



RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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WEDNESDAY, 25 MAY 2011

The Legislative Assembly met at 9.30 am.

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


SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS

Anticipation and Relevance

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I have reviewed the *Record of Proceedings* from yesterday and I note two matters that I wish to bring to the House's attention. Firstly, I suggest that all members refresh their understanding of the rule of anticipation. The subject matter of notices of motion, such as disallowance motions, which will be debated within a set time frame cannot be otherwise debated.


Secondly, I remind all members that the second reading debate on bills must be relevant to the long title of the bill. Members may be more concerned about federal issues, but they cannot use debate on unrelated state legislation as a vehicle to vent their opinions.

Regional Sitzings of Parliament, Mackay; School Group Tours

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, an important element of the parliament's regional sitting program is the opportunity provided for local students to attend and learn about their parliament. Yesterday, 930 students and teachers from 17 schools visited us and today over 1,000 students from 16 schools are expected.

As part of their visit, all students receive an educational briefing about Queensland's parliamentary system before entering the public gallery to view their parliament in action. Students then spend time in an educational display area located just outside the chamber where they answer questions about the parliament from a workbook. Part of this display is titled 'If I was a member of parliament I would', and it allows students to post messages completing this statement. Responses from yesterday's students included: 'If I was a member I would make bills lower so Mum doesn't stress so much', 'ban long division'—which I can sympathise with—and then, to enforce it, 'become education minister' and, finally, 'build a Lego factory so kids don't have to order from Mexico'.

Mackay Special School

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, at 1.30 this afternoon students from the Mackay Special School will visit us and perform a special song in the student area just outside the chamber. I invite all honourable members to attend and meet the students, their teachers and parents who will be accompanying them as I think this will be a very special occasion for them. I thank the principal of the Mackay Special School, Ms Sheina Treuel, and the member for Mackay, the Hon. Tim Mulherin, for their assistance in organising this visit.

PETITION

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

Bruce Highway, Safety Audit

Mr Malone, from 5,219 petitioners, requesting the House to undertake a detailed safety audit and analysis of the Bruce Highway between Rockhampton and Mackay with particular emphasis on but not limited to the provision of overtaking lanes and rest stops; and the depth of table drains, the quality and condition of road shoulders and obstacles close to the road from the perspective of providing an adequate and safe buffer area for motorists to leave the road in an emergency situation [\[4525\]](#).

Petition received.

TABLED PAPERS

MINISTERIAL PAPERS TABLED BY THE CLERK

The following ministerial papers were tabled by the Clerk—


Deputy Premier and Attorney-General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State (Mr Lucas)—

[4526](#) Letter from the Deputy Premier and Attorney-General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State (Mr Lucas) to the Clerk of the Parliament, requesting the tabling of an erratum to the explanatory notes for the Sustainable Planning (Housing Affordability and Infrastructure Charges Reform) Amendment Bill 2011

[4527](#) Sustainable Planning (Housing Affordability and Infrastructure Charges Reform) Amendment Bill 2011: Erratum to Explanatory Notes

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Premier's Disaster Relief Appeal, Allocations

 **Hon. AM BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Reconstruction) (9.34 am): Mr Speaker, I join with you in welcoming the young students who are here with us this morning. Queenslanders who are still struggling to get back on their feet after the summer's natural disasters will now be able to access special payments from the Premier's Disaster Relief Appeal in a new way. The appeal has, I think quite rightly, put all of its focus on those people who have lost their homes, because homelessness obviously is something that we want to avoid. But we do understand that not everybody who was affected was a homeowner. Today I am pleased to announce that the distribution appeal committee has recommended an initial allocation of \$10 million to St Vincent de Paul from the fund for them to distribute flexibly to people who were affected by the disasters.

Mr Seeney: Get them to do the job that you couldn't.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting.

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Those on my right will cease interjecting. The Premier has the call. I would ask you to extend the courtesy of the House to her.

Ms BLIGH: I think it is important for everyone, particularly those like the Leader of the Opposition, whose own constituents were affected, to understand exactly how these funds can help people. They will be able to be used to assist with essentials such as food, power bills, the purchase of household goods, furnishings or equipment, or other items.

We understand that there are still people struggling to get their lives back together and, while many of these people have received an initial emergency round 1 payment, we know that if they are not homeowners they are falling between the cracks of both other government assistance at all levels and the provisions and eligibility of the appeal fund which, as I said, I believe is rightly putting its priority on people who have lost the homes that they own. We know that there are many things that can never be replaced—things like family photographs and treasured family items—but there are many things that need to be replaced, and this \$10 million will help do that for that small category of people who are on very low incomes and who might have many other difficulties they are dealing with, who are not insured and who have not been able to access other assistance.

There is a very good reason we would provide this payment through a non-government partner like St Vincent de Paul. St Vincent de Paul has been out there on the front line and it knows the families who are in these circumstances. These are the people who do not fit any other criteria and we do not want to see them left in a very disadvantaged position. I think most people understand and know the good work that is done by St Vincent de Paul. It is a very experienced community based organisation with a well-established internal accountability structure and a strong network of over 8,000 trained volunteers across the state. These are the people on the ground in our flood and cyclone affected communities working to help people rebuild their lives.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Rockhampton will cease interjecting.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Rockhampton will cease interjecting.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Rockhampton will cease interjecting.

Ms BLIGH: I again note that these are people who will have received the initial emergency payment of \$2,000.


Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Rockhampton. I have asked you to cease interjecting. I now warn you under standing order 253A(1).

Ms BLIGH: Many of these people have already received assistance from the appeal fund with the initial emergency payment of \$2,000 for every adult and \$1,000 for children. But we know that, no matter the eligibility criteria of any government fund or any appeal fund, there will be some people who, some months after they have got that initial payment, will still be struggling. As I said, today's decision was supported by the appeal's distribution committee, which includes representatives from the Australian Red Cross as well as the members for Gregory and Rockhampton. I again put on the record my appreciation for the work that committee is doing.

St Vincent de Paul will have the flexibility regarding the amount allocated per household and its purpose. Today's decision recognises that devastation is not uniform, it does not follow neat criteria and it can affect families and individuals in ways that no guidelines, no matter how generous, can always capture. While we are deeply grateful to every Australian who donated to this fund, it is a large fund that does require significant resources to administer and I think it is important that government is bearing the cost of the administration of that fund. It is not something that we could have reasonably asked St Vincent de Paul or any other non-government agency to bear. I express my gratitude to St Vincent de Paul not only for the great work they have been doing but also for their agreement to come on board in this partnership.

Draft Mackay Isaac Whitsunday Regional Plan


 **Hon. AM BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Reconstruction) (9.40 am): The Mackay, Isaac and Whitsunday region is a very special part of Queensland and we are determined to keep it that way. Over the next 20 years the population of this region is expected to increase, with 100,000 new locals taking the region's population to over 280,000 by 2031. To manage that growth proactively is absolutely vital for the future of this region. We want to make sure that this region not only stays livable, sustainable and prosperous, but is more livable, sustainable and prosperous. Today we release the draft Mackay Isaac Whitsunday Regional Plan for public comment. This is a comprehensive blueprint for the future, an area of planning in which Queensland leads Australia. We have the South East Queensland Regional Plan, we have a statutory regional plan for Cairns and now Mackay is the next major region off the rank.

The draft plan outlines where we will see people living as Mackay grows into the future. It outlines where we expect to see people working in new industrial land areas. It outlines what land will be protected for the environment for the next generation of Queenslanders and also what prime agricultural land will be protected for agricultural purposes.

