland needs.

TravelSmart

Hon. RG NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (Minister for Transport) (10.17 am): As South-East Queensland continues to grow, we recognise the need for people to end their reliance on cars so our roads and environment do not choke. This has been a driving philosophy behind the release of our transport plan yesterday. A key component of that plan is TravelSmart—Queensland's signature program that encourages people to rethink their travel options. For example, can I ride to the train station instead of walking? Or can I car pool?

TravelSmart teams are working with 324,000 households throughout the south side, Ipswich, the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast. I can inform the House that TravelSmart is the now the world's largest travel behaviour change program. It is already a proven success on the north side, seeing a 13 per cent reduction in vehicle kilometres travelled. Workplaces and schools are involved, too. Other governments around Australia are coming to us for advice.

The Bligh government has invested \$5.2 million to support Queensland workplaces to take up sustainable travel plans. The Queensland Museum and the State Library recently completed a 12-month workplace trial, which resulted in a 10 per cent decrease in the number of car trips. The next rollout will start with my department, the Department of Transport and Main Roads, involving workers in our Brisbane CBD buildings from next month.

We are investing \$4.97 million to enable Queensland schools to develop school travel plans. Five schools are currently trialling these plans, and it is anticipated that 135 primary schools will be supported through the TravelSmart schools program by 2012.

We know opposition members just do not get it when it comes to climate change. They have got no smart ideas about dealing with the challenges of population growth and traffic congestion. The member for Gaven recently described our efforts to get more people car-pooling on the Gold Coast as 'nonsensical and ridiculous'. While they bury their heads in the sand hoping congestion and climate change will simply go away, the Bligh government is taking action. We are investing billions of dollars in public transport but we know that, in addition to spending that infrastructure money on buses, trains, cycle paths and better roads, we need to encourage people to make the travel choice to use them and that is exactly what we are doing.

Tourism, Cruise Shipping Industry

Hon. PJ LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Fair Trading) (10.20 am): Last week, Brisbane was fortunate to host the 2010 Cruise Down Under Conference. The conference brought together about 100 delegates from across the Asia-Pacific region to discuss the state of the industry, trends and the sustainability of the industry. The Bligh government has increased its support for the cruise industry in recent months, as it has experienced continued growth in recent years.

Just last week, a new report was released by Cruise Down Under titled *Economic Impact Assessment of the Cruise Shipping Industry in Australia 2009-10*. Port Douglas has recorded 15 cruise ship visits in 2009-10, compared to four the previous year, and Hamilton Island has gone from no visits in 2008-09 to eight over the past year. The report shows cruise shipping generated approximately \$290 million in related expenditure, an increase of approximately \$45 million on the previous year, and also supported approximately 1,300 full-time jobs. Queensland ports also welcomed an extra 50,000 passengers in 2009-10, with the yearly figure hitting 300,000.

We are already planning and building to support this tourism sector further into the future. The \$11.2 million construction and restoration of the Cairns cruise ship terminal is progressing well—

Ms Boyle: It's spectacular, Minister.

Mr LAWLOR: I am sure it is spectacular—thank you, member for Cairns—and completion is just around the corner. The port of Cairns is one of our busiest and most popular ports for cruise shipping, with almost 150 international and domestic cruise ship visits in 2008-09. For tourism to continue to grow and remain strong, it is vital that the terminal is renovated to cope with the growing number of cruise ships. The Bligh government is committed to building this terminal—it is part of our plan, we are delivering it and it will help protect tourism jobs into the future.

Cruise shipping has been identified as a priority development opportunity for Queensland, and supporting the industry's growth is a key action under the Bligh government's Tourism Action Plan to 2012. The fact that Brisbane was chosen to host the conference, and that we are building infrastructure for the future, shows the benefits of having a plan—the Bligh government's Tourism Action Plan to 2012. Delivering on that plan will protect jobs and help steer the tourism industry through both the good times and the bad.

Chill Out Zones; Youth Week Competition Winners

Hon. KL STRUTHERS (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women) (10.22 am): On any given Friday or Saturday night, thousands of young people will head out to Queensland's entertainment precincts to socialise and have fun. Unfortunately, for some young people, a night out can lead to a night in the emergency room or the police lockup. Last Sunday, the Premier announced new drink safe precincts in key locations across Queensland under a \$4.2 million plan to counter alcohol related violence. Police numbers will increase during peak times and there will be supervised taxi zones and more support services.

The plan means Brisbane's Fortitude Valley and Townsville will get safe zones, modelled on the very successful Chill Out Zone run by the Gold Coast Youth Service. The member for Surfers Paradise should love this plan because it is making ambulance trips, admission to emergency departments and being detained 'de-necessary' for hundreds of young people in his electorate. But what did he have to say? He said in his media release that the plan was 'offering nothing to tackle serious alcohol-related problems'.

I visited the Chill Out Zone service last month at the invitation of Christine Smith, the very active and effective member for Burleigh. I read through some of the nightly client reports and I could see the very practical help that this Chill Out Zone was providing to young people. For example, a young person presented and the diagnosis as noted was 'Nausea, disoriented'; the treatment was 'Needed a bucket, rang mum to pick him up'.

Whether it is for a bandaid, a bottle of water or a bucket, the staff and volunteers at the Chill Out Zone work into the early hours of the morning to help intoxicated young people when they need it most. It is \$334,000 well spent because it works and it keeps young people out of trouble. It takes the pressure off police, hospitals and ambulance crews and helps them to deal with much more serious issues. It prevents assaults, sexual attacks and harm to vulnerable people because it is there to help. That means safer streets, fewer assaults and a lower cost to taxpayers and the community.

While on the topic of youth, I also want to commend the Youth Week 'Live it Now' competition entry from five young Aboriginal men from Mount Isa. They won a prize for their hip-hop track *Get your head out of the can* which warned of the dangers of substance abuse. Other winners include Mitchell Gibbs of Scarborough, Knox and Flaxton Wheeler of Toowong and Sara Fonseca of Kenmore.

Acquired Brain Injury

Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs) (10.25 am): Last month, I officially opened the new premises of the Brain Injury Association of Queensland at West End in Brisbane. This organisation has been helping Queenslanders and their families for 25 years. At the opening, I had the chance to meet with many people who have had an acquired brain injury. They are using the centre and they told me that it is changing their lives. The association provides advice and information to people with acquired brain injuries as well as referrals to medical, rehabilitation and community support services. The state government provides \$3.6 million a year to help the Brain Injury Association of Queensland carry out its vital work.

Acquired brain injury can happen to anyone at any time. It affects one in 45 Australians, or around 433,000 people. Almost three-quarters of people with an acquired brain injury are aged under 65. Over 11,000 Queenslanders develop an acquired brain injury each and every year. Motor vehicle accidents account for 70 per cent of these injuries, and the majority of people affected are aged 16 to 24. Males are more likely than females to have an acquired brain injury. On the six o'clock news at night, we often hear about the car crashes but very seldom do we hear about what happens afterwards and the road to recovery for these victims. We rarely hear how difficult it is for these young people and their families when their lives are turned completely upside down.

The Bligh government is committed to supporting Queenslanders with acquired brain injuries. Our Younger People in Residential Aged Care initiative has helped move or divert over 100 Queenslanders with a disability from entering residential aged-care facilities. Many of these people we have moved out have had an acquired brain injury. Last month, 14 Queensland MPs attended a breakfast here at Parliament House to hear about the amazing work that the Brain Injury Association of Queensland is doing. This breakfast was organised by the member for Barron River, who has shown great commitment and passion about raising the awareness of this issue amongst his fellow colleagues, and I congratulate him.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Ms PALASZCZUK: I also attended a forum in Cairns in June with the member for Barron River to listen to the needs of Far North Queensland residents affected by an acquired brain injury. I have personally met with Jennifer Cullen, and I have asked her to submit an application about funding that is needed to establish a dedicated rehabilitation centre in Cairns. This is about the government listening and responding. We need to raise more awareness about this very important issue to ensure that people with an acquired brain injury can live back in their communities with their families and their friends.

ABSENCE OF MINISTER

Hon. JC SPENCE (Sunnybank—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.28 am): I wish to advise the House that the Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland will be absent from question time today. Minister Mulherin will be attending the CSG/LNG Community Information Forum in Miles.

NOTICES OF MOTION

Sale of Public Assets

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.28 am): I give notice that I will move—

That this House:

1. Notes the Premier's public comments supporting the right for Labor MPs to have their say on the Labor government's plans to privatise assets;
2. Notes reported comments in the media from select Labor MPs claiming they wish to raise concerns about the privatisation of Queensland's assets;

And therefore, suspends so much of standing and sessional orders so as to allow, at 7.30 pm this night, the following members of parliament to be given 10 minutes each to raise their concerns with the state government's privatisation plans:

- the member for Murrumba, Dean Wells;
- the member for Bundamba, Jo-Ann Miller;
- the member for Townsville, Mandy Johnstone;
- the member for Keppel, Paul Hoolihan; and
- the member for Mundingburra, Lindy Nelson-Carr.

Bundaberg Base Hospital; Cameron, Ms C

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—Ind) (10.29 am): I give notice that I will move—

That this House notes:

- 1 In February 2009, the CMC directed Queensland Health to investigate itself through its Ethical Standards Unit and report on serious allegations regarding approximately 100 breaches of patient safety and possible staff misconduct at the Bundaberg Base Hospital by nurse whistleblower Christine Cameron.
- 2 Queensland Health, despite numerous promises for 18 months, including a letter to Ms Cameron from District Chief Executive Kevin Hegarty on 22 September 2009 stating 'at the completion of the ESU's investigation you will be provided with detailed outcome advice as to the outcome of your complaints', have failed to provide the CMC, or Ms Cameron with a final report.

And calls on the Premier to advise this House of the specific date when the report will be provided to Ms Cameron and the CMC.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the House, there are two notices of motion. Which one will you accept?

Ms SPENCE: Mr Speaker, we will accept the notice of motion from the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr SPEAKER: Accordingly, the anticipation rule will apply to the notice of motion moved by the honourable Leader of the Opposition.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

School Group Tours

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before I call question time, today in the parliament we will be joined by the parents, students and teachers from Maryborough West State School in the electorate of Maryborough, All Saints School in the electorate of Beaudesert and Heights College in the electorate of Rockhampton.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Labor Party, Leadership

Mr LANGBROEK (10.30 am): My first question without notice is to the Premier. The Premier has said that she will resign if she is a liability to Labor. As President of the Australian Labor Party, the Premier had exclusive access to research and polling on marginal seats in Queensland. Will the Premier advise the House if this research showed she was an asset or a liability?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. I think most people would accept that party polling is a matter for parties. What I can say is that the ALP state secretary gave a full brief to caucus the other day which I think people found very instructive. There are some basics in it for everybody, and that is the harder you work for your electorate, the more often you are out there, the more likely people are to give you another chance. I think there are some good examples and lessons there for everybody.

What I would say to the member for Surfers Paradise is that I do not—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There was no member attacked. There should, therefore, have been nobody interjecting.

Ms BLIGH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The opposition gets one hour a day to quiz the government on the programs that we are putting in place and on the accountability for the programs and funding that we are allocating. These sorts of questions, in my view, do nothing to demonstrate that the opposition is holding the government to account. There is no question about the programs that we are putting out to the people of Queensland. There are no questions showing an interest in public transport. There are no questions on the building program. There are no questions on issues like employment, health or education. Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition started his day by pompously declaring on radio that he would be looking to see improved parliamentary standards in the House. What happened? I think a total of three of his members had to be warned for their appalling behaviour.

What we see nationally is a public debate emerging out of Canberra as a result of a hung parliament. We see a debate emerging about the role of parliament, the processes of the parliament and issues of parliamentary reform. I do not believe that the questions that have been asked by the Leader of the Opposition are any credit to him or his team. These matters have been comprehensively trawled over by the media. I look forward to solid questions about real issues that affect the lives and the everyday wellbeing of ordinary people that we represent.

Cost of Living

Mr LANGBROEK: My second question without notice is also to the Premier.

Mr Fraser interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable the Treasurer! I have called the honourable the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you, Mr Speaker. My second question without notice is also to the Premier. As the Premier claims she is now finally listening, what has she heard about the impact of the massive increase in the costs of fuel, electricity, water, tolls and land rents that Labor has imposed on struggling Queensland families?

Ms BLIGH: I do not claim to, and I do not think anybody in this House has the right to claim that they can, interpret every single message that was being sent on election day, but I think what we can understand immediately is that people want to see their governments and the major political parties doing better. What my members tell me on a routine basis from what they hear directly from the people they talk to is that they want to see the bread and butter issues of state governments—hospitals, schools, education opportunities, programs for children with disabilities, protection for people suffering from domestic violence, community safety and policing on the streets—performing at their absolute best.

Every government of every political persuasion at every point in every term they get from the people to govern should be striving for improvement. That is what I and my team do on a regular basis. My people also tell me—and I hear it from my own constituents and from the people whom I meet with directly in forums like community cabinet—that cost of living pressures are hurting people. We are very well aware of some of those pressures. We will work in every single budget to do what we can to take the pressure off working families here in Queensland and to provide the sort of relief and rebates that there are in this year's budget. We will continue in every budget to do that. We know that every dollar counts. That is why we worked to cut CTP in this year's budget.

While on the question of rebates, we know that in Western Australia, as I understand it, we have a Liberal government that has cut \$17 million from rebates to pensioners.

Ms Struthers: They cut the electricity hardship fund.

Ms BLIGH: They cut the electricity hardship fund in Western Australia. That is what a Liberal government delivers. What we can expect to see from this government in every single budget at every opportunity is relief for working families from the pressures of cost of living increases. Unlike Western Australia, we will not be dealing with our budget issues by cutting services or by cutting rebates to pensioners. We have made our financial decisions and we will stick with them.

'Walk a day in my shoes' Program

Ms O'NEILL: My question without notice is to the Premier. Can the Premier outline to the House the response from hardworking Queenslanders to her plan for MPs to walk a day in their shoes?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the member for her question. I hope that her electorate office has had the same sort of response that my Premier's office has had. Members who have been listening to morning radio today will know that people from around Queensland have a lot of ideas about how all of us could learn from walking a day in their shoes. Yes, some of them are taking the chance to have a bit of a go, and I do not mind that.

Mr Springborg: Did you read the blogs?

Mr Lucas: That is why you are who you are: you read the blogs.

Mr Springborg: You should grow feathers and fly out the window, mate.

Ms BLIGH: We have been taking intelligent pills over there this morning.

Mr Lucas: He is channelling.

Mr Fraser: You should walk in the shoes of someone who can win.

Ms BLIGH: With this sort of program I expect there will always be a few knockers and there will be those who will take the opportunity to have a bit of a laugh, and I do not mind that. But people have seriously thought about the benefits to their workplace and to them and their families of having a member of parliament walk a day in their shoes.

I have had a range of suggestions—everything from working as a traffic controller on one of our major roadworks for a day to working in IT for a day to aged-care workers wanting people to experience what it is like in their industry. The member for Beaudesert, who I think represents Boonah, will be interested to know that a gentleman from Boonah has suggested on Twitter that he would like the whole team to come down and chip some scotch thistle out of his property for a day, and I can understand the challenge he might have. Many are also suggesting that MPs play a role as a journalist for a day. I think that might tell me something about how many journalists are on Twitter.

As I said, the opposition might want to knock it and mock it, but what I know is that Queenslanders do want to share their stories. They understand that the more we know about their daily lives the better we will be at making decisions about them. Rather than knock this idea, I am surprised the Leader of the Opposition has not got on board and made the same requirement of his own MPs. It would not hurt them.

Mr Rickuss: We've actually had some real jobs.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Stop the clock. I will just wait. Those on my left!

Mr Robertson: Too scared of hard work.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Those on my right! I call the Premier.

Ms BLIGH: I think it would not hurt those in the opposition to walk a day in the shoes of a building worker who may not have another project to go to once they have reassessed the building program. Go on to the Airport Link project and talk to those guys. They know their job security and their family's wellbeing is only secure if there is another project in the pipeline. As good as Airport Link is, they are going to finish it one day and they want to know what is next. Under our government we have a 20-year pipeline of projects. Under that side of politics they have a program to reassess every one of them.

'Walk a day in my shoes' Program

Mr SPRINGBORG: My question without notice is to the Premier. I refer to the Premier's latest stunt of 'Walk a day in my shoes'—

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Deputy Leader of the Opposition

Mr SPRINGBORG: I refer to the Premier's latest stunt of 'Walk a day in my shoes' to try to save her crumbling and out-of-touch Labor government. When the Premier and her apologists make their one-day-in-a-decade visit to the real world, will they be walking in the shoes of a family struggling to pay her government's massive increase in electricity prices, the pensioner paying 10c a litre more for fuel because of her petrol tax or the railway worker terrified for their job and future because of her sale of Queensland Rail without a mandate?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question and for his interest in our 'Walk a day in my shoes' program. As I predicted when I announced this, there will be the knockers. There will be the people like the Deputy Leader of the Opposition who will never take a new idea and embrace it, who are not interested in the future and who are not interested in finding new and better ways of communicating and connecting with the people that we represent.

I lead a team of people who are vitally interested in the electorates that they represent. They are keen to do more and be out there and connect with people in real ways. I think we should all be very realistic about how easy it is for some of us sometimes, in the rarefied atmosphere of this parliament, to forget the real lives that people lead. I make no apology for the enthusiasm that my team has for this sort of program.

Mr Springborg interjected.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Premier will cease interjecting. I call the Premier.

Ms BLIGH: I would say that, judging from the very enthusiastic range of ideas and responses that we have seen to this suggestion in just 24 hours, Queenslanders want to see their elected representatives out there experiencing their lives.

This program is not just about turning up at a workplace for a couple of hours. It is about starting the day with someone, sharing the morning cup of tea, getting on the bus with them, being on the commuter train—

Mr Elmes interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Noosa will cease interjecting. I call the Premier.

Dr Robinson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Cleveland, I warn you under standing order 253A. I asked for the interjections to cease. That was not an encouragement or a signal to start interjecting. I call the Premier.

Ms BLIGH: As I have said, this Labor government is a team of people who are interested in connecting with their communities. They are interested in using new technology to do it. They are interested in doing the hard yards and getting out there.

Many of us, including me, will have an opportunity to do this on more than one occasion. I have had such a plethora of opportunities presented in the last couple of hours that I am looking at times in my diary when I can do this on a number of occasions. Frankly, I think the chance for me to sit down in a workplace, in a staffroom and talk to delegates, talk to workers, talk to employers and talk to managers about the issues for that company—

Mrs Stuckey: That's not working!

Ms BLIGH: Those opposite may not want to talk to people. I am happy to do it, as long as people want to talk to me. We will be standing with people. We will be doing the job with them. Guess what? We might have a conversation with them while we do it. This is a program that Queenslanders want to embrace and we want to be part of it with them.

CSG to LNG Industry

Mr SHINE: My question is to the honourable the Premier. Can the Premier update the House on the progress being made in the critical CSG to LNG industry?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. The member for Toowoomba North knows only too well the extraordinary opportunities that lie just to the west of his city with this remarkable resource and what it could mean not only for those communities on the Darling Downs and the south-west in the Surat Basin but also for the city of Toowoomba. We have already seen major companies in Toowoomba like Wagners form joint partnerships with companies that have expertise in this sector so that they can position themselves well to get contracts that will deliver jobs and more prosperity into the city of Toowoomba. I thank the member for his interest and for his ongoing work in this area.

This is an industry that, like all new industries, we will need to regulate carefully. We have already seen a number of pieces of legislation and programs in this parliament about making sure that we get this industry right. But we need to also be ready for the real prospect that this industry could become a reality in the very near future. That means making sure we have a real focus on skills—the kinds of new skills for a new industry that simply do not currently exist in most of our current workforce.

I have advised the House in the past about the program that we have for skilling in this sector. I am pleased to remind the House that it is a \$10 million LNG/CSG specific skills program. The government put \$5 million on the table, and that leveraged another \$5 million out of the companies that are in this sector. Training contracts worth more than \$2.8 million have now been issued. They are providing training to the major companies including Arrow, Origin, the Queensland Gas Co. and Santos.

Since July we have had 1,800 workers begin a program of training in this sector. The sorts of areas they are focusing on include drilling, process plant operations, construction, manufacturing as well as support roles in health, safety and training. What this program does is give these big companies the confidence they need to keep investing in Queensland because they are confident that they will have a well-developed workforce ready for these opportunities.

It is a good example of just how committed our government is to our jobs agenda. We do not want them advertising the jobs that come up and getting no applicants because people do not have the right tickets, the right training and the right capacity to take them up. That is why we are getting in early. That is why we are getting ahead of the game. We are planning for an industry of the future that will deliver jobs in the next 12 months potentially. It will make a huge difference in cities like Gladstone and Toowoomba and in those communities in the south-west which for many years have been struggling with issues of decline. Our jobs agenda is as strong as it has always been. Skills investment is part of it. This program is a very good live example of how it is happening on the ground.

Economy

Mr NICHOLLS: My question is to the Premier. Updated bankruptcy statistics show that 7,010 Queenslanders went broke in 2009-10. That is 7,000 breadwinners from 7,000 families that have been pushed to the wall while this government jacks up the cost of living. When will the Premier finally admit that her economic plan is not working? Will the Premier walk a day in the shoes of those 7,000 families?

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable the Deputy Premier will cease interjecting. I call the Premier.

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. Members will recall that the last time he raised these figures he neglected to tell the House that in fact Queensland had seen more company start-ups in the same period—

Mr NICHOLLS: I rise to a point of order. I have not raised this issue in the past. The Premier has got her facts wrong. I ask that she withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: No, I am sorry. It is not a point of order.

Ms BLIGH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I take it then that the question relates to individual bankruptcies. In that case, I am happy to take the question. When the economy is going well, people are out there investing, getting opportunities and making a go of it. When the economy is in a slump, we know that is difficult. That is why our government has had its foot on the accelerator with programs like our building program. Economic activity is what drives opportunities for people and when it dries up—when private investment withdraws because of the economic downturn like the global financial crisis—yes, there are terrible and catastrophic consequences for people. That is why our government is so determined to keep its foot on the pedal to keep its building program going because our money is driving jobs, driving opportunities and providing contracts for companies, large and small, right across the state. This question comes from a shadow Treasurer who has a stated economic policy of reassessing the building program, and that comes on top of his previous comment saying that he would scrap the building program.

Mr Nicholls: Seven thousand people bankrupt.

Ms BLIGH: So under the policy—

Mr Nicholls: How can you say it is working when 7,000 people are going to the wall?

Ms BLIGH: Under the policy of the shadow Treasurer, we would see 106,000 workers on the scrap heap—106,000 workers and their families with nothing. Under the program proposed by the shadow Treasurer, projects would stop. When projects stop, we see mass unemployment. That will mean bankruptcy for companies. Go into every town and city in Queensland and you will see it is government projects that have got the cranes working. What would it mean if we scrapped them? It would not be 7,000 people in trouble; it would be 106,000. That is the alternative that you offer. He does not want people to remember that he said it, but he did. He said, 'We will scrap projects,' and then he said, 'We'll reassess them.' We all know what that means. It is code for de-necessary. When he says 'reassess', he means 'scrap'. They are all embarrassed by it. Not one of them want to talk about the programs in their area that they would scrap. I have not heard one of them stand up and say, 'Don't do this project. Don't fund this. Take this project off the agenda in my electorate.' Under the opposition's program, 106,000 people would be on the scrap heap.

(Time expired)

Health Services

Ms JARRATT: My question is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health. Can the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health advise what steps the Bligh government is taking to ensure all Queenslanders have access to top quality, free health care?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for the question. Queensland is Australia's most decentralised mainland state. We are not like Victoria, where Bendigo is considered a remote community. We have 150 hospitals in an area six times the size of Victoria, and finding doctors to work

throughout the state is sometimes a tough issue. It is a supply and demand game and the old-style rural doctor that many of us used to see in those communities is increasingly harder to come by. Gen Y has a different attitude to that remote work which is the real backbone of our health system.

Today I note media reports that Queensland Health spends \$86 million a year on locums. To put that into perspective, we spend \$5.5 billion a year on our Health payroll. That is what it costs each year for that. I further note that a media release by the member for Caloundra criticised the state government and claimed that doctors had left Queensland Health. His solution was local hospital boards and axing locums. To deny rural doctors access to locum relief defies logic. Given the communities that many of those opposite represent, for them to say that we should not be spending money on locums to give our doctors a fair go—often the only doctor in town—is madness. I make no apology for us spending money on locums. I say this as well: whilst we want to recruit our own doctors for these communities and we want them to be local residents there—some of these are very remote locations with only one doctor—I make no apology for recruiting a locum if that is about getting services to people in those remote communities. I am more interested in that. Then we heard the incredibly xenophobic comments by the member for Burnett that there is some ridiculous policy in Queensland Health—

Mr MESSENGER: I rise to a point of order. I find those comments offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr Lucas: I have not actually said what his comments were yet, Mr Speaker, so I do not know what he has taken exception to.

Mr SPEAKER: It is easier I think—

Mr LUCAS: Mr Speaker, if I took a point of order to everything offensive the member for Burnett said or anyone else in this House said, we would never actually spend any time on the business of the House! He claimed the other day that Queensland Health should not be employing overseas trained doctors. In fact, I saw a story in the paper just this week about a very good doctor at Lowood who is very strongly supported by the local communities. I do not care what your ethnic origin is; I care what is between your ears when it comes to doctors or any other professional.

It is very interesting to note what the Victorian AMA said the other day about what we do in terms of doctors in Queensland. I should point out that since 2005 we have employed 2,514 extra doctors in Queensland Health and since March 2009 an extra 438. The AMA in Victoria said that the Victorian government must match the incentives offered by other state governments for general practitioners and specialists to attract the medical workforce to rural and regional communities. Whether it be with the NBN with specialist consultation fees to support rural practitioners, whether it be things such as teleradiology, whether it be the very significant practice loadings or whether it be rural generalists who can earn \$280,000 a year not including overtime—areas that Queensland has lead Australia in—we will not let rural communities down. This is a very important area.

Connecting SEQ 2031

Ms SIMPSON: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Yesterday the minister confirmed Labor's complete failure to meet the then coalition's 1997 public transport targets when she said—

It is the case that the mode share target was not achieved out of the last plan.

Minister, given the government's track record in failing to improve public transport and the fact that this new plan is not funded, should not Connecting SEQ 2031 be renamed 'Congestion SEQ 2031'?

Ms NOLAN: This question comes from the side of politics whose stated economic position is to reassess infrastructure projects. This question comes from the shadow minister whose effort at the last state election was to go rogue on the then Leader of the Opposition in that she trotted up to Redcliffe and stood with the local candidates and proudly announced the LNP's commitment to build the Redcliffe railway line, only for it later to be found that the commitment came in the small print with an asterisk—'subject to global financial crisis'. This question comes from the people who would cut public transport infrastructure funding. The question comes from the same side of politics that, when in administration right now at Brisbane City Hall, has cut its contribution to the running of Brisbane's buses from a fifty-fifty split with the state in 2004 when Lord Mayor Campbell Newman was elected to it now being 60 per cent state funding and 40 per cent council funding. This is these people's record on public transport funding, and the gall of a question that criticises our public transport vision and record is utterly astonishing. In the last five years public transport patronage in South-East Queensland has grown by 50 per cent.

Why has it grown by 50 per cent? It has grown by that much because we have built a world-class network of busways stretching now 24 kilometres around the city. It has grown because we have introduced for the first time TransLink integrated ticketing in terms of a successful go card program. It has grown because we have rebuilt the railway line to the Gold Coast, most recently to Varsity Lakes. We have a proud commitment to public transport. The next stage of that lies in the vision that we laid out for the people of Queensland yesterday. For that vision to be criticised by those people, whose fundamental commitment is to reassess projects and whose record down at City Hall is to cut their share of public transport funding, I think is utterly remarkable.

Papua New Guinea, Trade

Mr O'BRIEN: My question is to the Treasurer and Minister for Employment and Economic Development. Can the Treasurer inform the House of any new partnerships that will strengthen the economic relationship between Queensland and Papua New Guinea?

Mr FRASER: I thank the member for Cook for his question. He is uniquely placed to know the importance of Papua New Guinea's relationship with our state and for the electorate that he represents and he also knows firsthand the opportunity that exists in Papua New Guinea to grow jobs and to grow the economy in Cairns and the Far North.

As I outlined this morning, we are committed to growing the trading relationship with Papua New Guinea. We know that Papua New Guinea is on the cusp of China-like growth. With a massive Exxon LNG project in PNG, hungry for resources, hungry for skills and hungry for a piece of the action are many businesses in Queensland. That is why I am pleased to advise the House that a Queensland company, SkillsTech Australia, has won a \$5.5 million contract to train Papua New Guinea nationals in Port Moresby who will work on that project. They will train 3,000 PNG nationals who will get a job on that project. That is a contract win for a Queensland company and it is a win for the Queensland economy.

That is what we are committed to doing on this side of the House—building trade, building opportunities, building connections, building Queensland, building the capital works projects that a growing region needs and that a growing state needs. On the other side we can see that they have been revealed for what they are. What are they committed to doing? They are committed to stopping projects, to stopping jobs, to stopping the building that is going on around the state. They have revealed themselves over the last week that, while in opposition their strategy is to keep hitting the snooze button, as soon as they get into government they are going to hit the kill switch. They will hit the kill switch on the capital program, hit the kill switch on the building program, hit the kill switch on the livelihoods of thousands of building workers who utterly depend on the building program that this state has put in place.

What we have seen is that 'Tim the Axeman' has revealed that what he has always believed in is what he will bring to government. His record in the Brisbane City Council is that he wanted to axe 320 jobs out of the Brisbane City Council in library services, in the maintenance of footpaths and in the maintenance of parks. At the time he said, 'Workers come and go.' That is what he thinks. According to the shadow Treasurer, the livelihoods of working families can come and go.

'Tim the Axeman' also has a reputation as 'Tim the Taxman'. If we look at his record in the Brisbane City Council, we see that he was committed to growing rates, he said, by the inflation rate. But what was his record? It was well above inflation. So take no notice of it, because what does he say now? He says now that he does not believe in privatisation, yet he has always believed in privatisation. He says that he does not want to stop the building program, but he has always believed in stopping projects. He has said that he will never raise rates greater than the rate of inflation. What has he always done? He has raised rates by greater than the rate of inflation.

On the record what we see is totally different from what they pretend. The reality that has been revealed is that on the other side of the chamber we have a side that is committed to stopping the building program, killing the jobs of workers, and on this side of the parliament we see a government that is committed to building the future of Queensland and building jobs.

(Time expired)

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable the Treasurer, it would help the dignity of the House if you referred to the honourable gentleman by his correct title.

Connecting SEQ 2031

Mr EMERSON: My question is to the Minister for Transport. I refer to Connecting SEQ 2031, which states—

...the draft Connecting 2031 plan is not intended to be fully funded.

Will the minister list the projects in this plan that are not fully funded? Is it not correct that this plan is really just another example of Labor announcing a grand plan which it has no intention of delivering?

Mr Lucas: Unlike TransApex? Was that fully funded?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable Deputy Premier.

Mr Lucas: Was TransApex fully funded?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable Deputy Premier.

Ms NOLAN: The integrated regional transport plan that the government delivered yesterday is a 20-year vision for South-East Queensland. No government has a 20-year budget cycle. Of course, in 1997 when the member for Gregory was the transport minister the government brought down an integrated regional transport plan and it set out a series of goals and a series of priorities. It did a number of things. It introduced the then radical concept of the busway and 13 years later there are 24 kilometres of dedicated busway stretching around South-East Queensland. That plan, introduced in 1997, did not set dollar figures for that busway and it did not set a funding stream for it. Indeed, what it did say was that the government would consider congestion pricing—something that we on this side of politics have ruled out specifically.

When Campbell Newman released his plan, Moving Brisbane, as an opposition mayoral candidate back in 2004, he introduced the concept of the TransApex network. At the time no dollars were attached to that but, because he set out a plan, he then went about, in this case, engaging with the private sector and talking to other levels of government and the plan was then funded and, as we know, is being delivered. This government does have a funding stream for public transport and we set out a pipeline of projects over 20 years through the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program. It is by far the most comprehensive infrastructure program of any government in Australia. So that already exists and it existed well before yesterday. In addition to the budget cycle and SEQIPP, we now also have a complete connected vision for transport planning in the south-east.

I think it is utterly remarkable that the opposition's only contribution to this plan, when so far the plan has been quite well received by people who catch public transport—by groups like RAIL Back On Track, by the Trucking Association; those people who are interested and understand—is to seek to trash it. I think that that shows that it fundamentally fails to understand where good planning can get us and it fails to understand a genuine public transport vision for the south-east.

(Time expired)

Gold Coast, Construction Industry

Mrs SMITH: My question is to the Minister for Public Works and Information and Communication Technology. The building and construction industry on the Gold Coast is our lifeblood. For example, there are currently nine tower cranes on the site of the Gold Coast University Hospital and a projected workforce of 2,300. Can the minister inform the House about building projects that can be reassessed in the unlikely event that the LNP won government?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I congratulate the member on her observant nature. She takes a great interest in the industry—and so she should, because the building industry is doing it toughest in two places in Queensland. The Gold Coast is one of them and Cairns in Far North Queensland is the other. So in that regard I congratulate the honourable member on her continued interest in her constituents.

Unfortunately, I cannot think for the honourable member for Clayfield. I do not know what he is planning to reassess and nobody else seems to hold him to account on it. He can go on the media here and say that he is going to reassess projects and then that is the end of it; no-one ever asks him. So I am asking him, by close of business today, to publish a list of all of those projects that the honourable member intends, that the opposition has considered, to reassess. That is what we need to do. We need some transparency here.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: They do not like a bit of transparency and accountability. They do not like it. That is the challenge for him. He cannot just suddenly want to be the Treasurer of this state and say that he is going to reassess projects on some level. Either he is not telling the truth in that circumstance or he is misleading the public of Queensland. The opportunity is here for the member for Clayfield to show some transparency. I heard him prattle on about 7,000 people this morning. I am talking about 106,000 people who do not have employment.

Mrs Stuckey interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Currumbin, it is impossible to hear with that level of sound coming from your side.

Mr SCHWARTEN: As I said, we heard about 7,000 people in dire straits this morning, but there are 10,000 people on the Gold Coast—families—who will owe their livelihood to that project which the member for Burleigh raised; 10,000 people with the threat that is hanging over their heads from those opposite should they slime their way into government, sneak their way into government as they smugly believe that they are going to do. The reality is that those 10,000 people on the Gold Coast have a right to know exactly what 'Tim the Terrible' has in mind.

Mr Nicholls interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayfield will cease interjecting.

Mr SCHWARTEN: What is the agenda of the opposition? What are the projects that are going to be reassessed? What is the effect that they are going to have? For example, is the Police Academy one of them?

Mr Nicholls interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I know there are five major builders in Brisbane who want to be involved in that because their workbooks are looking very shabby going forward. We want to know what are the projects, when are they going to be reassessed and what is the effect going to be on the workforce of Queensland. Unless I hear the answer to that, today I will be writing to every builder in Queensland to point out to them exactly what the opposition is proposing. It will be up to them to say, 'What are these projects that are going to be reassessed? Which of the projects are going to be reassessed? Which ones are you going to pull the cranes down on?', should, as I say, those opposite coast their way into government as they firmly believe they will.

(Time expired)

Mr Nicholls interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Clayfield, I have warned you previously. I now warn you under standing order 253A.

Innisfail Work Camp

Mr CRIPPS: My question without notice is to the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services. Today's *Cairns Post* outlines a very serious allegation regarding the alleged use of illicit drugs, unsupervised excursions to local recreational areas and possession of contraband such as mobile phones and pornography by prisoners at the Innisfail work camp. Will the minister please advise the full extent of the allegations being investigated that caused him to immediately close the work camp yesterday?

Mr ROBERTS: I thank the member for the question. This comes from a member who sits with an opposition where the member for Gregory, the member for Southern Downs and the member for Warrego sat in a cabinet when 13 people escaped from high-security prisons in the last year of their office and 28 people walked off low-security prisons. Forty-two people—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Those on my left will cease interjecting.

Mr ROBERTS: Forty-two people escaped or walked out of prisons in their last year of office. To get a question like that about this issue! In addition to that, sex offenders walked free. Every sex offender, when they finished their term—

Mr Johnson interjected.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Resume your seat. I call the honourable the minister.

Mr ROBERTS: Under the National Party government when Vaughan Johnson and others sat around the cabinet table, every sex offender when they finished their term walked free—every single one of them. It has taken a Labor government to do something about it.

The Innisfail work camp is a part of an important network of work camps that exist throughout Queensland. As people know, it was established as a temporary work camp to help out with the cyclones et cetera, and it has done a lot of good work.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Gregory, I cannot hear the answer.

Mr ROBERTS: There have been some allegations raised about activities of offenders at the Innisfail work camp. I pay tribute to the member for Mulgrave, Curtis Pitt, who raised this issue with me yesterday. As soon as that information was brought to light the eight prisoners at that work camp were returned behind razor wire to the Lotus Glen prison facility. A number of allegations have been made. One of them is that prisoners have been taking drugs. The information that has been provided to me about drug taking is that throughout 2009-10 at the Innisfail camp there were 186 breath tests and 139 urine tests undertaken and not one of them was positive. So far this financial year, from 1 July to 31 August, a further 15 urine tests and 66 breath tests have been undertaken.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gregory.

Mr ROBERTS: Not one of them has returned a positive result. I want to make the point here that there have been a number of concerning allegations made about this work camp. They will be properly investigated. If there is any truth to them, obviously action will be taken against the offenders. And if any

matters result in action being required against Queensland Corrective Services officers that, of course, will be taken as well. I again remind the House about the record of the opposition when they were last in government and how they treated and ran prisons: 42 people either escaped or walked out. I will remind them every time I stand up and talk about corrective services issues in this place.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Those on my left will cease interjecting.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable member for Gregory, I warn you under 253A. I have asked you twice already. There will not be a third time.

Gold Coast, Road Infrastructure

Ms CROFT: My question is to the Minister for Main Roads. With the Gold Coast in with more than a sporting chance of hosting the Commonwealth Games in 2018, can the minister please advise the House of the status of roadworks in the region in preparation for what could be the biggest coup for the Gold Coast in recent times?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Broadwater for her question. She is a great believer in the roadworks we are doing on the Gold Coast. I tell you what: I will be down there for those games if we get them. As this government leads the charge for Queensland to host the games, all eyes will certainly be on the Gold Coast. If our bid is successful, all roads will lead to the Gold Coast. Why are we able to put such a great case forward so confidently to the Commonwealth Games Federation? Because we have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in infrastructure to put the Gold Coast on the international map.

This year alone \$370 million is being spent on roads. That means 3,100 jobs for local workers. We heard the Minister for Public Works talking about the importance of jobs on the Gold Coast. Roads are leading the way. What we are building on the Gold Coast will now meet the needs of motorists well into the future. We are going for gold. For the Pacific Motorway upgrade there is around half a billion dollars. There is \$420 million being spent between Nerang and Varsity Lakes. Let us have a look at some of those projects: \$158 million on the road from Nerang to Worongary generating 740 jobs.

Mr Lucas: How long did we have to wait for Howard to come into that?

Mr WALLACE: I take the interjection from the Deputy Premier. The Howard government did not put in a cent and tory members sat down there mute. There was very little input into that road. There has been \$77 million on new interchanges at Mudgeeraba and Coomera generating 540 jobs. There is also another project at Varsity Lakes, a direct link to the new railway station, at a cost of \$80 million generating 180 jobs; \$126 million on Olsen Avenue, consisting of six lanes with direct access to the new Gold Coast Hospital, generating 300 jobs; and \$130 million for the Gold Coast Highway. I have been there with the members for Broadwater and Burleigh looking at those works.

Ms Croft: How many jobs?

Mr WALLACE: Four hundred jobs on the Gold Coast with that particular project. I have said it before and I will say it again: it beggars belief that the LNP will reassess these building projects that we are rolling out. In tough economic times, governments need to build projects to strengthen economies and protect jobs. That is our plan. The *Australian* summed it up so well last week when it wrote—

Are we to believe that the Liberal National Party, the party of free enterprise, wants government in the business of hauling coal or collecting the toll on Brisbane's Gateway Bridge?

No. We want to be out there delivering better roads on the Gold Coast, delivering jobs on the Gold Coast, delivering 30,000 jobs across this state and protecting 33,500 kilometres of roads in our state, delivering our program for Queenslanders.

(Time expired)

Crown Land, Leases

Mrs PRATT: My question is to the Minister for Natural Resources. Annual land rental invoices have increased by 500 per cent. In one letter to me the writer stated—

The licence fee on two hectares is greater than the rates on 130 hectares.

Another wrote—

This effectively values our land through the fence at \$1,618,496 per acre.

Many leaseholders have stated that there is no longer any benefit for them to use or care for this government land and that they wish to relinquish the lease, but the cost to do so is \$106 and many have stated that they will not pay. Landholders are finding that departmental officers cannot explain the increases, so I ask the minister to justify the 500 per cent government fee increase and the extortionate relinquishment fee.

Mr ROBERTSON: I thank the member for the question. As was raised in this House last time we sat, a process of reviewing state land rentals has been underway for nearly the past two years. Because land rentals had not changed for quite a period, there was a recognition that the value of those rents needed to be adjusted to make them more contemporary and to bring them in line with the cost of administering those leases. That is why we released for comment a regulatory impact statement that contained those increases. At the end of last year we tabled in the House the regulation for those new rent amounts, which would take effect from the beginning of this financial year. Of course, I am aware that there has been significant criticism of some of the increases that were put in place. However, I should remind all members that a number of rental categories have actually decreased. For example, sporting clubs and community organisations received significant decreases in rents, because we recognised that it was in the interests of those community based organisations to have their rents minimised to benefit the services they offer their communities.

However, having recognised that we did reduce some rental categories, I am aware that across a number of categories significant concern has been expressed about the increases. That is why during the last sitting week, if I recall correctly, the Premier announced that we would review those increases and that review is underway. I like to think that that process will be completed in the not-too-distant future. I would like to think that for those concerned landholders—and particularly for those who have seen significant increases in the minimum rental paid for very small parcels of land, for example, where they may have located a pump or similarly small piece of infrastructure—we will have some positive news to announce in the not-too-distant future, when the review has been completed.

Population Growth

Ms FARMER: My question without notice is to the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning. In my electorate people deal with the reality of South-East Queensland growth every day. They want to know what the state government is doing to provide infrastructure to meet growth. Can the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning report to the House on infrastructure projects underway to address growth?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank the member for Bulimba for her question. Like the Bligh government, the member for Bulimba is committed to building Queensland's future. Our demonstration of that commitment includes the \$17.1 billion we have spent on our building program this year alone. For the 10th year in a row that has been the biggest building program spend in Australia. I agree with the Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Campbell Newman. Recently during an appearance on *Stateline* he said that the responsibility of managing population growth and addressing issues like traffic congestion was one for federal, state and local governments. He said it was up to the three levels of government 'to plan for the future and deliver infrastructure and services to actually make our country and our cities better places to be in'. I concur with those statements. Yesterday's release of the IRTP is evidence of this. Connecting SEQ 2031 is absolute evidence of this Bligh government's commitment to that concept.

However, it would appear that the LNP ranks are split in this regard. They are split when it comes to delivering much needed infrastructure for Queenslanders. Last week we heard the member for Clayfield admit that the LNP would reassess the Bligh government's record infrastructure spend. He said that the LNP would reassess the wealth of projects providing, among other outcomes, roads, schools and health facilities while protecting 100,000 local jobs. We hear the deathly silence of people offering up the projects they would cut or reassess out of existence. I am afraid that constituents across Brisbane, including those living in the electorate of the member for Clayfield and former Brisbane city councillor, can only ponder which of the much needed projects would be reassessed; which of those projects would be gone. Would it be a road or a vital busway, such as the one I spoke about this morning that will deliver a fantastic urban outcome at Lutwyche, connecting the electorates of the member for Clayfield and me? Would he cut that project? Would he fill in that hole? Would he let cobwebs grow on that hole? Would he cut the school expansion program that Councillor Newman recently demanded the state government fund alone and that will support the level of residential density that he would like to see just across the river? We can only wonder how the member for Clayfield would reassess projects in the City of Brisbane. We invest, they reassess. We are committed to the future and to building tomorrow's Queensland.

Strategic Cropping Land

Mr WELLINGTON: My question is to the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines, Energy and Minister for Trade. I refer the minister to the government's recently released strategic cropping policy, and I ask: will the government prioritise the investigation and potential protection of good-quality agricultural land in the Mary River, similar to that proposed for the Dalby and Clifton areas, in light of scientific evidence that much of the land in the Mary Valley meets the state government's strategic cropping land criteria?

Mr ROBERTSON: I thank the member for the question. As all members are aware, the strategic cropping land framework, which I released only a couple of weeks ago, has received quite positive responses across a range of stakeholders involved in this particular area. I remind members that it was

the Deputy Premier in his previous role who first travelled out to the south-west and met with landholders. He brought to cabinet the view that we needed to take a more rational policy position to ensure that the rights of landholders were protected, particularly when engaging with the resource industry, and that there was a very strong public policy position that we ensure that one of our most valuable natural resources, that is, our best strategic cropping land, is protected for current and future generations.

After extensive consultations, the framework has been put out for a final round of consultation, which will also look at the provisions that need to be contained in a new act of parliament that I envisage bringing into the House early next year. Maps of the Mary Valley at the back of this framework document show that, at this point in time, land within the valley has been designated strategic cropping land. That is based on a preliminary assessment by my department, based on its understanding that a combination of soil type and climate make parts of the Mary Valley, as is the case currently, valuable land for the purposes of cropping. However, we need to understand that the next part of the process is to take these very broad maps and define them at a much higher resolution. We know that there is great variation across the landscape and in this way individual parcels of land can be designated and protected.

In terms of whether the Mary Valley should receive priority in that regard, I remind the member for Nicklin that, at this point in time, landholders on the downs are face to face with the resource industry. I suspect that given the level of activity that is occurring in that part of Queensland they require priority over landholders in his part of Queensland, where the intersection between the resource industry and landholders is not as acute as it is on the downs. Whilst I understand his preference and desire for work in this area of his electorate, at this stage the western part of the state would receive my priority.

Woodridge Fire Station

Mrs SCOTT: My question is to the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services. Can the minister update the House on the construction of the new Woodridge Fire Station in my electorate?

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable the minister, you have one minute.

Mr ROBERTS: I thank the member for the question. I will be pleased to join with her and also the member for Springwood on Saturday to open the new \$3.6 million Woodridge Fire Station, which has sustained 27 jobs during its construction. It will be a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week station, and it became operational in that region in July.

The government, through the Department of Community Safety, has an impressive track record with its Capital Works Program. This year \$8.28 million was allocated to the fire service for two new stations and seven replacement stations and \$17 million was allocated to QAS for six new stations and 14 replacements. For the record, QAS expended 96 per cent of its capital works budget and QFRS expended 92 per cent. The member for Clayfield is out there talking about projects that will be reassessed or made 'de-necessary', which is the new term that the LNP are using. Which projects will they cut in the emergency services sector?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The time for question time has ended.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Bligh Labor Government

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 am): I table three sheets that show reassessments by the Minister for Infrastructure, the Premier and the Minister for Main Roads.

Tabled paper: Extracts from press releases dated 18 May 2010, 16 April 2010 and 7 April 2010 by the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning, the Hon. Hinchliffe, containing the word 'reassessed' [2866].

Tabled paper: Extract from transcript of speech made by the Premier, the Hon. Bligh, to the Queensland Growth Management Summit on 30 March 2010 containing the word 'reassessment' [2867].

Tabled paper: Extract from press release, dated 17 July 2009, by the Minister for Main Roads, the Hon. Wallace, containing the word 'reassessment' [2868].

The Premier seems to think she can make up for 12 years of political deafness by listening for a day. Of course nothing will change—she has made that clear. They will listen to but once again ignore the people of Queensland. Listening without action is as hollow as promising without delivering. It counts for nothing.

Queenslanders have seen straight through this listening offensive and they find it offensive. I recall that another parliamentary leader recently sent out his troops to the electorate to listen. His name was Kevin Rudd. To be blunt, he probably wishes he had not, because what the federal Labor members heard was that their esteemed leader was on the nose. He was detested. He had not quite reached the 69 per cent dissatisfaction level of the member for South Brisbane, the Premier of Queensland, but the people gave their local members plenty of information to take back to the PM. The ALP members got in touch with the sentiment of their electorate. Boy, did they listen. They listened, they heard, they got the message, and they terminated Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's leadership.

So I say to members opposite: follow in the footsteps of their mostly former federal colleagues from Queensland and listen for a day. The message they will get is this: Queenslanders have had enough of their incompetence, trickery, insincerity and hubris. Queenslanders want a government that listens every day, not just when their jobs are on the line. Queenslanders want a government that does not waste taxpayers' money. Queenslanders want a government that does not hike up taxes and charges. Queenslanders want a government that does not walk away from promises straight after an election. Queenslanders want an LNP government. That is what they want.

Many of the members opposite who supposedly are making merit of the fact that they are going to go out and listen to their electorates have never had real jobs, as we heard this morning. The Premier said that they are going to go out and have morning tea and catch the bus with these workers, because they have never had a real job. To hear the Minister for Natural Resources, the former great firefighter, this morning tell us about us supposedly not having real jobs is a joke, let alone to hear the Treasurer talking about the fact that he is going to go out and listen. He also has never had a real job. I have said it before. They have never filled out business activity statements. They would not know what a real job is. They would resign by morning tea because they would not know what the work would be like. That is why all they are going to do is catch a bus and have a chat to people in the tea room. I say to members opposite: go out and listen to the people in their electorates. They will come back and terminate their leader's leadership, just like they did federally with Kevin Rudd.

(Time expired)

Pine Rivers Memorial Bowls Club

Ms MALE (Pine Rivers—ALP) (11.33 am): I rise this morning to inform the House of a great partnership between the Bligh Labor government and the Pine Rivers Memorial Bowls Club. Earlier this month I assisted the Minister for Sport, the Hon. Phil Reeves MP, to officially open the two new undercover bowls greens. This \$3 million project, which included the refurbishment of the interior of the club, had a state government contribution of over \$1.4 million through the Major Facilities Program.

I got involved in the upgrade of the Pine Rivers Memorial Bowls Club even before I became the member for Pine Rivers. Club members, like President Bob Ebborn and Terry Orreal, approached me and the then member, Linda Lavarch, back in 2008 about their ambitious plans for the club. I invited then sports minister Judy Spence to visit the club and listen to the board's plans. After the election, funding for this magnificent redevelopment was approved under the state government's Sport and Recreation Services Major Facilities Program and then the real work started for the club and its contractors. I made several visits back to the club to view progress, and Bob and his committee gave me updates whenever they got the chance.

The Pine Rivers Memorial Bowls Club is one of the most progressive sporting clubs I have seen since becoming a member of parliament back in 2001. You only have to look at the standard of facilities they provide for their members to see how much they are ahead of the rest. The Pine Rivers Memorial Bowls Club has more than 12,000 members, is home to three bowling greens and almost 100 staff members and has hosted the Asia-Pacific Games, international test matches and other telecast matches.

Mr Reeves: Well done for your hard work.

Ms MALE: I thank the minister. While it has always been successful, it is now a showpiece for the Pine Rivers area and one of the best bowls clubs in Queensland. But, more importantly, they are one of the most welcoming clubs I have come across and they made me feel right at home from day one. That welcoming attitude is probably one of the main reasons they are one of the most popular and successful clubs in Brisbane—people just keep coming back. Now their members and guests have lots more reasons to return with the opening of these new facilities.

I would like to congratulate President Bob Ebborn and CEO Wayne Moffatt and their team for their hard work and making sure that the enormous building project went ahead very smoothly. I thank the minister for listening to my concerns, coming through with the funding and supporting it throughout the entire project.

Connecting SEQ 2031

Ms SIMPSON (Maroochydore—LNP) (11.35 am): Actions speak louder than words. Thus no-one believes the Premier when she promises a rail revolution after a decade of inaction and her broken promises on asset sales and petrol tax. Yesterday's release of Connecting SEQ 2031 should have been renamed 'Congesting SEQ 2031', as it was not accompanied with costings or time frames for delivery other than the projects it was delaying. On page 118, this document admits that the projects are not fully funded. Contrary to the statements of the transport minister, if you go to SEQIPP you will also find that those details have been stripped out. You can no longer find indicative delivery dates or in fact costs.

Let us look at the track record of this government. Fact: not one level crossing has been upgraded and removed in Brisbane in the last decade. This plan does not remedy this problem. In fact, we still have the Telegraph Road situation with the proposed urban development—broken boom gates and no plan from this government. The Greenbank-Flagstone study was announced today yet again. This has been promised before. Let me refer members to the 1997 IRTP and the 2008 industry statement, which I table.

Tabled paper: Copy of extracts of a Powerpoint presentation titled 'Salisbury-Beaudesert Rail Corridor Study (Stage 1 and 2)' [\[2869\]](#).

CAMCOS was due at Caloundra by 2015 and at Maroochydore by 2020. Under this plan, Maroochydore is now back beyond 2031. Gold Coast services also previously announced are back to 2031. But then there is the hypocrisy of the Premier with the so-called fast train. The tilt train already runs through the Sunshine Coast at steam train speed. That is on an 1880s alignment and that was due to be upgraded with the work to start two years ago, but it has been mothballed under this Premier and pushed back. The most serious, of course, is the cross-city rail, which has been delayed. It was announced in 2005—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): Order! The member's time has expired.

Ms SIMPSON: And still the feasibility has not been finished.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Maroochydore, when your time is called, you will please cease speaking and sit down. Thank you.

Public Transport

Mr RYAN (Morayfield—ALP) (11.38 am): I rise to highlight to the House the great work that this Queensland Labor government is doing in the area of public transport. On Monday, 23 August 2010, I was at the Morayfield train station celebrating the addition of two new peak-time weekday train services on the Caboolture line. These new peak-time train services on the Caboolture line will add 4,500 weekly seats to the local public transport network. Local people know that I have been campaigning hard for improved public transport infrastructure and additional public transport services for the Caboolture-Morayfield region. That is why I am very pleased that this state Labor government is delivering the new weekday peak-time train services on the Caboolture line.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Morayfield has the call. Would members on both sides please refrain from interjecting.

Mr RYAN: The new weekday morning peak service will now depart Caboolture station at 6.32 am and arrive at Central at 7.29 am. This service will run express from Petrie to Northgate train stations. The new weekday afternoon peak service will depart Central station at 3.48 pm and arrive at Petrie at 4.30 pm. Not only does this new afternoon peak service add extra capacity to the Caboolture line; it relieves pressure on later Caboolture services.

I welcome these two new weekday peak-time train services on the Caboolture line, but I know that there is more to do. Whilst I will not stop fighting for further improvements to public transport infrastructure and more public transport services, I remind the House that it is only a Labor government which is committed to affordable, quality and reliable public transport services. It is only a Labor government which is delivering more public transport services and better public transport infrastructure for our communities. Through our Connecting SEQ 2031 public transport plan, this Labor government will provide the public transport services and infrastructure which our communities need both now and into the future.

Beaudesert Hospital

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—LNP) (11.40 am): For some time, the Labor government has had a policy of closing regional and country hospitals to the detriment of those who live in these communities. In particular has been the loss of maternity services in many of our regional hospitals. The one I will highlight today is Beaudesert Hospital, which I had the opportunity to visit and inspect the facilities of last week.

In 1997 the number of children born at the Beaudesert Hospital was 309. This peaked at 470 in 2000, dropped to 391 in 2001 and then quickly fell away to nil. What this means is that families living in Beaudesert now have their children delivered at either the Gold Coast or Logan hospitals, with a resulting inconvenience to local families and the businesses they operate. When one considers the location of Beaudesert to the Logan and Gold Coast hospitals, the ever-increasing workload on these hospitals and the population increases in the region which also result in increased strain on the PA and QEII hospitals, there is a necessity for a fuller health service to be re-established at Beaudesert Hospital.

As I said, I recently visited the hospital at Beaudesert where the operating theatre is used for only one half day per month. When I inquired as to whether it could be used for maternity services, I was advised that with minor alterations it could. At the same time, maternity rooms are still there and are not being used for other purposes except the occasional overflow patient.

Until 2001, the hospital in Beaudesert was one of Queensland's busiest regional hospitals. It would therefore be in the interests of those people who live in the Beaudesert region, given a growing population, that we look seriously at re-establishing maternity services on a low-risk basis for, say, between 70 and 100 women and then using that as a catalyst to expand into other services. The infrastructure within the hospital is currently drastically underutilised and I note the RDAQ believes the hospital in Beaudesert has the potential to become a leading rural teaching hospital both for medical students and for the rural generalist pathway. It is by using these training experiences at Beaudesert that the Southside Health Service District could become part of the solution to the rural medical workforce crisis.

Mount Ommaney Electorate, Public Transport

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (11.42 am): The Premier recently announced in this year's budget that the 10-kilometre section of the railway line from Richlands to Springfield would be brought forward by two years. On 5 July, I joined the Premier at the sod turning to commence track laying for the project which will extend railway services between the upgraded Darra Railway Station to a new station at Richlands by 2011 and on to Springwood by 2013.

QR and TransLink are currently conducting a review of timetables on the Ipswich line to utilise the state government's new infrastructure. After community consultation this year, the aim is to implement our timetable for the first half of 2011. Our plan is to ensure that public transport keeps pace with the rapid population growth in Brisbane's western corridor.

Recently, I announced a new \$4 million bus park-and-ride facility to be constructed on the corner of Sinnamon and Yallabee roads at Jindalee. The former petrol station site was chosen for its easy access, central location and proximity to local shops and it is one of the outcomes of my representations to improve public transport accessibility in the area. The design will include an easy pedestrian link from the new park and ride to upgraded bus stops immediately adjacent to the facility on Sinnamon Road, motorcycle parking bays, cyclist facilities, security lighting and closed-circuit television monitoring, and landscaping. The project is subject to development approval by Brisbane City Council and community consultation, and construction is expected to start in the second half of 2011.

For people living in the Mount Ommaney electorate, the new station at Richlands will have the effect of easing pressure on the Darra, Corinda and Oxley railway stations where the park-and-ride facilities are currently being utilised by commuters outside the local area. The new bus park and ride at Jindalee will encourage locals to use our regular bus services to the city. It is anticipated that the new public transport opportunities will encourage motorists to drive to the station and catch the train or bus to work rather than increasing traffic congestion on the Centenary Highway during the peak period. I am looking forward to seeing these projects completed and I am excited about the benefits they will provide to the people living, working and commuting throughout the western corridor.

Child Care, Fees

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—LNP) (11.44 am): One of the cost pressures facing Queensland families is the impending dramatic increase in the cost of child care, which is estimated to be between \$13 and \$20 per day or \$65 per week. Those opposite have produced a deafening silence on the issue of the cost of child care. We have seen award simplification procedures push up costs by \$2 to \$4 a day. We have this bizarre new model of DECKAS funding that is so bizarre it is unquantifiable. It is dragging children out of long-day-care centres. It uses a process of giving selected long-day-care centres a voucher for \$1,200. This process is opaque and those in the industry believe the selection process for these day-care centres is corrupt. Workers compensation premiums for this industry have increased by double the amount of other workers compensation premiums. Those in the industry face an increase of around 30 per cent.

Then we have the national quality framework that came out of COAG on 7 December last year. The regulatory impact statement estimates that this could cost Queensland families up to \$800 million, that places in child-care centres will be lost, with an average of six places per centre being lost, and that we could lose 1,000 places for babies in child-care centres in this state.

This government appears to have little understanding of the mechanisms in the child-care sector. By dropping staff ratios from four babies to three babies per staff member, this unprofitable service will become more and more difficult for people to access, while the areas where child-care centres are able to make enough money to keep going are gradually being whittled down by the government.

Acquired Brain Injury

Mr WETTENHALL (Barron River—ALP) (11.46 am): The last sitting of the parliament coincided with Brain Injury Awareness Week. To help raise awareness about acquired brain injury, with the cooperation of the Brain Injury Association of Queensland, BIAQ, I organised a breakfast briefing during Brain Injury Awareness Week, to which all MPs were invited. I thank all of those MPs who attended. The feedback I received was that it was very worthwhile for both the MPs and the BIAQ, and I thank them for attending and addressing the meeting. The BIAQ has been helping Queenslanders and their families for 25 years, and I thank its CEO, Jennifer Cullen, for all of the good work.

As the Minister for Disability Services, the Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk, said in the parliament this morning, acquired brain injury can happen to anyone at any time. It affects one in 45 Australians, or around 433,000 people. Over 11,000 Queenslanders acquire a brain injury every year. Brain injuries occur in a variety of ways, including as a result of assault and abuse, sporting accidents, stroke and substance abuse. Many of those affected are children or teenagers. Seventy per cent of the injuries occur as a result of motor vehicle accidents, and the great majority of those victims are between 16 and 24 years of age.

Our government rightly places a high priority on improving road safety. Our road toll is understandably a matter of great community concern. Thousands of people survive road crashes, but for many their lives and those of their families will never be the same. Brain injury is often an invisible injury. It is often misunderstood and mistaken for other conditions, including intellectual impairment or intoxication. That is why it is so important that we do all we can to raise awareness about acquired brain injury in our community. As members of parliament, we have a great opportunity to help raise awareness in our community about issues like brain injury. I will continue to work towards ongoing and improved government support for people with an acquired brain injury, their families and their carers, particularly in regional and rural parts of the state.

Lockyer Electorate, Powerlink

Mr RICKUSS (Lockyer—LNP) (11.48 am): I am glad to see the Minister for Energy sitting in the chamber because the issue I raise today is about the Powerlink transmission line which is going through the Lockyer Valley, particularly the area of Lockrose, which is in my electorate. I had a meeting recently with three members from Powerlink—Bill Buikstra, Melissa Nixon and Michael Jones. Unfortunately, I was quite misled by what they informed me at the meeting.

They told me that they had made resumption arrangements with the Eleisons and Bill Howe. Mr Howe is an elderly gentleman who wanted to leave the area as soon as he realised that this large powerline was going in. The Powerlink representatives assured me that they had made satisfactory arrangements. I visited these two residents not long after that and they assured me that Powerlink had not made satisfactory arrangements and they were extremely disappointed with the amount of value that has been taken off their properties because of the easement.

I have obtained a copy of some of the contractual arrangements for the easement that were made in 1991 and 1992 by the power body at the time—South-East Queensland Energy, I think. I have seen a copy of those contracts, and for good blacksoil agricultural land they were paying about \$1,700 an acre. The land that I am talking about is now more grazing country for which I assume they would have paid something like \$500 per acre. They are now discounting by many thousands of dollars the value of some of these small rural residential properties. I realise that it is not all the problem of Powerlink. Some of it is the problem of Laidley council, real estate agents have misled some of these people, and some people probably did not look into it. But I am calling on the government to give these people a fair go. They will not get enough money to relocate if these large discounts are taken into account. There is only a small number of them. I expect these battlers to be given a fair go. They are not in a high socioeconomic area, so I expect the government and Powerlink to give them a fair go. I will be writing to the Powerlink board urging it to give these people a fair go.

(Time expired)

Kindergartens

Ms CROFT (Broadwater—ALP) (11.50 am): Kindergarten counts, and the Bligh government is transforming kindergarten in Queensland into a springboard for learning and formal school. Kindergarten is not about tests or school uniforms; it is about giving each and every child a flying start to learning and life. Sending a child to kindergarten will expose them early to the fundamental building blocks of learning in a fun, supportive environment.

In 2009 only 18,000 of Queensland's 57,000 kindergarten aged children were attending a kindergarten service. The Bligh government wants to raise this figure of 32 per cent to 95 per cent over the next four years, which will give our young children an even greater stake in their future. An advertising campaign began today—Wednesday, 1 September—in press and on radio which will help parents discover why kindergarten matters. Children who attend a quality early childhood education program make friends, develop their confidence and language skills, and begin the journey of learning before they begin prep. This foundation learning has proven to increase literacy and numeracy skills later in schooling and life, which is a key target of this government. The Bligh government has made a \$321 million commitment to deliver up to 240 kindergartens by 2014. Some of these services have already opened, with 108 to open by the end of 2012 and the remainder rolled out after 2012.

The member for Clayfield said on radio last week that the opposition would have to reassess projects like these, which is code for 'hack and slash'. The opposition did not have or support a kindergarten policy at the last election, and now it is plotting to blast a hole in the early years education platform the Bligh government is building. Regardless of the wilfully stagnant policy platform of the kindergarten cops opposite, this government will continue to deliver on this fundamental reform. You cannot trust those opposite with your child's future.

Water Supply

Mr DICKSON (Buderim—LNP) (11.52 am): I rise to speak in an effort to get to the truth about the Queensland Labor government's state water reform process. In this House on Thursday, 19 August 2010, I asked Minister Stephen Robertson a question without notice. The minister's reply included the following—

Mr Soorley said Unitywater was a business based on full-cost pricing.

He is absolutely right ... He said both the Coast and Moreton councils had agreed in February that if there were to be discounts or rebates on bills then the council, not Unitywater, would dish them out ...

I can advise this House that there was an ordinary meeting of the Sunshine Coast Regional Council last Wednesday, 25 August 2010. In that meeting Councillor Ted Hungerford asked the chief financial controller, Greg Laverty, if water subsidies were discussed with Unitywater and/or agreed to in February, as claimed by Minister Robertson. Mr Laverty replied that discussions were held but no agreement was reached. Councillor Hungerford then sought to clarify the answer through the chair, Mayor Abbot. Mayor Abbot said that Minister Robertson's answer in parliament was incorrect.

So there we have it. Once again, we have the state government and the council on the Sunshine Coast blaming each other, in denial about water bills. The Premier has said that this government is going to listen. Well, it had better start listening to water consumers because the voters have stopped asking what has happened in relation to their water bill. They are now asking how it happened, and they want answers. Unlike what has happened to electricity in this state, which has gone up by 50-odd per cent, water will be going up next year by a further 25 per cent. The increases by this Labor government do not stop. If it is not registration, it is electricity increases, water increases or licence increases. When is the government going to learn that people cannot cop anymore? Ratepayers cannot cop anymore so start telling the truth.

Cairns Indigenous Art Fair

Mr O'BRIEN (Cook—ALP) (11.54 am): As the Premier informed the House this morning, the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair was an enormously successful event again this year. It was a great pleasure to attend the opening night celebrations with the Premier; the member for Cairns and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Desley Boyle; and the member for Barron River, Steve Wettenhall. Also in attendance were the co-patrons of the event, her Excellency the Governor, Penelope Wensley, and an icon of Indigenous arts in Queensland and Australia, the potter Thancoupe.

As the Premier said, over 11,000 people attended the fair over the course of the weekend. I understand that sales were very good again this year. Artists from all over Queensland were represented at the fair, and we even met a few who had snuck in from the Northern Territory. They were more than welcome, of course. In fact, I foresee a time when the fair becomes a beacon for Indigenous artists from all over the Asia-Pacific region and perhaps Indigenous artists from all over the world. Of course I am biased and it will not matter where they come from—none of their work will be as good as the Indigenous art that comes out of Cape York Peninsula and the Torres Strait.

From the entrance statement to the fair, the carved dog pack from Aurukun, the ongoing intensely spiritual work of the pioneering artist from Lockhart River, to the sophisticated cultural story telling from Torres Strait printmakers, artists and sculptors, and the emerging artists from Pormpuraaw, the work of artists from my electorate is second to none. I want to pay particular tribute to the Kuku Yalanji artists, who have developed some great commercial works without losing their cultural connection, and the big improvers of the fair, the Hope Vale artists. I had the great pleasure of opening the Hope Vale art centre a little over a year ago. What I witnessed at the fair was a group of artists who have seized the opportunity that this government has helped provide and brought to the fair a spectacular array of work. Well done to them and to everyone who exhibited work for sale at the fair. I congratulate Mr Michael Snelling and his team for pulling this wonderful event together.

Boyne Valley

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (11.56 am): On 25 June 2010 by gazette notice a number of name changes occurred I am sure across the state but certainly in my electorate. Four townships in the Boyne Valley ceased to be recognised as postal identities and became Boyne Valley. These four townships of Builyan, Many Peaks, Nagoorin and Ubobo have a great deal of history attached to them. But, more importantly, the change has made addresses and locations very nonspecific. The whole region is just called Boyne Valley.

Additionally, residents found on Curtis Island that their postal address and their locality address is now Harbour Island—again, a very general location and identity. This has led to problems in terms of very practical matters and safety. One lady who works at one of the mills at Builyan has informed me that she rang an ambulance. The area is listed as Boyne Valley now on ambulance documentation. The ambulance went to Boyne Island. Another time a delivery for the mill went to Boyne Island rather than to Builyan because the address was Boyne Valley. So there are very dangerous misunderstandings occurring.

Because of the safety implications, I would ask the minister to review these locality changes and reinstate those very discrete identifiers of Curtis Island from Harbour Island—because there are a number of islands in the harbour—Builyan, Many Peaks, Nagoorin and Ubobo, and to review other areas of the state where those specific identifiers have been dropped to a very general name and potentially dangerous situation.

Ambulance Week

Mr WATT (Everton—ALP) (11.58 am): Next week is Ambulance Week. This provides a great opportunity to pay tribute to our hardworking local Queensland Ambulance Service team members who do such important work in our community. It also makes it timely that this Friday will see the official opening of the new Mitchelton Ambulance Station on the old police station site on Samford Road, Mitchelton. The new \$3.1 million ambulance station will deliver an even better ambulance service to the north-west suburbs. For decades the north-west has been served very well by ambulance officers based at Grovely Ambulance Station. Having been there a couple of times, I can tell the House that it was well past its use-by date. It was cramped and ageing. The contrast with the new station could not be greater. It is three times bigger than the old Grovely station. It will be able to house 10 emergency ambulance vehicles and four Patient Transport Service vehicles, as well as accommodate up to 48 staff.

To properly acknowledge local history, during construction we were able to retain and restore the old police residence that was on site. The refurbished police residence will be used for modern office and training facilities. The new station was completed on time and began operation in July. As well as delivering an even better ambulance service to the north-west, by pursuing this project the government created 23 jobs during construction. It is a good reminder of the kind of project that would not have been completed by the opposition under its policy to 'reassess' all the building projects that are supplying jobs and much needed infrastructure around Queensland.

I was at the new station last week and heard about the great work that local ambos are already doing from the new station. One ambo had delivered a baby the night before. As someone who is about to have his second child, it gave me some comfort to know that this kind of expertise is available so close to my home.

This Saturday morning the ambulance station will open its doors to the public for an open day. I encourage all local residents to come along. I pay tribute to all those involved in the new station's construction—the local ambulance committee, the station's officer in charge and our fantastic local ambos. The opening of Mitchelton Ambulance Station is a truly great present for the people of Mitchelton to celebrate Ambulance Week.

Queensland Health, Allegation of Assault

Ms BATES (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (12.00 pm): I rise today to highlight a disgraceful example of the Bligh government's toxic culture of bullying and intimidation which continues to permeate the Queensland public hospital system, particularly in relation to victims being blamed and whistleblowers being bullied. The matter of which I speak is currently under police investigation; therefore I will not mention names, roles or the workplace to ensure the integrity of the investigation is not compromised.

I have been made aware of an allegation of a serious assault of a sexual nature by one Queensland Health employee against another. Both continue to work in the public hospital system. I will not focus on the alleged crime, but what I will speak about is the atrocious and unfair way Queensland Health has used and abused its performance management policy to systematically humiliate, punish and belittle one of the employees in the workplace in an effort to avoid dealing with this serious and difficult situation.

Queensland Health's treatment of this employee is nothing short of negligent when the hierarchy has known of the assault allegation for three months and done nothing. Instead of supporting the employee during this vulnerable time, it has hung them out to dry. Irrespective of the outcome of investigations into the assault claim, Queensland Health owes a duty of care to its employees to provide a safe workplace.

It owes the employee in this case an obligation to take her concerns seriously, to act compassionately and without favouritism and to establish for them a safe and secure working environment. Instead of supporting the employee during this vulnerable time, Queensland Health and its managers have acted only to avoid taking action. They have washed their hands of it and told the employee that it is not their problem, not their fault. They have even implied that the alleged serious assault 'was a result of the employee's own behaviour'.

The employee requested secondment to less stressful duties which was coldly rejected by management, who then accused the employee of blackmail and said that the employee should 'hurry up and get over it' and should take leave without pay or long service leave. The lack of support and insensitivity is atrocious and clearly calculated to make the issue go away. This person has lost their dignity, their wages, their leave and their entitlements.

Morale amongst hospital staff is already abysmal, particularly when victims are victimised and whistleblowers are bullied and intimidated. The failure to properly manage this issue is abysmal. I have referred this matter to the Crime and Misconduct Commission.

(Time expired)

LAND VALUATION BILL

First Reading

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Minister for Trade) (12.02 pm): I present a bill for an act about land values for particular other acts and related purposes, to make consequential and minor amendments to the legislation mentioned in schedule 1 and to amend the Aboriginal Land Act 1991, the Acts Interpretation Act 1954, the Land Act 1994, the Land Tax Act 2010 and the Torres Strait Islander Land Act 1991 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: Land Valuation Bill 2010 [2870].

Tabled paper: Land Valuation Bill 2010, explanatory notes [2871].

Second Reading

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Minister for Trade) (12.03 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Earlier this year the government introduced a range of amendments to the Valuation of Land Act 1944 and announced major reforms to the valuation system. I stand here today to introduce to the House a bill that delivers on those reforms. In developing these reforms over the past five months, the government has delivered on the commitment to closely consult on every aspect of the reform to the valuation system with key industry stakeholders.

Extensive consultation has occurred with a valuation reform reference group which was formed in April 2010—a group comprising key non-government stakeholder bodies with interests in valuations. The reference group members represent the following organisations: the Local Government Association of Queensland; the Property Council of Australia; the Shopping Centre Council of Australia; the Queensland Tourism Industry Council; AgForce; the Queensland Farmers Federation; the Queensland Resources Council; the Real Estate Institute of Queensland; the Urban Development Institute of Australia—Queensland branch; the Australian Property Institute of Queensland; and the Queensland Law Society. I am happy to say that, through the exhaustive consultation undertaken and the good faith and involvement of these stakeholders, there is general support for this bill in relation to the provisions for introducing the site value methodology for non-rural land in 2011, the strategies put in place to transition landowners across to the new methodology and the reforms to the valuation system.

Consultants PricewaterhouseCoopers were engaged by my department in April 2010 to provide independent, expert advice on options for the introduction of site value and other reforms to the valuation process in Queensland. They also met with key stakeholders, independently from officers of my department, to discuss options.

At this time I would also like to recognise the contribution my parliamentary secretary, the member for Capalaba, has made to this process. His interest in valuation reform is clear. Michael, I have appreciated your involvement and assistance in bringing this bill to the parliament.

This bill sees a new era in the statutory valuation process in Queensland. Those aspects which were so contentious previously under the unimproved value methodology—that is, the consideration of 'intangible elements' such as including development approvals, leases and infrastructure credits in determining a valuation—are no longer part of the unimproved and site value definitions. The existence of any agreements for lease, leases, development approvals or infrastructure credits and their added value, if any, will not be considered when determining the value of the property. Queensland is adopting an amended version of the New South Wales definition of site value which is generally consistent with other states and is used by the Commonwealth Grants Commission in the distribution of GST funds back to the states. The amendments and wording of the definition have been fully endorsed by stakeholders.

To put it simply, from next year the state will value all non-rural land based on site value, consistent with other states—a value that is more closely aligned to the property market and more reflective of a developed state. Rural land will continue to be valued using the unimproved value methodology. This new valuation approach delivers on a more transparent and robust valuation system and will provide all landowners with a simpler valuation that is fair and equitable.

While most landowners will see very little difference in the valuation when it is issued in 2011, where there has been significant fill made to the land landholders will see some increase in value. Any impact from this increase can be readily managed through existing tools that local governments and the Office of State Revenue have such as averaging and capping.

The Queensland government is introducing a site value methodology which will align with other states but is doing it with a more generous package of transition measures than has occurred when other states have moved from unimproved to site value. These include: the benefits of capping and averaging on land tax to mitigate the effect of any change in the statutory valuation to land taxpayers; and an allowance which can be claimed on site improvements undertaken at the property in the past 12 years where it has occurred at the current owner's expense. This means, for example, if a developer has made site improvements in preparing the land for development in, say, the last three years they will be able to deduct the value of these improvements for the next nine years, or until sold, in recognition of the cost of development.

The last measure is a phased-in approach for landholders whose property value increases by more than \$1 million when the new site valuations are issued in March next year. For those landowners where there is more than a \$1 million difference between the existing unimproved value and the new site value when it is issued in March next year, the government has included a transition strategy. To transition these landowners to the new site valuation methodology, the state will incrementally phase in the increase in value over 12 years to mitigate against any significant increase in land tax and local government rates, allowing time for these properties to adjust to a level playing field with other properties, reflecting the value the land would sell for.

Landowners will not have to do anything to receive this. The state will automatically transition a landowner's value and they will be advised in their valuation that this provision has been applied to their valuation. Of course a landowner will still retain full objection rights to their valuation through this process. The full value of site value will be introduced at the end of the 12-year period or if the property is sold beforehand.

Through these significant measures to assist the transition to site value, the government has demonstrated its commitment that this reform process is not a revenue-raising measure. Other valuation reforms being implemented include reinstating the position of the Valuer-General and defining the role

and responsibilities of the position; enhancing the objections and appeals framework; delivering annual valuations to all property owners; and streamlining business processes to provide for ongoing performance improvement in the State Valuation Service.

As announced last week, Mr Neil Bray has been appointed to the position of Valuer-General and will commence duties in October this year. Mr Bray will have the lead role in the ongoing implementation of the reforms. The amendments to the objections and appeals process simplify this provision for landowners. The amendments provide for greater periods of time to lodge and correct objections and preserve a landowner's rights. Every aspect of the objection and appeal process has been reviewed and the changes are supported by the Queensland Law Society and the Queensland Bar Association. This process is now much more simple and ensures a landowner's rights to have decisions reviewed and appealed are upheld within reasonable time frames.

A key issue raised by the Local Government Association of Queensland during the reform process and development of this bill was the removal of concessions from the valuation process. There is an argument in policy terms that it is better to produce a pure valuation and to provide any concessions in the revenue measures, such as rates or land tax settings, than in the value. However, in the current economic environment and recognising the significance of other reform measures in this bill, the government has not sought to reform this aspect of the Valuation of Land Act at this stage. We have taken close account of stakeholder interests in this matter and the new legislation provides a requirement that a review be undertaken of the concessions in 2012. The timing of this review will allow further consultation with stakeholders to determine how the removal of concessions may be better managed. By this time, the new site valuation methodology introduced in 2011 will have been bedded down. This bill is about modernising the valuations system in Queensland and introducing a simpler, more equitable process for assessing non-rural land. The existing system of valuation was first introduced more than 65 years ago. A review was overdue and now is the right time for us to move to a methodology that is more reflective of the market value of the land.

The bill will also amend the Aboriginal Land Act 1991 and the Torres Strait Islander Land Act 1991 to provide that land may be granted to a registered native title body corporate and for that land to be held for a broader group of Indigenous beneficiaries rather than only those persons who hold native title. The bill also provides for roads closed within an Indigenous deed of grant in trust to readily become transferable land under the ALA and TSILA for transfer to Indigenous ownership; for land that is opened as road within a Torres Strait Islander DOGIT to no longer be transferable land; and to allow registered interests in transferable land under the TSILA, held by the Queensland or Australian governments or easements that benefit that land, to continue upon transfer. These amendments will facilitate the priority transfers of the Hope Vale and Badu Island DOGITs. The option to appoint a registered native title body corporate to hold land for a broader group of Indigenous beneficiaries though specifically facilitating the Hope Vale DOGIT transfer will also be available in other transfers of land under the ALA and TSILA. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Nicholls, adjourned.

CHILD PROTECTION AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 31 August (see p. 2946), on motion of Mr Reeves—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Ms DAVIS (Aspley—LNP) (12.13 pm): Today I rise to speak to the Child Protection and Other Acts Amendment Bill. As the shadow minister has indicated, the LNP will not be supporting this bill, which in itself is a snapshot of Labor's failure over the last 12 years to effectively manage child safety. The wellbeing of children is a paramount concern for our community. Children who are left in exposed, risky and dangerous situations which can cause emotional, psychological and physical trauma need to be able to depend on our community through our government to help them. There is no process for children to resolve the problems and it needs the careful, considered and compassionate intervention of Child Safety to ensure their best possible wellbeing, both in the short term and long term.

It is not an easy subject and nor is it an easy process. Dealing with such vulnerability and with every step involving risk of harm and damage, managing a child safety system effectively is difficult. That does not excuse the consistent failure of this government to provide a workable system. Watching the Bligh government deal with child safety has been a case of waiting for the next blunder, the next failure to resource the system, the next exposure of children to unnecessary risk. Since Labor announced the protection of children was reason enough to call an early election in 2004, we have witnessed a constant turnaround in the portfolio. Shuffling ministers like deckchairs, there have been three reviews of the Child Protection Act in six years and new ministers to match them all. Yet still this bill fails to advance the recommendations of the CMC review and will in fact unwind some of the advances that have been made.

Family is another concept that is central to our community and to the ideology of this side of the House. A lot of the work of child safety officers is trying to protect the wellbeing of the child while also trying to protect the remnants of family life. This bill damages that process further. Under this bill, a temporary custody order will remove the obligation of the department to notify the parents of the action, which flies in the face of a more family focused approach. Amendments to the assessment care arrangement will remove the rights of one parent having a say in the child's removal and care. This could mean a situation where a father who is not currently resident with the child but willing to provide for his son or daughter is excluded from the process. Child safety, by its very nature, does not deal with the happiest and the most stable of families. The expectation of the minister that involving just one party will lead to a resolution is naive and potentially dangerous.

The Bligh Labor government seems to be of the attitude that if it can trumpet the record spending in the child protection sector the money will simply fall into the places where it will be most effective. Time and time again this has proved to be wrong. Bumper budgets do not automatically equate to the safety and protection of children. Adequate resourcing, workable systems, common-sense staffing and considered allocations are needed. This bill provides none of that.

An example of the expenditure process under this government is nicely summed up by a couple of statistics from the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian. In the last 12 months the commission decreased its staff by 30 people. That is simple enough, except for the fact that the salary bill increased by \$3 million in the same period. Within the same office, the biggest increase in revenue is due to appear in the next 12 months courtesy of the blue card system. Following the criminal history legislation that passed this House recently, blue card revenue is increasing from \$4.678 million to \$7.784 million in 12 months. It was in fact the hurry of the government to defuse the member for Hinchinbrook's bill to amend the Disability Services Act to deal with the criminal history screening for employees that led to half of the bill before the House today.

Because of the Labor government's haste to draft a bill so that it would be able to bypass the opposition's proposals, many of the provisions were not in the state they should be when introduced to the House. That hurriedness has left pages and pages of amendments which have been jammed into this bill—a questionable process in itself, as it leaves the Minister for Child Safety amending the act of a body whose duty it is to independently monitor the welfare of children in our state. The Minister for Communities, who has responsibility for the act, should have come into this parliament with a bill that was properly prepared initially or at least put her name to the amendments.