The plan for the future has been prepared in partnership with the Mackay Isaac Whitsunday Regional Planning Committee, which includes all three local regional councils, state agencies and community representatives. The plan also identifies Moranbah as a major regional centre, the epicentre of the Bowen Basin, which is the home to Australia's largest coal deposit and Australia's largest coal producers. While it plans for economic growth and extensive population growth, the plan also protects the environment, with 40 state forests and 41 nature reserves identified in the region.

The plan aims to make more efficient use of infrastructure and services, reduce growth pressures on locations and protect areas with high environmental values such as coastal and wetland areas, areas of significant biodiversity and good-quality agricultural land. I think everyone understands the sort of pressure there is to subdivide some of the agricultural land in this area into residential lots. That pressure uncontrolled and unplanned could see the good agricultural land of this region end up like Swiss cheese with some residential areas in the middle of it. This plan will protect the region from that. In fact, the regional plan will for the first time place more than 99 per cent of the region off limits to urban development and encroachment while still ensuring there is enough land to accommodate the anticipated population, but that population will be accommodated in a way that is planned and careful, not sprawling and not into places that would be better used for agricultural purposes or protected for the environment. Submissions on the draft plan can be made until 2 September this year. I encourage residents, businesspeople and locals to find out more and have their say on the future blueprint for this great region.

State of Origin


 **Hon. AM BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Reconstruction) (9.43 am): Tonight the mighty Maroons will begin their campaign to further cement their place in rugby league history. They rewrote the record books last year by winning five series in a row. Now they are attempting to win an incredible six series in succession. I know that many Queenslanders who were affected by the floods or the cyclones will be uplifted tonight simply by seeing their team run onto the field at the legendary Cauldron. Captain Darren Lockyer will equal Allan Langer's record of the most Origin appearances when he runs onto the field for the 34th time. Barring injury he will surpass that record in game 2 in Sydney. Darren Lockyer truly is a legend of the game, and the state government is very pleased to be partnering with News Ltd to fund a statue of Darren Lockyer at Suncorp Stadium, the scene of so many of his triumphs and a great part of rugby league history. Where better to have it on display than at that stadium.

There is another incredible rugby league record on show tonight in the curtain-raiser. The Queensland women's rugby league team will be going for their 13th straight victory in the women's State of Origin. I want to wish captain Karyn Murphy and the rest of the team all the best. What a great start to the night if they can make it 13 in a row. This is their first opportunity to play the curtain-raiser and it will be the first time for many people to see this great team and their efforts on the field. What a record it would be if they were to have 13 Origin wins in a row.

Tonight I look forward to hosting emergency services workers and volunteers at the game to thank them for their efforts during our summer of sorrow. Before the game I will be meeting with New South Wales Premier Barry O'Farrell for the first time since his recent victory. We have significant matters to discuss, including cross-border issues that have arisen at the flood inquiry, the National Health Agreement and the COAG agenda. And, of course, there is also the issue of the Premier's traditional Origin bet. I am pleased that Premier O'Farrell has joined with me in an effort to start a new Origin tradition. We all know about the familiar bet where the losing Premier boasts the flag of the winning team on their bridge after the series has been won, but this year we have started the series by putting the maroon flag on the Story Bridge and the blue flag on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. It was a way of signalling the start of Origin fever and, as I said to Barry O'Farrell, it might be the only time he sees the blue flag on the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

When Queensland wins the series our flag will fly once more from the Sydney Harbour Bridge to remind Sydneysiders of our rugby league supremacy and the spirit of Queenslanders. Good luck to Darren and the boys. Go the mighty Maroons!

Draft Mackay Isaac Whitsunday Regional Plan

 **Hon. PT LUCAS** (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Attorney-General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State) (9.46 am): Later today I will join the member for Mackay and the member for Whitsunday in launching the draft Mackay Isaac Whitsunday Regional Plan for community consultation, and I now table that document.

Tabled paper: Draft Mackay Isaac Whitsunday Regional Plan, May 2011 [\[4528\]](#).


The draft plan outlines a vision that spans sustainability, natural resources, economic development, stronger communities, integrated transport and infrastructure. It is a comprehensive plan that protects 99 per cent of the region from urban development while still ensuring a 20-year land supply for housing affordability. An important part of the draft plan is diversifying the region's employment base to ensure long-term jobs and economic security. For example, much of the Whitsunday's population growth will stem from large scale industrial developments associated with the Abbot Point State Development Area and port expansions. The Abbot Point SDA is the only place along the Queensland coast where new large scale industrial development can locate near a deep-water port that is well separated from established communities. New resource developments in the Galilee and Bowen basins will also stimulate further growth in the area, specifically around Bowen.

For Mackay, a key focus of the plan is to better match where people live and work. Mackay's urban form today is characterised by residential development north of the Pioneer River and employment activities south of the river. Over the last 10 years the majority of new greenfield residential development has occurred north of the Pioneer River at Eimeo, Bucasia, Blacks Beach and Shoal Point and more recently Plantation Palms. During the same period the only significant residential development to occur south of the river was at Ooralea, but at the same time the largest employment locations in Mackay are south of the river in the CBD and the industrial area of Paget. With a growing population, that means more pressure on the three existing river crossings as more people commute to work every morning and afternoon. Good planning now can ensure we avoid problems in the future. That is why the plan prioritises further residential development at Ooralea to encourage more balance so that people can live closer to where they work, reducing congestion and improving quality of life. The plan also encourages a more diverse range of residential options, including short-term accommodation for tourism and business travel, high-density development along the Pioneer River frontage, retirement age accommodation and a mix of dwelling types to provide more housing choice.

For Isaac, the plan predicts a population growth from 23,000 to 37,000, much of which is expected to occur in Moranbah. In recent years Moranbah has been ground zero for the housing affordability crisis and with a growing population this will only get worse unless we take action now. Much of the area around Moranbah is constrained by mining leases so good planning early is vital to protect the lifestyle and sense of community in this town. While recognising a role for temporary workers' accommodation, the plan acknowledges that there is a clear community expectation that there should be much more permanent housing for Moranbah, which is one of the principal reasons we have deployed the ULDA to the area.

The draft Mackay Isaac Whitsunday Regional Plan shows the way to grow for the next 20 years. It will mean a more sustainable, more prosperous and more liveable region. Residents can find out more at the DLGP website now or at one of the community information sessions that will be scheduled over the coming weeks and months. I encourage people to have their say.

Buffel Park Accommodation Village, Development Application

 **Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade) (9.49 am): The Caval Ridge mine is a \$4 billion project of potentially huge importance and impact to both this region and the state. Last week, during a visit to Moranbah with the Coordinator-General I inspected the site and met with the council, the Moranbah action group and BMA to hear firsthand the

concerns and perspectives of each party about the future of resource development in the region. The Buffel Park Accommodation Village is a proposal to build temporary and permanent housing facilities to accommodate construction, operational and maintenance workers for BMA's Caval Ridge mine project in Moranbah. This project is of significant importance to the region, and a timely resolution of these matters is beneficial to all parties.


The Caval Ridge mine is expected to produce approximately 5.5 million tonnes per annum of coal over an estimated 30-year lifespan, as well as an additional 2.5 million tonnes per annum sourced from the existing Peak Downs mine expansion, which would be processed through the Caval Ridge mine development. As I said, the project is worth an estimated \$4 billion in construction and would support a construction workforce of some 2,000 workers.