We are opposing the bill for a number of reasons, not least of which is the fact that this bill will not improve the functioning of this portfolio. That will not happen until the bureaucracy of the department gives way to support and services. At the moment the department is one of the most bureaucratic, with virtually half of the staff in administrative roles and just 51 per cent designated as child safety and child safety support officers. We can add to that one of the highest staff turnovers in the Public Service. Considering the dedication and compassion of the staff who work in Child Safety, that is a great loss to the children and families who rely on these staff members. There could be few more heart-wrenching and difficult jobs in our society than those done by child safety workers, yet their dedication and care is taken for granted by a government which will not even resource the portfolio adequately and effectively.

The result of the minister's administration of the department is a record number of children living in care. Under this bill, many children will remain in care unchecked by child safety officers for 12 months. Under Labor and this minister's stewardship, transition plans, which should be a matter of course for all children, will only be completed at the request of the courts. This bill shows a minister unable to direct a child protection system towards its priorities and one who can see no further than the amount of money he pours into the system. The terrible sadness is that the heart of the system—the vulnerable children, the children who are relying on the child protection system to keep them out of harm's way and stop the enormous trauma and suffering—are the people who will suffer the most.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (12.19 pm): I rise to speak to the Child Protection and Other Acts Amendment Bill. Like all speakers—I think most, anyway—I acknowledge that our children are incredibly important and of great value and that any legislation that impacts on their stability and their safety is critically important. I would like to place on the record my very sincere gratitude to the parents and the extended carers in our society who look after their children well and who look after them wholesomely.

There are parents and family members who find parenting difficult. It is challenging—it is 24 hours a day, seven days a week—and if you have a child with a particular behaviour that is difficult to manage and difficult to accept then it is an added burden. Some children whose parenting is deficient end up in our child-care system. I would also like to place on the record my thanks, appreciation and gratitude to the foster carers, to the non-government organisations and their staff and to the staff of the department of child safety who work so hard in what I believe is an incredibly difficult circumstance. Foster carers are a very special group of people. It takes a special person to open up one's home and, more so if they have already children of their own, to open one's heart to children who often have developed behaviours because of the dysfunction in their own family. On that basis, I would certainly like to place on the record my gratitude.

I understand that there are a number of changes in this bill—for instance, the taking of the three-day order in an emergency. I was under the impression that, if there were an emergency situation, officers of the department of child safety could already remove a child to ensure his or her protection. So I would be interested in hearing the difference between this three-day order and the current circumstance. Certainly one would never argue about the importance of protecting children, but that protection comes at a cost and that is not only a cost to the parents whose children are removed but also, more importantly, a cost to the children who are removed. They are emotionally damaged, even at that point of removal, even from an abusive circumstance. So it is important that those moves are taken with all care and all responsibility.

The bill also deals with early intervention to identify vulnerable families and to wrap services around those families. Sadly, we have been in this place many times talking about early intervention for children in need and yet I do not see that occurring often. Recently in my office I had a parent who has a child with quite profound behaviours—not disabilities but disquieting behaviours—and this young person is known to the police because of those behaviours. That parent has been to the department of child safety to get help in managing that lad and has been told that there is nothing they can provide unless the child is at risk, unless the parent does something to put that child at risk. The mother remonstrated with the departmental officers and said, ‘So you are saying that I have to harm the child to get support for him, to get him perhaps in a temporary placement?’ The reply was, ‘Yes, but if you do that your other children will be taken as well.’

Over the years that I have been in this place we have given a lot of lip-service to early intervention, but not enough support is there for these parents who have the common sense and presence of mind to say, ‘I desperately need help before I do something that all of us will regret.’ I would be interested to see how the early intervention rolls out. I note the shadow minister’s comments that not enough money is invested in the programs, but it is some money and to that extent it is welcome. However, the early intervention has to include intervention before the children are removed rather than after.

I note that the pilot sites for these programs are at Logan, Beenleigh, Eagleby and the Gold Coast. Again, I would have to say on behalf of rural and regional Queensland that it is disappointing that somewhere out in the regions was not included in these pilot sites to see how the program operates away from metropolitan South-East Queensland.

The bill also includes a framework of principles to improve, according to the minister’s second reading speech, decision making to promote child safety, wellbeing and best interests. I think a lot of parents are quite concerned that when they want to administer discipline in a public place they will be reported and that the children will be taken. I am not just talking about smacking, either; I am talking about verbal discipline as well. Yet many parents feel disempowered, and that in part has added to the difficulties in child raising.

The bill recognises the important role of long-term guardians. One of the important long-term guardians for children—that is, kinship carers—is grandparents. It has been recognised in the media and it has been recognised elsewhere the important but growing role that grandparents are playing in parenting children in circumstances where things are quite difficult. There is already a growing area where grandparents babysit kids while mum and dad are at work. I am not talking about that. That is a family arrangement and the family is a functioning family. But there is a growing role for grandparents in particular in dysfunctional families and it is important to recognise them not only generically but also by providing emotional and skills support—giving them the tools that are necessary to manage children who have grown up in difficult circumstances—and financial support. The costs of raising children are certainly not going down.

The bill introduces three-business-day temporary custody orders. As I said earlier, I will be very interested to hear in the minister’s summing-up why those orders are necessary, given that if the safety of the child is a concern to child safety officers they can remove them currently. I would be interested to see how these changes pan out.

The bill proposes to emphasise the importance of sustainability in decision making about a child. Yet I find it anomalous to then see that Child Safety’s case plans can go for 12 months between reviews. It is my understanding that at the moment the case plan usually involves both parents—not necessarily at the same meeting if the parents are not getting on well—and there is consultation with the parents, with the carers if the child has been removed and with child safety officers. The more often those case plans are reviewed, the more wholesome and continuous the care for that child should be. I understand that doing a monthly case plan is impractical because, sadly, we have too many children in care, but certainly I believe 12 months between reviews is too long. That period for the review should be shortened. My suspicion is that, because the work of caseworkers is so great, they have not been able to comply with the current requirement and that this change is more or less to justify what is happening currently rather than what is genuinely in the best interests of the child.

As I said earlier, it must be remembered that even children who have been removed from circumstances that are not optimal for them—that is, abusive circumstances, physical abuse or abuse where it involves the child witnessing violence between the parents or violence in the home—that the sheer removal is also traumatic. They may be traumatised because of the action or the conduct against them, but removal is also traumatic. That removal has to be done very carefully and in a very thoughtful way. The minister in his second reading speech said—

Child protection is everyone's business and this government is committed to protecting our most vulnerable children and young people.

I do not believe that that care is quarantined to government members. I believe that it is a view shared by every single member of this chamber. I think that all of us want to see decisions made that ensure protection of children. But, where reunification with the family is at all possible, the family should be given the support and the tools to properly parent and the children should be returned as soon as possible. Sadly each of us has had instances in our electorates where parents have come to us with complaints, and a reasonable person would say that the parent had been dealt with harshly. Overwhelmingly I agree that where children are removed because of harm done to them in the home by either their parents or friends or family the removal is essential. Whilst the overarching criteria is the child's safety, the process also has to be done sensitively and well. I look forward to the minister's response.

Ms JOHNSTONE (Townsville—ALP) (12.30 pm): I rise to speak on the Child Protection and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2010. I am very pleased to speak on this important issue of child protection. As we all know, and are reminded of all of the time, child protection is a whole-of-community concern. Our children are our community's most important assets. We are coming up to Child Protection Week, and I am looking forward to speaking at the child protection breakfast in Townsville next week and working with the wonderful organisations in my electorate that devote their energies towards making sure that our little people are as safe as they possibly can be.

I have been pleased to visit a number of our valuable non-government organisations and dedicated front-line Child Safety Services staff in the electorate of Townsville over a long period of time, both before being elected and since being elected, including a couple of visits with the current Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport. This is an issue that is close to me and I am sure that it is an issue for many members of this parliament. My interest in child protection stems from my previous work in both domestic violence and family support. This experience has been in directly providing support to families who are in crisis. This experience has demonstrated to me that the service systems must get better at providing an integrated response to families that are in need of help and that more focus must surely be on early intervention. What I mean by that is providing practical support to families that need it before things spiral out of control to such a stage that Child Safety is required to get involved.

This bill provides the basis for the next stages in the development of a more comprehensive child protection system that incorporates effective secondary services that work in collaboration with a strong and dedicated tertiary system. It is the Labor government that has a strong record on child protection. Since 2004 the child protection budget has more than tripled and the staff numbers have doubled. It was the Bligh government that implemented and modernised Queensland's new Adoption Act 2009. The new laws ensure a more open and fair process for people considering adoption or who may be affected by adoption. The act represents a major reform of the adoption law in Queensland.

I agree with some other speakers on this bill that often the most effective work that can be undertaken is in the non-government sector. The non-government sector has the ability to be creative in the way that it supports people. It can develop individual responses to individual family situations and it can complement the government systems. The government has been delivering on this issue by providing funding of over \$65.5 million per year in new and enhanced grant funding for non-government organisations to deliver a range of out-of-home care places for abused or neglected children and for young people who cannot safely live at home. This includes funding from the \$36.32 million that was advertised in the recent placement funding round and includes the reapproval of some existing services already provided by our valued non-government partners.

This funding round enhances the stability and the diversity of placement options available to Queensland's vulnerable children and young people. It was this Labor government that provided more than \$55 million over four years for the Helping Out Families initiative. As members have heard, the bill before the House provides the legislative basis for this initiative. I look forward to watching as this initiative rolls out to see how that could be broadly implemented across the state in the future.

While this is an important step in ensuring that Queensland families can access the right services at the right time, the bill also provides a number of amendments that enable Child Safety Services to respond more effectively to the needs of children and young people who come to the attention of the statutory child protection system. One such amendment relates to the definition of 'harm' in the act. This probably goes to the heart of some of the difficult decisions that child safety employees and staff have to deal with. Deciding whether an allegation raises a reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm and therefore may be in need of protection is an important part of the work of front-line Child Safety Services staff.

The bill will make it clear that harm can be cumulative as a result of a number of instances of abuse or neglect. Harm may be caused by an accumulation of single reoccurring adverse circumstances or events. Each incident on its own may not meet the Child Safety Services threshold for intervention, but the impact of cumulative harm can be profound and has been widely associated with children experiencing complex trauma. I have personally witnessed this trauma in my work in women's shelters and working with families who are deeply fractured because of long-term systemic abuse sustained within the home.

The Child Protection and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2010 introduces significant changes to the way that long-term guardians are regarded in the administration of the act. As the act currently stands, long-term guardians do not have the same legal rights as parents when child protection concerns are raised. These amendments will place obligations on the department to tell parents about certain actions of authorised officers, serve them with notices of applications for orders or explain the content of orders. These amendments seek to align the rights of long-term guardians who are not the chief executive with those of parents. The amendments that relate to cumulative harm and those significant changes to the way that the long-term guardians, other than the chief executive, are viewed in the administration of the act all contribute to an increased focus on stability and permanency. This is mirrored by the introduction of the decision-making framework into the Child Protection Act. This framework will clarify that all persons who are making decisions or exercising powers under the act must consider and balance the principles according to a child's particular circumstances.

Focus on stability is in line with recent research. This research indicates that an unstable environment can lead to developmental delays, particularly in young children. I think any parent of small children would attest to that as a fact. As many people are also aware, the long-term consequences of these unstable environments can include substance abuse, mental health problems and ongoing association with the youth justice and criminal systems. That is why I am proud to be part of a government that recognises the importance of stability and a government that is increasing the stability and diversity of placement options for children and young people who cannot remain living at home.

I mentioned before the Bligh government's recent investment of \$65.5 million in enhanced and new placement options. This funding will deliver a total of 1,049 new places and renewed funding for a further three years for 1,459 existing places, including 716 new foster and kinship care places, 244 new specialist foster care, 65 new residential care places and 24 new supported independent living places. Nothing is more important to me than making sure government responds appropriately to ensure that our children are safe. I am very proud of the initiatives in this bill. I support the bill and I commend it to the House.

Hon. MM KEECH (Albert—ALP) (12.39 pm): I am pleased to contribute to the debate on the Child Protection and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2010. It has two main functions. Firstly, it will enable the Child Protection Act 1999 to respond more effectively to the individual needs of children at risk and in care and will ensure that when it comes to decision making their safety and wellbeing are always put first. Secondly, the bill provides a legislative foundation for the government's important Helping Out Families initiative, which begins trialling in October of this year in my electorate of Albert.

As the former minister for child safety, I am happy to support the amendments. I am particularly excited to see that a majority of the amendments initiated by my director-general, Norelle Deeth, and I are now introduced by the minister. I congratulate Minister Reeves on continuing these important reforms to the act by introducing the bill and on the second reading debate today. As the father of three beautiful daughters, he has brought to the portfolio a passion for protecting vulnerable children and ensuring the hardworking Department of Child Safety staff have the support they need in carrying out their very difficult jobs.

Having listened last night for 20 minutes to the member for Burnett's contribution, I am forced to make some comments in defence of the dedication of the hardworking staff of Child Safety. In the almost 10 years in which I have had the privilege to sit in this parliament I have never heard public servants so unfairly attacked by a member of this parliament. The member for Burnett should hang his head in shame after the disgraceful accusations he made about public servants who are completely unable to protect themselves. Child safety work is tough work, it is dangerous, it is very demanding and it is absolutely thankless. I certainly recognise that child safety staff are not always perfect. On some occasions they do make wrong decisions. That is why this government has put in place appeal mechanisms to ensure fairness for aggrieved parties and that is why we ensure that families have access to their own legal representation.

When I was the minister for child safety, every week in this place I had to put up with the then shadow minister, the member for Currumbin, attacking child safety staff. When it was not staff, it was foster carers. Now the member for Burnett is continuing that disgraceful tradition. In his speech last night he revealed the other bandwagon he is now on: any child safety officer who is female, under 30 years of age and not a mother is now in his sights. He believes that such officers are not capable of making professional decisions regarding the best interests of the child. He has no problems whatsoever

with young soldiers fighting in Afghanistan, young nurses working hard to save lives in the Bundaberg Hospital or young teachers training future minds in the great schools in Bundaberg, but for some mad reason he despises young child safety officers. It is little wonder that staff have grave concerns about what the future would hold if those opposite ever came into power.

On a more positive note, the bill amends the overarching principle for administering the act so that the safety, wellbeing and best interests of a child are paramount. It inserts a framework of principles for decision makers that need to be considered when making decisions. For example, if a chief executive is making a decision under this act about a child where there is a conflict between the child's safety, wellbeing and best interests and the interests of an adult caring for the child, the conflict must be resolved in favour of the child's safety, wellbeing and best interests.

In this debate we have heard claims by the LNP that the department makes decisions on an ad hoc basis. The truth is very different. The trained professional staff must act within the confines of the act. Inserting the framework of principles into the act clarifies for all decision makers, as well as families, exactly what is expected and how those decisions are made. In making a decision under the Child Protection Act, judgement should be exercised in a way that is open, fair and respectful of the rights of each and every person. In addition, the general principles ensure that a child has the right to be protected from harm or risk of harm and a child's family has the primary responsibility for the child's upbringing, protection and development.

The preferred way of ensuring a child's safety and wellbeing is through supporting the child's family. If a child does not have a parent who is able and willing to protect the child, the state is responsible for protecting that child. In protecting a child, the state should only take action that is warranted in the circumstances. If a child is removed from the child's family, support should be given to the child and the child's family for the purpose of allowing the child to return to the child's family if the return is in the best interests of the child. If a child is removed from the child's family, consideration should be given to placing the child, as a first option, in the care of their kin. If a child is removed from their family, the child should be placed with the child's siblings to the extent that that is possible. Therefore, the principles ensure a focus on stability of placement and connection with the child's family and community. The child's developmental, educational, emotional, health, intellectual and physical needs must be met. It is also about ensuring the maintenance of relationships with the child's family and kin and about ensuring that their culture, ethnic and religious identities and values are kept. In addition, the principles ensure that a child's views must be sought and listened to.

I am very excited indeed about the second aspect of the bill, which is the legislation for the introduction of the Helping Out Families initiative, which will commence in my electorate of Albert in Beenleigh and Eagleby, and also in Nerang and Logan from October this year and the southern Gold Coast from early next year. Last week I was very pleased to join Minister Phil Reeves, Minister Karen Struthers and the members for Waterford and Woodridge at the Beenleigh Community Health Services Centre at Mount Warren Park in my electorate. Although this project has been criticised by some LNP members, it is widely supported by the very child health nurses who will be directly involved with families. Those clinical practitioners know well the practical needs of families. Those I spoke with last week at the opening were very excited about our Labor government's initiative.

The Helping Out Families initiative is a fantastic \$55 million prevention and early intervention strategy. It is aimed at helping families to stay together and keeping vulnerable children and young people out of the tertiary child protection system. It will ensure that Queensland families receive the right service at the right time. Building a fence at the top of a cliff to ensure families are supported before a number of smaller issues become so serious that Child Safety is forced to intervene for the sake of the children is far more effective, better for taxpayers and better for the future of families.

In 2010-11, the Helping Out Families initiative will provide \$2.5 million for child health nurses to visit mums of newborns to three-year-olds in the pilot area, \$4.8 million for non-government organisations to provide intensive family support services, \$1.6 million for more domestic and family violence services and \$850,000 to set up a Family Support Alliance to assess and refer families to family support and domestic and family violence services. A Family Support Alliance non-government organisation will be established at the three pilot sites to receive referrals and identify the needs of families. Referrals will occur where the investigation and assessment outcome of a notification about a child is unsubstantiated and the child is not in need of protection but the family is at high-risk of entering the statutory system if they do not receive support, or where it is substantiated but the child is not in need of protection and high-risk factors are present. Referrals will also occur when one or more of the following factors are present in child concern reports: the subject child is under three years of age—and we know that those children are most at risk; where there are multiple child concern reports including domestic and family violence; and where there has been previous statutory involvement. These are really terrific issues for referral and I congratulate both ministers.

When a family is referred to the Family Support Alliance by child safety staff, the NGO will make contact with the family and engage with the family to identify their needs. Helping Out Families will only work if there is confidence in being able to share information between services, particularly between Health, non-government service providers and Child Safety. Therefore, the bill amends the Child Protection Act 1999 and includes new provisions to enable Child Safety Services to refer a family to the Family Support Alliance non-government organisation or any other service provider. It also provides confidentiality of this sharing of information.

International expert Professor Dorothy Scott reminds us that, in keeping children safe, child protection services and funding are not enough. In keeping these children safe, we need other types of fences—other types of protection that can only come from the whole community. Despite the member for Currumbin's criticism, the experts do agree therefore with the Bligh government that, yes, child protection is everyone's responsibility. Whether it is the sexualisation of children in the media or parental alcohol abuse, we must collectively as members of parliament commit to tackling the multiple underlying causes of child abuse and neglect. Blaming the dedicated child safety staff is attractive for some because they are such an easy target. However, it is much more challenging to work constructively in partnership with foster carers, non-government organisations, lawyers, academics, social workers and the department to develop whole-of-government approaches to keeping children safe.

As the clinicians at Mount Warren Park's community health centre told me, the causes of child neglect and abuse are complex and deep-seated and require long-term strategies. Many families present with not just one or two issues but sometimes 20 intersecting problems including health, unemployment, domestic violence, physical and intellectual disability, homelessness, poverty, language and learning challenges and the list goes on. However, it is alcohol abuse that research shows is involved in almost every type of child maltreatment, with 50 per cent of Australian children entering state care having at least one parent with alcohol problems and 13 per cent of Australian children living in a household with at least one adult who regularly binge drinks.

In addressing this, the Bligh government is already leading the nation by tackling head on the irresponsible consumption of alcohol and binge drinking. I was very proud indeed to be a member of the Labor government when the Premier asked the parliamentary Law, Justice and Safety Committee to investigate alcohol related violence in Queensland. I look forward to the implementation of the recommendations of that report.

The research clearly shows that one of the most common risk factors for abuse, including sexual abuse, was that parents had been previously abused themselves. That is why the Helping Out Families program is so important in breaking the cycle of abuse and so important in keeping families safely together. It is the right of every Queensland child to have the safe, healthy and happy childhood they deserve and need. That is why we need to work together to protect our state's most valuable assets. Under the policies of this Labor government, vulnerable children are in a far safer place, with significantly increased funding and more staff for the department of child safety.

These amendments are most welcome because they offer a helping hand to families who need intervention to keep their children safely at home. The amendments also make it clear to all decision makers, including the department, that the safety, wellbeing and best interests of a child are the paramount principles and prescribe a framework of principles for decision makers which need to be considered in making decisions. Our children must be able to grow up nourished and supported in loving and caring environments. They must have time to be children with all the wonder, happiness and innocence that childhood should bring. But they can only do that if they have a family who can provide them with love, safety and security.

I congratulate Minister Reeves and Minister Struthers, who are both in the chamber today, on the next important step—Helping Out Families. This is a terrific commitment from the Bligh Labor government, a commitment to keeping families together, keeping families safe, preventing problems from escalating and providing help to families in a timely manner. I strongly commend the bill to the House.

Hon. KL STRUTHERS (Algeria—ALP) (Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women) (12.53 pm): There are far too many children who are harmed by those who are meant to love and protect them and, despite the determination and goodwill within our community amongst our child safety officers, our non-government service providers and our government, too many children do suffer. Before I discuss the details of the bill—and there are amendments in this bill that relate to my portfolio—I want to say that child safety, as Minister Phil Reeves has said, is everyone's business. We need more foster-parents, we need more people to help out struggling families and we need more people to accept safe houses for children in their communities.

This Labor government in Queensland has doubled the child safety workforce and, as the minister said, has tripled the child safety budget since 2004. We certainly consider it a high priority. We have substantially increased the funding for early intervention and family support services in the non-government sector, and I will come to new initiatives shortly.

I thank the member for Albert for her very deep felt and passionate speech. In stark contrast, I, too, condemn the member for Burnett for his nonsense last night. His commentary on the child safety system in Queensland was disgraceful. It was ill-informed. He was acting as judge and jury. I sat there questioning why is he focusing on protecting alleged sex offenders rather than protecting children? That is what he spent about 10 minutes doing. He is an absolute disgrace. He is an absolute disgrace to his community.

Mr MESSENGER: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I find those words offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms O'Neill): Order! The member finds what you said offensive, member for Algester. I ask you to withdraw.

Ms STRUTHERS: I withdraw. In contrast to the comments of the member for Burnett, who denounced the child safety system and condemned child safety workers, the member for Albert, who works closely within her community and who as a former minister knows the complex work that is involved in child safety, spoke very passionately and with great concern about child safety work. I, too, have done some statutory child protection work—over 25 years ago in the Northern Territory. I know how hard it is. I was going out to the Tanami Desert—

Mr Reeves: You would have been young back then, too, wouldn't you?

Ms STRUTHERS: I was a youngster back then. I used to get in the four-wheel drive with my swag and my esky and be sent out to visit families in communities like Lajamanu and Wave Hill. I would have to work in an environment where, if you applied Brisbane standards or Darwin standards to some of the conditions those families were living in, you would take all the kids into care. You would want to take them all home and look after them. Making child safety decisions is a very complex decision-making process. Way back then it was pretty tough. I would get a call at night from the police to go out to the highway and pick up some kids who were left in a car. Those decisions were very clear. Those kids were abandoned and you take them into care straightaway. But not all of the decisions are that black and white. Not all of the decisions are that clear to make. I thank the member for Albert for bringing some good sense to this debate in drawing the stark contrast to the member for Burnett's disgraceful nonsense in his presentation last night.

I also commend the Minister for Child Safety. In our new machinery of government changes we have extremely good cooperation between our agencies in dealing with the statutory functions that he is primarily responsible for and the service delivery and early intervention services and support systems in the non-government sector that I have a greater level of responsibility for. It is this cooperation with our departmental officers and ourselves that we have developed the new Helping Out Families initiative. It has been in gestation for a little while, with former ministers playing their role as well. But it is certainly an initiative that we have been able to announce and get operational in Logan and soon to be on the Gold Coast. This is what families need. Families need early support. As soon as those warning signs are there, we need to have the systems in place.

Like other members, I met with child health staff at Beenleigh and I joined the member for Burleigh, Christine Smith, at the Burleigh Heads child health clinic and saw the great passion that those child health nurses bring to their work. They are very keen to see the enhanced support that will be available—home based help and clinical based help for families, to get in early to help them out, to help them in a very practical way and to get them back on track.

Around 27 per cent of cases of reported child abuse and substantiated child abuse are general neglect. General neglect can be prevented. General neglect does not necessarily mean bad parents or bad people. General neglect means 'I can't cope.' General neglect means that generally with a little bit of help people can get back on track and those kids can be safe. That is what Helping Out Families is responding to—providing that early, much needed help so that kids are not harmed.

There are amendments in the bill that I want to address specifically, and some of the opposition members commented on these. Let me say firstly that in Queensland we have a very highly regarded system of criminal screening and a very effective children's commission. Last financial year the commission processed almost 279,781 blue card applications. More than 650 high-risk individuals were prevented from working in child related services, and this included issuing 382 negative notices. What we also need in this system is that in order to protect children we need to make sure the volunteers and others working with children are credible and are the right people to be doing the job. Our children's commission deserves commendation for the great work it does in putting that protection in our system.

It is not the only thing. We should not hang our hat on it. We all know that organisations need to have their own risk management strategies. That is why we have strengthened the legislation in relation to criminal screening and the work of the children's commission. That is why I brought in legislation earlier this year that we passed to reduce duplication and improve the screening processes. Members opposite commented on a couple of issues in relation to the amendments and the criminal screening system and the work of the commission. I just want to make a couple of comments in regard to that.

The member for Bundaberg asked about the net increase in blue card revenue. That is not specifically a matter for the bill, but that does not stop opposition members from wandering across all sorts of issues in relation to their discussions on the bill.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.30 pm.

Ms STRUTHERS: In response to the issues raised by the member for Bundaberg, it is important to explain that the projected revenue for the children's commission for 2010-11 does not show the full effect of the new three-year cycle on revenue that will actually result in an annualised reduction in blue card costs to paying applicants of \$7.60 per year. It is the projected increase in population growth that is the main driver of the revenue estimate published and, therefore, may or may not eventuate depending on the demand actually experienced.

The issue of photographs on blue cards has also been raised by members opposite. There is not persuasive evidence to support the view that inclusion of a photograph on blue cards would further enhance safeguards for children and young people. As we have said before, the blue card is only one tool which should be used as part of a comprehensive, broad risk management strategy to create safe environments for children.

In response to the concerns of the member for Burdekin, the member for Currumbin and the member for Mudgeeraba that the Minister for Child Safety should not be introducing amendments to legislation relating to the commission for children, it is not unusual for a minister to bring forward amendments relating to legislation which is the responsibility of another minister. The government has approved these amendments to be brought forward, and Minister Reeves is acting on behalf of the government in doing so. The amendments are not changing policy in the commission's act but are only removing a few ambiguities and correcting anomalies to enable effective implementation of the Criminal History Screening Legislation Amendment Act and make clear what was originally intended.

The amendments proposed in the Child Protection and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2010 seek to correct anomalies regarding ongoing notifications between the commission and the Queensland College of Teachers for student teachers who seek to have their blue card recognised for teacher registration. They make clear and correct anomalies regarding requirements for blue card and yellow card holders who seek to use their volunteer card for paid work. They make clear and correct anomalies regarding the operation of exemptions for certain professional groups under the blue card system.

In response to the member for Burdekin's concerns about staff reductions and increased expenditure, the reasons that the children's commission budget increased by \$3 million, despite a staff reduction, are: enhanced service delivery in the community visitor and the employment screening services programs; changes to the provision of information communication technology; the fact that staff reductions did not all occur at the beginning of the year—there were 272 staff in June 2009 and 242.5 staff in June 2010 due to the closure of projects towards the end of the year; there was an additional fortnightly pay in the year, which occurs every 11 years; and there was an increase in enterprise bargaining commitments.

This government is absolutely determined to reduce the harm to children in Queensland. The Helping Out Families initiative and other initiatives included in this legislation are other important steps in protecting our children.

Hon. PG REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport) (2.34 pm), in reply: I would like to thank all honourable members who have contributed to the debate. I would like to acknowledge the presence in the chamber today of the Wishart State School Prep 3 mascot, Bindi, which the Reeves family has responsibility for this week. I was told I had to bring it to work so I acknowledge Bindi in the chamber today.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): Unfortunately, though, Bindi is unparliamentary. I have had to stop opposition members from taking out a bunch of flowers before, so I ask that Bindi not be seen. My apologies to Bindi.

Mr REEVES: As many members have highlighted in their contributions to the debate on the bill's second reading, the benefits of providing support as early as possible to families who are struggling to care for their children cannot be overstated. This bill has undergone comprehensive consultation with the community and stakeholders. I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the consultation on this bill, especially the key stakeholders who have made valuable contributions to the formation of this legislation. I want to congratulate past ministers—both ministers for communities and ministers for child safety, particularly the member for Albert—for their contribution in developing a lot of the stakeholder and consultation paper in this regard and also what is now known as the Helping Out Families initiative. I congratulate the member for Albert not only for her contribution in that regard but also for her earlier speech.

We are committed to working in partnership with our non-government organisations, and this is demonstrated by our significant investment in the non-government sector. Early intervention and prevention is one of my main priorities as child safety minister. The bill lays the foundations for this government's Helping Out Families initiative. The Bligh government wants to ensure Queensland families receive the right support at the right time.

The Helping Out Families initiative increases the focus on providing support to families at an early stage to reduce the risk of children entering the child protection system. The three key elements of the Helping Out Families initiative are: firstly, a more effective regional intake service model and method for referring families who are the subject of child concern reports and both substantiated and unsubstantiated child protection notifications but who do not meet the threshold for statutory intervention to non-government services for effective intervention; secondly, strengthened non-government early intervention and family support capacity through the establishment of a Family Support Alliance non-government organisation and a network of service providers; and, thirdly, ongoing work with partner agencies to develop innovative referral processes.

The establishment of Family Support Alliance non-government organisations that will lead a network of service providers is well underway. In the Beenleigh, Eagleby, Nerang and Logan regions, the successful non-government organisation applicants for the delivery of the Family Support Alliance, intensive family support and domestic and family violence services have been notified. These services will commence on 4 October 2010. Lifeline will look after the Family Support Alliance part, and the Benevolent Society will look after the other parts. By the end of January 2011, services will commence on the Gold Coast, with ACT for Kids doing the Family Support Alliance work there. There will be increased and coordinated family support services and domestic and family violence services. For all families with children from birth to three years of age, a health home visiting service will also be provided in those locations.

The changes contained in this bill will enable the efficient and appropriate exchange of confidential information from Child Safety Services to a Family Support Alliance non-government organisation so they can offer to provide the right services to the family. The partnership and coordination involved in the Helping Out Families initiative is possible because of this government's already sizeable investment in prevention and early intervention initiatives. These include established services—and opposition members might want to hear these—such as family intervention services, referral for active intervention, counselling services, intensive family support, drug and alcohol support, and domestic and family violence support services. These services work effectively with families to relieve stress, family conflict and anxiety, and to help them manage anger. They also assist families to manage their budget, prepare healthy meals, establish routines and set guidelines in the home.

The information-sharing provisions in this bill and the Helping Out Families initiative will take the coordination of these prevention and early intervention services to the next level. It is not enough to focus only on elements of earlier intervention, however. We also need to maintain a strong tertiary child protection system able to respond to the protective needs of children and young people when they are not able to be met by their parents.

The bill makes several amendments to improve responses for children in care and their families. These amendments have been informed by public consultation that commenced in 2008 and included non-government partners, peak organisations in child protection and front-line staff. The bill provides a better aligned and consistent set of principles for administering the act.

The bill strengthens the paramount principle to reflect the department's focus on children's immediate safety and long-term wellbeing and best interests. The framework provides a legislative guide for those exercising powers or making decisions under the act in applying the paramount principle.

The amendments will require the Children's Court to consider certain parts of this framework and state the reasons for its decisions. These amendments will provide greater consistency on how the best interests of a child are considered and determined by Child Safety Services and the courts in child protection matters.

The bill makes several amendments to ensure the rights afforded to parents in the act are also extended to long-term guardians who are suitable relatives of the child or other suitable persons. This government recognises the commitment shown by foster carers who become long-term guardians of the children in their care. These amendments are another step towards providing these children with long-term stability as part of a family. That is a very important point.

The bill also provides for a number of new orders that will be available so a court can make an order to meet the needs of individual children. It introduces a temporary custody order to enable the court to respond more appropriately to children at risk of harm and to meet their protective needs.

There has been some confusion between the new temporary custody orders and the existing temporary assessment orders, and the member for Gladstone mentioned this. Allow me to clarify: a temporary custody order will be made when an assessment has already been conducted by the department and the department believes the child is at an unacceptable risk of harm. For example, a pregnant woman may have other children who are in the department's care. The department may be offering support during the pregnancy to reduce the likelihood of the child being in need of protection when born. When the child is born, the department may have already assessed that the parents continue to be unwilling and unable to provide appropriate care for the baby, and the department needs to take swift action at the time of birth to ensure the child's immediate safety. The amendment is increasing the suite of orders available to allow departmental officers to take the most appropriate action in a timely manner. Previous orders were a temporary assessment. The assessment had already been made. That is why it is a temporary custody order before we go back to the court and ask for a longer term order.

This will not increase the number of orders that are expected to be made; rather, it will ensure child safety officers can apply for the most appropriate order that is relevant to the individual circumstances of a particular child. A temporary assessment order will still be in use when an assessment needs to be carried out but concerns exist about the immediate safety of the child.

The bill will provide the Children's Court with the discretion when it decides not to make a new order or to extend an order to set a future end date for the original order. This will provide a period of time for the child to be supported to transition back to the care of their parents. We heard the member for Mount Ommaney mention a family that she knows. I had the pleasure of meeting those great people with the member for Mount Ommaney, and it really highlighted how this change is vital in transitioning back from care. The children are now with their family, but previously the way the act was written the order was made straightaway rather than allowing for that transition back. I thank them for taking the time to explain that to me and the member for Albert as well.

The bill also makes amendments to the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000, the Disability Services Act 2006, the Family Services Act 1987, the Community Services Act 2007 and the Public Service Act 2008. These amendments remove issues identified during implementation of the Criminal History Screening Legislation Amendment Act 2010.

The contributions by members to this bill have been many and varied, to say the least. One thing that has astounded me on the eve of Child Protection Week is that this state has an LNP opposition which does not support reform to the child protection system. If it did, it would be supporting this bill.

The member for Bundaberg has again failed to mount a decent argument against the reforms or outline a comprehensive alternative policy. The lessons from the recent federal election should be clear to members opposite. There is no point opposing something just for the sake of it and not offering a clear alternative. In politics you cannot expect a clear mandate if you keep saying, 'No, I don't like this or that.' All the member for Bundaberg is saying—and I refer honourable members to his speech—is that he opposes this bill but he does not say what parts of the bill he opposes and why.

Mr Dempsey: That is why we have amendments to the clauses.

Mr REEVES: I respect that, but you are not supporting this bill while at the same time you have a discussion paper out there which says that you do not have the answers.

Mr Dempsey: Call the election now, then. Call the election this Saturday. The Treasurer wants it this Saturday. You call it this Saturday if you want. Put it to the people of Queensland.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): Order! The member for Bundaberg!

Mr REEVES: Quite frankly, it just shows that the opposition has no policy but it will continue to say 'no'. Child protection is too important for that to occur.

The member also spoke about the need for early intervention and prevention but stated that he could not support the Helping Out Families initiative because he did not have enough detail. A detailed briefing on this initiative was provided to all members including Independents, and the member for Gladstone and the member for Bundaberg attended the briefing. After all questions were answered, he and the member for Gladstone were invited to come back to us with any other queries they might have about the Helping Out Families initiative. The member chose not to ask any further questions. This yet again shows that he is a member of not only the most well resourced opposition in the history of Queensland but also the most lazy opposition.

The member started his speech with a history lesson but strangely made no mention of the 2½ years that his side of the House presided over the child protection system when budgets were minimal and reforms were nonexistent. You might remember those 2½ years. They had a minister who was more interested in going out for lunch with mysterious people and getting the government to pay for it. Remember Charlie Doyle?

Mr Dempsey: What about the member for Rockhampton? At least he didn't hit him.

Mr Dickson: What about Gordy?

Mr Dempsey: What about Gordon? Don't mention D'Arcy.

Mr REEVES: The member for Bundaberg likes to quote statistics, and his speech is littered with them, but when there are statistics which conflict with his argument the member puts the word 'allegedly' in front of it. Where does the member get all of these statistics?

Mr Dempsey: Well, you won't give them to me, will you? You don't even put them in estimates. I ask you questions and you can't answer them.

Mr REEVES: Where does the member get all of his statistics from? They are all from the numerous reports released by this government on a regular basis. Queensland's Child Safety Services releases more than 150 measures each year. More than 80 of these measures are released on a quarterly basis on the department's website every three months. So much for what he claims is a secretive government—more than any other state in the country. Even when he has access to all this information—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Minister, it would help the debate if you referred your comments through the chair and referred to the member by his proper title.

Mr REEVES: Even when the member for Bundaberg has access to all of this information, he still cannot get it right. In his recently released discussion paper, the member said that, compared with larger states such as New South Wales and Victoria, Queensland had the largest number of children under protection orders in 2008-09. That is completely wrong. If the LNP bothered to review the current Australian Institute of Health and Welfare child protection report, it would clearly see that Queensland had almost half the number of child protection orders as New South Wales in 2008-09. I refer the member to that report and I will get the page for him.

The members opposite also keep highlighting the fact that there are 7,600 children and young people in care in Queensland and try to paint it as something bad. These are 7,600 children who are now safer than they were. I do not apologise for the fact that child safety officers have had to step in to protect these children and young people. That is what they need to do and that is what they do. If those opposite do not believe me about the safety of these children then they should look at the latest *Views of Children and Young People in Foster Care* report from the Queensland children's commissioner which says that 98 per cent of children in foster care felt safe.

I would love the situation to arise—I think members on both sides of the House would love the situation to arise—where there are no children in care. Due to family breakdowns and incidents of abuse and neglect, child safety officers have to step in. Step in they do. They do a terrific job. Reducing the number of children in care is the responsibility of the whole community and to point the finger at Child Safety Services and say, 'It's your fault; fix it,' is a simplistic and incorrect assertion from members opposite.

To further emphasise this point—and the member for Bundaberg might want to hear this—the member for Mount Ommaney kindly passed on to me comments from a constituent who watched last night's debate. He wrote—

I was amused that a couple of the opposition speeches seemed to give the Government the "credit" for the big rise in numbers of children in out of home care, when the figure has doubled Australia wide in the last 10 years. There is a similar pattern all the around western world, so the Queensland Government must be very influential!!

I think the comments from the member for Mount Ommaney's constituent say it all about those speeches last night. I think that puts the member for Bundaberg's comments in their proper context.

For the member for Bundaberg to claim that the budget for early intervention is only \$12 million is just plain wrong. During estimates I outlined the vast range of early intervention programs offered by the whole Department of Communities, which includes Child Safety Services. I table this outline of services for the information of members. This does not include all the early intervention and prevention services offered to families to protect their children by Education Queensland, Queensland Health and the Queensland Police Service.

Tabled paper: Document titled 'Early intervention and prevention programs for Department of Communities' [2872].

It seems the member for Bundaberg is confused about the involvement of the non-government sector. On the one hand the member keeps talking about needing more NGOs involved in the child protection system, but, on the other hand, he opposes this bill which proposes greater involvement of non-government organisations, especially in the area of early intervention and prevention. He cannot have it both ways. He either acknowledges the important role that NGOs can play in service delivery and engages with them or he puts service delivery in the hands of government officers. Considering the raft of negative comments about bureaucracies from the members opposite, I thought they would have embraced this bill but sadly they have shirked their responsibility in the name of negativity and point scoring.

It seems the member for Bundaberg has not really read the bill properly anyway. If he had he would have realised when he was quoting from a two-year-old submission from CREATE that those comments were about proposed legislative changes which are not part of this bill. At the time that CREATE made the submission we listened to their concerns and did not proceed with those amendments. He has not read the bill. The member cannot even get the right legislation to mount his argument. But when he does, he likes to selectively quote from the submissions of non-government organisations.

For example, the member for Bundaberg quoted heavily from PeakCare's submission. When it came to the topic of case plans he failed to mention PeakCare's position on them. I think it is important to have their position quoted in *Hansard*. PeakCare stated—

There is a need to strike a balance between oversight and stability for children and to ensure that children remain in contact with relatives and parents. PeakCare believes that there should not be DChS case plans in operation for a child under guardianship to a third party.

PeakCare quite sensibly stressed the need for balance, something which is missing from the comments and proposed amendments of LNP members. I will speak more on that during the consideration in detail stage.

The member for Glass House asked a specific question about section 51ZE regarding obtaining parental consent for assessment care agreements and what constitutes reasonable attempts to get consent. As the section says, the assessment care agreement—

... can be made with the consent of only one parent if it is impractical to obtain the consent of both parents or if the chief executive has made reasonable attempts to obtain the consent of the other parent.

Reasonable attempts to locate the other parent and obtain consent may include but are not limited to consulting with the recognised entity; searching telephone directories; contacting the Queensland Police Service for information and assistance; requesting assistance from Centrelink; requesting assistance from Medicare Australia because we have an agreement with them; and requesting assistance from child support agencies. The use of any of these actions will be determined on a case-by-case basis with the best interests of the child being the paramount consideration in determining the viability of obtaining the consent of the other parent.

We have to bear in mind that one of the parents may have been convicted of an offence related to the child. That would be the reason that Child Safety has to act. The opposition is saying that we have to get the consent of the person who committed a crime against that young person.

The member for Glass House also mentioned the recent reforms to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child protection services. The government has refocused its child protection investment to continue to provide the valuable statutory role that recognised entities undertake. It will now also provide intensive family support and early intervention services that will make a real difference for families who are vulnerable and at risk.