I advise the House that I am now considering calling in the Buffel Park Accommodation Village development application proposed for the Isaac Regional Council area. After the development application was considered and refused by the Isaac Regional Council on 12 April, BMA lodged an appeal against the decision on 17 May. Of course, it is important to advise of the consideration of the call-in powers based on the recent decisions in the Planning and Environment Court. I am doing so on the grounds of the significant state interest that is at stake. It is important to allow the project to be reassessed ahead of a lengthy court action that could jeopardise the potential of the development.

Any possible call-in would consider the location of the Buffel Park village. The issues around percentages of fly-in fly-out workers are matters that are determined independently by the Coordinator-General, not through the call-in process. Upon any application, the Coordinator-General would consider such matters through an in-depth consultative process that would involve a social impact assessment.

We need to ensure that the community can gain the maximum economic benefit from the mine and allow BMA to operate the mine efficiently. We need to ensure that local communities get the benefit of resource development and also that the state gets the benefit of future economic prosperity. I intend to make a decision on calling in the application by 9 June.


Building Rural Communities Fund

 **Hon. TS MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Agriculture, Food and Regional Economies) (9.52 am): I am pleased to announce the recipients of nearly \$400,000 in funding under the second round of the Building Rural Communities Fund. The Building Rural Communities Fund is a Bligh government initiative providing \$2 million in funding over two years to help rebuild communities and improve their economic, social, environmental and cultural capacity. In this round, 46 organisations state-wide will share in \$384,146 and have been given grants of up to \$10,000 each for community building projects.

Recipients in this area include the Whitsunday Charter Boat Industry Association, which will use \$10,000 to produce and review an efficient website to assist the long-term growth and sustainability of the region's marine tourism industry. Mackay Canegrowers Ltd has been granted \$10,000 to deliver HR management skills training to farmers to help them attract and retain seasonal workers, as well as encourage them to employ school based and full-time trainees. The Coinda Family Centre in Bowen will receive \$10,000 to stage the Whitsunday Youth and Children's Arts Festival.

At a time when rural and remote communities state-wide are recovering from the devastating summer of natural disasters, the Queensland government's Building Rural Communities Fund gives them a much needed helping hand. This funding initiative over two years is just one example of how the Bligh government is investing in the future of regional Queensland and delivering for local communities so that they can develop their economic, social, environmental and cultural capacity, creating regions where people want to live, work and raise a family.

Local Industry Policy, Guidelines

 **Hon. JH JARRATT** (Whitsunday—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Manufacturing and Small Business) (9.54 am): Today I am pleased to inform the House of an initiative that is very close to my heart—that is, keeping Queenslanders employed by securing more local contracts for Queensland companies. The Queensland Local Industry Participation Policy Act 2011 is planned to come into effect on 1 July this year, and I am very pleased to announce that new supporting guidelines are now available. Aptly called *Local industry policy: a fair go for local industry—guidelines*, these will help businesses and companies better prepare to bid for major Queensland government funded projects and procurement. It is a smart framework, underpinned by a solid policy that we introduced in 1999 and that is now backed up by the new legislation and updated supporting guidelines.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the Treasurer, Andrew Fraser, and the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Regional Economies, Tim Mulherin, who have wholeheartedly supported the objectives and principles that underpin our local industry policy. These guidelines have been specifically prepared to assist local companies bid for government business, especially those that have strategic significance for rural and regional Queensland.


I acknowledge that many businesses, particularly sectors like the construction industry, have been doing it tough. Therefore, this is about supporting business and growing our local workforce. In response to this need, the Industry Capability Network brought training forums to regional Queensland to assist companies large and small to better understand the government's tender process and improve their chances of securing contracts and work. To put it simply, we are about a fair go for local industry, which is what these guidelines are about.

This is a smart move for a number of reasons. Local industry participation plans will ensure rightful consideration is given to our towns and regions and, just as importantly, to the people in them. It will encourage companies to consider employment and training skills development, and will provide opportunities for local industries to be involved in project delivery. The act requires state departments and government owned corporations to report annually on the opportunities they have provided for local contractors and suppliers to tender for work, so there is transparency built in as well.

In this region, the Mackay Base Hospital redevelopment demonstrates the government's local participation policy at work. Queensland Health and its contractor, Baulderstone, have partnered with the Industry Capability Network Queensland to ensure local businesses are aware of the opportunities that are available so they can register their interest. So I say 'well done' to all involved and I look forward to many more good-news stories, thanks to the Queensland Local Industry Participation Policy Act and the fair-go guidelines. I table the Queensland government's *Local industry policy: a fair go for local industry—guidelines*.

Tabled paper: Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation guidelines titled 'Local Industry Policy: A Fair Go for Local Industry—Guidelines', updated May 2011 [[4529](#)].

Arrow Energy, CSG Wellhead Leak

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Skills and Mining) (9.57 am): I take this opportunity to provide the House with an update about the Arrow Energy CSG wellhead leak that occurred west of Dalby on Sunday. I can report to the House that it was successfully plugged by Arrow at 11.20 am on Monday. While the successful rectification of the situation is welcome, the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation's Mine Safety Inspectorate will continue to investigate what went wrong, why it went wrong and why strict industry reporting regulations apparently were not followed.


There have been particular questions raised about why it took workers on the ground so long to notify authorities and the landholder of what was a very significant event. While the incident occurred at 8.20 am, email notification was sent at 10.20 am and a follow-up phone call was made at 4.30 pm. In a situation like this, an email on a Sunday morning, two hours after the event occurred, is clearly not an adequate response. To put it simply, the tardiness in reporting this matter is unacceptable and it shows contempt for the rules and no respect for the landholder or regulating authorities.

DEEDI and DERM staff are now carrying out a full and frank investigation of this incident. If Arrow or any of its contractors have done the wrong thing, there will be consequences. Failure to notify of an event can attract a fine up to \$50,000. Already we have identified that the contractor involved was due to undergo a standard audit of its Moranbah operations. That audit will now be extended state-wide.

In a separate incident, a significant diesel spill on Arrow's Moranbah gas fields project occurred yesterday afternoon. Arrow notified landholders, neighbours and authorities. Contaminated soil has been contained and will be removed by a licensed contractor. DERM will continue to monitor the situation.

For the CSG industry to safely advance in Queensland and to put our state on the map as a leading exporter of LNG, the strictest environmental standards must be upheld. This government has put the strongest regulations in place to regulate the CSG industry and will heavily enforce them when and wherever necessary.

Water Fluoridation

 **Hon. RG NOLAN** (Ipswich—ALP) (Minister for Finance and the Arts) (10.00 am): As members are aware, the Bligh government has accepted the overwhelming scientific evidence that fluoride protects children's teeth and from 2008 it introduced fluoride into the state's water supplies. At that time, Queensland's level of tooth decay was the worst in the nation, with tooth decay affecting 50 per cent of Queensland children by the age of six. As one of two shareholding ministers responsible for water, I am pleased to update the House on the government's \$113 million fluoridation initiative post the January floods.

From July 2008, the Queensland government began investing in the construction of fluoride dosing plants and integrating those plants with existing water treatment plants. We all know that many facets of life, including infrastructure, were impacted during the first few months of this year. Almost all of Seqwater's water treatment plants were impacted during January's floods including Mount Crosby, North Pine, Petrie, Capalaba, Lowood, Esk, Dayboro, Kilcoy, Woodford and Caboolture. This caused less fluoride than required to be integrated into the drinking water system. Let me make it clear that there was never any health risk associated with this.