Following the reform of the child protection system in 2004, \$16 million was allocated to recognised entity services. However, only \$11.7 million was expended by recognised entity services in 2008-09. I consulted with the non-government organisations. The peak body came to government and me to talk about this. The consistent message given to me was that we needed to target our investment towards intervention at an early stage to prevent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people entering the care system in the first place.

Following significant consultation and working closely with the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak and other key stakeholders a new model was recommended. The refocus of the current investment in Indigenous child protection services includes \$8.5 million for new early intervention and Indigenous family support programs that will help address the risks to children and the challenges that families face early on. This will help to reduce the number of children who need to be removed from their families.

I acknowledge that the member for Glass House also questioned how the 'extra layer of bureaucracy'—the lead Family Support Alliance, as an administrative function—would help regarding the Helping Out Families initiative. He further agreed that someone needs to take the lead. I am pleased to inform the House that the lead Family Support Alliance function represents about 8.4 per cent of the total investment in the Helping Out Families initiative. The Helping Out Families initiative shows we need a lead agency to coordinate action.

With regard to the reforms to the Indigenous child protection system, I note the member's use of the word 'administration'. I would like to point out that these significant reforms have taken the number of recognised entities from 33 down to 11 service hubs, which will significantly reduce duplicate administration.

The member for Currumbin was asking to see the detail of the contracts for Health's home visiting program which is part of the Helping Out Families initiative. The member has obviously not been listening lately. I would like to clarify for the member that in the pilot sites, which include her electorate,

all mothers with newborns will receive up to six visits from a registered nurse. Mothers with newborns who are identified as requiring more intensive help will be offered an additional 15 visits over a 12-month period.

Members opposite, including the member for Burdekin, keep talking about children being our future. I have always believed that this is a misleading statement. Children are our present and future and I am determined to help children who are subject to abuse and neglect now, not at some time in the future.

As for the contribution from the member for Burnett, all I can do is shake my head in disbelief and refer him to the member for Albert's contribution to this debate, because no-one could have put it more precisely than the member for Albert. The member for Burnett's attack on the appearance of a child safety officer was unwarranted and bizarre. As long as a child safety officer is doing their job, I will stand behind them and support their hard work. Child safety officers do an unbelievable job in some of the most difficult circumstances experienced by any worker. They knock on the door and do not know what to expect. The member for Burnett seems to change his opinion about people as often as he changes parties. Just last month he praised my leadership on initiatives. My door is always open to members who wish to raise issues with me, and I encourage members to take up that opportunity.

The reforms in this bill highlight this government's ongoing commitment to investments in a range of social preventative measures to make our communities fairer and our neighbourhoods safer now and into the future. I want to thank all of those in the child protection system who had input into this and those who do great work, from the staff who helped develop this legislation to the staff in my office who assisted and to previous ministers' officers. I particularly want to thank the foster carers and the peak organisations for their input. Given that Child Protection Week is just about to start, I want to highlight the great work that foster carers do. They are the backbone of our child protection system. I also thank the non-government organisations in this sector and their staff. I thank members for their contributions and I commend the bill to the House.

Division: Question put—That the bill be now read a second time.

AYES, 49—Attwood, Bligh, Boyle, Choi, Croft, Cunningham, Dick, Farmer, Finn, Fraser, Grace, Hinchliffe, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Johnstone, Jones, Kiernan, Kilburn, Lawlor, Male, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Reeves, Roberts, Robertson, Ryan, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Struthers, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wellington, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Keech, Pitt

NOES, 33—Bates, Bleijie, Crandon, Cripps, Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, Foley, Gibson, Hopper, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, McArdle, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Nicholls, Powell, Pratt, Rickuss, Robinson, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey. Tellers: Horan, Sorensen

Resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Clause 1—

Mr DEMPSEY (3.09 pm): What we have seen with the introduction of this bill and its second reading debate is a total contempt for the parliament and how it operates and total contempt for the people of Queensland in terms of how this bill has progressed through this parliament. The long title of the bill before the House covers a number of acts. The long title of the bill states—

A Bill for an Act to amend the Child Protection Act 1999, Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000, Community Services Act 2007, Disability Services Act 2006, Family Services Act 1987, Juvenile Justice and Other Acts Amendment Act 2009 and Public Service Act 2008 for particular purposes

However, this minister is only in charge of one of those acts. Clauses 95 to 138 of this bill are the responsibility of another minister, yet this minister is bringing these amendments before the House. This is a total abuse of this House, and this bill is being used as smoke and mirrors. I refer to a speech made by Tony Fitzgerald in July 2009 at South Brisbane before a meeting of crime commissioners. I will only read excerpts from his speech, because there are parts that are not relevant to what I am saying today. Tony Fitzgerald stated—

By the end of the Coalition's term in power in 1998, the political situation in Queensland was volatile. Wayne Goss had departed from politics. The Labor Party was led by Peter Beattie and much of the principled willingness to confront Queensland's dark past had been lost and with it the momentum for reform.

...

Labor regained power in Queensland in 1998 and has retained it ever since and that, on its assessment, is all that matters. Perhaps, to it, the adverse consequences of its political tactics are just collateral damage.

That is what I am talking about—collateral damage and misuse of political power. Tony Fitzgerald stated further—

Ethics are always tested by incumbency. Secrecy was re-established by sham claims that voluminous documents were cabinet in confidence. Access can now be purchased, patronage is dispensed, mates and supporters are appointed.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): Order! Member for Bundaberg, your comments have absolutely nothing to do with the clause or the bill that is currently before the House.

Mr DEMPSEY: They are—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, do not argue. Your comments have nothing to do with the clause or the bill that is currently before the House and I would ask you to refer your question to the clause that is currently before the consideration of the House.

Mr DEMPSEY: Yes, will do. When Tony Fitzgerald talked about incumbency, he was referring to governments becoming stale, the abuse of power, and governments becoming arrogant in relation to the process. That is reflected in clause 1, which contains the title of this bill, and how the bill was presented before this parliament.

When the division was called, the government knew it was going to win with its numbers. The government won that vote by 49 to 33 votes. This morning, the Minister for Public Works and Information and Communication Technology and member for Rockhampton talked about transparency and openness. This issue relates to the title of this bill because, when the minister who is responsible for child safety spoke in relation to the commission for children, he was getting rid of openness and transparency. We have a minister who has oversight of the commission for children, yet this minister is introducing legislation that relates to child safety.

The abuse of the system as it relates to the title of the bill was even more evident yesterday when the member for Waterford, Mr Moorhead, made a speech in this parliament about the Helping Out Families initiative, which appears on page 2,875 of *Hansard*. This bill is before the House, yet that member stated—

Along with Desley Scott and Margaret Keech, I was delighted to join the Minister for Community Services, Karen Struthers, and the Minister for Child Safety, Phil Reeves, in launching the initiative in Logan and Beenleigh.

The arrogance of this Labor government to launch an initiative prior to this bill being passed by the House beggars belief. We have seen this arrogance reiterated by the Attorney-General who filled positions before a bill relating to those positions was before the House. We talk about openness and transparency, but one of the most senior persons in the government, the Attorney-General, stated in the estimates committee hearing that if he had an issue with the PCMC members he would just talk to them. How can you talk to the PCMC members? That shows a lack of understanding of due process and accountability. That goes to the heart of the heading of this legislation, which appears in clause 1.

This government has shown a complete arrogance for the people of Queensland and a complete arrogance for the whole political process by announcing and putting in motion programs even before the bill is passed, because the government knows that, at the end of the day, it has the numbers to get the bill passed—not that it would be passed through due process with debate between parties—

Ms Struthers interjected.

Mr DEMPSEY: The Minister for Community Services spent five minutes talking about the child safety department and then only two minutes talking about her own department, which is reflected in over a third of the bill. That shows that this bill, under its heading, is a totally sloppy piece of legislation.

We have had Fitzgerald talk about openness and transparency. We have heard a number of untruths since then. I believe that this minister should take responsibility. I know that he understands some parts of this bill, but this bill and its heading show a complete contempt for the people of Queensland. It shows the arrogance of the minister, the Labor government and the Premier to allow such a process to go through this House without the proper checks and balances being put in place.

We only have to look at the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee report, which sets out the letters between this minister and the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. With reference to the other minister's role in relation to the children's commission, the minister's letter to the committee states—

Given the Commission's role as an independent statutory oversight body with the primary purpose of promoting and protecting the rights, interests and wellbeing of children and young people, it is in their best interests and in the public interest that persons proposing or continuing to be engaged by the Commission undergo a high level of screening.

It is also necessary to continue this high level screening to maintain community confidence in the integrity of the Commission as an oversight body of the child protection system, as administrator of the blue card system.

But we do not have the minister for communities in charge of this bill; we have the minister who is supposed to be responsible for child safety. Did the minister have proper legal advice in relation to the introduction of this bill in terms of how it would affect the rights and liberties of all involved in this bill? Did the minister understand it properly in relation to how it would affect the most vulnerable people within the

community? There are some good bits in this bill, but when it is presented in such a way, how can anyone in the state of Queensland have confidence, right from the heading of this bill, that this bill will effect its outcomes?

Mr REEVES: I thank the honourable member for his speech. I raise a couple of points. The first is the complete hypocrisy. Does anyone remember the member for Aspley's first question in this parliament? She asked me a question about the children's commission.

Mr Dempsey: And who had to answer it?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Firstly, member for Bundaberg, the minister sat through your 10-minute question and heard it in silence and you will hear his answer in silence. Secondly, Minister, you used the word 'hypocrisy'; that is unparliamentary, and I ask you to withdraw.

Mr REEVES: I withdraw. As with any legislation that comes through the House, I am quite prepared to answer questions on the clauses regarding the changes to the act that the member referred to. I am quite happy to do that. That is the proper process. The bill has gone through all the processes. The member has spoken about the Helping Out Families initiative and quoted somebody who has said that it is not reform. The Helping Out Families initiative is the biggest reform in child protection in a number of years. That is what we are supporting here. It was supported in the budget. The debate here is about the process of providing information to non-government organisations. We launched the program at budget time. Unlike those opposite, we plan. The government wants this up and running as quickly as possible. We announced the NGOs that were successful for the Family Support Alliance knowing full well that it was coming to parliament this week.

Mr Dempsey: Exactly!

Mr REEVES: If there was a debate and we changed some of the process that would be implemented on 1 October—if, for example, we had an amendment here—it would be voted on and changed. But we do not have an amendment. It is wrong to say that it is corrupt to announce the new program in the budget. It is proper planning so that we can get the NGOs in time so that they can get into people's houses and help them. If the member thinks that is wrong, that is his choice. This side of the House does not think that. I am prepared to receive any information on any part of the bill and I will continue to do so.

Mr DEMPSEY: The minister started off talking about blue cards. My first question in parliament was to the then Premier Beattie about blue cards. He dealt with it in an efficient way.

Mr Moorhead interjected.

Mr DEMPSEY: He understood openness and transparency and the separation of this parliament and the departments. He understood the oversight process in relation to the departments.

Mr Moorhead interjected.

Mr DEMPSEY: Particularly Child Safety and what the staff of Child Safety have to go through. When these questions were referred to the minister they were quickly deflected to the Minister for Communities. By doing that the minister acknowledged that nearly a third of this bill should have been brought here by the Minister for Communities. Even the green paper states on page 4—

The proposed amendments will correct drafting anomalies to achieve the original policy intent.

It shows the flippancy and the sloppiness of the departments. We have two departments that are unable to put a bill before the House that properly represents what that bill is about. The bill deals with the family initiatives part of it and the processes involved to achieve that, but all of these other rights and liberties and acts are not covered by the child safety minister; they are actually covered by another minister altogether.

This bill, as the minister quite correctly stated, deserves to be treated with the utmost respect. That respect needs to be at the infancy of this bill. The government needs to be open and truthful with the people of Queensland as to what the bill is actually about. It is not just the Child Protection and Other Acts Amendments Bill—

Mr Moorhead interjected.

Mr DEMPSEY: It is bit like a number of other bills we have had before the House. When one reads through the fine print, it does not make sense. The member for Waterford, who keeps interjecting, showed his disrespect for the process by coming in here yesterday and so freely, openly and confidently speaking about how the family initiative launch had taken place. He did not even spare a moment to think that the bill might still have to be passed by the parliament. That is a reflection of the arrogance and the lack of openness throughout the process of the passage of this bill. That is why it was opposed. Certainly some of the provisions of the bill are fantastic; however, overall we have concerns about the legitimacy of much of the bill. That is why I asked the minister what were the legal determinations that he had to counter in relation to the introduction of this bill.

Mr REEVES: Very quickly, even if this bill was not passed, the Helping Out Families initiative could be implemented with the exception of the sharing of information and the confidentiality. We would have had to find a different way of referring the clients to the Family Support Alliance. I think the argument is false. We put out a press release when the budget was handed down. It was a major announcement in the budget. Everyone knew that that was occurring. We wanted to ensure that people can hit the ground running in October and that we can have the workers in place in January on the Gold Coast. Crown law advice on a bill happens as a normal cabinet process and it happened in this instance.

Mr DEMPSEY: Even if the bill does not pass through the House today, those opposite say they still would be able to get through part of the initiative. Considering all of the bureaucracy and resources available to this state Labor government, surely it can come up with a better answer than, 'We would have made a few tweaks here and there and a few changes to make sure it was implemented.' That is not what the people of Queensland want in a competent government. They want to know that the t's are crossed and the i's are dotted in relation to the process.

This process does not just happen. Legislation is planned a long time in advance. We had the previous minister for child safety saying that she had had influence in relation to the implementation of the bill and that it was a positive influence that had been carried on by the current minister. There has been plenty of time to follow proper process in bringing this bill to the people's house of Queensland, instead of putting together some slap-happy legislation, putting a bit of spin on it highlighting the good points and sneaking the rest through. It is simply not good enough. The people of Queensland feel strongly about child safety and they deserve better. The staff and clients of Child Safety Services deserve to have a better process in place. It defeats the purpose of the words of the minister that he is trying to get the best for the children of Queensland when he presents to this House this poor piece of legislation which gives rise to more questions than it answers in relation to how it will take child safety forward.

Mr REEVES: I remind members that, as I said in my summing-up, the honourable member was told that following the briefing he could come back and ask any questions he may have had. He asked no questions. The people in need, the families in need and the children in need do not care about process. They want the people coming to their houses to look after them, to give them parenting skills and to assist them so that their children will not have to go into care.

Clause 1, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 6, as read, agreed to.

Clause 7—

Mr MESSENGER (3.29 pm): Clause 7 is a very important clause. It talks about the paramount principles that child safety officers must operate under. I would like the minister to answer a number of questions. I will go through clause 7 in detail. However, first, I take this opportunity to answer the criticism that the government has made that my criticism of young child safety officers is a criticism of young people. The minister mentioned it in his summing-up and the member for Albert mentioned it in her speech. It is integral to this clause because, of course, the paramount principles will be interpreted and delivered by those people. The member for Albert referred to young men who serve our country in Afghanistan. I have no objection to the member for Albert making that comparison. She also said that I should apply the same principle to young child safety officers and that I should not criticise child safety officers for being young. She said that somehow I was being—and I will take your ruling on this, Mr Deputy Speaker: is the word 'hypocritical' unparliamentary?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): I have already ruled it unparliamentary.

Mr MESSENGER: I will not use that word, then. She said that my approach to the employment of young people was inconsistent. That is a fair enough starting point for a debate. I do not believe that there is anything wrong with young people being on the front line, whether it be in the war on terror or in the war against child abuse. However, to compare soldiers in the Army to young community services officers in Queensland is not entirely accurate. I reject that. Yes, both young soldiers and young community services officers have the right rules to operate under and I believe that, fundamentally, the act that we are talking about is a good act. I have been told that this act is a good act if child safety officers follow it. However, the training, supervision and leadership of young Australian soldiers is vastly different to the training, supervision and leadership of Queensland child safety officers.

Mr REEVES: I rise to a point of order. Mr Deputy Speaker, I refer you to standing orders 94 and 232 on relevance. This clause talks about the paramount principles. It does not talk about which staff should be employed or not employed.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member is generally in order. He is talking about the responsibility of child safety officers and the clause deals broadly with that. I think the member is in order.

Mr MESSENGER: Thank you for your ruling, Mr Deputy Speaker. As we have seen, this minister and former ministers are hardly General Cosgrove or Angus Houston. If their troops did anything wrong or operated illegally, those men would not cover up for them. They would ensure they operated according to the rules of the engagement. That is the difference between young and inexperienced officers in the military and this Labor government's child safety department. In the military we have full-time professionals who are subject to military justice and civil justice on top of that. We have an unhealthy number of part-time officers in the child safety department. The department should be composed of full-time professionals, as are the police and other Public Service departments. In comparison to other full-time professional officers, child safety officers are subject to minimal supervision and minimal mechanisms for accountability. We will rely on child safety officers to look at these paramount principles to guide their actions.

Could the minister answer this simple question: what proportion of child safety officers are full-time employees of this government as opposed to part-time employees of this government? Does the chief executive officer take into account the harm that occurs to a child when taken away from their parents? I cannot find that in the paramount principles. I cannot find the guiding principle that they must balance and take into account the harm that the government's child safety officers cause to a child by separating them from family members. That is not in the paramount principles. I would like the minister to answer a number of other important questions. If a child is taken away from their parents, is there a limit to the number of foster carers they may be left with? This is addressed in new sections 5B(j) and (k).

Mr REEVES: Quite simply, I stand by the paramount principle that the safety, wellbeing and best interests of the child are more important than anything else. They are more important than anything to do with the parent. The paramount principle is that the safety, wellbeing and best interests of the child are the No. 1 aim. That should be clear to everyone. It is absolutely amazing that people could think we should balance that right with the right of the parents. The parents lose that right if they neglect and abuse their children. The reality is that the safety, wellbeing and best interests of the child are No. 1 as far as I am concerned and should always be No. 1.

Mr MESSENGER: As I said before, we are not dealing with a General Cosgrove here, and the minister has just proved it by that answer. First of all, he failed to answer my question, which was: what proportion of child safety officers employed by the state government are part-time workers as opposed to full-time workers? He will not have that figure, and that is one of the reasons he has a dud department.

The other point that he made was that I was suggesting that the parents have a right and that right supersedes the right of the child to remain safe and not be caused harm. I was not saying that. I asked: what harm is being caused to the child by the separation of that child from their parents? That is not taken into account by the child safety department. Certainly, the minister's reply suggests that he does not take it into account, either. That is one of the structural faults in this act. A harm is caused to a child by separating them from their parents. The minister is not taking that into account and neither are his child safety officers on the ground. It must be taken into account.

I would like to raise other questions. I do not expect the minister to answer them, but I will raise them anyway, just for the fun of it—just for the laughs and giggles.

Ms Stone: Child safety is nothing to laugh about.

Mr MESSENGER: There is a thing called irony, although it appears that people in this place cannot accept that irony. I take the minister to section 5B(l), which states—

a child should be able to maintain relationships with the child's parents and kin, if it is appropriate for the child ...

Section 5B(k)(ii) states—

for the child's developmental, educational, emotional, health, intellectual and physical needs to be met ...

Does the minister think that a direction from a child safety officer to, for example, a father on a contact visit not to hug his daughter for more than three seconds is a lawful command? Is the minister able to answer that? That is the sort of direction that child safety officers are giving to parents who have been separated from their children. They say, 'You are not allowed, on a contact visit, to hug your child for more than three seconds.' What sort of harm is caused to the child because that parent is not able to hug them? That is a real example of what is happening at the coalface of child services. It is very important.

I also refer to section 5D, principles about exercising powers and making decisions. Section 5D(d) states—

a relevant person for a decision under this Act may obtain their own legal advice, or be represented by a lawyer or supported by another person, in relation to the decision-making process ...

If you are a parent and you have had your child taken away from you or you are a relevant person under this bill, you are allowed to have a support person. I pose this question, and it is a very important question: can a relevant person, for the purposes of this bill, be supported by a member of parliament?

It is a very simple question. I would appreciate an answer. Can a relevant person, as defined by this bill, be supported by a member of parliament? Is it legal for a child safety officer or a manager to make a ruling that a relevant person cannot be supported by a member of parliament? It is very, very important to get an answer from the minister on this issue.

Mr REEVES: I reaffirm that I fully support the paramount principle—and members on this side of the House and most members on that side of the House support this principle—that the child's safety and wellbeing are paramount. I know what the member for Burnett is trying to do. He is trying to get around other things that are occurring. When we talk about a relevant person, I leave it to the professionals to work with the group. The relevant person should know the child and be able to have input into the family group meeting. I do not believe that a member of parliament, except if it is to do with their own child, should ethically or morally get involved in family group meetings, particularly if they do not know the child and all the family, because it is impossible for that to occur. I think what the member for Burnett is trying to do in this House is morally and ethically wrong.

Mr DEMPSEY: I also have questions on clause 7, the replacement of section 5 (Principles for administration of Act). This clause establishes the paramount principle and other general principles. Section 5A inserts the term 'safety' into the paramount principle. We understand the overall meaning of the general term of 'safety'. But there is nothing to guide Child Safety Services as to how this will apply or what impact this new undefined term will have on the government's child removal policy. I want to hear from the minister what he deems to be the meaning of 'safety'. Will it apply to past acts or future risk or being unsafe, to use that term? To what degree will 'safety' be defined before a child is removed from harm and placed in care? Every person can have a different interpretation of safety. When we use terms like 'duty of care', it comes down to people's interpretation of that. I know there are legal ramifications in relation to what is a 'reasonable' response to certain acts. But surely in relation to safety there needs to be some charter of identification.

The other question is in relation to section 5B(k). One of the ongoing issues which relates to the principles in this bill is the stability and safe placement of children in care. Will the minister explain, as stated before, why we have such a high percentage of children who exit care but who have a number of placements before they are released? This comes back to the word 'should' in this subparagraph. I believe the word 'should' should be replaced with 'must'. Section 5B(k) states—

a child should—

I believe it should be 'must'—

have stable living arrangements, including arrangements that provide—

- (i) for a stable connection with the child's family and community, to the extent that is in the child's best interests; and
- (ii) for the child's developmental, educational, emotional, health, intellectual and physical needs to be met ...

These things seem to me to be basic requirements. I think we should replace the word 'should' with 'must'. Section 5B(l) states—

a child should be able to maintain relationships with the child's parents and kin, if it is appropriate for the child ...

Section 5B(m) also uses the word 'should'. Each one of these general principles uses the word 'should'. We have seen in legal determinations in the Family Court and in other courts that 'should' becomes a wishy-washy word. It would be more defined if we replaced 'should' with 'must'. We are talking about basic requirements—education, health, intellectual and physical needs. It is good to have these general principles, but I believe that the word 'should' should be replaced by 'must'. Also, section 5C, additional principles for ATSI children, states—

'The following additional principles apply in relation to an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child—

- (a) the child should be allowed to develop and maintain a connection with the child's family, culture, traditions, language and community;
- (b) the long-term effect of a decision on the child's identity and connection with their family and community should be taken into account.

As the minister knows—as he has met with Combined Voices—and from figures that have been presented from time to time, the reality is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders represent almost seven per cent of the population between nought and 17 years of age, yet they make up 35 per cent of children who are dealt with by Child Safety Services which is an overrepresentation. We need to put some basic requirements in the legislation to strengthen the rights and the protection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children throughout the community. We only have to look at the Combined Voices proposal—I know that the minister has seen it, and they have had correspondence in relation to the task force recommendations. I ask the minister to reply to those three issues.

Mr REEVES: I thank the honourable member for the question. These principles are a guide. We want these principles applied to each particular child's circumstances. Using the word 'must' makes the legislation overly prescriptive. When they are assessing each particular child and their particular circumstances, by prescribing the principles using the word 'must', you are limiting a total understanding. Every circumstance can be completely different. There are a variety of family groupings.

In regard to adding the word 'safety' to the paramount principle, it broadens the definition of the paramount principle and puts a child's safety before their wellbeing and best interests because obviously the safety of a child in any circumstance is paramount. If a child is allowed back into their home—assuming they have been removed from the home—but it is unsafe to do so at that time, even though the child's wellbeing and best interests may be that they go back home, then the child safety officer would take that principle into consideration and try to balance those things. It is not retrospective but it can take into account circumstances such as if a child was on a two-year order and they were removed because their safety was at risk at that time then, when making a decision about whether to reunify the family, what happened two years ago and what has happened at contact visits since would be taken into account in making a decision on whether to refer the child to the department.

Obviously we are all aware of the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the child safety system. Not only have I met with Combined Voices; I have actually been in the community and talked to people affected by children and young people being removed from the community. Quite frankly, they are some of the hardest discussions that one can have. That is why we have implemented safe houses. I acknowledge again the member for Albert for her instigation of safe houses, and I have had the pleasure of rolling them out. That is why we have family support services in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, to try to stop children and young people from having to be taken into care and removed from their communities.

I was with the Deputy Speaker in Napranum and we heard firsthand what the safe houses were achieving. We saw the first two children from Napranum who came back into the safe house. That family had severe problems and the workers worked through those problems with them. The family was able to have a reunification and those children were able to leave the safe house and go back into the family.

That sent a trigger throughout the community, whereby other people thought, 'Hang on a minute. If I get my issues in order and I get the support that I need, then I can really make a difference and I can actually get my children back in the community.' We are not going to see overnight success but, ultimately, the reforms we have made and the social and physical infrastructure we have implemented in those communities will really make a difference.

Mr DEMPSEY: Clause 5B(h) states that 'if a child is removed from the child's family, consideration should be given to placing the child, as a first option, in the care of kin'. We understand and appreciate that that is the first option, and obviously there is never any good time for this to happen. The bill says that the first option is for the child to go to the kin, but what type of basic support will the kin be given? We talk about early intervention and so forth, but what are some of the basic support mechanisms that will be given to the kin? Currently, a lot of the kin, especially the grandparents, are only covered by Centrelink payments and so forth and there is confusion in relation to this—I am talking about overall, of the whole estate. I am after some practical measures in relation to when that first option comes into play.

Clause 5B(n) states that 'a delay in making a decision in relation to a child should be avoided, unless appropriate for the child'. What is a reasonable time in relation to that?

Mr REEVES: I thank the honourable member for the question. The reality is that, if a child is removed and placed with the kin, the kin will receive all the support that a foster carer would get—training, the foster carer allowance and all of that.

In relation to the grandparents, the grandparents do a terrific job. They are the ones who self-help, they are the ones who step in before Child Safety end up getting involved and have to do an order. That is the issue. This issue has to be tackled federally because it is about federal allowances. If we have removed the child from the family and given that child to the grandparent under an order, that grandparent will get all of the support offered to a foster carer—the training, the allowances and the like. Obviously, if there is a choice made before they get involved, we offer other programs to assist. I know this is a big issue; I have met with many grandparents regarding this.

In regard to when a decision is made, you cannot simply put a time frame on that decision making because of the complex nature of each individual case, each individual family and each individual child. I would not want to put a definite time on them. We obviously have targets, but we cannot put a definite date or time frame on each particular case because there might be a range of issues involved, such as trying to get family contact, trying to find a kin or issues outside the child safety arena—for example, education, health or criminal matters.

Mr DEMPSEY: In relation to 5B(n), as the good Minister for Community Services referred to earlier today, there is no set case in relation to child safety, there is no perfect storm, as they say. Each case is different and there are different complexities, but I think we could strengthen this in some way in order to have some definition and commitment by the department. The phrase used in 5B(n) is 'should be avoided'. That creates a lot of ambiguity and a grey area in relation to decision making.

We know that the people in Child Safety have their hearts and souls in their jobs and they try their best, but it is incumbent on us to put more detail into the legislation that is before this place so that it is not as vague in relation to how we deal in a responsible time with a child who is obviously in a dysfunctional situation and is wanting love and care from the people around him or her. So it would be appreciated if there could be some reasonable time noted or some other arrangement in relation to that item, or even if that situation could be acknowledged.

On the other side of it, the minister spoke about grandparents and I know that the minister has met many of these grandparents. We have all had grandparents who have been given the care of their grandchildren for a number of reasons come through our electoral offices. When we look at this part of the legislation, the families initiative, a grandparent is a significant part of a family. A grandparent is someone who really needs to be acknowledged within that family initiative. I feel as though that aspect has been left out, particularly in this clause, in relation to the grandparents being properly supported in the infancy of the case. The minister will agree that, if we can get to that problem and concern as quickly as possible, we have a chance at turning the situation around for the benefit of the child and the benefit of the whole family in the end so we can try to break this cycle.

I know it would be very hard to make changes to this legislation because it goes back to the reason we have this legislation before the House and how it was brought before the House—and I will not go back through that process—but I think it is incumbent on the state government to look again into the involvement of grandparents and give them some assistance. I have a number of grandparents who are crying out for help—as no doubt other members do—but that cry for help can often be determined by the department as a sign of neglect and of them not wanting responsibility for that child.

It is really sad that some people who are at the lowest part of their life and who are trying to get the best for these children cannot get help, and I am talking about help from all levels of government as well. I understand what the minister said about federal funding and so forth, but surely there must be some practical measures to be able to assist these grandparents at the early stage.

Sometimes that help is not monetary help; it could be transport, clothing or an extra bed inside their house because they do not have enough beds. That is all a cash output for those grandparents, even though they would sleep on the floor because at the end of the day they love these children and they will do whatever they can to show that love. I certainly know that love is not counted by dollars or by pieces of furniture. If we can give some assistance to stabilise those children and also stabilise the background—and I am referring to the grandparents—then we should. I ask the minister to bear that in mind in any future deliberations in relation to early intervention and so forth.

Mr REEVES: I thank the honourable member for the question. I am aware of that. I have met with grandparents throughout the whole of Queensland, particularly at community cabinets. I regularly meet with the Council of Grandparents. I was instrumental in putting forward the idea of a grandparents day to acknowledge the contributions that grandparents make every day. I give him my commitment that I will continue to work with them to see what support services we as a state can provide. I will also continue to lobby the federal government. I have personally spoken to the federal minister—hopefully she will remain the minister—regarding this issue. I will not flick it and say that it is purely a federal responsibility. Child safety and child protection are a whole-of-government responsibility. I am prepared to continue to work with the federal government and with individuals on this issue.

Regarding the discussion of 'should' or 'must', we rely on professional judgements. Being overly prescriptive in this legislation will impede professional judgements. We do not want the guiding principles to be overly prescriptive. Other parts can be a bit more prescriptive, but in the guiding principles we rely on professional judgements. That is why we have set it that way.

Clause 7, as read, agreed to.

Clause 8—

Mr DEMPSEY (4.01 pm): Clause 8 renames provisions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and proposes to insert 'recognised entities and decisions'. It comes back to Indigenous overrepresentation within child safety. I do empathise with the minister at times in relation to child safety and Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders and their circumstances, but it is incumbent on other government departments—being Housing, Education, Health, Police and Communities—to take some ownership of this issue in relation to Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders and the child safety factors that continue to overlap time and time again.

In relation to recognised entities and their stability, I think earlier today or yesterday the minister stated that a number of REs would not be receiving funding. Is he able to reiterate how many REs throughout Queensland will not be receiving funding?

Mr REEVES: Quite frankly, the biggest threat to the wellbeing of Indigenous people is the end result of the federal election. With the cooperation that is occurring between the federal Labor government and this state government we are getting some real outcomes, particularly with housing in Indigenous communities.

Ms Struthers: Closing the Gap.

Mr REEVES: The Closing the Gap initiative and the No Wrong Door initiative. It is really concerning what might happen. That will have a direct impact on those families.

In regard to recognised entities, as I quite clearly said, the peak body came to us and said that it wanted a difference. It wanted a hub-and-spoke model, and that is what we have delivered. We have gone from 33 recognised entities to 11—a hub-and-spoke model. Administration costs will be reduced because we have reduced them from 33. I believe that it will be a much better service but, more than that, we will have Indigenous family support run by Indigenous organisations helping those families work through the issues that they have.

Mr DEMPSEY: How many RE organisations have had their funding cut in this financial year? That was the original question.

Mr REEVES: We have gone from 33 recognised entities to 11 recognised entities, but then we have 11 Indigenous family support organisations. I do not have the figures with me about each individual organisation but we have publicised them. I have received phone calls and letters in response, but ultimately this was a direct result of what the peak body wanted. We worked with the peak body, we went out and we are delivering it.

Mr DEMPSEY: From travelling around the state I know the fundamental importance of the REs in the delivery of services in different communities. I know that the reduction from 33 REs to 11 was the advice of the peak group, but has there been any other consultation in relation to that modelling? Has there been any reduction in the total amount of funding—the 33 REs that are now down to 11 and the other associated groups?

Mr REEVES: It is a shame that you did not listen to my speech earlier. In reality, \$11.7 million was spent. We are now spending \$8.5 million for recognised entities and \$8.5 million for Indigenous family support. We are talking \$17 million compared with \$11.7 million, so it is an increase in real terms.

The other thing you mentioned was a cutback in services. That is not correct. The role of recognised entities is to provide advice to Child Safety in relation to kin, placements and culture as well as to assist with families. What this new reform does is get Indigenous organisations employing people to go into the homes of Indigenous families to stop them becoming a part of Child Safety's child protection system. The reality is that those Indigenous members of our community who need it will have more contact than ever before. Many of them would never have heard of an RE, let alone seen one.

Clause 8, as read, agreed to.

Clause 9, as read, agreed to.

Clause 10—

Mr DEMPSEY (4.07 pm): Clause 10 inserts the definition of 'harm'. How many children in the 2008-09 financial year who were recorded in child concern reports would have been classified as a notification, taking into account the new definitions of cumulative harm? How many additional intakes, notifications and substantiations are expected because of this change in the definition of 'harm'?

Mr REEVES: With due respect, you cannot expect me to have those figures at my fingertips. This is about formally incorporating cumulative harm. The amendment to the meaning of 'harm' in section 9 of the Child Protection Act simply formalises and expresses current practice. It is part of the process of citing whether an allegation raises a reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm and therefore maybe needs protection. That is the basis of the obligation of the department, to carry out the investigation of allegations to determine whether a child is in need of protection.

As I have said during estimates and I have answered in many questions on notice, the member for Bundaberg made a speech about bean counters. Nearly every question on notice that I get from the member concerns what his definition of bean counters would have to do. I want child safety officers working with clients and families, not collecting all the data that he is requesting. As I have said, we release 80 sets of statistics every quarter and 150 every year. That is more than any other state. When the member for Bundaberg's side of politics was last in office, how many statistics did they give for child safety? One.

Mr DEMPSEY: Obviously giving information to the opposition that should also be given to Queenslanders is a touchy issue. We agree on the majority of things. We agree on the reporting mechanisms that the department of child safety has now. When I read the websites I agree that there is more information on those sites than ever before. I understand that the ICMS is a different system, but with computerisation there is significantly more information available to departments now than in the last year, five years ago, 10 years and 20 years. The collation of that information is done by the department.

When I ask questions of the minister in this House or in estimates—and I go back to why we are here and the issue of accountability—in no way am I asking for a front-line officer to come off the street and be able to provide those statistics. We can cop it on the chin when the government says that we are the most well resourced opposition in the Australia. I put it back onto the minister, his department and the government that to have true openness and transparency it is incumbent on them to provide the figures and the information that is asked for. There are 28 days to answer a member's question on notice. I must say that the information has been provided by the department. I thank the minister for that information.

Clause 10 deals specifically with what is 'harm'. Surely the minister when determining how this was going to fit within the act—and with all the advisers and legal information available—must have known whether this change of a few words would actually increase or decrease the number of people affected.

Did the minister have checks and balances in place to understand why we are changing this definition in the first place? It must be being done for some benefit. He must have known how many people it affected beforehand and how many people it will affect going forward. As the minister says, we have to look at things now, but we still have to remember our past and what may be ahead of us in the future.

Mr REEVES: The member is right. We have a record budget. We have tripled the budget and doubled the staff. As a result of that, we report on 80 measures every quarter. That is more than any other state. We report on 150 annually—and that is more than any other state. We are delivering more.

As I have explained, ICMS is a client file system. The data we produce is the data that we can produce today with the click of a button and with a bit of cleansing in terms of overlaps of dates and things like that. If it were as easy as a click of a button to provide the member with all that information we would provide it, but it is not. I am not prepared to get departmental officers to do that.

I will simplify this. Officers would have to go to every file—I do not know how many files we have on ICMS; there would be enormous numbers of them—and extract that information from every file. The member needs to think about the process involved. They would have to turn on the computer and get that information out from all files. It would take an extraordinary length of time for a large number of workers. Those people should be working on cases and working with families to ensure that children or young people can be reunited with their families or any number of other things that happen. I am not prepared to do that. If the system allowed that to occur I would be prepared to do it. The system is improving every day. It is improving as it gets more mature. I am not prepared to ask staff to do that type of work.

Cumulative harm may be the accumulation of a single recurring adverse circumstance or event—for example, ongoing neglect—or multiple different circumstances and events such as a combination of persistent verbal abuse, harsh discipline, exposure to domestic and family violence. Each incident on its own may not meet the child safety threshold for intervention. However, the resulting impact on the child can accumulate and that is why we are implementing this change.

Mr DEMPSEY: That answer beggars belief when a number of computer systems have gone into child safety. I think around \$45 million or \$50 million has been spent over a number of years on computer equipment for child safety. We have a case file system that is dealing with individuals. I understand when we are dealing with individuals that we are addressing their personal issues. But surely it is incumbent on the state government—and I said this in estimates—to answer basic questions and provide statistical information in relation to health, education, sexually transmitted diseases and other issues.

We may have an issue with so many young children being abused in a certain way in one area. We may have a group in a certain region or district that have sexually transmitted diseases. We may have a region that does not place a great emphasis on health passports and educational plans. Surely the collation of those statistics would mean that the department would be able to identify those issues early and then it would be able to put resources into those areas.

When I am asking those questions I am asking them for the betterment of the department. Whether one is running a shop or a household one knows where the resources need to be directed. In this day and age I find it remarkable that we are only able to pull up an individual client each time to gather statistics that might help us identify problems later on.

When I ask those questions it is to benefit the department and to get resources put into problems areas. At the end of the day, this would save the department money that could then go back into front-line services that are better directed to benefit all children around Queensland.

When questions are asked of this government it always seems as though the wall goes up and that the opposition should not ask questions and Queenslanders should not ask questions. These are basic questions that need to be answered. This is not, as many other government departments say, to pass the *Courier-Mail* test but to make sure that improvements are made within the department that, at the end of day, affect the people in the department and the people they serve throughout Queensland.

Mr MESSENGER: Clause 10 refers to the amendment of section 9 relating to what is harm. It states—

Harm can be caused by—

- (a) a single act, omission or circumstance; or
- (b) a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.

I rise to speak to this clause because I think the definition of 'harm' under the Child Protection Act is very important, and it is very important for this reason: the definition of 'harm' under the child safety act is very different from the definition of 'harm', say, in a criminal matter in terms of what the police consider to be harm. There is a difference. There is a lesser standard of harm under the child safety act than there is under criminal acts such as the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act.

I ask the child safety minister to answer one very simple question, and he would not even have to go to his departmental officers for advice to answer this. I ask him to give an example of harm under the child safety act. For example, the minister mentioned earlier that he is the father of three girls and, as I am sure any normal father would, he may have bathed his girls at some stage. Would a father bathing or washing, say, a four-year-old girl constitute harm under the child safety act? I think this is a relevant question given circumstances that have happened all around Queensland. I would like to honestly know if the child safety minister would think that parents bathing with children constitutes harm under this act.

Mr REEVES: In referring to the member for Bundaberg's question, we report on 150 measures annually and 80 measures quarterly because we have the system in place. It is improving. As I mentioned at estimates, hopefully child health passports will be further advanced shortly. I say to the member that he should go to the staff in his electorate office with its database and get them to select 100 files on individuals and see how long that takes them. There are statistics that are relevant for the majority of people, but they may not be totally relevant to all of the different measures that the member wants to raise. However, we have measures in that regard and we are improving them all of the time. There are team leaders when issues arise in areas or regions so, therefore, I think the member's concerns will be met by the professionalism of the staff.

With regard to the member for Burnett, I do not think what the member for Burnett is trying to do is morally and ethically right. In terms of what he is trying to do—and I know the background to this—I think it is ethically wrong and I think it is beyond the pale to pose a question like that to a minister or anybody else. That has just amazed me.

Mr MESSENGER: The minister seems to be running away from his responsibility as the child safety minister and is obviously not across his department. There are many hundreds of Queensland families who have been caught up in the child safety net. Many parents have been caught up and accused of harming their children. The definition of 'harm' under this bill is a vital point, and the fact that the minister will not give us a simple example of harm shows that he is obviously covering up. He is also saying that I should not be speaking about these issues in this place. Referring back to the member for Bundaberg and shadow child safety minister making the point that he has not been able to measure certain statistics, there is an old saying that if you cannot measure it you cannot manage it, and this has certainly become quite apparent with Child Safety in Queensland. It is a dysfunctional department. It cannot manage the cases it has and it all stems back to the budget.

The minister is also trying to put forward an argument that members of this place should not be advocating and interesting themselves in child safety matters and thinking about what 'harm' means and the like. He is trying to say, for example, that I should not be advocating for my constituents. Many constituents come to my office about child safety matters. First of all, it is very cheap in that you do not have to go to a solicitor and pay \$300 an hour to try to get some guidance and to try to navigate the child safety procedures that they are caught in, because obviously many of these parents are very fearful of having their children taken away from them for spurious reasons. I find it astounding that a minister of the Crown is trying to place limits, effectively, on the people and the issues that we can advocate for as members of parliament. If people study what he has said they will see that he is trying to limit the issues that we can advocate for and also the people whom we can advocate for. By doing that—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): Order! Member for Burnett, the clause that is before the House is clause 10. It deals specifically with the definition of a word. You have strayed beyond the boundaries of that clause and I ask you to return to it now.

Mr MESSENGER: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I go back to clause 10 and I simply go back to this point: the definition of 'harm' under this provision of the bill is quite a broad definition. It is a catch-all. It allows a child safety officer to have incredible powers—incredible discretionary powers. If proper process and procedure are not followed, it stands that people's basic human rights to natural justice and civil liberties can be trampled by child safety officers if they do not act according to the provisions of this bill.

Mr REEVES: The simple fact of the matter is that child safety officers—and I commend the great work that they do—have to go to a court to justify any order. So it is up to the court. Whether talking about a criminal act or otherwise, you have to prove your case. That is what child safety officers do every day to protect children and young people, and I support them for doing that. Ultimately, it is the court that decides whether there is an order. It is the court that makes the decisions on the evidence, and it is the court that receives the evidence from both Child Safety and the people who may not want that action to occur. That is the system that we have in a democratic state like Queensland. I think the member for Burnett is trying to insinuate that the child safety officers can just make the decision and that is the end of it. They have to justify that to the court, as they do day in and day out. Their No. 1 priority is to make sure those children and young people are safe from harm and neglect, and I commend them for the great work that they do.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: I have one matter for clarification, because there is a spectre in my mind now that has been opened and not responded to. I would be devastated—and I do not believe that this is the case—if any part of this legislation could in any way undermine or infringe or threaten the ability of either custodial parent to do the job of parenting across-the-board in a wholesome, healthy, pure and parenting way. I believe that this legislation is only directed at those parents who wittingly or unwittingly have found parenting too difficult or have abused their children in some way.

Mr REEVES: The member for Gladstone is 100 per cent accurate in her assessment of this bill and this change contained in this clause. She is exactly right. It is not about trying to restrict the normal parenting that many people have done and will continue to do in the future.

Clause 10, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 11 and 12, as read, agreed to.

Clause 13, as read, agreed to.

Clause 14—

Mr MESSENGER (4.29 pm): The minister said in his last reply that it is up to the court and that we should all feel comforted because it is the court that makes decisions regarding the guilt or innocence of people in child safety matters. He has failed to recognise that, in reality, it could be quite a while before people accused of harming their children actually get before the court. There is a process that child safety officers may use that will delay the person's day in court. I would rejoice if everyone accused of harming their children or sexually abusing their children were able to have their day in court and have that matter heard fully before a magistrate.

Clause 14 is titled 'Replacement of s 15 (Child's parents to be told about allegation of harm and outcome of investigation)'. From my experience, this process is able to be dragged out for quite a while. It is not unheard of for parents or people accused of harming their children to not have their case fully heard before a magistrate, for their case not to be put before a judge, for quite a period of time—10 months or more. Through a very tricky series of adjournments and legal procedures—

Mr REEVES: I rise to a point of order. Because of previous speeches the member for Burnett has made in this House, everyone knows only too well the case that he is talking about. As has been ruled by the Speaker, the case is now sub judice. Mr Deputy Speaker, I request your ruling on this.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): Member for Burnett, I would caution you against speaking in this House about matters that are currently before the court.

Mr MESSENGER: Might I say that I am speaking to a general principle here; I am not invoking any particular case. I think the minister doth protest too much. I take members to new section 15, titled 'Child's parents and long-term guardians to be told about allegation of harm and outcome of investigation'. New subsection (2)(a) states—

Gives details of the alleged harm or risk of harm to at least 1 of the child's parents.

How do those police officers or authorised officers give details? Are they able to convey those details orally? Do they have to put them in a written format? The new section then says a little bit further down at new subsection (2)(b)(i)—

Tell at least 1 of the child's parents about the outcome of the investigation.

Why have these officers been given the option of not officially recording the outcome of investigations? It appears to me that there can be phone calls made to people who are the subject of allegations of harm and the information that has been conveyed to those people not officially recorded. I note that new subsection (2)(b)(ii) states—

If asked by the parent, give the information about the outcome of the investigation to the parent in writing.

But that is only if the parent asks for it in writing. Surely it should be a matter of course that matters of such grave importance are put in black and white, otherwise Child Safety Services is opening itself up to a whole world of trouble when it comes to legal matters that would surely follow.

I would hope that the minister can answer this question. Is the officer, after they have given the information about the outcome of the investigation—perhaps they have said, 'Okay, there is nothing that I can charge you over, there is nothing that you have done wrong'—able to officially tell the parent that they will not be charging them but then at a later date change their mind, depending on the information that may come back? For example, the information may come back from supposedly therapeutic counselling. Child Safety might refer the parent to therapeutic counselling. Information gathered during therapeutic counselling comes back and the police officer is then able to resume their investigations with the new information received through what is supposed to be therapeutic counselling. Of course, we then have the dilemma of whether police are able to access information that is supposedly obtained from therapeutic counselling. The whole quality of the counsellor then comes into account—whether they are registered medical practitioners.

Mr REEVES: Charging people is the responsibility of the police when it comes to criminal actions, not Child Safety.

Mr MESSENGER: I still do not believe that the answer that the minister has given is a correct and sufficient answer. It is a very trite answer. The reality is that the whole procedure that an authorised officer or a police officer has to follow is prescribed in this legislation. This is what we are talking about. I would still like the answer to this question: is an officer able to officially tell the parent that they will not be charging that person? Maybe they have done that orally. They have not put that in writing, as they are able to under this legislation. Are they then able to decide to change their mind and then, for example, go and charge a person?

Mr REEVES: Can I just seek clarification? Is the member talking about a police officer charging someone or is the member talking about a child safety officer charging someone?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am sorry, Minister, but the member has had his time. You cannot ask that question of the member.

Mr REEVES: If a police officer charges someone it is a matter for the police, not a child safety officer.

Clause 14, as read, agreed to.

Clause 15, as read, agreed to.

Clause 16—

Mr DEMPSEY (4.37 pm): This section deals with the removal of children at risk of immediate harm. I ask the minister: how many children were removed because of an immediate risk of harm? Had a final child protection application been in place? What I am really worried about is what risk management procedures are put in place to avert any possible misuse of this clause in the legislation that is before the House.

Mr REEVES: Obviously I would not have that particular data that the member is asking for. I will not go through all that again because I know the member wants to get to his amendments. In this regard, it is about a temporary assessment order or a temporary custody order. A thorough investigation and assessment is undertaken. I refer the member to my answer to a question asked by the member for Gladstone about a temporary custody order. There would have been a thorough investigation prior to applying for that. It was noted that the protection order was needed. That is why we apply for a temporary custody order. But in regard to a temporary assessment order, we obviously want further assessment and further investigation. That is why they apply for that. I refer the member to the example that I gave the member for Gladstone in my reply.

Mr MESSENGER: I ask for clarification in relation to this clause. The clause seeks to insert—

(5A) However, subsection (5) does not apply if an authorised officer applies for a temporary custody order for the child.

The section to which it refers in the act proper states—

The officer must, as soon as practicable, apply for a temporary assessment order for the child.

It appears that this circumvents the need for a temporary assessment order. That, for me, is a lessening of the amount of rigour that must be applied to the risk that the child faces.

First of all, who does the temporary assessment order? Is that temporary assessment order done by a CSO or can that temporary assessment order be farmed out, if you like, to an appropriately qualified third party? Is it a health professional? Once again, can the police use the information obtained in the temporary assessment order as evidence in criminal proceedings?

Mr REEVES: I refer the member for Burnett to my reply to the member for Gladstone. As I quite clearly said, a temporary custody order is after all the assessment is done. I will give you an example. On the birth of a child, when the department has been attempting to assist the child's mother during pregnancy but considers the child is at risk when it is born, we know that we are going to have to have an order on that child. We cannot ask for a temporary assessment order because we have already assessed it, but we will have temporary custody while the department applies for a long or short-term order, whatever is appropriate in the case. It is child safety officers who carry out the assessment. We have to go to the court for the temporary custody and then go back to the court with the investigation and say that we want another order or, in fact, when a temporary assessment order may occur it might be that we work out that with support the child can stay there. It depends on the particular case. Charging is a matter for the police.

Mr MESSENGER: I understand that the police charging people is a matter for the police. Sharing information with child safety officers and the department and how they share that information and the type of information they share is also a matter for them as well, as is the weight of evidence that could be applied to someone who has been charged with harming their children. Can the minister clarify how many times a temporary custody order can be applied for? I believe it is only once, but I would like to hear the minister's statement on that. How long is the temporary custody order? Is it three days; is it longer? As we all know, child safety officers have incredible power. If they decide to try to draw out the legal process they could apply for multiple temporary custody orders. As I referred to in previous clauses, people are then delayed and they then do not have the ability to be able to present their case before a magistrate and have their voice heard. Only one side of the argument is heard in the courts. Every day that people are separated from their children must surely be like a lifetime to most loving parents.

Mr REEVES: I refer to other parts of the act where if child safety officers become aware of criminal action they must refer it to the police and obviously provide the police with any information that they request. That is the law, that is in the act and it is the right thing to do. In regard to temporary custody orders, it is three business days. We can ask for an extension for one day. It can only be once. The department must go to court to get that extension.

Clause 16, as read, agreed to.

Clause 17—

Mr MESSENGER (4.44 pm): Clause 17 is the replacement of section 20, 'Officer's obligations on taking child into custody.' It reads—

- (1) This section applies if an authorised officer or police officer takes a child into the chief executive's custody.
- (2) If the child does not have long-term guardians, the officer must, as soon as practicable—
 - (a) take reasonable steps to tell at least 1 of the child's parents—
 - (i) that the child has been taken into custody and the reasons for the action.

I would like the minister to clarify whether an officer is obliged to inform the parents of their legal rights at this particular moment in time. When is a child safety officer supposed to inform parents of their legal rights when the children are taken away from them? What does the minister know of the legal rights of the parents?

Mr REEVES: Obviously when orders are made we inform those who are affected by those orders of their rights, their rights in regard to appeals and a range of things. That is the general practice of child safety officers in regard to all that.

Mr MESSENGER: It is a bit like 'the vibe' really. Not a very detailed or complete answer, Mr Deputy Speaker. I will reiterate my question: is an officer obliged to inform parents of their legal rights and detail in the process when the parents are entitled to have their rights told to them? I would have thought that at the very beginning, as soon as the department engages a parent or a long-term guardian in this process, that they would be informed immediately of their legal rights as the department sees them. Anything less than informing people of their legal rights would be denying them natural justice and abusing their civil liberties, I would have thought. The other issue is in (b), which states—

tell the child about their being taken into the chief executive's custody.

I was wondering how they are going to tell the child. In what form? Are they going to sit down and orally tell the child? Are they going to tell an independent legal representative of the child? Are they going to appoint a legal representative of the child and inform that independent legal representative?

Mr REEVES: Under this section, an authorised officer or a police officer who takes a child into custody under section 18 will be required to take reasonable steps to tell at least one parent of the child that the child has been taken into custody, the reasons and when the custody ends. That is how it is operating. Obviously in some cases there would be difficulty finding the parents. Do not forget that in some circumstances the reason the child is being removed might be because they have been abused and that person may be facing criminal charges and the like.

Clause 17, as read, agreed to.

Clause 18—

Mr DEMPSEY (4.49 pm): Clause 18 amends section 21A relating to unborn children. Subsection (3) states—

If the child is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child, the chief executive or an authorised officer must consult with a recognised entity for the child for the purpose of—

- (a) assessing the likelihood that the child may be in need of protection after he or she is born;

We have spoken about REs and the circumstances involved there. What resources will the minister give to REs in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to assist them with clause 18, for the betterment of the unborn child?

Mr REEVES: I have spoken about the resources we are giving recognised entities. The previous act did not allow us to get advice in relation to unborn child notifications and we have put that into this bill. Recognised entities are not just in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; they exist throughout the whole of Queensland. As we know, 75 per cent of Indigenous people live in urban and regional areas, not in distinct communities. Throughout the length and breadth of Queensland we have 11 recognised entities, as of a couple of days ago.

Mr DEMPSEY: I have a few concerns, particularly in relation to this clause, about the resourcing of REs within the communities, particularly in Far North Queensland. There may be issues relating to a family's cultural heritage which can differ from community to community, yet a child may have to relocate to Mount Isa, Cairns or Thursday Island. If REs are properly supported within the communities, it may break the cycle of people having to transfer to larger communities and all of the issues of cultural significance that are involved, as well as the partnerships and the advancement that we see with other government departments getting involved in relation to drugs and alcohol, domestic violence, housing and so forth. If we can put a little upfront in relation to the REs and fully support them, we could stop that cycle occurring whereby members of Indigenous communities have to relocate to major centres because of a need. People, quite rightly, have the right to go wherever they want, but if there are REs in those areas we should be able to help them.

Mr REEVES: I should be clear that recognised entities provide advice. They are not going in there to provide support services; they provide advice. The whole idea of the new hub-and-spoke model is that you would have the administration based at, for example, Cairns. They would have contacts who would give them advice about the particular areas that they service. They do not have to have a physical office in every location, but there will be justice groups and a range of people whom they can rely on to provide information to Child Safety as part of the recognised service. That is the whole idea of the hub-and-spoke model.

Mr DEMPSEY: To clarify that, the REs will not be on the ground within those communities but will be located in major centres and will give advice to the non-government sector. We might not be able to change this tonight but, as with the issue with grandparents, we need to identify the fact that REs need resources and a connection within certain communities to stop people travelling. I have spoken to a lot of mothers in Cairns, Mount Isa and further north who, because of cultural sensitivities and so forth, have to relocate. There are a range of issues that come with that. It puts a lot of pressure on those family units.

Mr REEVES: The relocation that the member is talking about occurs with the placement. REs would use people in each community. Those could be representatives from justice groups or a range of other people who have information about particular family situations in the communities. The physical office may be at a regional centre. Obviously, that is up to the recognised entity that is being funded. They will have contacts within the communities to provide that service. What the member is talking about is when there are no carers available in a particular community and someone has to be moved. That occurs particularly in some of the cape communities where they will be moved to Cairns. That is when the dislocation occurs. That is the whole purpose of safe houses.

Clause 18, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 19 to 21, as read, agreed to.

Clause 22—

Mr DEMPSEY (4.54 pm): Clause 22 relates to the duration of temporary assessment orders. The amendment of section 29 refers to three business days. My concern is that, particularly in isolated and rural areas, the situation could arise where, because of necessity or issues that come up within the department, a child may be taken on a Friday or on the day before a public holiday. For example, if they are taken on Friday that is one business day and Monday and Tuesday would be another two business days, so they are actually away from their support base for five days. Can the minister clarify what he means by 'three business days'? I am concerned that that time could be extended. We all know about the importance of realistic time frames to ensure that the issues in relation to that child are dealt with quickly and action is taken quickly.

Mr REEVES: First of all, we have to convince the court to give us this judgement. Using the example of the member, it might be Friday and the Monday is a public holiday. One of the referrals may have been from the education sector. Perhaps a teacher reported to a principal, who then reported to Child Safety. We then assess the case and may decide that we need to get a temporary assessment order to remove that child immediately. Sometimes it is very difficult, particularly in remote communities, to access the teacher who referred the matter so that we can get all the information we need. Therefore, allowing three business days allows flexibility. Before we get those three business days we have to get approval from the court to allow it. We have to have enough evidence for that to occur. However, the member should not forget the paramount principle, which is the safety and wellbeing of the child. That safety and wellbeing should not be restricted because it is a weekend or a public holiday and we cannot contact the people we need to get the information from to get a final order.

Mr DEMPSEY: I understand that, but I am concerned about what happens after an order is put in place. I have practical examples of this. A person within the department may not be able to liaise with the other government officers before they go into a community. Problems could arise around transport and getting flights. There are logistics involved in being in a certain place by a certain time. If the child is taken away, a whole range of other complex issues arise. For example, other family members may need to get to the central area to assist the investigation and the department.

What risk management procedures are in place when these orders are put in place? They are put on paper, but what practical measures will ensure that those three business days are worked out in the best interests of the child and not in the best interests of a procedure? That is my concern. Perhaps something is written out on one day but it is not enforced until a couple of days later because of technicalities or workloads. That could mean that the child is kept away over the weekend.

I am the first person to say that we should take a child out of a dangerous situation. However, if we can manage that process a lot better it would be better for the department. To quote myself on bean counters, obviously it is financially beneficial if the department can deal with the situation as quickly as possible, rather than stagger it out over a weekend or a public holiday or extend it for any other reason. I am asking for a form of better management in relation to that process. Does the minister have procedures in place to ensure that those three business days are taken into account?

Mr REEVES: I refer to what we have said. As I said before, we have doubled the staff and tripled the budget and the resources. I used the example of education. The process to apply for a temporary assessment order is that there would be enough evidence and a judgement would be made by the professionals who would say, 'We believe this child is going to have to be removed from this family for safety reasons.' So we would remove the child and apply for a temporary assessment order. We would get the information, go to court and the court would then agree with the order. Let us not put that child at risk just for the sake of three days. If it happened over a long weekend and we could not get all the information, we could not go to the court and say, 'We need a long order.' In reverse, if we do not remove the child immediately because we may not be able to get hold of the principal or the teacher or the health professional, or whoever it may be who referred the case, to get more information and to investigate, or the family might have gone missing in action so we cannot find them, then we put that child at risk. Quite frankly, I will go for the safety of the child first. It is three business days. In reality, the most it could possibly be, if it were over Christmas, would be five days.

Mr DEMPSEY: We are in agreement in part, in relation to the three business days and the priority being the best interests of the child. What I have concerns about is, because of the procedure of notifications and so forth, a document could be signed on one particular day but not acted upon until days after. That is my worry. If an order is taken out through the department, or whatever document it may be—I have seen this time and time again—on the Monday but not acted upon until the Friday, that is an in-house issue in relation to how those documents are addressed.

If we are talking about that child being in immediate danger if that child is not removed, then I believe it is incumbent on this legislation to ensure that when those orders are taken out they must be acted upon within the first 24 hours at least—whether it be a Friday or a Monday. It has to be three business days from when those orders are taken out. When gathering evidence and so forth, not in the

immediate cases but in other cases where we know it will involve having to visit an organisation where the children are or getting the police and so forth, the procedural compliance is three business days before action is taken to remove the child from those circumstances. I seek clarification on that.

Mr REEVES: The reality is that the staff who apply for the temporary assessment order would want to work on that case as soon as possible. In a perfect world, yes, we would love to do it in a day. But let us be real here. Let us talk about the communities and the decentralised state of Queensland. We need to get this information and we need to make sure it is right and we need to investigate the circumstances. I used health as an example—nurses or doctors who may have referred a case. It might have been a GP who referred a case on a Friday afternoon. You might not be able to contact him on the weekend, for example. You might be trying to find a teacher. It is really not an issue with the child safety processes here. We have to be realistic. Ultimately, we have to make sure that the child is protected first while we go through those steps.

Clause 22, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 23 to 25, as read, agreed to.

Clause 26—

Mr DEMPSEY (5.04 pm): This is in relation to three business days again. How many extensions of temporary assessment orders have been made after three business days under existing legislation? What has happened in the past? How will this legislation free up the process to ensure orders are acted upon straightaway so we do not have to keep extending temporary assessment orders to facilitate the administration of the act in gathering evidence to provide the best outcomes for the child? To put this provision before the House, there would have been certain investigations made in relation to how many orders had been extended. Will the enactment of this legislation reduce the number of orders that will be extended?

Mr REEVES: The reality is that legislating for three business days will cut down the need for extensions because of all of those examples I gave you in a previous answer.

Clause 26, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 27 to 30, as read, agreed to.

Clause 31—

Mr DEMPSEY (5.06 pm): I move the following amendments—

1 Clause 31 (Insertion of new ch 2, pt 3AA)

Page 32, line 4, after 'on the application'—

insert—

'if the magistrate is satisfied that all reasonable steps to contact the parents have been taken'.

2 Clause 31 (Insertion of new ch 2, pt 3AA)

Page 32, line 7, after 'child'—

insert—

'as a last resort and'.

3 Clause 31 (Insertion of new ch 2, pt 3AA)

Page 32, line 13, 'action.'—

omit, insert—

'action; and

(c) there is sufficient and reliable evidence of immediate risk of harm presented to the magistrate that justifies the making of the order.'

I table the explanatory notes to the amendments.

Tabled paper: Explanatory notes to Mr Dempsey's amendments to the Child Protection and Other Acts Amendment Bill [\[2873\]](#).

The first amendment seeks to add a safeguard to ensure that all reasonable steps have been taken to contact both parents before the order is made in their absence. The second amendment makes it clear that this order should only be used as a last resort because the order has the most potential for misuse.

Mr REEVES: New section 51AD, deciding application, provides—

A magistrate may decide an application for a temporary custody order without notifying the child's parents of the application or hearing them on the application.

The proposed amendment to new section 51AD is to include the additional proviso that the 'magistrate is satisfied that all reasonable steps to contact the parents have been taken'. When the department is investigating whether or not a child is in need of protection, the aim is to work with the

child's parents to undertake the investigation for a temporary agreement. Unfortunately, assessments cannot always be undertaken with the agreement of the child's family. Section 27 enables the department in these circumstances to apply to a magistrate for a temporary assessment order so the required assessment can be undertaken. In these circumstances, it is appropriate for the magistrate to be satisfied that the department has taken all reasonable steps. That is why we would not support the amendment.

Mr DEMPSEY: I will go through these amendments individually. The amendment to part 3AA states that a magistrate should only make a temporary custody order for the child 'as a last resort' and only if the magistrate is satisfied that all attempts to contact parties have been made. The concern in relation to this is that under the current legislation only one person may be contacted. We know the complexities in relation to families in a modern society. There is a concern that, if the amendment is not agreed to, people may be able to abuse the process in relation to not advising the other person or seeking information from the other person. What steps are in place? If the requirement is only to contact one person, then that falls far short of what needs to be done in relation to accountability and getting information properly to all parties.

I will go through these provisions as they are all part of the same amendment. Proposed section 51AE inserts a provision that there is sufficient reliable evidence of immediate risk of harm presented to the court that justifies the making of such an order. Proposed new section 51AG(4) states—

Regardless of subsections (1) to (3), the order ends when the child turns 18 years.

I have concerns about the department giving responsibility away once a child turns 18. We do not do it as parents, depending on the maturity of that child. For instance, we know that we try to keep a child with disabilities within the school environment. The majority of these young children are going until 18 years of age. They might have contact with the department now already. It is about having processes in place, ensuring that we understand the complexities and having some flexibility in relation to how this legislation is administered. As the other ministers who spoke this morning have said, each section or person within Child Safety is quite different to the next. We have to ensure that we have some flexibility.

Mr REEVES: With regard to the member's concerns, I will give an example. The department may be working with a family who has entered into a child protection care agreement with the department for out-of-home care of the child. The family may end the agreement with two days notice to the department. They can resume care of the child unless the department takes action. If the department believes that the child continues to be in need of protection or the child's immediate safety needs to be secured, again, an assessment is not necessary. In that case they are already working with one or two of the parents. One parent might not be existing. Also, one parent may have been a perpetrator of a crime against the child, which could be the reason that Child Safety became involved in the first place. Is the member saying that that person should be involved? As I said, the department will take all reasonable steps—and I listed those reasonable steps in my reply with regard to the concerns of the member for Glass House.

With regard to the other amendments, we believe that the clauses in the bill sufficiently and adequately cover those concerns. We will not be supporting the opposition's amendments.

Non-government amendments (Mr Dempsey) negated.

Clause 31, as read, agreed to.

Clause 32—

Mr DEMPSEY (5.13 pm): Clause 32 deals with how case plans must be carried out. This amendment seeks to omit the editor's note regarding the need to ensure a culturally specific process. The explanatory notes give no reason why this important note is being deleted. What possible explanation can the minister give for this amendment?

Mr REEVES: I refer the member to the submission of the organisation that the member for Bundaberg, the member for Currumbin, the member for Aspley and a couple of other members referred to, and that is PeakCare. It is important in the context of this debate that I read into the record its submission regarding long-term guardianship orders made with a third party. It states—

There is a need to strike a balance between oversight and stability for children and to ensure that children remain in contact with—

Sorry, I have the wrong one there—

... in operation for a child under guardianship to a third party.

Mr DEMPSEY: Clause 32 details how case plans must be carried out. The amendment seeks to delete a key editor's note regarding the need to ensure a culturally specific process. What possible explanation can the minister give for this amendment in relation to how case plans are carried out?

Mr REEVES: When case planning is carried out, all the circumstances of the child or young person are taken into account, including their history. In relation to those with an Indigenous background, it takes into account their cultural circumstances and education plans in a range of circumstances. If reunification is an option it details the steps for that. It deals with visits and a range of other things.

Clause 32, as read, agreed to.

Clause 33, as read, agreed to.

Clause 34—

Mr DEMPSEY (5.19 pm): This clause relates to the length of time required when dealing with a case plan developed at a meeting. What systems are in place to ensure that workloads do not interfere with case loads? How is this change in the legislation justified?

Mr REEVES: With regard to workloads, it is the responsibility of the team leaders and the managers of child safety centres to work with child safety officers on case planning and fulfil the requirements of the legislation.

Clause 34, as read, agreed to.

Clause 35, as read, agreed to.

Clause 36—

Mr DEMPSEY (5.20 pm): I move the following amendments—

4 Clause 36 (Insertion of new s 51VA)

Page 40, line 2, '12 months'—

omit, insert—

'3 months'.

5 Clause 36 (Insertion of new s 51VA)

Page 40, line 5, '12 months'—

omit, insert—

'3 months'.

These amendments address the extension of the review of the plan to 12 months. This amendment is about ensuring that children in care get regular contact with their child safety officer. A 12-month period between that contact is obviously dangerous and unacceptable. We would like some other system put in place to at least bring the period between contacts back to three months.

If we look at the recommendations of the CMC we see that Child Safety itself recognises that case planning is a process used to make sure that children and young people in out-of-home care receive the care and support they need, including maintaining contact with their family. A case plan is designed to meet the needs of children and young people ranging from placement and support, health and education to emotional and social development. Children and young people should be involved in case planning in a way that is appropriate for their age and their development.

In relation to case planning, the CMC recommended that all children have an identified and designated caseworker from the department of child safety who maintains regular contact with that child and is responsible for the development of a detailed case plan that focuses on both the short- and long-term needs of the child. According to the CMC, the plan must be reviewed at least every six months. It believes that children need regular access to a worker who represents their best interests and develops a comprehensive and evolving case plan for their long-term wellbeing.

My other concern in relation to this 12-month review period concerns the children's commissioner. We have seen the inspection times relating to young children put back. We have seen the oversight and overview of the processes of child safety and the checks and balances taken away. There will obviously be a further erosion of the process if we extend this period to 12 months. The reason for bringing it back to three months is to have a shorter time between contacts to alleviate a child's concerns in relation to a placement, to know what is happening to the child and to make sure that there are no other views the child wants to express in relation to their home, how they are being cared for and so forth. As parents, we speak to our own children more than three times a year. Blinky Bill the koala over there gets a lot of attention. It is incumbent on us to make sure that these children have an inspection process more than every 12 months.

I believe that these amendments are a common-sense approach to ensuring that the rights of children are protected at all times. This will be of benefit to the department as well. It will be able to gain information from the child on how he or she is going in their situation.

These circumstances are borne out of great deal of dysfunctionality. We have cases where there has been drug and alcohol abuse or mental health issues. This may not just be on the part of adults but on the part of children. We talk about health passports and education plans and so forth, but these are areas that need to be checked on.

Whilst I have the utmost respect—and I have said this time and time again—for carers and foster carers and people who take young children into their lives, they need support as well. It is incumbent on this government to give that support. If they are not heading in the right direction they need to be given assistance. It works in all ways. By reducing those inspections to three months it helps all those involved—the adult and the child. It would also assist child safety workers as well. It is all about breaking the cycle.

It is not good enough to keep stretching out this responsibility for young people. It would open up avenues for accusations of ill-treatment. A lot of the negative aspects of child safety could be borne out and grow in those circumstances.

Mr REEVES: I should make it clear that the young people we are talking about here are those in long-term guardianship situations other than with the chief executive officer. These are long-term guardians for children that the courts have ordered to be suitable relatives or suitable persons to the age of 18 when it is satisfied that the persons will be able to meet the child's needs in the long term. The court has made that decision. If the order is made, the child is no longer in care or in the guardianship of the chief executive.

The relationship between the child and the long-term guardian and guardian's family should be regarded the same as any other family. An intrusion into the relationship should be no more than is necessary. However, the new section recognises that the department still has a role in case planning for the child but places the control of the child in the hands of the long-term guardian. It requires the department to contact the child at least once every 12 months to give the child the opportunity to discuss the case plan and ask for a review. It also provides that at any other time the child or the guardian may contact the department.

PeakCare is the body which the member has quoted all day and all night. I think it is important in the context of this debate to read what it said. It stated—

There is a need to strike a balance between oversight and stability for children and to ensure that children remain in contact with relatives and parents. PeakCare believe there should be no child safety case plans in operation for a child under guardianship to a third party.

Mr DEMPSEY: It still beggars belief that a child in a long-term guardianship arrangement should only be inspected or even asked how things are going every 12 months. We are talking about a child. It should not be determined that we should not ask questions of a child who is 14 years of age that we ask of a child who is five years of age.

There has to be some compassion within the process to enable more inspections for the benefit of the child, and at the end of the day we are talking about what is in the best interests of the child. The minister can say that, yes, it is a perfect scenario, but there have to be risk management procedures and flexibility in terms of the 12 months when the child goes into that care arrangement. There has to be some flexibility in that there should be inspections every three months until we know that the child's needs are met and all parties involved are comfortable with the process. Once that occurs, that period of time can be lengthened. However, in its infancy this needs to be a shorter period to ensure that everybody's rights are respected for the sake of all parties involved.

Mr REEVES: I refer to my previous answer. The safeguard is there because there is contact by the guardian with the child and we can do a review.

Debate, on motion of Mr Reeves, adjourned.

MOTION

Sale of Public Assets

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (5.30 pm): I move—

That this House:

1. Notes the Premier's public comments supporting the right for Labor MPs to have their say on the Labor government's plans to privatise assets;
2. Notes reported comments in the media from select Labor MPs claiming they wish to raise concerns about the privatisation of Queensland's assets;

And therefore, suspends so much of standing and sessional orders so as to allow, at 7.30 pm this night, the following members of parliament to be given 10 minutes each to raise their concerns with the state government's privatisation plans:

- the member for Murrumba, Dean Wells;
- the member for Bundamba, Jo-Ann Miller;
- the member for Townsville, Mandy Johnstone;
- the member for Keppel, Paul Hoolihan; and
- the member for Mundingburra, Lindy Nelson-Carr.

It is terrific to have an opportunity to put on the record the LNP's position on Labor's privatisation, and of course it is even better tonight because for the first time we might get to hear the views on privatisation of those members opposite in the parliament. We have heard lots of talk from this government out in the electorate about this issue—lots of foisting things on the electorate that were not promised at the last election—but the member for South Brisbane has come into this place and foisted it on the people of Queensland, showing contempt for the views of the people of Queensland when we put forward our manifestos at the last election led by the then Leader of the Opposition, the member for Southern Downs.

Of course, some of these members have had a bit to say in their electorates but they have been strangely silent in this House. Today they have the opportunity to stand up for their electorates in this place. Today they have the opportunity to put on the record their views about the way their Labor government has treated the employees of Queensland Rail, the ports, the forestries and of course the motorways. Today they have the opportunity to clearly enunciate their views so that the electors know that they are not being two-faced—saying one thing at home in the electorate while being totally silent here, where it matters.

Last weekend we heard from these five members that they were going to go to caucus and express their views about privatisation and leadership, but of course yesterday the Premier had to retract her statement that there had been no discussion about leadership because of course there had! But the Premier cannot even tell the truth between caucus on Monday and parliament on Tuesday.

The question is: will these Labor members take the opportunity, or will they squib it? Will the member for Bundamba speak up for rail workers, or will she run and hide? Will the member for Keppel put the interests of his electors before his ambition to have a ministerial chauffeur? Will the member for Townsville articulate the views of the north, or will she cower to the will of the Treasurer and the Premier?

Will the member for Mundingburra—a former minister—express the views of the residents of the Railway Estate in her electorate, or will she allow herself to be gagged by the Brisbane factional bosses? I was at the Railway Estate State School on the Saturday of the federal election, and CFMEU members came up to me wearing shirts saying 'Queensland—not for sale'. They said that this Premier had sold them out and that they would not be voting for Labor again, either at that federal election or at the subsequent state election.

What about the member for Murrumba, the Hon. Dean Wells? Once a lion of the Labor Party—a former education minister, a former Attorney-General—he has now been reduced to kitenesque stature. Is he a man of conviction, or is he a man of compliance and of docile concurrence with the young turk from Mount Coot-tha? Will he roar like the lion that he once was, with some of that verbiage that we know he comes in here with, or will he allow himself to be gagged? Is he going to pump out his chest, or will he be led around by the nose?

Today is the day we discover just how serious these members are. Today is the day we also discover how genuine the Premier is when she states that she supports the right of Labor MPs to have their say. We again heard from the Premier on Monday that she was listening and hearing after the federal election result, but of course she has then subsequently come into this place and said that nothing will change. Today is the day we discover if it is business as usual—when Labor MPs just take their instructions from the Premier—or if they are really listening. That is what the people of Queensland deserve to hear in this place. We need to hear the views of their electorates, where the people have clearly said that there was no consultation with the electorates about privatisation, there was no consideration for the long-term economic interests of Queensland, there was no consideration for what is going to happen to prices—and we have seen what happened when this government privatised the retail arm of electricity. There was a guarantee that there would be no increase in electricity prices. There have been no customer service obligations enforced by this government. There is debate about how it should be sold off, and today we are seeing debate within Queensland Rail as the government potentially considers changing the vertically integrated model of sale. There is debate from the CEO of Queensland Rail about the threat to jobs.

When this government has privatised, it has done it without consultation, and these members need to stand up. If they are prevented from speaking, it will be proof positive that nothing has changed—the same old Labor, the same old cowardly MPs selling out their voters for a slap on the back and a wink from the most unpopular Premier in Queensland's history. But worse than that, it goes to the heart of what they do when they are in their own electorates. When speaking to their local media—and I

have been in many of these areas—I have heard members talking about what it is they are going to do when they get to Brisbane, and then when they get to Brisbane they do not actually do anything like that at all. They are in the caucus room and supposedly saying something, but there is never any proof of that outside of the caucus room.

I have been puzzled in the past couple of weeks by the statements of these members. As I have said already, there are two personas—one for the electorate, one for the parliament. So who do we see in the chamber today? Do we see the Bundamba Jo-Ann Miller or the Brisbane Jo-Ann?

Mr Schwarten: What you say in the boardroom is different from what you say here.

Mr LANGBROEK: I have said this before in answer to those interjections in terms of what I say in the boardrooms: there are no Chatham House rules for me! I will say everything in the boardroom that I say here.

Government members interjected.

Mr LANGBROEK: No Chatham House rules for me!

Mr Schwarten: You'll be struck down!

Mr LANGBROEK: I will say and do in the boardroom what I say here, because it will not take much for me to contrast with this government, which refuses to tell people what it is going to do and then changes things after the election.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr LANGBROEK: The Minister for Public Works is the worst example of it, and that misrepresentation that happened at the Master Builders function earlier this year—

Mr Schwarten: Absolutely true!

Mr LANGBROEK: I called him because he tried to imply that our policies would be a reflection of the things that the Master Builders had done.

Mr Schwarten: Absolutely. That's what you said.

Mr LANGBROEK: I said very clearly then that I would not be misrepresented by the member for Rockhampton, and I will not be misrepresented by him now. It might have worked with other people, but it will not work with me because I am straight up and I am going to tell people what we are going to do and then we are going to deliver it. Are we going to see the Townsville Mandy or the Brisbane Mandy? Will it be the Keppel Paul or the Brisbane Paul? Will it be the Mundingburra Lindy or the Brisbane Lindy? Will it be the Murrumba Dean or the Brisbane Dean?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable gentleman should refer to people by their correct title.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you for your guidance, Mr Speaker.

Mr Schwarten: What projects are you reassessing? Tell us that!

Mr LANGBROEK: These members cannot go on having split personalities, and I note again in the interjection from the member for Rockhampton a misrepresentation of what the shadow Treasurer said on radio on Saturday. What we have committed to and will continue to commit to is stopping the waste of this Labor government that adds up to billions of dollars in our annual budgets as exemplified by the Health payroll crisis and as exemplified by the water grid and the desalination plant.

That is what we have committed to. As I showed this morning, the reassessment also comes from the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning and the Premier herself, who said that they are going to reassess the SEQ plan. I have tabled those papers. As if the member for Rockhampton is not reassessing Shared Service, because if he is not, given that the Auditor-General has just given a damning indictment of his failures—costing hundreds of millions of dollars—he should be out of a job. Of course they are reassessing Shared Service. That is what they should be reassessing. If the member for Rockhampton, the Minister for Public Works, is not prepared to do it, then clearly he is derelict in his duty.

Either those members oppose the greatest betrayal of Queenslanders ever or they endorse it. Either they oppose the fire sale of some of this state's most strategic assets or they endorse it. There is no middle ground; nowhere to hide. I am going to travel to each of those members' electorates to let the people there know how those members have deceived and misled the people of Queensland. I will be in Townsville again on Friday and Saturday and in Cairns. I look forward to going to the cafes at North Ward and the Railway Estate to explain to those electors that their spineless and witless members have sold them out. I will tell them how they were tricked and deceived into believing that their Labor members would stand up for them. I will tell them that they are right to be angry with Labor.

The LNP is the only party that will properly represent the interests of their families, that will get Queensland moving again, that will tell the truth before the next election, that will restore trust and dignity, that will fix this state's economy, that will fix the health system, that will keep taxes and charges low, that will cut the waste, that will cut the debt and that will get back Queensland's AAA credit rating. When the time comes to vote I say to those members to vote with their conscience, vote with 85 per cent of Queenslanders and vote with the LNP.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (5.41 pm): Tonight is an opportunity for the member for Murrumba, the member for Keppel, the member for Bundamba, the member for Mundingburra and the member for Townsville to come out of hiding and tell us what they really think when it comes to the issue of privatisation. Lo and behold, since this morning when they did not have very much to say, they are on the speakers list and they are going to participate in this debate tonight.

But it is a far cry from being on this speakers list to saying what you believe. It is going to be very interesting to see if the amendment that the government will move a little later on when it has the opportunity is going to have another mealy-mouthed persona as those members take the opportunity to walk away from those principles that they seem to espouse so fulsomely and so honestly in the electorates but, when it comes in here, they just melt like ice cubes.

Over the last week or so we have seen something very interesting. We have had those Labor members of parliament go out there with all of the hand wringing, all of the chest thumping and all of the brow wiping and all of the fretting over the evils of privatisation. They said that they were going to raise merry hell when they got into the caucus meeting on Monday. Even the lion, as the Leader of the Opposition indicated—albeit a slightly philosophical one—the member for Murrumba, said that it was not a revolt; it was just a rethink. What happened when they got into the caucus room was absolutely classic roll-over Labor tactics. We saw high fives behind the caucus door, we saw belly rubs, we saw tickles and giggles and we saw 'Big' Bill send the message saying, 'Suck it up fellows, you are just going to have to take it. That is the way it is. Nothing is going to change because I have delivered the edict.' That is what we have in Queensland. 'Big' Bill is continuing to run the show. He ran it on Monday and he will continue to run the show in Queensland. Behind the belly rubs, the high fives and everyone gladhanding, we had absolutely nothing but the meekest of all revolts.

This week we have seen the greatest of all stunts from this government as it seeks to walk away from its own unpopularity—the unpopularity of the terminal and long-term Labor administration. It has now discovered that there are other Queenslanders out there. Lo and behold, the Labor members are going to arrange to go and meet one. Of course, they will have to be counselled beforehand, they will have to be advised beforehand and they will have to put the people up on a board to see what they actually look like. They are going to go out there and find a real Queenslander and they are going to walk in their shoes—or so they tell us. Last week I spent an intensive week in my electorate going to the various community meetings and into the halls. Guess what? The people there were telling me last week what they were telling me the week before and the month before and the year before, and that is that they have been deceived by a Labor government that did not have the mandate to privatise their generational assets—their assets that belong not only to them and their children and their grandchildren but their parents and their grandparents. Those same people were telling me last week what they were telling me last month and last year and that is that we have a long-term, terminal Labor government that is in denial, that has its fingers in its ears, that just does not get it.

This week we saw the Premier come into this place and say that there were messages in the federal election, that the government had listened to what these messages were in the federal election, but she was not able to tell us what those messages were in the federal election. I can tell members what they were: that the people of Queensland feel utterly and absolutely deceived by this Labor government. The people who feel the most deceived by this Labor government are those members who supported this Labor government most loyally for so long—the rank-and-file unionists who the honourable Leader of the Opposition said walked into the polling booths of Townsville and said, 'No way are we going to ever vote for the Labor Party in Queensland ever again.'

This government has no mandate for privatisation. All it has done is deceive the people of Queensland. I can tell members that the people of Queensland are saying that they do not trust this Labor government anymore. They see an absolute inconsistency with this approach from this government.

The other thing that we need to have from those honourable members when they stand up tonight to try to explain away their support for privatisation in the caucus and in the parliament and their opposition to it in the community is how Queensland got to this position—how we lost our AAA credit rating in the middle of the biggest boom ever, why all of the other Australian states had equally the same global financial crisis but they did not need to sell a generational asset to prop up their economics and to prop up their budgets, and how those states do not have this debt problem that Queensland has because we have an incompetent Labor government. It is time for those members to speak up.