Seqwater has today confirmed that its fluoride program is back in operation and delivering fluoridated drinking water at the required concentration rate following the impact of the floods. In its latest report to Queensland Health, Seqwater has advised that 21 of the 25 plants recovered sufficiently over the January to March quarter to provide the maximum health benefit of between 0.7 and 0.9 milligrams per litre.

During the January to March quarter there were no exceedances of the maximum concentration rate of 1.5 milligrams per litre. Despite experiencing significant damage during the floods the Mount Crosby treatment plant, the region's largest plant, recovered and was just 0.03 milligrams per litre below the regulated target level for the reporting period. Seqwater has advised that all plants are expected to be on track to meet the Queensland Health requirements for the next quarter from April to June.

The Capalaba plant has been progressively commissioned following some modifications in January and had been operating below the regulated target level. However, I am pleased to report that the plant is now back in operation and is expected to be fully commissioned by the end of next month. I also note that about half of the Redlands-Capalaba drinking water supply is provided by the North Stradbroke Island water treatment plant, which produces fluoridated water at the regulated target concentration.

The government is committed to providing water treated to industry best standards with the correct amount of fluoride as set out by internationally accepted health guidelines. It is a fact that Queensland children have the worst rates of tooth decay in Australia. That is why the Bligh government took this decision to introduce fluoride. It is a good program that will help Queenslanders and, in particular, our children have stronger teeth and less decay.

Chronic Kidney Disease


 **Hon. GJ WILSON** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Health) (10.03 am): This week is National Kidney Week. Kidney disease is one of Queensland's major health challenges, with one in every three of us at risk of developing chronic kidney disease. The number of people in Queensland with chronic kidney disease who need dialysis or kidney transplantation was growing by about six per cent per year. The good news is that chronic kidney disease can be prevented in many cases if caught early. There are a number of known risk factors that increase the likelihood of developing chronic kidney disease such as diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, family history and smoking. Kidney Week is a great time to see your doctor, have a blood pressure test and test your blood and your urine to check on your kidney function.

Unfortunately, there are some people for whom kidney disease is unavoidable and who will require ongoing treatment. That is why I am pleased to announce today the appointment of the first urologist at the Mackay Base Hospital, Dr Kahloon. This is another example of the Bligh government delivering more services sooner and closer to home for Queenslanders. Dr Kahloon's appointment means more patients who need operations such as kidney stone removal and treatment for kidney cancer can now be treated at home in Mackay. It results in less time that patients have to spend away from their families and it allows them to have their surgery in a familiar environment.

I know that this new service will be greatly welcomed by locals. There is a strong demand for urology treatment, with almost 300 in-patient admissions at Mackay Base Hospital since 1 July last year. Of these, about 80 per cent required surgery. So it is great to now have a dedicated urologist at the hospital who can perform these procedures.

Dr Kahloon, who divides his time between the public and the private health sectors, has undertaken this role after two years of additional intensive clinical training. His study was jointly funded by the public and private sectors. It is innovative training schemes like this that allow us to deliver more services to regional Queensland. This is about doing things differently to make sure that we can give more Queenslanders access to the care that they need closer to where they live. This is another way in which we are helping more Queenslanders access care that they need closer to where they live.

National Parks

 **Hon. KJ JONES** (Ashgrove—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Resource Management) (10.06 am): The Queensland government is committed to protecting wildlife and conservation right across Queensland including here in the Mackay and Whitsunday regions. Today I can announce that we have created a new national park west of Bowen and we are expanding two existing national parks in the Mackay and Bowen regions. They total more than 1,500 hectares of new national park for Queensland and for Queenslanders.

The outstanding natural features of the new 1,300 hectare Mount Abbot National Park ensure that this unique area was afforded the highest level of protection by the Queensland government. The Mount Abbot National Park will protect rare montane heath vegetation including five species of plants that are unique to the park as well as fauna. This includes—

Mr Lucas interjected.

Ms JONES: Better than that. This includes the protection of the vulnerable striped-tail delma, also known as the legless lizard. The Mount Abbot National Park will also protect a number of new and rare insect species—and we have not seen any of them around here!—including the Notozomus tailless whip scorpion and the wingless beetle. As a national park (scientific), this new national park also presents a significant opportunity for researchers to study this unique biodiversity.

The good news does not end there. Moving north-west, we also have added 70 hectares of land to the Mount Aberdeen National Park to expand the koala corridor between Bowen and Collinsville. Mount Aberdeen National Park is also home to the black ironbox eucalyptus, the common death adder and the northern quoll.

Locals of the region have also long appreciated the beauty of the Cape Hillsborough National Park. That is why we have expanded it to a total of 1,100 hectares to ensure the natural values and recreational opportunities are protected. I encourage all Queenslanders to come and enjoy the world-class national park which is right on Mackay's doorstep. Again, I am sure the local member, the member for Whitsunday and Minister for Tourism, will welcome this expansion and what it provides as a drawcard to this region. These expansions and our new national park show just how committed the Bligh government is to protecting the biodiversity of the Mackay and Whitsunday region.

Bruce Highway

Hon. CA WALLACE (Thuringowa—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Fisheries and Marine Infrastructure) (10.08 am): Whilst I am on my feet, I say go Maroons for tonight. I think when we build a statue of Darren Lockyer we should also build one of Johnathan Thurston from the North Queensland Cowboys.

The Bligh government is working closely with the Gillard government to deliver a safer Bruce Highway for the people of Queensland. On top of those extra 16 new overtaking lanes I announced last night, I am pleased to announce that funding of \$18.5 million has been allocated for a package of works on the Bruce Highway near Waverley Creek including funds to upgrade the rest area at Waverley Creek near St Lawrence south of Mackay.

This project will see the construction of a new heavy vehicle stopping area as well as an upgrade of the existing rest area facilities. Indeed, I remember as a kid stopping at Waverley Creek with Mum and Dad when we would drive down to Brisbane from Home Hill in the Datsun 180B. It was a very—

Mr Hinchliffe: That would've been a long journey.

Mr WALLACE: It was a long journey—with no air conditioning and no radio, with the dog stuffed in the middle. But it was a great rest stop and it is great to see that wonderful area being upgraded. The new heavy vehicle rest area is expected to cater for 14 B-double vehicles. This will provide long-haul truck drivers with a safe place to pull over and have a rest. The existing rest area facilities are going to get a major overhaul, with new roadways, construction of parking areas, installation of lighting and upgrading of toilets all part of that plan.

In conjunction with this project, the Bligh government will be rehabilitating and sealing 26 kilometres of road shoulders on three sections of the Bruce Highway between Granite Creek and Freshwater Creek, as well as upgrading access to that rest stop area. That is good news for people using the Bruce Highway. Work is currently programmed—

Dr Robinson: About time.

Mr WALLACE: It is about time. I take that interjection. We are making up for 12 years of neglect by John Howard—12 years of neglect—and the people of Mackay know that well. Let us look at the funding. When John Howard was Prime Minister—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable the minister will return to his ministerial statement.

Mr WALLACE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. When John Howard was Prime Minister, he spent a piddling \$100 million a year on the Bruce Highway compared to Labor's \$486 million a year, making up for 12 years of neglect. Work on this very important rest stop is programmed to start in August. Assuming the weather is okay, we will finish it in the middle of next year. The transport industry is the backbone of our regional communities and it is vitally important to ensure that heavy vehicle drivers and travellers—


Mr Horan interjected.

Mr WALLACE: The member for Toowoomba South is the bloke who ripped the money out of the Mackay Hospital and the Rockhampton Hospital. He has a hide to speak here today.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable the minister will return to his ministerial statement.

Mr WALLACE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am just taking an interjection from the other side. This is another example of how the state and federal governments are working shoulder to shoulder to bring the Bruce Highway up to scratch after 12 years of neglect by those members opposite.

Domestic and Family Violence

 **Hon. KL STRUTHERS** (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women) (10.12 am): This month is Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Awareness Month. I want to commend the great work being done by organisations here in the Mackay region including the Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research—a state-wide research centre, a leading centre nationally—the Mackay and Region Domestic Violence Resource Centre, the Whitsunday Crisis and Counselling Service and the Mackay Women's Centre. Today I am visiting the Mackay Women's Centre and I will tell them directly what a great job they are doing.


The horrific double murder on the Gold Coast last week demonstrates the serious consequences of domestic and family violence. We are doing everything we can to tackle domestic violence, to raise awareness of it, to support those who fall victim to it and to hold the perpetrators of violence accountable for their actions. This financial year the Bligh government has spent over \$190 million to address domestic and family violence including the provision of refuges, counselling, court support and programs for perpetrators, including over \$2.5 million on domestic and family violence services here in this region.

Additionally, we have recently established a Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Unit in the Queensland Coroner's office to help identify systemic gaps in responding to domestic and family violence and identify avenues for preventing further deaths. Sadly, the horrific murders on the Gold Coast will be the first new domestic and family violence related deaths to be reviewed by this unit in the Coroner's office. The unit will also review all domestic and family violence related homicides and suspected suicides over the past five years.

The Queensland government is currently undertaking one of the most comprehensive reviews of the domestic and family violence laws in 20 years. To make sure we got it right, the government undertook state-wide consultation to get feedback from stakeholders including people affected by domestic and family violence. I thank the people in this region who had input into that review. Outcomes included calls for stronger penalties for breaches of domestic violence orders, clearer identification of the predominant aggressor and the person most at risk, as well as more training for police and the courts to better respond to these incidents.

Domestic and family violence has widespread impacts on many families including thousands of children around our state. That is why the Bligh government has developed the Act as 1 campaign. It is a call to action for neighbours, friends, family, work colleagues and community members to take a stand against domestic and family violence, to speak up and to support those affected. The message to all Queenslanders this month is: you could be the one to make a difference.

Mackay Region, Police Resources

 **Hon. NS ROBERTS** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services) (10.15 am): The sworn officers and civilian staff of the Queensland Police Service's Mackay district are doing an admirable job in protecting the local community, and they are doing so with the strong support of the Bligh government. The Mackay police district stretches from Whitsunday in the north, Clermont to the west, St Lawrence to the south and Mackay to the east—an area comprising some 128,000 square kilometres. The area is served by 297 sworn police officers and 60 civilian staff working across the full range of police functions, from general duties to criminal investigations, child protection, communications, crime prevention, prosecutions, Dog Squad and tactical crime.


The great work being done by the local police is demonstrated in the 10-year crime rates for the district. The overall rate of crime in the Mackay district has decreased 14 per cent in the last 10 years. That decrease comprises a 39 per cent reduction in the rate of property offences and a 23 per cent reduction in the rate of offences against the person—all due to the fine effort and proactive policing of local police officers.

The Bligh government will continue supporting local police officers as they work to reduce crime and help keep the Mackay community safe. Thanks to successive record budget allocations for the Police Service, the number of sworn officers in the Mackay district has increased by 50 per cent, or 100 officers, over the past 10-year period.

Government funding has also seen substantial capital works across the district, including the replacement of the Whitsunday Police Station, which was completed in June 2009 at a cost of \$11.6 million. Over the past five to six years, the government has also funded the construction of a new police station at Mackay Northern Beaches and the replacement of the Sarina Police Station, Seaforth police beat and Whitsunday water police facility.

The government went to the last election with a commitment to upgrade the heritage listed Mackay Police Station in Sydney Street—a commitment we will keep. The government has a strong record of funding the improved resources and facilities for police in the Mackay district to help them continue the great work they are doing to drive down crime rates and help keep the community safe.

Mackay Region, Sport and Recreation

 **Hon. PG REEVES** (Mansfield—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport) (10.17 am): When it comes to helping people of Mackay swim, run and kick their way to healthier lifestyles, this Labor government has delivered in spades. In fact, we all know that the Mackay and Whitsunday region is a region of sport lovers and sport participants. In fact, I could not think of a better place to watch the State of Origin than here with the people of Mackay.

Many locals have risen to national and international fame through their participation in community sports, including Olympic champion Cathy Freeman and rugby league legend Wendell Sailor. Mackay can also claim our newest Origin stars Dane Nielsen and Jharal Yow Yeh. Every single one of these stars started at a grassroots club here in Mackay and they know who supports them, and that is the Bligh Labor government.

Since 2006 the Bligh government has assisted 1,336 young Mackay athletes through the Young Athletes Assistance Program, providing funding for them to compete in state, national and international events—events such as the Queensland under-14 soccer championships, the Queensland primary school hockey championships, the Queensland junior squash championships and the state little athletics championships. The Bligh government is a government that understands how important grassroots sports and recreation clubs are to our communities.

Here in Mackay we have invested millions to support sport and recreation in Mackay on an impressive list of projects. The Southern Suburbs Football Club now has a shade structure and an artificial green to support lawn bowls through funding from this government. The Bligh government funded the multipurpose youth space at the Mackay PCYC.

We have also funded a new clubhouse for the Mackay Surf Life Saving Club with all the mod cons. The Bligh government has also created jobs for Mackay locals under the sport and recreation local jobs plan to help build the capacity at clubs like the North Mackay Australian Football Club, the AFL Mackay Juniors, the Mackay Rowing Club, the Mackay Gymnastics Inc., the Mackay Netball Association, the Mackay Regional Football Zone, the Andergrove Kangaroos Australian Football Club, the Mackay City Football Club, the Mackay Amateur Basketball Association and many other clubs in the greater Mackay region.

We provide this funding—up to \$156,000 over three years—so these clubs can work together to recruit volunteers, to identify fundraising opportunities and to improve the governance of the club. Earlier this year more than 5,000 people attended the Queensland government's Mackay supersports sign-on day. This day showcased 87 local sport and recreation clubs for 40 sports, with the assistance of over 300 volunteers. Through sport and recreation the Bligh government is creating jobs and supporting our clubs at the grassroots level. We want to ensure Queenslanders are able to lead a healthy and active lifestyle and our track record here in Mackay is a clear demonstration of this.

I wish the Maroons all the best this evening. I also want to congratulate the Firebirds on their success. The Premier will be presenting the Queensland champion award to them at a special ceremony in the mall this afternoon.

National Heavy Vehicle Regulator


 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Multicultural Affairs) (10.20 am): Moves to make Queensland home to the national heavy vehicle regulator have taken a major step forward. I can inform the House that all states and territories have agreed to set up a national heavy vehicle regulator to administer a uniform approach to the management of the heavy vehicle industry in Australia. Transport ministers from the Commonwealth, states and territories made the decision at a meeting of the Australian Transport Council in Alice Springs last Friday.

The establishment of the regulator will now be progressed at the next meeting of COAG. Once set up in Queensland this new regulator will be responsible for administering the nationwide rules and regulations for all vehicles over 4.5 tonnes, including inspection standards, safe driving hours, mass limits and registration. The move from state based to national regulations will improve the safety and productivity of the trucking industry, including here in Mackay. It is also a big tick of confidence in the state's ability to lead the way on heavy vehicle reform. Victoria and New South Wales were originally in the running, but I am pleased to report that, at the end of the day, Queensland won out. Queensland will be home to the new CEO and regulator's office that will boost productivity and improve safety in this critical industry.