Hon. DM WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (5.46 pm): I move the following amendment—

That all words after 'House' be deleted and the following words inserted:

- notes the LNP 2009 Economic Policy Statements at the last election stated 'An LNP government would not oppose privatisation of public assets';
- notes that the 'Draft Economic Policy Statement 2010' on the LNP website supports privatisation by stating 'The LNP is not philosophically opposed to the sale of non strategic or redundant assets';
- notes the public statements by the Leader of the Opposition of May 4 2010, where he said 'We are about true privatisation';
- notes the public statements by the shadow Treasurer from *Hansard* of 30 November 2006, where in a debate about the privatisation of the electricity retailers, he said 'It is important to give credit to the government for at last accepting the benefits of privatisation, but this government's effort is halfhearted at best. One has to ask: Why not sell the poles and wires as well? Why not sell the generators as well?';
- notes the public statements by the member for Moggill in 2006, when he said 'sometimes we need to sell government owned assets in order to reinvest those funds in more urgently needed infrastructure that it is more appropriate for a government to provide'; and
- condemns the Shadow Treasurer's public comments calling for projects to be cut from the building program, jeopardising both Queensland's economic recovery and the jobs of thousands of Queenslanders.

The Labor Party is the lion. I merely have the honour on this particular occasion of moving the roar. It begins by rehearsing the LNP's 2009 economic policy statement, which states—

An LNP government would not oppose privatisation of public assets

and concludes with—

Condemns the shadow Treasurer's public comments calling for projects to be cut from the building program, jeopardising the economic recovery and the jobs of Queenslanders.

I thank the opposition for its kind offer of 10 minutes, but I will only need five because that is all it takes to expose the cant and hypocrisy of the LNP. When we hear the LNP criticising asset sales, we hear Dracula arguing for the inviolability of the blood bank. The LNP is the party of privatisation for goodness sake. It is endemic in its make-up. It is emblazoned on its foreheads. Conservatives are the party of small government, the banner bearers of economic rationalist philosophy, the self-styled authentic voice of market economics. They are everlastingly lecturing us on how governments should not be running things that private enterprise can do better.

They ran amok in Victoria under Kennett and privatised everything that anyone could possibly turn a profit out of—from the Melbourne trams to ambulances. When they were last in office here, the first thing they did was to freeze public capital works. Their own professed philosophy is small government and privatisation and yet they would have us believe that they are opposed to these particular asset sales. Their view is that government should not own anything out of which the private sector could turn a profit—except, of course, the particular assets that the government proposes to sell.

If anyone thinks that the members of the opposition are sincere when they say that they would not sell the assets in question, ask them this: if they are in favour of selling everything then why would they have not sold these? If anyone thinks they can preserve the size of the public sector by letting the LNP manage it then they would also have to think that you could prevent fires by putting pyromaniacs in charge of the fire brigade.

When a Labor government, responding to a revenue shortage caused by a global financial crisis, decides to dispose of some assets, that is one thing. You can argue about it, you can hear your constituents' concerns about it, you can take those concerns to parliamentary party meetings, as I have. A Labor government moved by economic necessity is one kind of thing; a tory government moved by a driving ideological commitment to privatisation is another thing entirely. A tory government would sell these assets and more—much more, not because they were in extraordinary economic circumstances but because they believe that the government should own as little as possible.

When constituents raise this issue with me I tell them that there is a fundamental divide in Australian politics. There is one party that supports social justice as its primary principle; there is another party that supports private individual economic opportunity as its primary principle. It does sometimes happen that the party most deeply concerned about social justice takes a decision to sell a government asset, but when it does, it does it because it believes that it is the only way to get the best outcome for the battlers. More often the party of individual economic initiative sells off government assets, but when it does it, it does it because it is ideologically driven to do it. It is not rocket science. Whatever your view on the sale of these particular assets, the Bligh Labor government is certain to deliver more social justice than the conservatives ever would and it is certain to retain more assets.

During the global financial crisis, Australia was the only country in the OECD that did not go into technical recession. We were saved from the worst ravages of that crisis by an interventionist Labor federal government and an interventionist Labor state government with a big capital works program. So

when the advocates of small government on the other side of the House tell you that they would not sell those assets, do not believe them. They are shamelessly preaching against their own religion in the hope of gaining a short-term political advantage.

Mr HOOLIHAN (Keppel—ALP) (5.51 pm): I second the amendment to the motion moved by my colleague the member for Murrumba and I welcome the opportunity to give the people of Queensland and this House an outline of the sheer duplicity of the LNP. All members of the Labor Party have at heart the concerns and welfare of the people they represent. We as members of the Labor caucus represent our constituents and bring forward for consideration matters brought to us by those people. I mention for the shell-like ears of the tyros like the member for Kawana—and I think I should probably include the member for Southern Downs in this—that one sometimes has to live in the real world to understand what happens there. Experience is a great teacher and I would commend to him some forethought before he professes to lecture people who have lived, perhaps before he was born, in some of the eras to which he refers.

In 2008 serious concerns were expressed to me when the global financial crisis hit the worldwide economy and my constituents were bombarded almost on a daily basis with layoffs and reductions in jobs. Ordinary Queenslanders being thrown onto unemployment queues was of major concern to me and to the government as a whole. I happen to recall the loss of jobs between 1995 and 1997-98 when funding was cut to government programs by the Borbidge government. For instance, the member for Toowoomba South as health minister directed that \$100 million be cut from the Health budget virtually overnight. Rockhampton Hospital funding was reduced by \$9 million resulting in a seriously defective accident and emergency building from which it is only now recovering at four times the cost with state government funding and Commonwealth funding from the Rudd government.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr HOOLIHAN: There was also the August 1996 plan of the member for Toowoomba South to privatise cleaning and catering services at Rockhampton Hospital. In a world of shrinking finances for governments and private enterprise, our promise to the people of Queensland in relation to jobs became very difficult. Infrastructure spending by government was needed to replace private funds as many workers throughout other regions of Queensland were thrown on the scrap heap of unemployment.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr HOOLIHAN: I had reservations at the 2009 budget briefing which proposed any asset sales but, with some serious misgivings, I supported the limited asset sale.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr HOOLIHAN: I did weigh up that funding put into new infrastructure projects would acquire additional assets. Major concerns for me arose when borrowed funds were being used to support private operators, mainly coalmining companies, which were actually receiving the benefit of borrowings that could go into schools and hospitals.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Toowoomba South, I cannot hear the honourable member for Keppel.

Mr HOOLIHAN: It has been the misrepresentation of the media and LNP which has caused so much fear for Queenslanders. The majority of concerns relate to the sale of QR. I have received many complaints about asset sales but I have also received many complaints about the way employees were treated. If the sale were to proceed protection of workers was also required. It is a Labor government that looks after workers in all the circumstances. One of the later speakers will illustrate how much this mob cared for the workers.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Stop the clock. I will just wait for the member for Gregory to settle down.

Mr Shine: It will be some time!

Mr SPEAKER: It will not be some time. He will settle down.

Mr HOOLIHAN: I have promoted the issues passed on to me by my constituents about asset sales. I raised the issue in May and promoted deputations by concerned union members with the Premier at the country cabinet at Emu Park. That is a proper discharge of my obligations to all of the people I represent in this House. I have continued my discussions with ministers and the Treasurer and have taken my constituents' worries about asset sales to them. They may not always agree with me, but that is the freedom in a democracy. That is the freedom that you denied to the two people who sit up behind me—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will address his comments through the chair.

Mr HOOLIHAN: They may not always agree with me, but that is the freedom in a democracy. That is my right and I do not have to justify my actions to the LNP or the media unless the media persist in portraying the discharge of my obligations to my constituents as some argument with my caucus colleagues. These so-called friends of the working people of Queensland, who have consistently over the years treated Queenslanders with complete disdain, now try to convince everyone that they are opposed to asset sales.

As the amendment outlines clearly, the LNP are a pro-privatisation party. Elected representatives must be constantly vigilant, listening and delivering. I have been listening, I am still listening and I will continue to listen and act on the concerns of my constituents. That will enable Queenslanders to receive good, cohesive, accountable government, which is what they want and deserve and would never, ever get from an LNP government, including the empty vessels sitting behind me. I support the amendment and oppose the original motion.

Ms SIMPSON (Maroochydore—LNP) (5.56 pm): This is a Labor government that is in crisis because it has sold out its grassroots members. It has sold out the people of Queensland. They are now in revolt. When those opposite say that they are out there standing up for the people of Queensland, they are so loud that you cannot hear it above a whisper in the street. Where is the strength of the Labor Party that would stand up for the workers and oppose asset sales? They have gone to water. How interesting that we have seen 'Big' Bill Ludwig strolling the carpet of the Queensland parliament today. The boys in the back rooms are pulling the strings, telling those opposite what they are supposed to do and what to believe. But they are in crisis because they are in disarray for selling out their people.

Let us remind this House just what a Labor promise is worth. It is worth zip, it is worth zilch, it is worth zero. Who could forget the infamous backflip of the Minister for Transport, Rachel Nolan? When I asked her on 21 May last year in this parliament about the government's proposed sale of Queensland Rail she claimed that Queensland Rail was not for sale. Then four days later on the front page of the *Sunday Mail* it was.

Mr Springborg: But she didn't know.

Ms SIMPSON: She claims that she did not know. It was the worst kept secret, because that is why I asked the question in parliament. This dishonest government was trying to tell people it had a plan before the last election and then post election its plan was a secret plan because it was to flog off the assets. The minister claimed ignorance of this plan until it happened and professed at the time that she did not support the sale of Queensland Rail. Then when it happened she rolled over, just like these other members of the Labor Party on the benches opposite.

There is a message for this government: you cannot sell out the people of Queensland without them feeling betrayed, without them feeling misled and without them being angry. For this government to say that it is going on the listening offensive is only an acknowledgement that it has not been listening to the people of Queensland. The Minister for Transport sold out Queensland Rail. With the smell of ministerial leather in her nostrils, she rolled over and said that she completely supported this government. Since then we have seen a similar thing occurring with all of the adamant supporters of the Labor Party who claimed that they were against privatisation. Now they are all in love with this plan. They are willing to get behind their leader and continue to support a plan that is not in the best interests of Queensland. They are selling off the house to pay the grocery bill. It does not make sense, it does not add up and it does not address the fundamental waste and the dysfunctional way that this government runs Queensland.

Queensland has lost its AAA rating, not because of a global financial crisis but because of the absolute incompetence of yet another Labor government that could not run a chook raffle. One thing you can trust about Labor is that it will always waste money. Tragically, that is what has happened in Queensland. They have broken their promises about asset sales, they have broken their promises about the petrol tax and still they are just not listening. Leaving Labor members of parliament in charge of Queensland's vital assets is like leaving Dracula in charge of the blood bank. If you cannot trust them with money, how can you trust them to keep their promises?

Not only did Premier Bligh and Labor break their election promises on asset sales but also they keep reinventing the story about the funding for current projects in the capital program. They are at odds with what they said before the election, when they claimed all these projects were fully funded. Now they claim that cannot be done without the asset sales. Whatever way you turn, when you tell one lie and try to cover it up with another lie—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! You will withdraw that. It is unparliamentary.

Ms SIMPSON: I withdraw. If they tell one gross mistruth and try to cover it up with another gross mistruth, the people of Queensland will not wear it. They are sick of being misled. There is a message for this dishonest Labor government: it is that the people are feeling betrayed and they are feeling ripped off. The Labor ministers and the backbenchers, who claim that they are listening, simply are not listening to the people of Queensland. There is waste in this state that needs to be fixed. We have identified a number of areas. We can talk about the wasted pipelines to Traveston that are still being

built to provide 10 times the capacity that is required without the Traveston dam. That is half a billion dollars down the drain. That is a disgrace. That money should be going into hospitals and the infrastructure that is required. It should not be spent on a dam that will not be built. Another example is the new Queensland driver's licence. The cost of that started out at \$20 million and now is up to \$112 million. There is so much waste that this mob has lost touch with the value of \$1, but Queenslanders remember. They know that they are paying the price of this government's blatant mismanagement and blatant waste.

(Time expired)

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (6.02 pm): I rise in support of the amendment moved by my colleague the member for Murrumba and seconded by the member for Keppel. I represent the many hardworking men and women who work at the Queensland Rail workshops at Redbank. Those men and women work in various trades and positions—from the boilermakers and the electricians to the train drivers. Seven hundred people are employed at the workshops. Over numerous years I have visited the workshops for many reasons. I have visited the men and women in the wagon shop, the wheel shop, the paint shop, the heavy fabrication shop, the electrical passenger vehicle overhaul shop, the locomotive overhaul and repair shop and the various component overhaul shops. It takes well over three hours just to walk around the workshops, such is the size and complexity of its operations.

My Uncle Garth worked in the wagon shop until he retired. For many Ipswich families, working at Queensland Rail is not just a job; it is a generational vocation. It is what your grandfather did, it is what your father did and it is what many of our men are now doing. Being a fifth generation local, in our community I will always represent a belief in the importance of work, having a job, first-class training opportunities and generational commitment to an industry, whether it is rail, coal, meatworks, hospitality or even the Public Service.

I am proud to stand here as the member for Bundamba, knowing that I have strongly represented their interests and the interests of their families direct to the Premier, the ministers and other members of parliament in our party room. Yes, I have spoken out—absolutely. Yes, I have asked the hard questions and on a number of occasions, both inside and outside the caucus. Yes, I have not liked the answers that I have been given. Yes, I have had my say, and you know what? I will continue to have my say. Why? Because that is what my party, the Labor Party, is all about. It is about taking the issues of our local people to the very top. It is about getting a fair hearing and it is about the Premier and the ministers listening. And they do listen, even if they do not like what I am saying to them.

The motion of the opposition is not about the asset sales or the opposition pretending to be the friend of the workers. What a joke you are! It is not about privatisation. It is all about them trying to hoodwink Queenslanders so that they can gain political power. That is the main game that they are on about. The Leader of the Opposition wants to be The Stig of asset sales, but he is not in the race. He is not even at the starting line. The opposition is a joke. If the Leader of the Opposition needed a teddy bear comforter just to get through university, what crutch will he need if he ever, for God's sake, runs this state? Will he need Humphrey B Bear? Will he need Mr Squiggle at the blackboard writing out the budget? Can members imagine it: upside down, inside out, here we go, Mr Squiggle.

I have seen their record firsthand. I was on the hit list in 1995, with many other fine and decent officers of the Public Service. Under the coalition the Public Service was in disarray. There was a freeze on programs, a freeze on capital works and a freeze on decency in workplace relations. I know, because I was one of the public servants that that lot treated like dogs. They brought in the old men of yesteryear. The old tory ghosts were brought back as directors-general and they caused mayhem within the Public Service. It was disgraceful behaviour that is still evident today. Can they tell me how many of the 200,000 public servants are on a hit list for next time?

I will always represent the people in my community. I pay tribute to Clive Cooke, Brett Gamlen, Dennis Ellis and Ray Devantier of our unions and all of the men and women who work at the Redbank railway workshops. It is my job to represent them and, yes, I will do it. I will not be hoodwinked by the hypocritical opposition attempt to represent itself as the friend of the workers. They are disgusting and disgraceful. The true friends of the working class will always be the Australian Labor Party. Yes, I will represent them in our caucus. Yes, I will represent them and I will always do my best for my local people.

Mr KNUTH (Dalrymple—LNP) (6.07 pm): We have an \$85 billion deficit and we have lost our AAA credit rating. The Labor government is clutching at straws and will even blame the tories for the catastrophe. However, Labor has been in power for 18 of the past 20 years. When Goss first came to power in 1989, he could not believe what he inherited—all the assets such as power stations, dams, water infrastructure and cranes moving equipment. Then he embraced what they called the no new dams policy. That no new dams policy stopped the Wolfdene Dam, which would have provided one million megalitres of water to the south-east corner, which would have almost set it up for life. Beattie embraced the no new dams policy, but suddenly there was a water crisis in the south-east corner. Therefore, going into the 2006 election, Peter Beattie had to appear to be doing something about water

because he had built nothing. He had to set that perception. He flew over Traveston and said, 'I will build my dam here.' Now we have a \$9 billion deficit with the failed water grid and the failed Traveston dam, which would not have provided any water anyway. We had the energy crisis, then the water crisis and now we have an \$85 billion deficit and they are selling our profitable assets.

This sell-off is probably one of the greatest acts of betrayal by the Labor Party in Queensland history. I had the privilege to work for Queensland Rail for 20 years. When I first joined, a job in the railway was a job for life. We had a rail network that had a station at every town, a trucking yard every 30 kilometres and a freight service that reduced the traffic on our roads. Our small communities thrived on the back of the railways and relied upon a reliable freight service. Queensland Rail would boast about having up to 26,000 employees, and many workers were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders. This was Queensland Rail before the 19 years of Labor government under Goss, Beattie and now the public asset seller, the Bligh government. I have an extract from the *History of Maryborough Station* which I will read out in parliament. It states—

Besides the convenience of safer and more efficient travel, the railways also provided alternative employment to mining for young men. The railway men also formed a supportive group of workers for ALP which represented Maryborough in state parliament over a long period of time.

The same support to the ALP also came from the iconic workshops at Ipswich, Townsville, Banyo, Rockhampton and many other rail facilities across the state. I have spoken with rail employees who are angry, fear for their jobs and cannot believe that the Labor government has betrayed its core principles and grassroots. We never thought we would see the day when this 144-year-old Queensland icon, built by the taxpayers of Queensland through sweat and toil, would be sold. Our Citytrain and passenger service runs at a loss of \$1 billion each year and relies on the coal network to prop it up. The sale of Queensland's profitable assets will mean that the state will have little income stream for our future generations to draw from.

At the last election the LNP were open with the Queensland voters. However, the Bligh government lied and, to make matters worse—

Mr SPEAKER: You will withdraw that. It is unparliamentary.

Mr KNUTH: I apologise, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Withdraw it, please. I said withdraw it.

Mr KNUTH: I withdraw, Mr Speaker. The Bligh government is selling Queensland's profitable assets. I was hoping that after the caucus meeting on Monday the Premier would come out and announce that she has listened to the Labor backbench and Queenslanders and will not be selling these assets. I was hoping that would happen, because the rest of Queensland and I do not want to see our assets sold, particularly Queensland Rail.

The state swing was real, but it will be worse at the next election. Gone at the next election will be the seats of Brisbane Central, Mount Isa, Redcliffe, Mount Coot-tha, Pumicestone, Burleigh, Mount Ommaney, Kallangur, Pine Rivers, Ferny Grove, Mansfield, Cairns, Springwood, Townsville, Southport, Whitsunday, Toowoomba North, Barron River, Cook, Broadwater, Everton and Chatsworth. It is understandable to lose your career for standing up for your principles, but you will lose your careers for standing up for everything you do not believe in. Go back to your fundamental principles. Go back to your grassroots. Go and listen to the workers, the railway employees and the people of Queensland and support the LNP on its position to oppose these asset sales.

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (6.12 pm): I make no apology for expressing my views recently on ABC Radio. If you are listening, Pat Hession, I would like to thank you. I thank you for the opportunity to express the views of Queenslanders given to me over some time but expressly on election day. Privatisation is extremely difficult for a Labor government and, as a political representative in Townsville, I would be lying to say it has not been hard.

Mr SPEAKER: Withdraw the word—try to express yourself better than that.

Ms NELSON-CARR: I would be telling fibs to say that it was not hard. I echo the concerns of my constituents. And do I like it? No, I do not. Has it been difficult? Yes, it has and I have said so. But governments have to make difficult decisions. But to sit here and listen to the opposition is at best a health hazard. I actually feel heart palpitations.

Mr Bleijie: That's the election you're thinking about.

Ms NELSON-CARR: Oh, that's really funny.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Stop the clock. Just wait. The honourable member for Mundingburra.

Ms NELSON-CARR: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I can hardly sit here and listen to the hypocritical, new-found friends of the worker. I can remember being in this place when the opposition was last in office, and it was in much less challenging economic times. We had Horan's hospital tax, Sheldon's capital works freeze, the seven deadly taxes in the 1996 Borbidge budget including—

Mr Horan: Frank Tanti was the member; you weren't here.

Ms NELSON-CARR: I overtook him. They included a 35 per cent increase in bank account debts.

Mr Horan: Misleading the parliament.

Ms NELSON-CARR: Listen because it might remind you of what you did in opposition. They included a new oil tax of 10 per cent, a new tyre tax, a new national parks tax, increased fees for TAFE courses and extra administrative costs. What does the LNP really stand for?

Mr Horan: You got a new hospital in Townsville, a brand-new hospital.

Ms NELSON-CARR: Are they like their federal counterparts, who are unwilling and unable to tackle the issues facing Australia? These ideological extremists—

Mr Horan: You got a new hospital.

Ms NELSON-CARR: Can you be quiet?

Mr Horan: You got a medical school.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Toowoomba South.

Ms NELSON-CARR: He is very rude.

Mr SPEAKER: You will cease interjecting. Another interjection and I will warn you under standing orders. The member for Mundingburra has the call and I ask you to respect that. The honourable member for Mundingburra.

Ms NELSON-CARR: Thank you, Mr Speaker. What their federal counterparts wanted to do was to gut Medicare, stop immigration, bring back Work Choices and eliminate unions. As an amalgamated conservative party, the opposition does not know what it stands for. It is fundamentally weak and it has trouble holding on to its parliamentary team. Did the giddy-up pep talk from the man of steel, John Howard, at your love-in recently focus on the importance of good policy and political conviction? He would blanch, as would Peter Costello, if they could hear the pitiful tunes of the LNP today.

Apart from opposing daylight saving and water fluoridation, the LNP stands for nothing. Your hypocritical and token opposition to privatisation is just that, and you would reverse it as quickly as Abbott reversed his position on maternity leave and Work Choices. Even the term 'LNP' is a marriage of convenience and it has never stood for anything apart from the fact that it is not Labor. It is a Clayton's party. I will tell you what you stand for. You stand for privatisation. You maximise the individual and the private sector initiatives. You encourage and facilitate wealth. Governments are not allowed to compete with the private sector. Business and individuals, not government, are the true creators of wealth and employment. In a nutshell, it is all about individual freedom and free enterprise and privatisation.

Power for the LNP is innate superiority—an abrogation of the rights of others, especially foreign others and Indigenous others. The bankrupt Liberal Party let the National Party take them over because they had nothing to lose. It is an amalgamation of emptiness.

I will finish on these words from Jessica Christmas's departure from the party and from level 6. She left because she believed you had abandoned core values of decency and respect. She left because she felt you were blinded by personal vendettas—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Address your comments through the chair.

Ms NELSON-CARR: Mr Speaker, they were blinded by personal vendettas and an abnormal fetish with 'crushing and destroying' their own members as well as their wives and children. She left level 6 because it was in a complete shambles. They were all about revenge and payback. They are a clique of hopeless incompetence, suffering from bitter factionalism, a self-destructive party, with senior staff members playing solitaire and computer games because they did not have anything better to do. You can sit in this House and say that you are—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will direct her comments through the chair.

Ms NELSON-CARR: Mr Speaker, the opposition members will sit in their seats and pretend that they are friends of the workers. You should all hang your heads in shame.

Mr NICHOLLS (Clayfield—LNP) (6.17 pm): 'Hang your heads in shame,' says the member for Mundingburra. 'Hang your heads in shame,' she claims should happen on this side of the House. But on that side of the House we have heard from four of the five members listed to speak to this motion and not one of them has addressed the central theme. Not one of them has actually said whether they support or whether they oppose this privatisation.

We had the member for Murrumba come in here with his usual flights of fancy as he traivailed philosophies and went backward and forward about who was doing what. He talks about ideology. He said, 'The tories over there are the ones who sell as a matter of ideology.' I say to the member for Murrumba: tell us about Qantas, tell us about the Commonwealth Bank, tell us about the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories, tell us about OTC—all were privatised. All were privatised by the Hawke and Keating governments as a matter of ideology. That is the heritage of the Labor Party. What rot does the member for Murrumba speak when he talks about ideology. His ideology, the ideology of members on that side, is the ideology of Graham Richardson: whatever it takes; tell whatever story needs to be told to scrounge the votes to get back into power.

The member talks about social justice and he says, 'I am the spokesperson for social justice and the Labor Party is the spokesperson for social justice.' What social justice is there when unemployment is rising? What social justice is there when pensioners cannot afford to pay for the gas to keep their houses warm? What social justice is there when a young, struggling family cannot afford to put fuel in their car? What social justice is there when people cannot afford to buy a car because of the registration fees and the stamp duty? Social justice comes from having a secure job and a secure income and not having the cost of living eating away at every cent that people earn and being worried about where the next dollar is coming from.

Then the member for Keppel came in and talked about being out there listening. 'Listen, listen, listen,' the member for Keppel said, but he is not acting. He still danced around the central issue. He still has not said what he believes in. Is he for or is he against this privatisation? He still has not said. He has not said a word.

The member for Bundamba came in here and gave us a family history. She told us about the tours that she has done at the railway workshops, but what does she say? She says, 'I continue to have my say. I continue to make representations,' but she does not do it in the people's chamber of the people's house. She does not stand up and put her position on the record. She is still avoiding it. And she talks about the treatment that was meted out to her in 1995 or whenever it was. However, she fails to talk about the treatment meted out to the Public Service in 1989 when they established the gulag up there at Gregory Terrace and destroyed careers and people's lives when Goss and co. came into power.

Mrs MILLER: I rise to a point of order. I take offence at what the member has said. You set up issues worse than the gulag.

Mr SPEAKER: No, don't argue the point.

Mrs MILLER: I ask that it be withdrawn. I ask that his comments in relation to the gulag and others be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. There was no personal reflection. As I understood the comments to be, they were a general comment.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you, Mr Speaker. So after that diatribe from the member from Bundamba we are still no clearer about what her position is on privatisation. She still has not made the point on the record in this place.

Then we had the member for Mundingburra, who still does not answer the fundamental question: does she support the government's sale of these assets or does she oppose them? If she opposes them, why will she not support the motion of the Leader of the Opposition and reject the government's amendment and stand up and put her reasons forward? I bet a penny to a pound that the member for Townsville is not going to make us any wiser by the time this debate concludes.

If there is one group of people who have consistently opposed this Labor privatisation, it has been the LNP. Honourable members have not seen one chink in the armour on this side of the House in our opposition to the asset sales. Not one chink in the armour has been seen. The challenge for the MPs on the government side is to stand up in this chamber and do what they were elected to do and represent the interests of their constituents. Those members deserve the chance to show that they are not spineless or witless. They ought to take the opportunity here to make their position clear. Now is the opportunity for them to tell the people of Queensland where they stand—clearly, unequivocally and on the record. The question is: do they have the stomach to stand here and do it? Do they have the stomach to defy the party leaders or are they going to repeat the line? I say to those members: do your duty and show some spine.

(Time expired)

Ms JOHNSTONE (Townsville—ALP) (6.23 pm): Since being elected in March 2009, many difficult decisions have needed to be made by this government. None was more difficult than the decision to sell some parts of Queensland Rail and other government assets. I voted to support the asset sales because, after hearing presentations from senior members of our government, I believed that selling some assets was the only option that would allow us to continue with other important programs. Since this decision was made I have met with and passed on to senior government colleagues the concerns of the many QR employees and their union representatives with whom I have met. I will continue to represent their interests at every opportunity.

During my election campaign I continually said that a key issue for me was the retention and creation of jobs in Townsville. I believed that, in the middle of the global financial crisis, financing the massive building projects in schools, hospitals, roads and especially public housing was vital not only because these projects are important but also because the only major source of employment over the last 18 months in the construction industry has been government projects. There have recently been some signs that the private sector is coming back to life, but it is still government projects that are the main source of employment for construction workers. This was even said to me again by members of the construction industry at the Master Builders annual awards night last Friday.

My first full-time job upon leaving high school was with the then Queensland Housing Commission. I can remember quite distinctly what the capital budget for housing was in those days—nil. In my electorate alone there are currently more than 230 units of community housing being constructed. This is an unprecedented growth in public housing which is creating and preserving hundreds of jobs and giving affordable accommodation to those who need it most. I have been working in both paid and unpaid capacities to improve the outcomes for the homeless for 20 years.

Selling public assets is something that does not sit easily with me, but constructing public housing and giving a home to those who need it most certainly does. I do understand that in these hard economic times it would be very difficult to do both. While it is true that the government is selling assets such as parts of Queensland Rail, we do need to remember that we are actually acquiring new assets such as public housing, public school buildings and new roads. As I look around my electorate I can see major new projects everywhere such as the new marine precinct, the port access road across the Ross River, the Jezzine Barracks, the Flinders Street upgrade and many other projects. All these projects have created and are still creating employment at a time when families in our community need it most.

When I was elected to office, the loudest voice of protest in my electorate was from an angry boating fraternity. Townsville has beautiful weather and there are over 11,000 registered boats. Boat ramp facilities had left a lot to be desired and the people had been promised more ramps and trailer parks for years with no result. Funded in this year's budget are two new boat ramps and a pontoon at Railway Estate which will be integrated with a 100-bay car and trailer park. This is a major boating facility planned for the new \$110 million marine precinct development, which will protect some 500 jobs in the marine industries in Townsville. This facility will have 12 new boat ramps, two pontoons along with a 250-bay car and trailer park. This is great news for the Townsville boating community and great news for employment in the construction industry.

Once again, I understand that in these tough times caused by the global financial crisis people cannot expect to build new infrastructure and create jobs without taking tough decisions. However, handling the economy responsibly also has to be about people. It is Labor governments that invest in services and infrastructure that those opposite simply do not or will not invest in. It was the Bligh Labor government that last year announced unprecedented increases to the social and community sector wages, which have been dreamed about for years and years. These are the workers about whom the opposition makes speeches and broad motherhood statements with regard to how valued they are and what an honourable contribution they make to the community. It was this Labor government that made the decision in the budget last year to increase wages for this group. The single biggest line item in the 2009-10 budget was the \$414 million to increase wages for these workers, my former colleagues. I would rather not have come into parliament in the middle of a global financial meltdown, but I did and I was faced with these decisions. These are necessary decisions to ensure that the things which are important to both me and my electorate can be delivered on behalf of our community.

Division: Question put—That the amendment be agreed to.

AYES, 52—Attwood, Boyle, Choi, Croft, Darling, Dick, Farmer, Finn, Foley, Fraser, Grace, Hinchliffe, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Johnstone, Jones, Kiernan, Kilburn, Lawlor, Lucas, Male, Messenger, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Reeves, Roberts, Robertson, Ryan, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Struthers, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wellington, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Keech, Pitt

NOES, 31—Bates, Bleijie, Crandon, Cripps, Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, Gibson, Hopper, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, McArdle, Malone, Menkens, Nicholls, Powell, Rickuss, Robinson, Seene, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey. Tellers: Horan, Sorensen

Resolved in the affirmative.

Division: Question put—That the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

AYES, 52—Attwood, Boyle, Choi, Croft, Darling, Dick, Farmer, Finn, Foley, Fraser, Grace, Hinchliffe, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Johnstone, Jones, Kiernan, Kilburn, Lawlor, Lucas, Male, Messenger, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Reeves, Roberts, Robertson, Ryan, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Struthers, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wellington, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Keech, Pitt

NOES, 31—Bates, Bleijie, Crandon, Cripps, Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, Gibson, Hopper, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, McArdle, Malone, Menkens, Nicholls, Powell, Rickuss, Robinson, Seene, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey. Tellers: Horan, Sorensen

Resolved in the affirmative.

Motion, as agreed—

That this House:

- notes the LNP 2009 Economic Policy Statements at the last election stated 'An LNP government would not oppose privatisation of public assets';
- notes that the 'Draft Economic Policy Statement 2010' on the LNP website supports privatisation by stating 'The LNP is not philosophically opposed to the sale of non strategic or redundant assets';
- notes the public statements by the Leader of the Opposition of May 4 2010, where he said 'We are about true privatisation';
- notes the public statements by the shadow Treasurer from *Hansard* of 30 November 2006, where in a debate about the privatisation of the electricity retailers, he said 'It is important to give credit to the government for at last accepting the benefits of privatisation, but this government's effort is halfhearted at best. One has to ask: Why not sell the poles and wires as well? Why not sell the generators as well?';
- notes the public statements by the member for Moggill in 2006, when he said 'sometimes we need to sell government owned assets in order to reinvest those funds in more urgently needed infrastructure that it is more appropriate for a government to provide'; and
- condemns the Shadow Treasurer's public comments calling for projects to be cut from the building program, jeopardising both Queensland's economic recovery and the jobs of thousands of Queenslanders.

REPORT

Study Tour to Japan, Russia and United Kingdom

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (6.37 pm): I lay upon the table of the House the report of my recent study trip.

Tabled paper: Overseas travel report: Report on overseas study tour by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr Langbroek) to Japan, Russia and the United Kingdom from 19 July 2010–1 August 2010 [[2874](#)].

Sitting suspended from 6.38 pm to 7.30 pm.

CRIMINAL CODE (SERIOUS ASSAULTS ON POLICE AND PARTICULAR OTHER PERSONS) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 4 August (see p. 2470), on motion of Mr Springborg—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—Ind) (7.30 pm): I rise to speak in the debate on the Criminal Code (Serious Assaults on Police and Particular Other Persons) Amendment Bill 2010. In doing so, I indicate that I will be happy to support this bill. I note from the proposed amendments to this bill that if a person is convicted of an offence of a section 340(1)(b) assault of a police officer or of an offence of a section 340(2AA) assault of a police officer and the offence involves circumstances in which the person does bodily harm to the prescribed persons or bites, spits or throws bodily fluid or faeces at a prescribed person then the court sentencing the person must sentence that person to a term of imprisonment of at least three months. If the sentence is three months the court may not order any suspension of that sentence. If the sentence is more than three months the court may not order that the whole or part of the first three months of the term of imprisonment be suspended. However, if the person is convicted as a child under the Juvenile Justice Act 1992 then these provisions do not apply if the court is satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist. The provisions apply despite any other act or law.

The following new definitions are also proposed to be inserted. At section 340(3) of the bill a 'prescribed person' means a police officer or a Public Service officer who is a member, officer or employee of the Queensland Ambulance Service or the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service or a member of a rural fire brigade.

I believe that passing this bill is the least we can do for our police officers, ambulance officers, fire and rescue officers and rural fire officers. I was proud to be a shadow minister for police and corrective services and to introduce similar legislation into this place in 2007. As noted before, it was defeated by this government on 27 February 2008. It was a missed opportunity. That bill covered a few more officers than prescribed in this bill. I think about the number of assaults that may have been avoided if we had taken that opportunity and sent a clear message to the thugs who think they are able to seriously assault police officers. We might have done some real good on that day. We missed that opportunity.

I would say to government members tonight: let us not miss this opportunity now. We have another opportunity to send a really clear message to those thugs who think they are good for it. It would also send a message to our public servants. If this legislation were to pass this place it would give a massive boost in morale to our police officers, who bear the brunt of these assaults. Let us be clear: it is serious assault that we are talking about here. We are not talking about a minor push and shove. We are talking about serious assault which is a category of assault that is far different to a push or shove to a police officer. I think this would be a huge boost in morale for our police officers at a critical time in our state's history.

I believe that our police officers who are now the victims of serious assault would cheer the passing of this bill, should it be the will of this parliament tonight if we get to vote on it. I believe that they, of all the public servants, are underpaid. We have heard many comments from Ian Leavers of the Police Union in the media. While I was the shadow police and corrective services minister I was acutely aware of how underpaid our police officers are for the dangerous work that they undertake. I believe that this government would be able to win huge kudos from police officers and their families should it pass this legislation. Let us face it, this government needs as many friends as it can get. It would be well worth its while to seriously consider passing this legislation.

It was brought to my attention—I may not be completely accurate, but I think I am in the ballpark—that a first-year teacher gets about \$50,000. I notice that the Minister for Education is in the chamber. He should be across these statistics. A first-year constable receives about \$5,000 a year less than a first-year teacher. They run the risk of being victims of serious assault and have the ignominy of watching their assailants walk out of the court with a slap on the wrist and a minimal fine. Two times out of every three there is no custodial sentence imposed at all.

That is an unfair situation. It is a dangerous situation for two reasons. It is unfair and dangerous for the police officers themselves. It is unfair for their families. But I also believe it is unfair and dangerous for the broader community. Passing this bill would send a clear and unambiguous message to the thugs who think they can have a crack at our police officers that they cannot and that we as legislators representing our communities will not put up with it. I know that the overwhelming majority of people in the Burnett would ask me to support this legislation.

I believe that passing this legislation would also have an effect on the overall crime rate within Queensland. I believe that by passing this legislation we have a chance, in a cheap way from an administrative point of view and a resourcing point of view, to reduce our crime rate. It is like New York City when they adopted the broken windows policy or the 'zero tolerance on crime' policy. They found that by cutting down on smaller crimes like jaywalking they had a reduction in the murder rate. That is a well-known fact.

Mr O'Brien interjected.

Mr MESSENGER: I can hear the member for Cook burbling away there, but he only needs to go and study that to know it is true. It is a famous study. It is called the broken windows policy. It works on the psychology that, if we have a vacant building and one of the windows in that vacant building is broken, if we do not immediately repair that broken window then the windows around that broken window are more likely to be broken. It was seen to work in New York City. I know that on the member for Cook's radar New York City is only small beer and does not really have any particular relevance to us. It has one of the largest law enforcement agencies in the world.

The passing of this legislation would have many unintended positive consequences. It would lower the overall rate of assaults in the general community and give added protection not only to the public servants mentioned in this bill but also to the public servants not mentioned in this bill. It would also lead to a more respectful and law-abiding society. Police and other public servants, as we know, are stretched to the limit. However, I do not expect the government to pass this bill. This is a government which is in the final political death throes with its current leadership. It needs renewal. It is delusional. It is not making rational decisions. In that regard, I cite my favourite example of the flying fox regulations—\$300,000 for killing a flying fox and a two-year maximum jail sentence or a \$100,000 fine for disturbing flying foxes. How can members of the government sit here knowing that they have supported those enforcement provisions for flying foxes and yet will not support a three-month minimal stay in jail for those people who break a police officer's jaw?

In closing, I wholeheartedly congratulate the LNP for resurrecting this piece of legislation. If I were re-elected as the member for Burnett at the next election and there was a change of leadership on the other side and there was the possibility of a conservative government, this legislation would be one of the things that I would push wholeheartedly as an Independent member for Burnett.

Mr O'Brien interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): Order! Member for Cook!

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (7.41 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Criminal Code (Serious Assaults on Police and Particular Other Persons) Amendment Bill. This bill is the second occasion on which the LNP has sought to provide for minimum mandatory sentences for individuals who are found guilty of an assault against Queensland police officers. Unfortunately, the Bligh government failed to support the LNP's first attempt to strengthen protections for serving police officers and it has indicated it will fail to do so again on this occasion despite increasing instances of violence against them.

This bill seeks to implement a minimum sentencing standard not only for serious assaults on police officers but also ambulance officers, Fire and Rescue Service officers and Rural Fire Service officers. This minimum sentencing standard is intended to act as a deterrent to offenders while enhancing protection for our police, ambulance, Fire and Rescue Service and Rural Fire Service officers. This bill proposes that standard be a three-month minimum imprisonment for serious assaults against police officers, ambulance officers, Fire and Rescue Service officers and rural fire officers.

Mr Wettenhall interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Barron River!

Mr CRIPPS: It is a sad thing that such a bill needs to come forward in the state of Queensland. Police, ambulance, Fire and Rescue Service and Rural Fire Service officers are asked to do very difficult jobs in our local communities and it is distressing to me to know that they face threats—totally unacceptable and unreasonable threats—in the course of doing those jobs. It is also distressing and unacceptable to me that the threats exist in my electorate. Unfortunately, I have been compelled to speak in this parliament before about assaults on police officers and ambulance officers in my electorate of Hinchinbrook.

In November 2008 an ambulance officer was assaulted while he responded to a call to treat an elderly patient in Ingham. The extraordinary thing was that the assault was perpetrated by the son of the patient while the ambulance officer was trying to attend to his medical needs. The assault of an ambulance officer in the course of doing their duty is cowardly and inexcusable and should not be tolerated in Queensland. Our ambulance officers increasingly and regrettably find themselves in harm's way responding to emergency calls, and so it is appropriate that this bill include ambulance officers. Unions representing ambulance officers in Queensland have actually raised the possibility of a future requirement for ambulance officers to be accompanied by security officers when they are deployed to an emergency if there is no improvement in the standard of community regard for ambulance officers. Things are certainly in a bad way in our community if ambulance officers need to be accompanied by security officers on call-outs in order to do their job safely. The provisions of this bill will seek to deter potential offenders and thus extend a degree of protection to ambulance officers.

Regrettably, in November 2009 a police officer was also assaulted while on duty at Mission Beach. I was extremely disappointed that this assault occurred, not only because it was a sad reflection of the poor attitude some in the community have towards the police but because it exposed a police numbers issue at Mission Beach which had been a problem for a long time and has only recently been resolved with the allocation of two more officers at Mission Beach. I would note that my concerns about staffing at other stations in my electorate, in particular at Cardwell, are yet to be addressed. In March this year two police officers were seriously assaulted in Innisfail by two men and a woman who were subsequently charged with a variety of offences, including numerous counts of serious assault and grievous bodily harm. One of the police officers was knocked unconscious, suffered a broken jaw and underwent surgery while his colleague suffered swelling and bruising to his head and ribs. Unfortunately, that is just a snapshot of some of the recent events in my electorate. It is alarming that North Queensland—

Mr Wettenhall: What happened to them?

Mr CRIPPS: What happened to who?

Mr Wettenhall: What happened to them?

Mr O'Brien: The perpetrators.

Mr CRIPPS: The perpetrators were subsequently charged and sentenced in court.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Hinchinbrook, despite the—

Mr Wettenhall interjected.

Mr O'Brien interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Barron River and member for Cook, your last warning!

Mr CRIPPS: It is alarming that North Queensland is a hot spot for assaults on police officers, particularly Cairns and Townsville which are on the list of the most dangerous places in Queensland for policing. As I have said before, police fulfil a challenging public service role for the benefit and safety of the community. An assault on a police officer in the course of doing their duties is totally unacceptable. It shows a lack of respect for the law in our community. Police officers do their job in very demanding situations. We ask police to deal with the most violent and dangerous people in our community and enforce the law on our behalf. If we want the law to be respected, the people charged with the responsibility of enforcing the law need to be respected and a failure to do so should have serious consequences, and that is what this bill is all about. A clear message needs to be sent that this behaviour will not be tolerated. The current consequences are clearly not a deterrent.