Almost 75 per cent of freight in Australia is carried by trucks, including every item we see on the supermarket shelves. It is vital for regional economies. The number of freight vehicles in Queensland has grown by 23 per cent in the last four years alone and it is expected to triple by 2050. Trucks do not know borders. Even little differences in rules and red tape can add big costs to doing business. This decision, as part of the Commonwealth government's effort to create a seamless national economy, will tackle the challenges of inconsistent heavy vehicle regulation between state and territory jurisdictions.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of all in the industry who have worked with the Bligh government to bring about these reforms. Legislation will be introduced into Queensland parliament later this year. It is proposed that the heavy vehicle regulator will be fully operational across Australia by early 2013.

Kindergartens; Lowood State High School, Fire

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Greenslopes—ALP) (Minister for Education and Industrial Relations) (10.22 am): A quality education in early childhood gives children a great start along the pathway to learning and success. Through carefully designed programs such as at kindergarten, children are able to learn, play, socialise and develop motor skills. The Bligh government has recognised the advantages that kindergarten has for our children. That is why we are making the program available to every child in Queensland. We are investing \$321 million to establish up to 240 extra kindy services in areas of need across Queensland by 2014.

Like all areas of Queensland, the Mackay-Whitsunday region is benefiting from this program too. Just this week, my ministerial colleague and the hard working member for Whitsunday, Jan Jarratt, opened a new kindergarten service at the Seaforth C&K Community Kindergarten. The state government provided \$1.6 million to establish this service from the start of the 2011 school year, ensuring 22 young children are now enjoying going to kindy with a qualified teacher.

Later this week we will open the new kindergarten service at Slade Point State School. The centre opened its doors to the first group of children in late March and the second group started last week. This service was established by the state government at a cost of \$730,000 and is being operated by the experienced and reputable C&K—a valued partner of the Queensland government in providing universal kindergarten access.


The services at Seaforth and Slade Point are among 10 new services already announced for the Mackay region. The other services are: the service at Beaconsfield State School, which opened in August last year; a number of services which will open in 2012 at Eimeo Road, Marian, Sarina and Mackay North state schools and Mackay Christian College; and a new service at Emmanuel Catholic College, which is scheduled to open in 2013.

I also use this opportunity to remind the chamber that the state government announced \$22 million in further funding earlier this month to establish 24 kindergarten services on Catholic and independent school sites across Queensland in 2013. The Bligh government is well on the way to achieving our commitment of universal access to kindergarten for all Queensland children by 2014.

While I am on my feet I would also like to say a few words about a fire that occurred overnight at Lowood State High School in the Brisbane Valley, in the electorate of the member for Ipswich West. The good news is that, although there was significant damage to parts of the administration block, the school is open for business this morning. Everyone, including the school principal, teachers and staff, emergency services and QBuild, is working hard to minimise the disruption to students, particularly year 12 students who are approaching the end of a very important semester.

Fires in schools can be quite devastating, but I am sure that the school staff and the community will recover from this setback. Both the member for Ipswich West, Wayne Wendt, and I have spoken to the principal of the school, Mr Wayne Webster, this morning. I know that the member for Ipswich West is greatly concerned by the fire, but can I assure him, Mr Webster and everyone associated with Lowood State High School that they have the full support of the government in getting the school back on its feet as soon as possible.

National Broadband Network

 **Hon. SD FINN** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Government Services, Building Industry and Information and Communication Technology) (10.26 am): The Bligh Labor government believes Queenslanders deserve a world-class, high-speed broadband network. That is why we are working closely with the federal government on the rollout of the NBN right here in Queensland. The NBN was officially launched on the mainland last week—an historic moment for communications and broadband services both nationally and here in Queensland.

The NBN rollout is worth \$9 billion to Queensland's economy and it will support 5,550 construction jobs. It is already full steam ahead with the NBN rollout in North Queensland, with the appointment of a digital business development officer to help local businesses prepare for the NBN rollout. Townsville is one of five NBN first release sites where local businesses and residents will be among the first in Australia to get access to the NBN.

Creating a high-speed NBN will help to bridge the gap between regional and urban Australia. It will deliver major benefits to regional economies. That will be felt keenly here in the Mackay-Sarina region. When the rollout is complete, Sarina and Mackay will be linked up to next generation fibre technologies providing businesses, schools, healthcare centres and homes with super fast and reliable broadband services.

While the NBNCo has the overall responsibility for its rollout, the Department of Public Works also has an important role to play in establishing the network. That is why we as a government went out and consulted Queenslanders about the best ways to use the NBN here in Queensland. We released a discussion paper entitled 'Queensland's approach to the National Broadband Network'. We have now completed that state-wide consultation. We consulted with government agencies at all levels, industry, community and school students.

The main issues that emerged for Queenslanders were: the need for more information through community and other forums on the emerging benefits from the NBN; the need for collaboration between local and state governments, local businesses and communities to maximise returns, particularly around local economic development; the need for access to digital literacy courses at all levels for people to develop their skills to make the most of the NBN; the need for improved disaster management through enabling greater information flows between communities and emergency response agencies using the NBN; and the need for the gap in service delivery between regional and urban Queenslanders to be closed by using the NBN to distribute expertise and improved services like health and education.

These responses have guided the development of the Queensland master plan for the NBN, which addresses these issues and which will be released shortly. The Bligh government is getting on with the job of ensuring Queensland is in a position to take full advantage of the benefits the NBN will bring to this state.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Islamic Law, Preemptive Ban



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

That this House notes that:

1. Sharia or Islamic law is routinely used all over the world in Muslim countries and countries with Muslim communities.
2. Sharia or Islamic law permits in some instances, the state to militate and/or impose the death penalty on people found to be guilty of certain crimes, including stealing and adultery.

And calls on this government to preemptively ban the use of Islamic law or sharia law in Queensland.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

School Group Tours



Mr SPEAKER: Before I call question time, in this morning's session of parliament we will be visited by St John's Catholic Primary School, the Whitsunday Anglican College, Victoria Park State School, Bloomsbury State School, North Mackay State High School, Pioneer State High School, Fitzgerald State School, Oakenden State School, Koumala State School, Homebush State School, Nebo State School, Emerald State High School, Marian State School and some students from Proserpine State High School.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Premier's Disaster Relief Appeal, Allocations



Mr SEENEY (10.30 am): My first question without notice is to the Premier. I refer to the Premier's announcement this morning that St Vincent de Paul is to be finally given the job that the government has failed to do so that the victims of Queensland's natural disasters might finally get the money their fellow Australians donated to assist them in their time of need, and I ask: will the Premier apologise to both the victims of the natural disasters and the people who donated the money to assist them for the prolonged delay in distributing this money and the additional pain and heartache that that failure has caused?

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Those on my right will cease interjecting. The Leader of the Opposition had the call. Show him the courtesy. I call the Premier.

Ms BLIGH: The Leader of the Opposition seems to be under a completely mistaken belief, so I am pleased to have the opportunity to outline again the decision that has been made after recommendations from the distribution committee in relation to these funds.

The appeal has raised to date close to \$270 million. The government, through the appeal, will continue to administer that fund overwhelmingly for the use of homeowners whose homes have been either completely lost and destroyed or those whose homes have not been destroyed but suffered significant structural damage and have other disadvantages. The only part that we have asked St

Vincent de Paul to come into a partnership with us on is a small \$10 million allocation. Why? Because we know that there are some people, no matter what eligibility criteria is used by government—state, federal or council—or by the appeal fund, whose particular circumstances require a more flexible response because if we do not they will fall through the cracks.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Ms BLIGH: I take the interjection from the member opposite because it is completely and utterly untrue to say that these people have had no help to date. These are people who have already accessed the fund, who have already had emergency assistance, who have already in many cases been the beneficiaries of charities like St Vincent de Paul and others in addition to the appeal fund.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition, you have asked the question. The Premier is answering the question. Show her the same courtesy that I demanded of those on my right. I call the Premier.

Ms BLIGH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. So let us be clear: the appeal fund has already helped many of these people. However, there are people who do not own their own homes, who are renters, who may never qualify for any other form of assistance unless we are flexible enough to assist them, and that is what we are doing. But the government will continue to administer the appeal fund, as we have been, getting that money out the door and helping people.

But what are the bona fides of the person who has asked this question? When it came to the largest, most significant disaster ever faced by this nation, the Liberal and National parties in the federal parliament of Australia opposed the introduction of a flood levy to help Queenslanders. They said it was okay to have a milk levy and it was okay to have a sugar levy but it was not okay to look after Queenslanders. They walked away and voted against any form of assistance. But worse, when they found themselves without a leader to bless themselves with they voted to accept somebody who walked away from his city, somebody who could not go the distance, somebody who said, 'I'm not going to finish the task,' somebody who cannot go the distance when the going gets tough.

Bligh Labor Government

Mr SEENEY: My second question without notice is also to the Premier. I refer to the fantastic record of the Queensland Maroons football team and their dominance over New South Wales in the State of Origin which I feel confident will continue tonight, and I ask: given that Queensland's Labor government has lost our AAA credit rating, which New South Wales retains, and the Queensland economy was rated by CommSec in an economic performance report to be well behind New South Wales, does the Premier concede that under her government Queensland now runs a poor second to New South Wales in everything but football?

Government members interjected.

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

Ms BLIGH: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the honourable member for the question. I am pleased to be out in Queensland colours today supporting not only the State of Origin team. I should also acknowledge that today is—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Those on my left will cease interjecting.

Ms BLIGH: I am wearing red today to also support the fact that today is Multiple Sclerosis Day. Red is the colour of the MS Society, and it has asked us to wear a splash of red to recognise what a difficult disease this is for many people. I am very happy to take this question from the Leader of the Opposition because I am very happy to stand here and say that I will never accept that Queensland is anything other than No. 1 in every single thing it goes at. Queensland—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order.

Ms BLIGH: I will be very happy to meet with Premier O'Farrell tonight and I will be happy to give him all the details of the member for Callide, because if you want to go and work and live in New South Wales I am sure he would be happy to have you! But our government at every chance—

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition, the Premier has the call.

Ms Jones interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The minister will cease interjecting. The Premier has the call.

Ms BLIGH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am a proud Queenslanders.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The crossfire between the minister and the Leader of the Opposition will cease.

Ms BLIGH: I lead a team of proud Queenslanders who believe in their hearts and are passionate about the fact that this state is the best place to live, the best place to work, the best place to raise a family, the best place to invest. Queensland leads the way in everything we attempt. We are the state that drives the federation. And here they are—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Those on my left will cease interjecting.

Ms BLIGH: Those opposite knock Queensland. They rubbish it. They take every opportunity to knock it. They look around Queensland and they see doom and gloom. When I look around Queensland I see greatness. I see greatness in our people. I see greatness in the promise that this state offers, not only to us who are lucky enough to live here but also to this whole nation.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting.

Ms BLIGH: The Leader of the Opposition may see his job as making every effort and taking every opportunity to tear this state down. I will never do it. I will never do it because I am a proud Queensland!

Opposition members interjected.

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

Ms BLIGH: I note that, when they looked around and could not find a leader in their own ranks, in the leader they found they could not find a Queensland. They had to find a Tasmanian!

Exports

Mr KILBURN: My question without notice is also to the Premier. Could the Premier please advise what this government is doing to recognise the enormous contribution made by Queensland exporters to our economy?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for his question. The member for Chatsworth is someone who understands just how important it is to Queensland and to our economy that we continue to see people who are entrepreneurial, who drive their businesses and who look for world markets. That is why we take the opportunity every year to recognise those people who are going the extra yard, because they are the people who are creating jobs, opportunity, wealth and prosperity in every region of Queensland. So this year the search is on for Queensland's most successful and innovative export business. These awards are now in their 22nd year and they showcase the very best of the best of Queensland's exporting talent.

Mackay exporters have been some of Queensland's best and I am sure this year we will see a good number putting their name up to be in the running for this year's awards. There have been 80 applications from Central Queensland in the past decade for these awards, with past winners from this region including Capricorn Sandstone Quarries in 2010, Central Queensland University three times—in 2001, 2002 and 2005—Collinsville Coal Mine in 1997 and Blair Athol Coal Mine in 1996. So achieving for this region over and over are the exporters that drive this economy. Exporters like those companies play a vital role in strengthening our economy and they create jobs.

Exporters can nominate in 12 award categories—everything from agribusiness, arts and entertainment to education. There is an Emerging Exporter Award, so you do not have to be a big experienced exporter. However, large advanced manufacturers, many of whom are here in Mackay, can also put in for these awards. There is also a Regional Exporter of the Year Award. I encourage people to give some thought to nominating. These awards have become very prestigious. They give companies that win them an opportunity to promote themselves even further in overseas markets. The overall Queensland exporter of the year will be selected from these categories. Those who win these awards in Queensland then go into the running for the national award. Last year we saw that great Queensland company Swift be the overall Queensland winner and it went on to win the national Agribusiness Export Award. So we again congratulate it.

As I said, selling our products to the world is what drives the Queensland economy. We are a small domestic market.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Ms BLIGH: I take the interjection from the member for Gregory about beef exports. Our primary producers are some of our most experienced exporters and they are doing extraordinary work on major world markets. We look forward to working with them through our trade offices around the world. It is that kind of investment that drives growth in these companies and that drives growth in the regions.

State of Origin

Mr NICHOLLS: My question is to the Premier. I note that immediately following Cyclone Yasi the Premier abandoned the people of North Queensland to jet south for a *Women's Weekly* photoshoot. I also note that the Premier will tonight abandon the people of Mackay to jet off and watch the State of Origin in a corporate box. If we were able to organise more media in Mackay, would the Premier stay in town with the people of Mackay?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the member for the question and I am happy, yet again, to set him right. He does not seem to be able to ask a question in this parliament that is not factually wrong in at least one respect and, of course, he rarely, if ever, asks a question about economics. So let me just set him right.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Ms BLIGH: I am very pleased to hear that the Leader of the Opposition has a copy of the *Women's Weekly* on his desk. I would be happy to sign it for him. I am pleased to advise the member for Clayfield that, in fact, the photoshoot occurred in the northern suburbs of Brisbane in what I suspect might have been his electorate.

I look forward to being at the State of Origin tonight. The New South Wales Premier will be flying up from Sydney to attend the State of Origin. If members think we are going to have the New South Wales Premier there and not have Queensland represented, they are wrong. I will be hosting the government box and who will be there? Tonight we will be taking the opportunity in the box to give those people who were at the front line of our emergency a chance to be there at the State of Origin. We will have SES leaders and Emergency Services Queensland and I will be taking the chance to meet the Premier of New South Wales. I think it is important that we take every opportunity to recognise those people who were out there at the front line and reward them. I make no apology for giving those people who were at the head of the emergency team a chance to see our team out on the field.