It has been argued by Labor members previously and it has been argued again by Labor members during the course of this debate that the introduction of minimum sentences somehow impinges on the discretion of the judiciary, and that argument put forward by Labor members is usually accompanied by some sort of mock outrage and accusations that minimum sentences breach the doctrine of the separation of powers. But I do not agree with that argument at all. Imposing a minimum sentence does not in any way impinge on the judiciary's ability to work within the established minimum and maximum sentences as defined by the legislature, which is the responsibility and prerogative of parliament. The Queensland parliament is a sovereign parliament and is perfectly within its rights to amend the Criminal Code and the Penalties and Sentences Act, just as it is entitled to amend any other statute in the state of Queensland.

The Criminal Code contains the penalties for offences and the Penalties and Sentences Act contains provisions regulating sentencing in Queensland. The concept of deterrence, as an aim of punishment, is concerned with preventing crime. Deterrence is actually cited in the Penalties and Sentences Act as a purpose for establishing provisions in the act that may be applied to offenders when determining their sentences. The concept of deterrence is balanced against the concept of proportionality. That concept holds that a sentence imposed by a court should not exceed that which can be justified as proportionate to the gravity of the crime. Proportionality has also been given statutory recognition in the Penalties and Sentences Act which establishes that the punishment must fit the crime.

There is no doubt our statute law in Queensland, which is the prerogative and jurisdiction of the Queensland parliament, recognises the concept of deterrence and proportionality. What this bill is doing is simply saying that where a serious assault is perpetrated against a police officer, an ambulance officer, a Fire and Rescue Service officer or a Rural Fire Service officer in this state this parliament considers that a minimum sentence of three months imprisonment is proportionate to the seriousness of that crime and considers that the sentence will serve as a deterrent to would-be offenders or repeat offenders. In terms of the law of sentencing, there are also the principles of aggravation and mitigation to consider. Aggravating and mitigating factors have a statutory foundation in Queensland in section 9 of the Penalties and Sentences Act. So there is no doubt our statute law in Queensland, which is the prerogative and the jurisdiction of the Queensland parliament, recognises the concept of aggravation and mitigation.

In the event that a particular offence has an aggravating dimension, it may lead to an increased sentence for the offender. This bill is simply saying that, where a serious assault is perpetrated against a police officer, an ambulance officer, a Fire and Rescue Service officer or a Rural Fire Service officer in this state, this parliament considers that that should be an aggravating dimension of the offence and that the offender ought to serve a minimum of three months imprisonment.

So when it is clear that the Queensland parliament has the prerogative and jurisdiction through statute law, through the provisions of the Criminal Code and the Penalties and Sentences Act, it is a complete nonsense for Labor members to claim that the proposal to provide for a minimum sentence somehow impinges on the discretion of the judiciary or breaches the doctrine of the separation of powers.

Mr Wettenhall: What type of assault justifies three months jail?

Mr CRIPPS: A serious assault under this bill. The provisions of the bill propose a serious assault—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): Order! Member for Hinchinbrook, would you please direct your comments through the chair. Member for Barron River, you are on your last warning.

Mr CRIPPS: As elected representatives of the people of Queensland, one of the primary roles of members is to reflect the attitudes and views of the community that sends us here to represent them. That inevitably requires us to make value judgements about public policy issues. When violence against police, ambulance, Fire and Rescue Service and Rural Fire Service officers is on the increase, it is a legitimate proposition for the LNP to put forward a bill to say, 'We consider Queensland needs a more pointed deterrent. We consider a minimum sentence of three months to be proportionate to the crime of serious assault against these public officers and we consider it ought to be an aggravation of that

assault to perpetrate it against a public officer as provided for in this bill and that warrants a minimum sentence of three months.' Those are the values of the LNP. Evidently, they are not the values of the Bligh Labor government.

Ms DAVIS (Aspley—LNP) (7.51 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Criminal Code (Serious Assaults on Police and Particular Other Persons) Amendment Bill. At the outset, I would like to record my appreciation and admiration for our police and emergency services personnel. The bravery and dedication shown by our police, ambulance and fire officers is a great asset to our state and a reassurance to all Queenslanders.

This bill was introduced into the House with the aim of offering our police, our ambos and our fireies more than just thanks; it was a way of ensuring their greater safety while they are at work. These people are already working in conditions that are often dangerous, stressful and urgent. They do not need thrown into the equation needless and damaging interference by people who find it amusing or brave to assault them. This interference is also certainly not welcome by the people who need help in an emergency.

This bill was born as a result of the increasing incidence of serious assaults against police and emergency service workers. Simply, the bill aims to deter behaviour that results in bodily harm to police, ambulance, Fire and Rescue Service and Rural Fire Service officers, including the acts of biting and spitting. It also aims to provide a workplace for these personnel free of the dangers involved in such acts and it achieves this by implementing a minimum sentence of three months.

Mandatory sentences have been introduced and are being used across many Australian jurisdictions. Their use in Western Australia has resulted in a 25 per cent drop in the number of offences against emergency personnel. That is 235 cases where the police, ambulance and fire officers were able to do their jobs without fear of injury or assault, 235 cases where those officers could hang up their uniforms after a shift and return safely to their homes and families.

Queensland has some quite frightening numbers of assaults against our emergency services personnel. In 2007 there were 429 convictions for serious assaults on police. In 2007-08 there were 38 assaults on ambulance officers—a figure which jumped to 107 the following year. There is no justification for assaulting personnel as they do their jobs and there is no excuse for this parliament to fail to offer increased security for these officers. Behind all of these statistics are the people who suffer the violence—people who are dedicated to their jobs but who suffer the injury or, in the case of offences such as spitting, the anxiety of these offences for some time.

Like other honourable members, I am a member of a local ambulance committee. In that capacity I have spoken to a number of ambulance officers and the message that comes across loud and clear is that there is a growing propensity for individuals to commit acts of violence against officers, particularly on Friday and Saturday nights. As one officer said, there are hot spots across Queensland, particularly in the south-east corner. He went on to say that it is just a sad indictment on our society that some individuals think that it is okay to assault those on the front line and those whose sole purpose is to care for the wellbeing of others.

Ambulance officers do not do their job for the money; they do their job because they get enormous satisfaction out of caring for others. It is reprehensible that we allow thugs to attack officers and get away with it. Through this bill, the parliament has the opportunity to stop those thugs getting away with it and to tell our ambulance officers and other services personnel that we have heard their concerns and that we are doing something about it.

A local police officer gave me an account of his experience, which reflects the conditions that he and his colleagues tolerate on a daily basis. In his 14 years as an officer, he has been hospitalised four times, including once as a result of being bitten, once following an assault involving spitting and the others for physical attacks. This officer is no whinger; he always understood that he would be confronted with situations that could get heated. But it is simply unacceptable that he is the victim of assault merely because he is doing his job in keeping the community safe. Of course, this officer's story is not uncommon. A local female officer shared her story of being spat upon whilst on duty. The impact of this assault was exacerbated when she found out just weeks later that she was pregnant and for most of that pregnancy, until her test results were in, she was terrified for the wellbeing of her unborn child.

Every weekend police are starting their shifts aware that they are going to be facing increased violence, that some of it will be directed at them and that it will impede their ability to do their job. The fact that there were 72 WorkCover claims in just one six-month period last year for police who were assaulted with blood or bodily fluids in the line of duty shows the magnitude of this problem. If we do not take measures in this parliament to help our officers undertake their jobs in the best possible conditions, we are saying to the 27,000 police officers who were re-assaulted across the state last year that they do not warrant our support as they do their jobs. We are sending a message to our ambulance and fire officers that they need to go out there and save the lives of others but that we will not act to assist their wellbeing. We are giving the perpetrators of the offences no warning, no deterrent and no guaranteed punishment. I heartily support this bill.

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (7.56 pm): I rise to speak against the private member's bill introduced by the shadow Attorney-General. Firstly, let me make the point that, like everyone on this side of the House, I understand and appreciate the difficulties involved in the work done by our police, ambos and firies. That is why the government has provided great support to these areas over the past decade and more by increasing the numbers of front-line staff and modernising the workplaces and equipment to allow the staff to do their jobs more effectively. Secondly, let me make the point that everyone in this House is united in their disgust at the attacks on these workers. That is why the government introduced tough measures for dealing with people who assault police and emergency services personnel. It was the Labor state government that lifted the maximum sentence for these crimes to seven years jail.

It is well known that mandatory sentencing does not act as a deterrent, especially where crimes are committed in the heat of the moment, which applies to many of the assaults on police and emergency workers. One only has to talk to our front-line workers to know that that is exactly what it is—often in the heat of the moment. Mandatory sentencing removes the discretion of the judiciary to take into account all the factors involved in the case before determining a penalty. The removal of this discretion raises concerns on this side of the House.

These concerns are not isolated to one side of politics. Earlier this year in this very chamber a debate took place about crime and appropriate punishment that is well worth revisiting. It demonstrates the hypocrisy of those opposite and exposes them for what they are: policy weathervanes prepared to change their views for the sake of political expediency. Back in February, the Attorney-General led the debate on the amendment to the Criminal Code to give the courts greater flexibility when dealing with offenders who appear on serious matters involving domestic violence and abusive domestic relationships. This debate dealt with serious issues, just as tonight's debate is dealing with serious issues, to do with crime and punishment.

What were the views of those opposite just four months ago? The member for Indooroopilly—obviously a true Liberal—commented that it was a positive that extra discretion was being allowed for the most serious crime of murder. The member for Kawana—demonstrating a very wise head on young shoulders—was in favour of the changes that would 'expand the court's scope for sentencing'. The contribution by the member for Glass House to the debate was similarly enlightened. He said—

A discretionary sentencing regime would make available the full range of sentencing options, including those community based options that may, in such cases, best ensure the defendant is not likely to reoffend by requiring the defendant to complete programs or attend counselling.'

'Full range of sentencing options', 'community based options' and 'counselling': these sound like the views of a person in a party that is opposed to mandatory sentencing rather than one that is trying tonight to introduce such a misguided bill. The views against mandatory sentencing continued. The member for Aspley, perhaps not yet brainwashed by the old National Party hard heads, had this to say:

It is essential that the courts be allowed to consider the contextual circumstances that may result in fair and just outcomes.

I think the final word on the LNP's chameleon-like position when it comes to mandatory sentencing should be left to the member for Currumbin. Back in February she had this to say when she supported the government's amendments—

There is more that can be done, especially with regard to discretionary sentencing.

Those opposite will probably claim that these comments relate to specific legislation brought in to address the serious issue of abusive domestic relationships. I agree that abusive domestic relationships are a serious issue. The government appreciated the opposition's support for the legislation, but the principle that the opposition supported just four months ago has been discarded tonight for the sake of political expediency and, I would say, probably to win favour with the Police Union.

The principle that was so strongly and rightly supported by the opposition in February was the principle that the courts need to have some discretion when sentencing offenders; they must be allowed to consider all circumstances involved in the matter. This principle was worth supporting four months ago and, from the government's perspective, this principle is still worth supporting. Unlike those opposite, I have not changed my stand on this issue. In fact, I wrote to the Police Union about mandatory minimum sentences for offenders found guilty of a serious assault on a police officer. I quote from my letter—

While I don't support mandatory sentencing I do believe harsh penalties should be applied in these matters after all aspects of the case have been considered.

I have heard over and over again in this debate that it is not right to attack police officers. Well, it is not right to attack anyone. I oppose the bill before the House.

Dr DOUGLAS (Gaven—LNP) (8.01 pm): Is Labor not ashamed of itself that a bill like this has to be submitted here tonight? I would like to open with a headline story from the *Gold Coast Bulletin* on 16 February 2009 in my own electorate of Gaven—

A man was beaten unconscious, paramedics were attacked and a baby narrowly escaped being showered with glass in the second gatecrash party at Highland Park in as many weeks.

Commissioner of the Queensland Ambulance Service, David Melville, said paramedics had to lock themselves and their patients inside the ambulance as the teenagers surrounded the vehicle, lashing out with glass bottles, golf clubs and their fists. An Emergency Medical Service Protection Association spokesman said there had been more than 20 assaults on Queensland paramedics in the last 12 months. Honourable members, we have a serious problem here and we must take action. It must be decisive, it must be overt and it must restore confidence in the emergency service staff and safety for all.

The bill is to introduce a minimum sentence range for serious assaults that involve bodily harm, biting or spitting on a prescribed person. This includes police, ambulance, fire, rescue and rural fire officers. There does appear to be a widespread pattern of Labor opposing applications for mandatory sentencing for crimes against police and emergency workers, but support for mandatory sentencing for serious sex offenders in every state of Australia. Lazy Attorneys-General have used every term from 'lazy politics' to 'backward' and 'reprehensible'. Is it that sexual offenders' crimes can be so disgraceful and reprehensible that community reaction demands backflipping from weak left-wing Labor members? Are our police, ambulance and fire officers really less deserving of zero tolerance options?

We need this bill, otherwise we will be abandoning our staff. What sort of message do honourable members wish to send? Do not tell me the evidence to support this is not there. I have 25 years of general practice and 20 years in Corrective Services as a VMO. We will only work in an environment of zero tolerance. Offenders do spit on you. It has happened to me. People are fooling themselves if they imagine this is unique behaviour. Offenders have no regard for their victims. If they just happen to be hep C positive, HIV positive or sufferers of any other illnesses, those people who are offended against have to run all the attendant risks of waiting to see if those illnesses are transmitted to them. This has happened.

On the Gold Coast in 2007-08 there were 293 assaults on police, including 50 that were considered serious, rising to 315 assaults in 2008-09 with 67 of those considered serious. That is an increase of 20 per cent. Those statistics were reported in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* on 13 August this year. Any police officer will tell you that the Gold Coast nightclub district is a dangerous place. Police are routinely targeted. The offences are premeditated as well as being opportunistic. The offenders are almost always recidivists, known troublemakers, and loaded up with alcohol and/or drugs. Rarely are those two key factors not involved. Occasionally we see a truly evil offender, such as the now deceased Nigel Parodi, who ambushed police and, incredibly, police officers survived. That occurred here in Brisbane.

Every speaker—particularly those on this side of the House—has listed the increasing numbers of offences. There have been workers compensation claims by ambulance officers, with 38 assaults on ambulance officers in 2007-08 and 107 in 2008-09. There were 21 in the first weeks of 2009-10. It must be time for immediate action. Nigel Stamp, a 30-year paramedic veteran, said—

We are often having to stand around the corner and wait for police now.

An unnamed senior officer told me today that the coast and the city police are routinely spat upon, punched and kicked. He told me that the offenders have the strength of 10 tigers if they are taking amphetamines as well. It is not just males, but it is mainly male perpetrated violence. They will assault female police officers as well. For those who do not know, we have an increasing number of female officers and they are not often the same size as men. Nigel Stamp has been quoted as saying that it is only a matter of time before a paramedic is seriously hurt or, even worse, killed.

In my electorate of Gaven we only have 13 police officers to fully staff and patrol an area from Carrara to the New South Wales border—that is 47 kilometres—north to Pacific Pines and east to Mount Tamborine. We have one of the worst police to population ratios in the state. We have organised criminals there as well. As has been stated today, we have no armed hold-up squad, no drug squad, no organised crime squad, and we live on the Gold Coast. We have every different type of criminal that you could have, including Hells Angels, Finks bikies, Black Uhlans and Russian Mafia. We routinely have serious issues between Lebanese, Italian and Middle European, including Turkish and Romanian, drug syndicates. They are preying on the locals and all manner of tourists.

We deserve to have this mandatory sentencing for serious assaults on police. We have earned this mandatory sentencing for serious assaults on ambulance officers. We need to send a clear message that assaults on police will not be tolerated. Criminals are not that stupid. When they see a weak government they know what it means. It is a measure of the courts not sentencing people to terms of imprisonment ordinarily for these assaults on police that is leading to this problem.

On 23 March this year in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* Peter Cameron got it right. He went right to the core of the government hypocrisy when the government fought over the issue of police purchasing helicopters. He said—

There is little shortage of revenue raising speed cameras to supply helicopter funding.

If this lazy, big-mouth government has any intestinal fortitude left after years of neglect and backflips when it suited its purposes, it would vote for this bill now and it would take whatever humble pie comes with it. Integrity is about courage, consistency and decency. We need to get real on those people who want to get even with us.

I wish to put a different position to that of the current Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services. I wish to start with mandatory sentencing and work through the government bikie legislation and the opinions of those opposite on the sex offenders record. I also intend to discuss the position that was taken by both the member for Toowoomba North and the member for Murrumba.

Denmark, a significant liberal jurisdiction, has mandatory sentencing for carrying a knife. Florida has mandatory sentencing for shooting somebody, irrespective of whether or not they are killed. Most USA states have mandatory sentencing for drug offences. In Queensland we have mandatory sentencing for paedophiles and Labor introduced it. The bikie consorting legislation is likely to be struck down in the High Court. For the information of the member for Nudgee, it was a former Labor leader, Bill D'Arcy, who was jailed for child sex offences and who spent years being protected by the system. He was jailed for the most offensive crimes against children. Those who are interested can read the judgement of now deceased Justice Robert Douglas. In commenting on the case he said that they were the worst offences he had ever heard of in his life.

The doctrine of the separation of powers refers to the separation of the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. A strict separation is not maintained in Australia, following the Westminster system and the doctrine of responsible government. When a similar piece of legislation—the Criminal Code (Assaults Against Police and Others) Amendment Bill—was introduced in 2007, Labor voted down the bill based on the premise that the judiciary's discretion in sentencing would be interfered with by parliament. The government would do well to remember that the judiciary's function is to apply the law.

Generally speaking, most of these laws are a product of parliament. In Australia, most courts are given their jurisdiction if not through the Commonwealth or state constitutions then through parliament-made legislation. The offences are found in parliament-made legislation. The sentences and penalties imposed upon conviction are found in parliament-made legislation. To say that the separation of powers in Australia prohibits parliament from legislating to affect the discretion of the judiciary is a weak proposition. Indeed, former High Court Chief Justice Garfield Barwick in his judgement in *Palling v Corfield*, states—

It is beyond question that the Parliament can prescribe such penalty as it thinks fit for the offences which it creates ... The exercise of the judicial function is the act of imposing the penalty consequent upon conviction of the offence which is essentially a judicial act. If the statute nominates the penalty and imposes on the court a duty to impose it, no judicial power or function is invaded: nor, in my opinion, is there any judicial power ...

An honourable member interjected.

Dr DOUGLAS: Wait for it. Another former High Court Chief Justice, Sir Anthony Mason, wrote—

... the authorities do not provide support for the proposition that the judicial function in sentencing necessarily entails a sufficient element of discretion which enables a court to differentiate between different degrees of blameworthiness.

Our constitution is a living document and it expects parliaments to manage themselves. This bill does not challenge the separation of powers, for, as has been pointed out, it is for the parliament to legislate with regard to the penalties carried by offences. As such, there can be no acceptance, on constitutional grounds, of the idea that parliament cannot legislate in this way—

(Time expired)

Mr DICKSON (Buderim—LNP) (8.11 pm): I rise to speak in support of the 10,000 men and women of the Police Service and the many thousands of Ambulance Service and fire brigade officers throughout Queensland. In 2007 there were 429 convictions for serious assaults against police. In addition, in 2007-08 there were 38 assaults on ambulance officers. That figure soared to 107 in 2008-09. During the first six weeks of 2010 a further 21 assaults were committed upon our ambulance officers. This recent number shows that the trend is definitely worsening. All those officers have sworn to protect us. They undertake mercy dashes to aid us in medical emergencies and they place themselves in front of the flames and fight fires for us. These assaults occur whilst those officers are serving us all in the execution of those duties. Despairingly, there are those in the community who think it acceptable to commit physical assaults upon these officers. As legislators, we have an obligation to provide the courts with a mechanism to allow for the application of appropriate sentences in line with community expectations. This serves not only to punish the offenders but also to act as a deterrent to other would-be assailants.

I highlight the case of a constituent of mine who is a police officer on the Sunshine Coast. That officer has been subjected to three very serious assaults. During one of the attacks the officer suffered a broken jaw. In another he received a syringe needlestick injury from an offender. The officer and his

family were then in the perilous position of waiting months for the outcome of blood tests arising from that assault. The Queensland Criminal Code provide penalties for people who assault police. Section 340(1) states—

Any person who—

...

- (b) assaults, resists, or wilfully obstructs, a police officer while acting in the execution of the officer's duty, or any person acting in aid of a police officer while so acting ...

...

is guilty of a crime, and is liable to imprisonment for 7 years.

However, in sentencing, the Queensland courts did not seek to have the punishment fit the crimes when having regard to the seriousness of the assaults on my constituent. The offender who fractured the officer's jaw received a \$1,000 fine and the officer received no compensation. Not only does a court decision like this have a demoralising effect upon the officer and his family; it also does not act as a deterrent to those members of the community who do not think twice about assaulting our emergency workers.

Another travesty occurred in the Brisbane District Court on Thursday, 1 April. Hearing of this decision, my mind immediately pondered whether it was some bizarre April fool's joke, but sadly it was not. Appearing before the court was a man who had smeared his own blood on the head and torso of two officers. Some of his blood went into the mouth of one officer. He then taunted the officers by claiming he had AIDS and that he hoped the officers got it. That is an appalling assault by any measure. The court was told that both officers endured six months of intense stress and pressure on their relationships, in particular when it came to being intimate with their respective partners, until blood tests conclusively proved they had not contracted any communicable diseases. The crown prosecutor said that the offender's actions 'demonstrated a level of vindictiveness and a lack of remorse'. The offender's own defence barrister said that he was sorry for what happened, although of course there were no excuses. His Honour described the offender's actions as 'abhorrent'. The judge sentenced the offender to a custodial prison sentence of six months, then immediately released him on parole. Let me say that again: the offender was immediately released on parole. His Honour also ordered that each officer receive \$1,000 compensation. The offender did not do one minute of jail time for his disgraceful assault upon the two police officers. That case is simply another example of our police being let down by the weak sentencing practices emanating from our courts.

I highlight a matter that occurred at Hope Vale in North Queensland. Police intercepted a vehicle as part of a traffic management program. The driver of the vehicle swore at the officers using foul language and raised his middle finger at one officer. The officer informed the driver that he was under arrest for public nuisance. The offender then adopted a fighting stance and threw a punch at the officer, but the punch did not make contact. The offender escaped from the grip of the officer and moved out onto the middle of the road and again adopted a fighting stance. A second officer tackled the offender and he was handcuffed. He was charged with public nuisance, assaulting and obstructing police. The magistrate dismissed all three charges and awarded costs against the arresting officer, at a total of \$32,000.

But wait, there's more! So serious is the incidence of assaults upon Queensland ambulance officers, both in numbers and in intensity, that the government has had to introduce a self-defence training program for ambulance personnel in order to protect them. Assaults upon ambulance officers are a poor reflection upon society. Let us pray that we do not go the same way as some other Australian jurisdictions. For example, in New South Wales the ambulance service resorted to taking the extraordinary step of altering their uniforms in an effort to protect their officers. In the 1980s they moved away from the traditional white uniform shirt to a more serviceable blue colour. Unfortunately, the colour was so similar to the New South Wales police shirt that ambulance officers were being mistaken for police and the assaults upon them increased dramatically. They have since changed back to the white shirt.

In this regard, we must make every endeavour and effort to discourage the morons among us from using our emergency services personnel as punching bags or subjecting them to other outrageous acts of violence. However, in the event that the deterrent effect does not get the message through, we must ensure that suitable punishments are imposed in an effort to convince a person guilty of assaulting our emergency workers to never consider reoffending. This will also show our emergency services people that they have the support that they deserve from us as law-makers.

Unfortunately, even though section 340 of the Criminal Code provides a term of imprisonment of seven years for people who assault police, the courts seem most reluctant to send these assailants to jail. The court's reluctance is born out of the Queensland Labor government's legislative direction for

judges and magistrates that they be discouraged from putting these criminals behind bars. The Penalties and Sentences Act 1992 directs the courts to consider a sentence of imprisonment only as a last resort. The Penalties and Sentences Act states—

In sentencing an offender, a court must have regard to—

- (a) principles that—
 - (i) a sentence of imprisonment should only be imposed as a last resort; and
 - (ii) a sentence that allows the offender to stay in the community is preferable ...

We must understand that these guidelines, as imposed by the Queensland Labor government upon our courts, are not only applicable when it comes to sentencing offenders who assault emergency workers. Indeed, no matter what the crime, this current legislation ensures that the courts must consider that a jail term should only be imposed as a last resort.

Who do we have to thank for this legislation? The Labor member for Murrumba, Dean Wells. Yes, that is right. On 5 November 1992, the current Labor member for Murrumba introduced into the Queensland parliament this way of ensuring fewer criminals go to jail. The date of assent was 24 November 1992—justice in Queensland the Labor way. In the absence of any backbone being displayed by the Queensland Labor government when it comes to sentencing offenders, I fully support the Criminal Code (Serious Assaults on Police and Particular Other Persons) Amendment Bill 2010.

The purpose of this bill is to implement a minimum sentencing standard for certain types of serious assaults on police and public officers, including ambulance officers, and act as a deterrent to offenders while protecting these officers. The bill implements a minimum three-month standard for serious assaults against police, ambulance officers, Fire and Rescue Service officers and rural fire officers in circumstances where the assault involves biting, spitting, throwing of bodily fluid or faeces at an officer.

In the six-month period from December 2008 to June 2009, police officers made a total of 155 WorkCover claims for assaults against them. In 72—almost half of those cases—the officers were exposed to blood or other bodily fluids. The bill provides that certain types of serious assaults, if proven, carry a minimum sentence of three months imprisonment when committed against a 'prescribed person'. Within the bill 'prescribed person' means a police officer, or a public officer who is a member, officer or employee of the Queensland Ambulance Service or the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, or a member of a rural fire brigade.

The bill provides that if the assault causes actual bodily harm to a prescribed person or a person bites, spits or throws bodily fluid or faeces at a prescribed person, the court must sentence the person to a term of imprisonment for three months. If the sentence is three months, the court may not suspend the sentence in whole or in part. The bill further provides that if the sentence is no more than three months then the court may not order that the whole or part of the first three months of the term of imprisonment be suspended. Additionally, if the person is convicted as a child under the Juvenile Justice Act 1992, the above provisions do not apply if the court is satisfied exceptional circumstances exist.

Imposing a minimum sentence does not in any way impinge on the judiciary's ability to work within the established minimum and maximum penalties as outlined in the law. It does, however, ensure that our courts hand down appropriate penalties to offenders who commit violent and potentially life-threatening acts against our police and other emergency services workers.

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—LNP) (8.21 pm): I rise to support the bill before the House tonight. As speakers have said, the bill imposes a penalty of at least three months imprisonment for persons convicted of an offence under the terms of the act. Of course a term of imprisonment is only required in clearly defined circumstances—that is, when an officer suffers bodily harm or when an officer is bitten, spat on or has thrown at him bodily fluid or faeces. 'Bodily harm' is defined in the Criminal Code as any bodily injury which interferes with health or comfort.

Increasingly, we are seeing those whom we call upon to undertake dangerous or risky occupations placed at risk by the actions of those whom they are in fact trying to assist or prevent from harming others. I have never fulfilled the role of any of the officers defined as a prescribed person in the bill, but I know that they are there if I need them when my family is attacked or if I am involved in a motor vehicle accident or if my property is on fire. They do not do it for the glory or the pay; they do it out of a deep sense of caring for their community and often at significant personal risk. They acknowledge the risk as a reality, and we often hear of their spouses wondering whether they will return home after a day or night's work.

In particular, police officers accept that the ultimate sacrifice could be their lives, and too many police officers have passed away in the line of duty since 1867. Tonight, hopefully we are not talking about the death of these men and women, but society has moved on since those early years and serious harm can come from many causes. We have, as a society, taken several steps to tighten the laws in many areas for the betterment of the public and, in fact, to protect the public. These laws include

tightening the drink-driving regulations and laws, with the goal to lower the death rate on our roads and to enable people to use roads safely. We have seen the dramatic strengthening of laws against sexual abuse to protect the innocent and ensure people understand the serious consequences of a child being sexually abused. We have seen laws strengthened in relation to domestic violence matters to acknowledge the fact that it is a scourge upon our society, as indeed it should be portrayed.

In all of these cases, a penalty is imposed to (1) protect the innocent, (2) punish the guilty and (3) send a clear message to those who contemplate breaking the law. The law evolves to take into account changing social norms, but it is a mystery that, with the number of officers suffering serious assaults, a government that professes to care for the worker will not protect a section of workers who could be described as at serious risk of injury. It is sad that a government that only this afternoon fought the 5.30 debate on the protection of the worker now turns its back on them.

I cannot contemplate working in any of the professions outlined in the bill, but I have spoken to many who do: a police officer who is required to attend a domestic dispute, never knowing what they are going to encounter; a paramedic who has to attend to motor vehicle accident to give lifesaving support to the occupants; or a firefighter who enters a burning house, placing their life at risk. All of these people offer themselves daily in the challenge to protect lives and property. It is against this background that this bill says simply enough is enough.

It is time to send another clear message—a warning—that if we expect and demand these men and women to do these jobs and potentially place their lives at risk then they should be protected from behaviour that is not acceptable and, in relation to these men and women, should not be tolerated under any circumstances. I support the bill before the House.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—LNP) (8.25 pm): I speak on this bill with a great deal of pride in our police, fire service, Ambulance Service and rural fire brigades. We are talking about people who are on the front line in some very dangerous situations. In the case of police, it is to preserve law and order and safety—the safety of other people and the safety of our communities. In the case of fires, very often they attend accidents as well as fires. There is a lot of emotion, and it is a very important task that they have today, not only in saving property but also in saving lives at road accidents as well as fires. In the case of ambulance officers, they provide a front-line service that is often filled with unbelievable stress, trauma and human emotions, and likewise with our rural fire brigade officers.

I come from a police family. My grandfather was injured in North Queensland in helping to put down a riot. My father received the George Medal twice for bravery. So I have lived in a family where the danger was discussed. We were well aware of it. I have seen my father's colleagues injured—one was put out of the police force because he was attacked with a bottle—and, growing up in that family, I have seen many other incidents. So I have come to a realisation of the dangers that are involved; what the mothers, wives and families feel; and the dangers that some of those officers face every night when they go out.

We are also talking about an era now when some extremely cowardly acts occur that did not occur going back probably a decade ago. Particularly since the outbreak of AIDS in the 1980s, we have seen cowardly attacks using blood, using syringes, using faeces and other bodily fluids—which strikes fear into the very heart of police officers. When they go through that period of testing, if you have ever talked to any of them or their friends and those who associate with them, you will realise what it does not just to them but to their family and to all of their colleagues. They experience lingering emotional strain and worry for the long period of time that it takes before the test results clear them.

We can discuss the theoretical or the academic or the philosophical arguments about judges having discretion. Judges have discretion in relation to a vast array of laws that this parliament has passed; those laws are passed on to the justice system to be used by judges as they have been determined here by the representatives of the people. Hopefully we understand how the people feel. We understand those people in our electorates who feel that we need balanced justice, and we understand those people in our electorate who also feel that our front-line emergency workers need protection.

These are the people who protect our towns, cities and suburbs. These are the people who enable our young 18-, 19-, 20- and 21-year-olds to go out in the prime of their youth and enjoy themselves happily and safely without being attacked or bashed, resulting in a most unpleasant evening. These police officers have to put themselves right in the middle of those situations which are often inflamed by alcohol or drugs. Often they take place in a dark back alley or other dangerous place or the police are outnumbered. Very often, the only thing that actually prevents injury to police officers is a modicum of respect so that passers-by or those who might be inclined to attack a police officer for whatever reason know in their subconscious minds of the feeling in our community that you do not attack police officers. I fear, more and more, that respect for the thin blue line of our Queensland Police Service is diminishing.

My colleague the member for Buderim outlined a recent case that had been thrown out of court. When people speak to police they use foul language and there is no fear in their minds; they do not have any respect for the police. Crime prevention takes in a whole range of things such as how families

bring up their kids, how those who fall into disadvantage can be looked after, nurtured and cared for if they have had a difficult upbringing, and so on. However, there has always been the fear of getting caught, which is an important consideration for any person contemplating a crime. If a person is standing in front of a window thinking about kicking it in and in the back of their mind is the thought, 'If I do this there is a big chance I will get caught and if I get caught it will be unpleasant and I will lose my liberty,' that fear is another ingredient in helping to prevent the crime along with, perhaps, the upbringing of those people that might make them stop and think about not committing the crime.

In this bill we are endeavouring to assure the protection of people who, night after night, day after day, are placed in the most dangerous and unenviable positions and who are outnumbered at times. Sometimes they face people who may be about to throw blood or jab them with a syringe. They may not even see it coming. They might be handling somebody in front of them and they are attacked from behind. They are in the most dangerous of situations. Therefore, we have to give this legislation and the laws we are contemplating here very special consideration. We all agree that any assault is bad. However, we also have to understand that these people on the front line face these dangers all the time when keeping our suburbs, our towns and our people safe, particularly our young people.

We have to protect these people. They have to have a special form of protection that balances out the dangers that they put themselves in and the dangers that their family—their girlfriend, partner, wife and children—fear every time they perform this front-line duty. We have to give them that sort of protection and we have to start to send a fair dinkum message to society that you do not attack the authority of the police, which is the thin blue line of the Queensland Police Service; that you do not attack ambulance officers, who are there to save lives in the most traumatic and sometimes dangerous of circumstances; that you do not attack fire officers, who are there to save lives and property; that you have a level of respect. We should be doing everything we can within this parliament to lift that level and bar of respect.

How many times do we hear people say, 'Isn't it dreadful? There is no respect anymore.' Standards are dropping and it is getting harder and harder in our society to find that reasonable behavioural standards are the norm. We are faced with what people see on TV—the lower standards, the attacks on police in TV programs. The bad language on TV is almost becoming a norm within society.

It is up to us; we are the people who represent those who live in our electorate. We should be putting in place laws like this that specifically protect the heroes of our society, safeguard their families and lift that level of respect. It is important that as our young people grow up they see the salutary example of someone who has done something stupid and seriously injured a police officer—and bear in mind that this is only about serious injuries; it is not about common assaults. It teaches people. There might be a sad case of someone who gets three months or more for breaking the jaw of a police officer. However, at least the lesson is there and it becomes common knowledge that that is what happens if you attack the heroes and the protectors of our people and our community.

I ask those in the government to seriously consider this. It is time to stand up to these people and it is time to lift the bar of respect within our society.

Ms GRACE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (8.36 pm): I rise to speak on the Criminal Code (Serious Assaults on Police and Particular Other Persons) Amendment Bill 2010, which was introduced into the House by the member for Southern Downs and Deputy Leader of the Opposition, shadow Attorney-General, shadow minister for trade and shadow minister for industrial relations.

This bill purports to introduce a mandatory minimum three-month period of imprisonment for anyone convicted of serious assaults against police or public officers—who are ambulance officers, fire and rescue officers or rural fire officers—where the assault involves biting, spitting or throwing bodily fluid or faeces at an officer or actual bodily harm to the officer.

I would like to say at the outset that I will be opposing the bill. I agree with the member for Springwood. In opposing the bill, I would like to indicate that I have the utmost respect for the work carried out by our hardworking police officers and other public servants who come into regular contact with the public. I believe that all workers should be treated with respect and should not be subjected to serious assaults whilst carrying out their duties. In fact, I have spent most of my working life fighting for the rights of these officers and improving their health and safety at work.

While complete removal of these hazards from such work undertaken by police officers or paramedics cannot be achieved, I believe that a combination of proper training and penalties for such offences must be in place, as they currently do exist in Queensland. To hear those opposite, one would think that there is absolutely no penalty for people who assault police officers. This government has made a commitment to the safety of its front-line officers that is unparalleled by that of any previous government.

In 2006 we amended the Criminal Code to clarify that section 340 of the code, which related to serious assaults, applied in circumstances where the assault was committed by a person biting, spitting or throwing bodily fluid or faeces at a police officer. So they already exist. Then in 2008 we further amended the section to provide that it applied to all front-line public officers—all of them—including fire and ambulance officers, child safety workers, who would be neglected under the proposed bill; teachers who work in state government schools or others, who would be neglected under this bill; and doctors and nurses who work in our public hospitals. We cover the whole gamut. This means that people convicted of this offence are liable to a maximum penalty of seven years imprisonment compared with three years for common assault. If that does not send a clear message, I do not know what does. It really is quite ridiculous for those opposite to suggest that a penalty like that does not send a clear message to the community.

This is the way that this government signals to the judiciary that the expectation is that persons convicted of this offence should receive a harsher penalty than those convicted of just common assault. This is the proper way to do things—not the way of the opposition. But instead of adopting the normal processes accepted within the criminal justice system, the opposition decides to introduce a bill that takes away the discretion of the sentencing judge or magistrate and instead imposes a mandatory minimum term of imprisonment.

However, as pointed out in the Robertson O'Gorman submission to the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee, of which I am a member, a simple Google search would have revealed that in Western Australia—a lot of members opposite have raised the issue of Western Australia—where a similar minimum sentence regime was introduced, the first person to be charged under that regime for spitting at a police officer was a mentally disordered person. Do we really want to have legislation that imprisons someone who has a mental disability? It is not the serious assault that the member for Toowoomba South was talking about. Those opposite are talking about somebody with a mental disability being imprisoned for three months. Lord help us if one of those persons happened to be a child or a relative of ours. Let me tell members, I would not want them to go to jail for three months because a judge who sentenced them had no option but to do it. It is ridiculous and those opposite know it. It makes no sense whatsoever.

The member for Hinchinbrook came in here espousing all these cases but he did not say what the sentence was for those who perpetrated the crime. Not for one second did he tell us what happened to the perpetrators. Do members know why he did not say that? Because it did not suit his argument. That is why he did not say it.

The member for Aspley talked about thugs who assault police and get away with it. No such cases have existed. Those opposite come in here with fabricated evidence. They have absolutely no evidence whatsoever. They make these blanket statements and do not back them up at any point whatsoever.

Much has been written by noted jurists and academics about the merits or otherwise of mandatory sentencing. Mandatory sentences remove the ability of the sentencing judge to give proper consideration to all the relevant facts of any given case. I agree with the member for Springwood that all relevant cases should be considered. It is absolutely imperative that we do that; otherwise, what we end up with is somebody who could be slightly intoxicated, have a mental disability or have a personality disorder being put into jail for a minimal action that may not have been typical of that person in society. What we do is throw them in jail for three months. It could have been the only thing they have ever done in their lives. This is ridiculous and those opposite know it.

I recall last year when this House debated the Criminal Organisation Bill. In the chase for votes—oh, my goodness—those opposite supported everything. Members opposite suddenly declared themselves to be civil libertarians. The member for Southern Downs in his speech on that bill quoted the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties on at least 10 occasions. The member for Buderim lamented that the bill curtailed the individual rights and civil liberties of members of organisations caught by the bill. The member for Indooroopilly was concerned about the bill dangerously infringing civil liberties. The member for Glass House and the member for Gaven also quoted the president of the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties.

I was intrigued to note that they did not quote well-known civil libertarian Terry O'Gorman during the course of tonight's debate. Mr O'Gorman made a submission to the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee on this bill. I wonder which members opposite quoted his observation in that submission. None of them did. He stated—

This particular Bill neatly reflects criticism of the mindlessness of politicians in exploiting law and order issues for electoral gain.

That is what those opposite are doing. In his submission he also states—

There is no attempt in the explanatory memorandum to analyse the extent to which there have been appeals against perceived inadequate sentences for serious assault against police officers. The failure to produce such materials reflects what is known to be the reality by practising criminal lawyers namely that spitting on Police Officers almost inevitably brings a jail sentence.

That is why the member for Hinchinbrook did not say what happened to people in the case he quoted. He did not want to do it because it did not suit him. In fact, the Court of Appeal in *R v King* established a sentencing principle that most people who spit on police officers should expect to serve a term of actual imprisonment. It is already there. Those opposite are wasting this parliament's time with their grandstanding and pretence of being tough on crime.

The bill that the opposition has brought before the House is fundamentally flawed. It purports to solve a problem that evidence suggests does not exist—namely, lenient sentences for persons who seriously assault police and other emergency services officers. What we see again is another bill that does not achieve what the explanatory notes indicate is the intention of the bill.

It is fundamentally flawed. We have the member for Burnett saying that this bill is going to solve all problems—murders and assaults. There is no evidence whatsoever to substantiate that. But they say that that is what it is going to do. It would also result in the courts and prosecuting authorities reducing charges in an attempt to mitigate harsh and unintended consequences of the bill. I believe that could definitely be a consequence if this bill were passed. For all these reasons and many more, which have been enunciated by my learned colleagues, including the learned Attorney-General, this bill strikes at the very heart of a democratic society and should be relegated to the scrap heap of history where it belongs. I have great pleasure in opposing this bill.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (8.46 pm), in reply: We have just seen the member for Brisbane Central muscling up to push the Attorney-General out of the road in the race to the top for the Labor Party leadership in Queensland. We know what has been happening in Queensland: the rush between the Attorney and the member for Brisbane Central is on as they try to find a new way forward to get the Labor Party out of its self-perpetuating quandary of maladministration in the state. This long-term Labor government has completely lost its way over the years.

What we have seen not only tonight but also last sitting week from the sad apologists who sit opposite is people who are not prepared to stand up for the front-line people who go out and protect and defend us every single day of the week. The choice can be no more stark than what we are seeing from the Labor Party and the LNP in Queensland.

The LNP actually has a plan to protect our police officers, our emergency services workers, our ambos, our paramedics and our firefighters in this our state—those people who often find themselves the victims of the most appalling and in some cases premeditated assaults that leave them permanently scarred and severely psychologically affected. Not only that; it has a very strong psychological effect on their families. I will talk about some of that a bit later on.

Most people would simply pose this question: why should we not protect to the ultimate degree those people who go out and protect and look after us? Why should we not have a strong deterrent to protect those people who go out on the front line and protect us and keep our community safe and secure? We know why we cannot have that law at the moment—because we have a long-term, politically terminally ill Labor government in Queensland which has simply lost touch with the people of this state.

What we have going on out in the community is an absolute political revolution. We have a government sitting around with its fingers in its ears pretending that it is listening to Queenslanders but hearing absolutely nothing, singing *Kumbayah* and reassuring itself. Those opposite are planning to go out in the next week or two and meet a real Queensland—somebody that they have not staggered across in the last 10 years or so.

I will turn to some of the queries that have been raised during the course of the contributions by government, opposition and Independent members over the last couple of nights that this bill has been debated. What we have seen from the Attorney-General—the reject from Tuvalu—is a clear and absolute misunderstanding of the legislation which is before the House tonight. The Attorney is also completely hypocritical and completely inconsistent when it comes to legislation which has been introduced into this parliament, because he stands and rallies against legislation which is almost identical in some of its sentencing principles to that which he is hoping to pass through this place at some time in the not-too-distant future. However, a reasonable question has been asked by not only the Attorney but also other members throughout the course of this debate: why aren't all government employees covered? We simply have a view that you need to start somewhere. We are very open to negotiation to look at whether this legislation should be extended to cover other professions as well, but that is what happens during the consideration in detail stage. However, if we look where the most serious and grotesque assaults are happening in Queensland, obviously they are happening to our police officers, our firefighters and increasingly the paramedics who turn up as first responders in the community, and a number of members mentioned that.

Quite frankly, we are more than happy to sit down to look at ways of extending that to other professions if that is what members of this parliament want now or at some future time. But we do not want the shrill harping from the wannabe Premier from Brisbane Central sitting up there but providing

absolutely no way forward when it comes to the issue of protecting our police officers, our firefighters and our ambos in Queensland—the repressed Premier, somebody who really feels as though their true capacity in life is not being met, and maybe that is why we saw Bill Ludwig stagger out of here only a few hours ago after perhaps coming here to talk about some new special deal or reading the riot act to the troops and saying, ‘Just hang off. We won’t put the member for Brisbane Central there just yet. We’ll leave it for a little while longer.’

This Attorney and members opposite stand up here and say that they oppose mandatory sentencing. They enunciate this very important principle that they are so absolutely consistently opposed to mandatory sentencing. However, it is interesting to note that the last time this parliament debated this bill the Attorney alluded to his own legislation—the legislation which establishes a Sentencing Advisory Council in Queensland. Not only does that legislation establish a Sentencing Advisory Council, which the Attorney referred to in the debate on this bill in parliament; it also refers very strongly to bringing in mandatory sentencing for those people who commit sexual offences against children where a period of jail is mandatory, except in the most exceptional circumstances. I would have thought that if those opposite were truly consistent in their views—that the court should be the ultimate arbiter, that the court should have absolute and complete and utter discretion in this socialist utopia—they should in no way seek to restrain the discretion of the court when it comes to sentencing. However, the government’s legislation—its intent in terms of what it is proposing—seeks to do just that.

Those opposite try to allude to the fact that there is a small age gap in terms of juvenile offenders and therefore it should not be mandatory. Guess what? That is exactly what is contained in the legislation that I have introduced into this parliament—only it is far more prescriptive and it actually says that in the case of juveniles there is an opportunity for the court to be able to exercise discretion when it comes to imposing a period of imprisonment on juvenile offenders, because we do understand that with a juvenile offender the court should have that particular capacity. That is no different from what the government is proposing with its mandatory sentencing provisions in terms of sexual offences against children in Queensland. So let us have no more of this humbug. Let us have no more of this nonsense about this so-called purity of legislative application from the Labor Party in Queensland where it is running around saying that on the one hand it believes absolutely in judicial discretion while on the other hand it is very happy to whittle it away when it suits it.

I turn now to the issue of serious assaults, and many members have spoken about this issue during debate on this legislation. We are not talking about your normal pushy-shovey that goes on when a police officer is involved in a scuffle when someone might be trying to resist arrest—that is, somebody is pushed here, somebody is pushed there. That is not what this is about. We understand that that is what happens in those circumstances. Here we are talking about serious assaults where police officers sustain harm—where harm has been done to police officers and they suffer a serious injury. It is also true that this legislation is defining ‘serious assault’ to include spitting on those particular officers and the throwing of blood, faeces and urine at those officers. Frankly, that should be a serious assault.

I heard the member for Brisbane Central—our wannabe Premier, as soon as Bill can arrange the numbers—say that spitting is not a serious assault. I heard that interjection from the member up the back when the member for Toowoomba South was on his feet. If someone who has hepatitis C or hepatitis B is spitting at a police officer and there is blood in their saliva, then I put on the record of this parliament that the risk of serious injury or ongoing harm or concern to that police officer and effect on their family is as serious as any assault which might see their jaw being broken or some other form of injury. So that is a serious assault. Even the government by its own admission has changed the Criminal Code in Queensland to ensure that those sorts of situations should attract a higher penalty. So the government already recognises that it is more serious than common assault, and frankly what we are doing with this legislation is consistent with that.

We also heard from the Attorney and the member for Brisbane Central that this disenfranchises and affects some of the most vulnerable people in our community—that is, the mentally ill. They spoke about the situation in Western Australia where the first person arrested under its mandatory sentencing policy for police assault was someone who was mentally ill. I am surprised that those opposite do not have a clear understanding of what happens in Queensland with mentally ill offenders. Queensland actually has a tribunal and that tribunal ensures that if a person is arrested who is mentally ill they are not dealt with in the criminal justice system; they are dealt with in a mental health tribunal, and the mental health tribunal considers them completely and absolutely differently. The tribunal may medicate those people or may lock them up for a particular period of time in a secure institution. They are dealt with completely differently than another person who is of sound mind would be dealt with under this bill. Those members who stand opposite and try to say that it is going to impact upon the mentally ill have no understanding of the way that the mental health tribunal works in Queensland and has worked for a long time, and the Attorney-General for all his alleged legal training perpetuated that humbug and dishonesty in this parliament.

If those opposite were so concerned about the impact of wrongful incarceration on those people who are mentally ill who have not been appropriately diagnosed, then they should be doing something about ensuring that Queensland has better facilities for those people who are mentally ill in this state. We know that on remand in our watch-houses throughout Queensland at any given time there are dozens and possibly hundreds of Queenslanders with a mental illness who have gone untreated by this government because it has not put the facilities in place. That is absolutely the case and is beyond question. Because of their lack of appropriate treatment, some of those people are going into our jail system with the early stages of mental illness because this government has not put the facilities in place. If those opposite were serious about dealing with that issue, more than seven new mental health beds would have been made available by the department of health in this state last year amongst a population that is exploding. If those opposite were serious about social justice and serious about addressing that issue, then they would address this huge area of unmet need which has fallen on the deaf ears of honourable members opposite. That is where the real problem is.

I turn now to the bikie laws, and the Attorney spoke about this issue, as did the member for Brisbane Central. That was a stunt. That was the government coming in here and getting its ACME hairy chest and gluing it on to say that it is really tough when it comes to the issue of dealing with bikies in Queensland—so-called organised criminal gangs.

But when it comes to declaring those organisations, when it comes to dealing with those individuals, I bet my bottom dollar that there has not been one application before the courts in Queensland for a declaration against those people. We know that a declaration of the organisation does not fix the problem; having the police resources and the police intelligence to be able to get in there and catch those people committing the crimes are the real impediments, the real deterrence to that sort of organised crime. Any successes that we have seen in recent times, even since the implementation of that legislation, have been as a consequence of that.

Was the Attorney-General fretting about police officers in his contribution to the debate? Was he fretting about the impact that this bill was going to have on police officers in Queensland who are victims of assault? Not once did he fret about the effect that an assault would have on police officers, but he fretted mightily about the impact that mandatory sentencing could have on these people who had committed these assaults and their families. What about the people who are assaulted—the people who are out there standing up and protecting our community and their families if they have to go through four, six or eight months of uncertainty because they have had blood spat on them, or because they have been bitten? What about those people? This is typical of the Labor Party's approach to law and order and criminality in Queensland: make excuses, stand up for the criminal, say some sort of mildly assuaging words of concern for the victim, but really when it comes to standing up, we know where Labor's heart lies and that is with the perpetrator and their family and not the victim and their family.

As the honourable member for Gregory said, when it comes to standing up for our police, this government is all talk and absolutely no action. The member also asked the very valid question of how many people who have assaulted police in a serious context have received the maximum penalty. I ask honourable members opposite that question, because this is the other great furphy that the government members go on with. They keep putting up the maximum penalties but they are not being imposed. In actual fact, I think you would find that zero of these people have received the maximum penalty. We know what is happening. Generally, most people who commit common assaults against police are not being sentenced to a period of imprisonment, but when it comes to serious assaults against police a large number of those offenders are not going to jail, either. Maximum penalties are just a smokescreen. They are an excuse to do absolutely nothing, because unless you are prepared to impose a minimum term of imprisonment, then they will not be upheld by the courts.

The member for Gregory also promoted the positive aspects of the Western Australian laws. The members opposite are talking about how those laws are terrible and dreadful, but what is also certain is that since those laws have been introduced the number of serious reported assaults against police officers has also fallen. So that is a clear indication of the success of those laws in Western Australia. Quite clearly, that issue culminated in what was the ultimate point made by the member for Gregory in his speech, and that is that those laws are a strong deterrent. I have been quoting the comments that the member for Gregory made in his speech so much because he is the shadow minister for police.

The member for Gregory's contribution was followed by that of the police minister. He stood up and again made excuses. He said that he supports police, but he did not really say how he was going to support them. He went on to wax lyrical about the introduction of more serious maximum penalties for serious assaults against police, but he did not go on to say whether any of those maximum penalties were being imposed by our courts.

Then the minister perpetuated the other great furphy of the Labor Party, the other great furphy of the Left in Queensland. That other great furphy of this long-term, terminal Labor government in Queensland is how we have staffing levels in Queensland police that are higher than they were when the coalition left office in Queensland. So they should be, because this government continued to

implement the plan put in place by Russell Cooper. It was Russell Cooper, as the coalition's police minister at the time, who started the program to recruit an additional 2,500 extra police officers in the force over the next 10 years. A comparison of what was proposed by the Labor Party in 1996 compared to that proposed by the coalition shows that the police to population ratio under the coalition was one in 524. At that time, under Labor, it was one in 524. The following year, under the coalition, it was one in 525. The following year, 1998, under the coalition it was one in 516. In the same year under Labor, it was one in 527. When you blow out what was proposed over the 10 years of that program and get to 2005, under the coalition in Queensland the police to population ratio was to be one in 453. But under Labor, it is one in 529.

Mr Horan: And they opposed the police academy in Townsville.

Mr SPRINGBORG: They opposed the police academy in Townsville, as the honourable member for Toowoomba South has said. So again, the coalition's program was largely kept in place by the Labor Party, but it has started to pull the numbers out of what was being proposed. We are talking here about a police minister whose government could not even supervise the serial paedophile Fardon in Queensland.

The honourable member for Mirani spoke about the serious effect of alcohol fuelled violence, the increasing number of assaults against police officers, ambos and firefighters. It is also true to say that we are seeing those assaults now popping up in the emergency wards around Queensland. We had a parliamentary committee charged by the government to go out there and in good faith look at the issue of dealing with alcohol fuelled violence in Queensland, how to rein in antisocial behaviour and to make some recommendations. Was that committee's report debated in this parliament? No, it was not. What did we see? Last week in an exclusive interview in the *Sunday Mail* the Premier said that it was all fixed, because she was going to give everyone a bottle of water and the problem was going to go away. Rather than fixing or even debating the recommendations of the report with regard to a reduction in trading hours in certain precincts, what do we have? A bottle of water and more police officers, which is an admission that this alcohol fuelled violence, this yobboism that we are seeing, is contributing to and exacerbating this problem. But a bottle of water and more police officers is going to fix it. That is the sort of response that we are getting to public policy in Queensland.

The member for Currumbin said that Labor does not care about front-line officers. We have seen that by its own words and its own admissions in this place. The member for Indooroopilly clearly enunciated again how this bill applies only to serious assaults against police officers and other officers. The member for Bundaberg, who was a police officer before he came into this place, said that what he heard from the members of the Labor Party in their contributions to the debate was just more excuses and no action. But he also said that what we should be looking at when it comes to these issues is more personal responsibility from individuals. We are not seeing that being enunciated as any sort of narrative within the Labor Party.

The member for Redlands said that three months should be seen only as a starting point and that maybe we should be looking at adding to that. At this stage, I think three months is a reasonable starting point. Of course, these things should be assessed for their effectiveness down the track. The member also spoke about the fear of police officers of contracting infectious diseases if somebody has spat on them or has thrown at them blood, urine or faeces.

The member for Toowoomba North, who is a former Attorney-General, stood up in this place and talked about a range of things, including the civil liberties council and how members on this side quoted the civil liberties council. I do not mind quoting the civil liberties council, because I am in agreement with the civil liberties council on a lot of things. I do not always agree with the civil liberties council, but I think the civil liberties council performs a very important role in our society. I have said so and I have said that at their meetings, which I have attended.

Its members often stand up and enunciate a point of view which is unpalatable and unpopular to the body politic, regardless of whether it be on the established left of this place or the right. I do not always agree with them, but I think they are generally consistent in their views and raise some very strong points. The member for Toowoomba North was also consistent with his civil libertarian view. He probably comes from more of a civil libertarian bent and background than do I and maybe some of his colleagues.

Mr Gibson: Just a little bit!

Mr SPRINGBORG: Just a little tiny bit. He sometimes wears it on his arm as a badge of honour. But where was he recently in this place when it came to the issue of changes to the civil and criminal jurisdiction with regard to what, in effect, was taking away the right of trial by jury for certain offences that have been established over centuries as being able to be tried by jury? Where was he when it came to the organised crime bill and the taking away of a lot of the fundamental civil liberties of those people who were not even found guilty, were not even established to have committed any sort of offence to a

criminal standard and may have only supposedly done something to a civil standard? Where was he when it came to that? He was a long, long way away. He was so far away that you would probably need maritime binoculars to see him, and that would be on a clear day.

Where is the Labor Party on Indigenous incarceration rates? They came into this place in 1998-99 and they apologised to the Indigenous community in Queensland. There were all sorts of concerns and they waxed lyrical at that time about how they would address Indigenous disadvantage. They signed all sorts of undertakings that they would address the issue of overrepresentation of Indigenous people in our prisons in Queensland. Guess what? Notwithstanding the fact that they came back here 10 years later and reaffirmed their do-nothing apology in this place, the Indigenous incarceration rates under this government have continued to go up each and every year, despite them signing undertakings with Indigenous leaders to try to address that. For them the issue of Indigenous disadvantage is something that you address for the media but you do not go out and address it in the community. If members opposite do not believe me they should look at the facts in Queensland and look at the record.

The member for Gladstone raised the issue of why this was not going to apply to other front-line workers. I think that is a fair enough point. In response to what the Attorney-General and others raised, we feel that we need to start somewhere. Certainly we can look at adding to that further down the track. If the member for Toowoomba North actually listened he would know that we are dealing here with those people who are predominately on the front line, where the serious assaults seem to be happening on a regular basis. That is what we are dealing with. Police officers are dealing with it all the time, and paramedics and firefighters are dealing with it increasingly.

The member for Buderim and others talked about how we are seeing ambulance officers in Queensland being forced to consider having self-defence training in order to protect themselves. What sort of a ridiculous situation is that? The honourable member was also concerned about limited exceptions to mandatory jail. Under what is being proposed here, obviously if a person has a serious mental illness then they are not dealt with under this act. The Mental Health Tribunal would deal with them. If it is a juvenile offender there is a discretion there for the court. As the honourable member for Gaven pointed out in his contribution, we are talking here about people who are serious recidivists. These offenders go out there and deliberately assault police officers and have absolutely no consideration for the consequences of their actions. They are quite happy to do it.

The member for Burnett touched on the issue of protecting police. He said that this is the least we can do. We nevertheless think it is very, very important. The member for Hinchinbrook talked about a number of serious local incidents in his electorate where ambulance and police officers were seriously assaulted, causing permanent disfiguration.

I have touched on the contribution from the member for Gaven. I have also talked about the contribution from the member for Buderim. The member for Caloundra again defined serious assaults and has a clear understanding of what this bill is all about. The member for Toowoomba South has a very strong heritage when it comes to police families in Queensland, with both his grandfather and also his father being police officers, and he has witnessed personally the impact of serious assaults on police families that he knew.

The member for Chatsworth referred to a number of things. He talked about the judicial discretion that our courts should have. If we were totally pure about this, we would still have capital and corporal punishment in Queensland. We do not because this parliament has sought to limit the judicial discretion of our courts in relation to that.

Members have talked about the repugnance they feel towards mandatory sentencing. We have mandatory sentencing for murder in Queensland. That is established in our case law and jurisdiction. Were they rallying against that? No-one said that they wanted to change that. What is happening with regard to the member for Chatsworth and others is that they want the type of judicial discretion that suits them but not the type of judicial discretion that does not suit them. That is the hypocrisy of those opposite when it comes to dealing with this issue and bah humbug to the issue of separation of powers. The legislature passes the law—it actually establishes the statutes—and the court interprets the law. That is how it works in Queensland. It only becomes an issue when the parliament sits in the court saying how it should be interpreted. Why is the government against this? Because it does not care for police officers, fires and ambos. This bill should be supported.

Division: Question put—That the bill be now read a second time.

AYES, 34—Blejje, Crandon, Cripps, Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, Gibson, Hobbs, Hopper, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, McArdle, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Nicholls, Powell, Pratt, Rickuss, Robinson, Seeneey, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Horan, Sorensen

NOES, 49—Attwood, Boyle, Choi, Croft, Cunningham, Darling, Dick, Farmer, Finn, Foley, Fraser, Grace, Hinchliffe, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Johnstone, Jones, Kiernan, Lawlor, Male, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Reeves, Roberts, Robertson, Ryan, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Struthers, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Keech, Pitt

Resolved in the negative.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. JC SPENCE (Sunnybank—ALP) (Leader of the House) (9.23 pm): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Bentley, Mr B

Mr STEVENS (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (9.23 pm): The Bligh Labor government and the ‘Minister Not Responsible for Racing’, Mr Peter Lawlor, have signalled their clear and unambiguous disdain for racing in Queensland by allowing the Chairman of Racing Queensland, Mr Bob Bentley, to be allocated a place in the Queensland Racing Hall of Fame on a recommendation from his own Bentley controlled board. This demeans the wonderful efforts and contributions made by horses, jockeys and trainers in Queensland over many years by elevating this non-elected, dictatorial racing official to their glorified status. We now have Bentley sitting on the same level of pre-eminence in racing as Gunsynd, Bruce McLachlan, Mick Dittman and George Moore. As they said on the national *Racing Retro* program last Sunday, the next thing you know, Bob Bentley will win horse of the year.

Minister Lawlor has to be kidding. We know he has wiped his hands of racing and is happy for Bentley to be the Labor fall guy for racing’s woes, but this self-indulgent grandstanding on the recommendation of Bentley’s board and not by the normal process of stakeholder nomination is beyond the belief of the racing industry. Minister Lawlor has presided over the greatest insult to Queensland racing and has turned what was an outstanding tribute to Queensland’s racing heroes into the Bentley board hall of infamy.

The racing industry is well aware of the Labor Party’s support for Bob Bentley and Bill Ludwig as Labor mates, but this latest insult by the untouchables of Racing Queensland’s board tells everyone involved in Queensland racing, including trots, dogs and gallops, that the only way to get rid of this unelected swill—to borrow a famous Labor Party term—is to vote for the Liberal National Party at the next election. If Minister Lawlor wants to stand shoulder to shoulder with Bob Bentley, defending his Labor mate and not listening to the howls of desperation and indignation from the racing industry, then he should reap the wrath of the voters at the next state election by those racing industry participants who cannot vote out Bentley and his board.

If the minister is not interested in racing, he should say so rather than having this charade that the Labor Party cares about the racing industry. He should tell everybody that he only wants the financial dividend from the industry and could not care less about sorting out racing’s problems and assisting its growth. If he really believes that Bob Bentley is doing a wonderful job for Queensland racing, particularly in country and regional racing, he should stand up and give a ministerial statement praising Bob Bentley’s accolade as a Hall of Fame inductee while he is still serving as Racing Queensland board chairman. The silence is deafening.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I rise to a point of order. There is no silence. I challenge the honourable member to come to Rockhampton.

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

National Meals on Wheels Day

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (9.25 pm): Members should be aware that last Wednesday, 25 August, was National Meals on Wheels Day, which fell during Home and Community Care Awareness Week. The 148 Meals on Wheels organisations across Queensland perform wonderful work each and every day, and it is important we recognise the value of those services and the efforts of the volunteers who run them.

The first Meals on Wheels service in Queensland operated from a backyard shed in Ipswich with an all-volunteer workforce. Meals cost two shillings, which just recouped the cost of the food. Today, less than 60 years later, Meals on Wheels has the largest workforce of any volunteer organisation in Queensland, with approximately 14,000 volunteers. It just goes to show that a good idea for a worthy cause can flourish if it has the support of the community.

This workforce and this goodwill ensures seniors and many younger people with a disability have access to nutritious but low-cost meals. The provision of those meals allows people to remain in their own homes, living independently in their own communities for longer. Meals on Wheels volunteers also help their service users in other ways, such as being a bit of company on a lonely day or helping with a household task that has become a little bit too difficult. When people talk about the strength of communities, Meals on Wheels should come directly to mind.

I recognised National Meals on Wheels day by joining the Centenary Meals on Wheels on its daily run. I was happy to help out in a small way on that day. As patron of the organisation for many years, I am very proud of the way people from the local community lend a hand for this vital service and it is always good to work with them. The president of Centenary Meals on Wheels, Gwen Braga, is also the Queensland president. We are very humbled to have her looking after our local organisation. At the recent AGM, we farewelled our long-time treasurer, Bob Henderson. Bob continues as a volunteer with several other worthy community organisations in the area and I know how much of himself he gives to our local area. Other members of Centenary Meals on Wheels who have been around since its beginnings are Rae Livingstone and Jim Haynes.

The Bligh government underscored its commitment to Meals on Wheels on National Meals on Wheels Day. Last Wednesday, Minister Palaszczuk announced that all of the 148 Meals on Wheels organisations in Queensland would each receive \$1,000 in one-off Home and Community Care funding to help meet operating costs. We recognise that some organisations have encountered increasing financial pressures in delivering their services over the past few years. This new funding will assist Meals on Wheels services in Queensland to produce high-quality food, meeting health and safety guidelines. I am sure all members of the House will join me in recognising and thanking Meals on Wheels and their volunteers across the state. I am sure they will also join me in encouraging people to consider volunteering for their local Meals on Wheels, as I know they can always use another helping hand.

Confidential Information

Mr EMERSON (Indooroopilly—LNP) (9.28 pm): The Bligh government continues to be loose and free with the confidential and private information of Queenslanders. In the latest example, it has spied on more than 57,000 motorists in a secret study of users of park-and-ride facilities. The study, conducted over the past 18 months, has seen car numberplates recorded after commuters parked at bus and train stations and ferry terminals. TransLink has then obtained, through Queensland Transport, the addresses of the owners of those vehicles. The actions of the state government raise serious privacy issues about the protection, use and potential abuse of personal information of car owners. Not one of those 57,000 car owners voluntarily gave their details to TransLink. Normally, only the police would have access to that information. Those commuters are not criminals, but those who obtain the information—and there is no indication that any security checks have been undertaken—now know where those commuters live and whether or not they are at home.

The implications are very clear to everyone but the state government and the transport minister, because the transport minister, Rachel Nolan, has defended the study, saying it was less intrusive than surveying individual commuters. By 'less intrusive' what she means is that by spying on commuters, and keeping it secret, the government did not need to ask commuters permission to access their private information or be forced to make any awkward explanations.

Is it any wonder that the Privacy Commissioner, Linda Matthews, has criticised the study? The Privacy Commissioner has said that she will investigate the operation, saying that TransLink should have told commuters that their details were being collected. She said, 'It is a concern when information about people is gathered without their knowledge. It would have been preferable to alert drivers that this information was being collected.'

But why was this secret operation occurring at all? The transport minister has said the government is looking at 'mechanisms to manage demand for parking' at park-and-ride locations. Is this spying part of her yet-to-be-revealed plans to manage demand? The Bligh government needs to show some honesty and tell commuters what it is planning.

Proserpine Citizens Band

Ms JARRATT (Whitsunday—ALP) (9.31 pm): There is something very special about country towns that is often quite intangible and difficult to put into words. There is a sense of stability and continuity that comes from knowing that many of the townspeople have family names that date back to settlement and that the buildings in the main street are the originals, untouched by the need to modernise and corporatise.

Proserpine is such a town. It still has an independent newspaper, one of the last in the state. It boasts stunning Art Deco style architecture in its main street. The sugar mill still takes pride of place in the centre of town, signifying the very origins of the town. And it still has a citizens band that plays at every Anzac Day march, every Christmas carol night and every Australia Day celebration in the district.

The Proserpine Citizens Band turns 100 this year, and last Saturday night the town celebrated this centenary in fitting style with a grand concert featuring music played by the band during its 100 years of existence. The celebration was led by our very capable compères Ross and Lyndal Hughes

and Harry Benjamin. I know that Ross and Lyndal each have amazing musical ability, but I did not know until Saturday night that Harry was a maestro of the cymbals. They did a great job of keeping the show rolling.

The band's music was complemented by local singers Dani Becker, Faye Chapman and Lyndal Hughes and dancers Hannah Arnold, Chez Rock, Joel Harding and Remi Vigor. Their performances showcased just how much incredible talent resides in our local district.

The audience was also very pleased to give a warm welcome home to David and Rohan Hughes and Bryce Fraser who, as guest performers of the night, entertained us with their considerable musical talents. Yes, Mr Speaker, Bryce Fraser is a relative of the Treasurer, Andrew Fraser. However, unlike the Treasurer, Bryce plays a mean range of brass instruments. Bryce, David and Rohan have each at various times conducted the Proserpine Citizens Band, as well as playing their various instruments. It was wonderful that they could come back to Proserpine to share in the band's night of nights.

The evening proved to be a walk down memory lane, as former conductors were honoured and classic numbers were brought back to life by the very energetic band members. In the early years the band rehearsed in halls and hotels throughout the area, playing at every special occasion in the shire including balls, picnics, sports days and show days. They performed in the town's main street regularly on Saturday nights as a prelude to the picture show.

Times have changed, but the Proserpine Citizens Band still regularly delights townspeople with their musical range—whether it be oom-pah-pah music, classic marches or contemporary pieces. Special praise must go to current band conductor Barbara Balma, who came to the area as a music teacher and took on the band leader's position in 2002. Indeed, congratulations to all band members past and present for their 100 years of community spirit.

Caloundra Aerodrome

Mr POWELL (Glass House—LNP) (9.34 pm): On 19 August, and as part of the Sunshine Coast Regional Council's ongoing consideration of the Bligh Labor government's demand that they fast-track development at Caloundra South, the council moved a motion. In the interests of time, let me share just part of it. It states—

That Council advise the State Government that it will retain operation of Caloundra Aerodrome in its current location until the State Government formally commits to the following:

- a replacement aerodrome is constructed by December 2014, at Johnston Road as per Council's Statement of Proposals and within the Glass House Mountain Protection Zone, at no cost to Council;
- the replacement aerodrome at Johnston Road is managed and operated by Council;
- the current Caloundra Aerodrome businesses and lessees are relocated at no cost to themselves or Council;
- the existing Caloundra Aerodrome site is jointly structure planned by the State Government and Council to ensure outcomes as outlined in the adopted Sunshine Coast Statement of Proposals are achieved for the Caloundra Major Regional Activity Centre; and further that
- the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning provides a commitment to the proposal including the conditions above within three months of today's date.

Basically, the council is calling on the state government to answer one simple question: will it fund the Caloundra Aerodrome to move from its current location to a new site at Glass House Mountains? I would like to assist the government in answering that question. The only responsible answer is no. And here is why.

The Caloundra Aerodrome in its current location is home to a flourishing aviation focused business park and to the renowned Air Museum. Together these businesses employ some 225 workers. What is more, the residents of Caloundra, rather than being opposed to the aerodrome continuing in its current location, understand the benefits that come from having it based in the city. So much so that 5,000 of them signed a petition sponsored by the member for Caloundra, Mark McArdle, to that effect. If that is not sufficient evidence, let us turn to the proposed relocation site, east of the Bruce Highway, adjacent to Johnston Road at Glass House Mountains.

If we put aside for a moment concerns around the environmental impact of aviation services operating in this corridor—although they are worthy justifications in their own right—if we put aside concerns that this will undo any goodwill generated by the government in announcing an expansion of the Glass House Mountains National Park and the establishment of the Pumicestone National Park, let me offer one simple reason why the proposed site is inappropriate. If it were to relocate to Johnston Road, it would be only 18 kilometres from the equally well-established Caboolture Aerodrome. It is madness to have two such aerodromes in such close proximity.

The people of Johnston Road and the broader Glass House Mountains have let me know in no uncertain terms that the aerodrome is not welcome—95 per cent of respondents to a recent mail-out have sent me a clear message: keep the aerodrome where it is! I think Ms Melinda Hesse sums it up best by saying, 'If you buy in area with a pre-existing aerodrome like Caloundra you can't complain, so there is no need to put one in a different area after the fact.' For the sake of the existing businesses at the Caloundra Aerodrome and for the sake of the residents of Glass House Mountains, I ask the government to tell the council no.

Seniors Week

Mr CHOI (Capalaba—ALP) (9.37 pm): Seniors Week was recently celebrated across Queensland. This state-wide event provided a great opportunity for people of all ages and backgrounds to celebrate the valuable contributions of seniors. The theme for Seniors Week 2010 was 'Positively Ageless'. It highlights the benefits of having a positive attitude, no matter how old you are. Seniors Week was kicked off around the state with people of all ages coming together to take part in an intergenerational walk in New Farm Park in Brisbane.

Across the Redlands a number of organisations also celebrated Seniors Week. I was pleased to catch up with seniors who took part in a walk from the Donald Simpson Centre. The walk, organised by the Redlands District Committee on the Ageing, RDCOTA, was a great start to celebrations. Seniors chose to walk a three, five or 10-kilometre round trip from the park along Eddie Santagiuliana Way. There was also a multicultural concert in the afternoon that provided lots of entertainment. It is fantastic to see multiculturalism is alive and well in the Redlands, where we celebrate different cultures and the wonderful community that we are with people coming from all around the world celebrating their lives in the Redlands.

Organisations in the bayside like National Seniors, RDCOTA and the Donald Simpson Centre work tirelessly to ensure that our seniors get out and about. The U3A in Redlands run a number of programs for seniors from aqua aerobics classes to a choir and theatre group. They do their best to make sure that seniors in our community do not face social isolation. In doing so, they organise seminars and debates.

In fact, I was invited a couple of years ago to U3A to debate water issues. In recent times, they invited me, along with the federal member and also the mayor, to debate the population issue in the Redlands. It was fantastic to share with our senior citizens in the Redlands some of the challenges faced by this government. We talked about population issues, such as challenges to water supply, and about balancing the economy and the environment.

I faced some tough questions at the debate and I truly enjoyed the experience. Let me assure honourable members that our seniors are engaged and that they care about the future of our state. It was a privilege to discuss how this government was planning for the challenges and opportunities that population growth will present. I take this opportunity to thank the president of U3A, Mr John Butler, and all members of the committee for the invitation.

Horse Riding, National Parks

Mr KNUTH (Dalrymple—LNP) (9.40 pm): Yesterday I tabled a non-conforming petition of 3,864 signatures and I now table an extra 325 non-conforming e-petitions and 199 non-conforming signatures, which equates to 4,387 signatures of Tablelands residents who are completely opposed to the closure of horse-riding trails in Far North Queensland.

Tabled paper: Non-conforming e-petition regarding horse riding in national parks [\[2875\]](#).

Tabled paper: Non-conforming paper petition regarding horse riding in national parks [\[2876\]](#).

The petition calls for the minister to support healthy lifestyles so that Australians can maintain a connection to the culture and freedom of this country by continuing existing public access to trails in state forests in the event they are transferred to national parks and to acknowledge that public access to trails used by horse riders ensures a safe and protected environment which encourages the young, elderly and urban Queenslanders into the great Australian bush.

Horse riding in the bush is ingrained in Australia's heritage and is a hugely popular recreation on the Atherton Tablelands. Any decision by this government to close forest trails in Far North Queensland will provoke an immense backlash as it is a blatant disregard of our rural legacy. Queensland was pioneered using horses and this country was opened up off the back of a horse. Getting outdoors, respecting the environment and enjoying it from horseback is part of our Australian history, culture and way of life. Is this government prepared to take responsibility for the eradication of this great Australian pastime from Queensland?

The closure of these trails would force those who currently use them onto public thoroughfares. Any intention to lock up forest trails on the Atherton Tablelands is in direct contradiction of the government's own policies encouraging healthier living, healthy leisure activities and safer riding of trails. The mixed messages and misinformation that have been used to keep the public in the dark over a range of issues will not be accepted by Tablelanders in the continuing recreational use of forest trails. I ask the minister: if off-road trails are closed, where will people ride their horses? Is the minister prepared to take responsibility for forcing young riders onto dangerous main roads?

The minimal impact that horse riding has on the environment has been grossly exaggerated by the minister's department. It puzzles me why horse riding is targeted and yet little has been achieved in targeting Australia's greatest environmental vandal, the feral pig. In one night a single wild boar can rut up a quarter acre of land like a rotary hoe and spread noxious weeds from one end of a national park to another. Even the most radical conservationist can see through the hypocrisy of this government shutting out horses but doing nothing to manage feral pigs.

The 2020 national parks plan needs to be tempered with reason and be developed in genuine consultation with all stakeholders rather than implemented on political grounds to shore up green support. The strength of these petitions is evidence of Tableland residents calling on the minister to provide that guarantee and assurance that horse riders will continue to have access to trails in state forests in the event they are transferred to national parks and will not be forced onto dangerous main roads and highways.

Tertiary Place

Ms FARMER (Bulimba—ALP) (9.43 pm): Like, I am sure, many of the newer members in this House, a lot of people in my local area ask me how I am going in my job as an MP, how I am enjoying it and what I have learned most since I was elected as a member of parliament. Without exception, I tell them that what I have learned is something that I suppose I had already known, but it has been confirmed to me over and over again in so many ways. I know now that it is one of the essential things in life. That lesson is that all most people really want in life is to be valued. It does not matter who you are. It does not matter if you are the CEO of a major company or if you are a small child; you just want to know that you are important to other people in some way and that you have something to contribute.

That is why an organisation that was established not so long in the Bulimba electorate is so special. This is an organisation called the Tertiary Place. What they are on about is making sure that people with disabilities feel valued and that people with disabilities know that they have something to contribute to others. This organisation was set up by sisters Nona Westenrieder and Angela Leneham, who have been special education teachers all their lives and two of whose brothers have disabilities. They are so ably assisted by Mary McKenna, who, after her own personal experiences, is deeply committed to providing positive experiences for people with disabilities, particularly those which encourage people with disabilities to enjoy being active and to achieve their greatest physical activity goals.

Tertiary Place is about providing lifelong learning to people with disabilities after they leave the formal schooling system. If you are a parent, you know that what you want most for your children is for them to feel happy and to know that they are the best that they can be. If you are a parent of a child with a disability then it is hard for you to be confident that that is what is going to happen for your child after they leave school.

Tertiary Place is guided by the belief that people with disabilities, at whatever stage of their lives they are at, can make valuable contributions to society and can achieve, learn and grow throughout their lives. What do they do there? Dance, dog training, drumming, computing, fine arts, bowling, songwriting. You name it, they do it.

Last week the Tertiary Place had an open day every day of the week to show off what every single person who attends is achieving there. I was totally delighted to be able to attend for the karaoke day, where I was treated to the musical arrangements from Crystal-Lee Phillips, Bradley Leneham, Kelly Buckell, Michael Duke, Richard Lowe, Nathan Blair, Robert Shelton, John Van Pelt, Andrew Leneham, Ashley O'Sullivan and Vincent Te Haara. I loved it. I loved singing along. But most importantly, I loved seeing how much talent there was among the performers and how much they enjoyed showing how talented they are.

I congratulate everyone at the Tertiary Place on what they are doing and how much they are showing all of us about how to value each other. I thank them for everything they have taught me and for everything they are going to teach all of us in the future.

Victoria Point State High School; RedFest

Mr DOWLING (Redlands—LNP) (9.46 pm): Tonight I rise to talk on a subject that I am certain will be supported by both sides of the House—a rare treat in this place. The issue is the value of travel, the value of language and the value of music and culture as an educational tool. The issue I raise relates to travel for music, for full immersion language study and for the experience of seeing another culture firsthand. Honourable members can imagine the disappointment of my school community of Victoria Point State High School when trip after trip has been either cancelled or reduced, with the reason given being some education policy that does not allow for overseas travel which includes missing school days. I have been in touch with the Minister for Education and his office and I have been in touch with the director-general for education on this issue. On the surface it appears to be a policy position. However, it is a policy of convenience used for reasons known only to those within the department.

Victoria Point State High School received a letter in July 2009—last year—advising that a Vanuatu trip could not include any school days. I would like to know why Cleveland State High School was allowed to go on the very same Vanuatu trip this year from 6 to 16 August, which included only two holiday days. The rest were school days and the weekend. Victoria Point State High School's New Zealand music trip had to be cancelled this year because it included three school days, yet Coorparoo State High School's music tour has been approved and includes school days. Again, the community would like to know why.

Victoria Point State High School's full immersion Japan trip has been reduced by three days because they are school days, yet a full immersion trip includes time at school while overseas. Cavendish Road State High School's full immersion Japan trip is approved and it includes five days of overseas travel. To say there are inconsistencies is an understatement, and my community needs to know why our students have been disadvantaged in such a blatant way. They have delayed a cultural tour to Vanuatu; they have lost the opportunity to visit New Zealand for a performance tour; they have lost three days from their full immersion language trip to Japan; they have had the disruption and uncertainty in planning these trips, not to mention the added costs associated with travel at peak times, namely school holidays.

The final bizarre inconsistency relates to international travel. There appears to be no restriction whatsoever on sporting trips overseas. I look forward to hearing the response from the department on this issue, as does my school community.

On a brighter note, it is RedFest this weekend. All honourable members are invited to this iconic event. It is held in Redland city and has been for over 50 years. It is taking place this Friday, Saturday and Sunday, 3, 4 and 5 September. There is a great line-up of entertainment including Glen Shorrock, Daryl Braithwaite, Peter Cupples, Russell Morris, Darryl Cotton, Jim Keays, fireworks, the world famous strawberry-eating contest, lantern parades, face painting, clowns, local entertainment and the Jaime Wells Trio. See you there, Mr Speaker, and honourable members.

Legacy Week

Mr WATT (Everton—ALP) (9.49 pm): Legacy is truly one of Australia's great organisations. Unfortunately, one of the tragic by-products of war is the loss of life of service people, often cut down in the prime of their lives. Legacy plays a role in filling the void left by the loss of a loved one in war. It assists over 100,000 war widows and 1,900 children and dependants with a disability who are left behind by those lost fighting for our country.

This week is Legacy Week. It is deeply touching and poignant that it is in Legacy Week that we yet again must recognise the recent tragic loss of life of three of our servicemen in Afghanistan. The Premier yesterday recorded the sorrow of all members of the House for the loss of Private Tomas Dale, Private Grant Kirby and Lance Corporal Jared MacKinney in service. These young men were all members of the 6th Battalion based at Enoggera Barracks, which is just outside my electorate.

Given the location of the barracks, it is not surprising that many defence families reside in the electorate of Everton. I must admit that until I was elected I had had little to do with defence families. Like many members of this House, I had family members serve in the armed forces in the Second World War but in recent years I have not had a lot of contact with the armed forces. So it has been a humbling experience to get to know a large number of defence families since I was elected. Many of the schools in my electorate have so many children of defence families that they actually employ Defence Force teacher aides to specifically look after the interests of children of defence families and assist them cope with the interstate moves and other upheavals associated with Defence Force life.

As a result of this contact that I have had with defence families, I feel that I am only just beginning to appreciate the incredible personal sacrifice that they make in the service of our country. It is not just the soldiers who serve our country but the loved ones they leave behind when they are serving overseas.

I recently hosted a forum for defence families with my colleagues the members for Ferny Grove and Ashgrove to see what we could do to assist defence families with the interstate moves that they have to make and the changes in schooling that that involves. Having to uproot and move home, change schools, make new friends are big challenges that defence families have to face. The biggest challenge they face is the worry of loved ones serving our country on the other side of the world, in the most dangerous conditions we have seen since the Vietnam War.

Legacy Week is the annual national appeal to raise awareness and funds for the families of our deceased veterans. It is held all around Australia and supported by many Australians. This week Legacy's appeal is focusing on the selling of wristbands to raise money for the loved ones of deceased soldiers. I acknowledge the \$15,000 donation which has already been made by the Bligh government in support of its good work. I encourage all members to join with me and purchase one of these wristbands before the week is out. I will be doing that myself. Good luck to Legacy.

Question put—That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 9.51 pm.

ATTENDANCE

Attwood, Bates, Bleijie, Bligh, Boyle, Choi, Crandon, Cripps, Croft, Cunningham, Darling, Davis, Dempsey, Dick, Dickson, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Farmer, Finn, Flegg, Foley, Fraser, Gibson, Grace, Hinchliffe, Hobbs, Hoolihan, Hopper, Horan, Jarratt, Johnson, Johnstone, Jones, Keech, Kiernan, Kilburn, Knuth, Langbroek, Lawlor, Lucas, McArdle, 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