Again, what are the bona fides on the issue of abandonment from those opposite? When they were looking around for a leader—they looked under the table, they looked around at each other—they found themselves completely without a leader; no-one worthy of it. They decided to outsource the leadership to someone who abandoned the city of Brisbane—someone who did not have what it takes, someone who could not go the distance. The capital city of our state underwent its worst ever natural disaster in our records and what did the leader of that city do? He decided to quit. He decided to walk away, because he does not have what it takes to go the distance. We have what it takes to go the distance and we look forward to doing it.

Tourism Industry, Nothing Beats Queensland Campaign

Ms BOYLE: Further to the previous question asked by the opposition, may I put it on the record and sincerely thank the Premier for the tremendous support, information and courage that she provided for the people of Cairns in Far North Queensland during Cyclone Yasi.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will come to her question.

Ms BOYLE: Will the Premier provide an update of our Nothing Beats Queensland post flood and cyclone tourism recovery package and in particular on how this massive marketing initiative has benefited Mackay and the Whitsundays?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for her question. The member for Cairns has been a great champion for the tourism industry not only in her part of Far North Queensland but also indeed across the state. But that is because, like so many of the members of my team, the member for Cairns understands that tourism is one of our largest employers. It is an industry that employs significantly more people than either mining or agriculture—in fact, more than those two big industries together. So it is one of those industries that so many families depend on and so many small businesses rely upon visitations. So we know that we need to keep marketing Queensland and putting ourselves on the national and the international map. Our Nothing Beats Queensland campaign is starting to really pay dividends. Today of all days we proudly say on our side of the fence here that nothing beats Queensland on or off the field. Nothing beats a Queensland holiday. Nothing beats a Queensland beach or a Queensland rainforest. Nothing beats Queensland.

I am pleased to note that we saw a bumper Easter period for Queensland tourism operators. We called on Queenslanders to back their local industry and to holiday at home. It was not just that we had a great Easter; we saw a lot of those bookings come from Queenslanders, many of whom had been travelling to other parts of Australia and the world and who decided that it was time to have a holiday at home. I hope that for many of them it was such a great experience that we will see them not only back again but also talking to their neighbours and family about their holiday.

The investment that we are putting into tourism—a \$12 million boost in partnership with the federal government after these disasters—is starting to pay off. I was pleased to join the Minister for Tourism at the Australian Tourism Export Council on Hamilton Island, where I announced that we will be putting forward a \$100,000 sponsorship to procure—and we won—the right to host the International Laser SB3 Class World Sailing Championship. This is the first time that this event will be held in Australia. Previously, it has been held in the UK, Italy, Portugal and Ireland. So it is a great coup for the Whitsundays.

But it is not just marketing. We are investing in infrastructure. The new Proserpine Airport is now well and truly up and away. We expect to see phase 2 finish in the second half of the year. It will be a state-of-the-art regional airport. First impressions count and those first impressions are going to be great impressions with the new airport. Of course, there is also Airlie Beach's main street. Airlie Beach is one of the hot tourism destinations for our state and, in fact, for our nation. As part of our work with the council and with the federal government, we are going to see a complete facelift there that will change the face of Airlie Beach, and for the better.

Redland Hospital

Mr McARDLE: My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. Given the enormous debt and mismanagement of Queensland Health by this government, will the minister confirm that things have become so bad that disposable cups and bread are no longer being provided to front-line staff at the Redland Hospital?

Mr WILSON: I thank the honourable member for the question. I have become accustomed to adopting the precaution, when responding to this member's questions, of rejecting the premise upon which the question has been framed. We are spending unprecedented funds to support our hospitals throughout the state, including in the Redlands. We are rolling out a \$7 billion program of building new and expanding existing hospitals, including in the south-east corner. I draw to the attention of the members opposite, as they may not be aware, that in Mackay we are spending \$408 million expanding the emergency department of the hospital in this area. Why are we doing that? To bring more services and more beds sooner and closer to home for regional Queenslanders, and we are doing that for Queenslanders all over the place.

We have also made funding available for three local chemists to provide free blood pressure and diabetes tests for people in Mackay. We have rolled out \$4.5 million to increase the number of rehabilitation services for people here in Mackay. People in Mackay are interested in what we are doing here, and across the state we are doing exactly the same. We have also set up an acute primary care clinic in the hospital that is making sure we can get people through to appropriate care in the hospital faster.

Whilst we are expanding services and building new hospitals so that there are more services and more beds closer to home for regional Queenslanders, what is the other side doing? People in Mackay might need to know that the Liberal National Party wanted to cut our building program. It opposed the expansion of the Mackay Hospital. It wanted to cut the extra services that we are now providing. It wanted to sack 36,000 public servants, including doctors, nurses and allied health professionals. Not only did it do that; it has denied hundreds and hundreds of folk living here in Mackay dental treatment. It opposed the federal government funding of that treatment here in Mackay. What else has it done? People in Mackay might need to know that 8,500 people were on the waiting list for elective surgery under the LNP. What is it now? It is a couple of hundred.

Regional Planning

Ms NELSON-CARR: My question without notice is for the Deputy Premier. Can the Deputy Premier update the House on the Queensland government's commitment to long-term regional planning?

Mr LUCAS: I am delighted to take the question from the honourable member. I am delighted, of course, to stand alongside the Premier on this State of Origin day. On this State of Origin day I am next to a Queensland and the leader of those on the other side is a Tasmanian. This is a State of Origin where I will be backing Queensland.

This state and this government have a proud history of long-term planning for the future. This government, through the Queensland planning process, is recognised as leading Australia. We have the award-winning South East Queensland Regional Plan, the award-winning Far North Queensland Regional Plan, the South West Regional Plan, the North West Regional Plan, the Maranoa-Balonne Regional Plan, the draft Wide Bay Burnett Regional Plan and today we have the draft Mackay Isaac Whitsunday Regional Plan. These plans are about protecting lifestyle in all of Queensland and at the same time making sure economic development continues.

When I was last planning minister, I called in inappropriate developments on the Sunshine Coast with the support of the council and knocked them over. In Wide Bay I stopped the Ray Duffy 'mates' rates' National Party development seeking to put a housing estate in the middle of nowhere that would have damaged good-quality agricultural land. Who could forget, when Liberals were actually Liberals, the 1980s Clive Palmer attempt at getting a call-in in relation to a development he was doing on the Sunshine Coast that was opposed by a Liberal councillor? He said that he wanted a call-in because it saved money and time.

When the Leader of the Opposition is talking about cutting red tape, he is talking about tearing up these instruments. At the last election the member for Warrego promised to tear up the Far North Queensland Regional Plan. The member for Bundaberg is promising to scrap the Wide Bay-Burnett

plan and the LNP is promising to shred the SEQ Regional Plan. This stands in stark contrast to the record of the LNP led by Campbell Newman, the Neale Fraser of politics—the non-playing captain. His long-term planning is to stick fibre optics up sewer pipes—think of that—and a CityCycle campaign. Every time you go past a CityCycle station you can see the bicycles sitting there in the racks, reminding you of the planning that he undertook.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about statues. I make this prediction: Campbell Newman will be like Shelley's Ozymandias. He will be in the sand saying, 'Look upon my works, ye mighty, and despair!' But the despair will be on the other side of the House because they have the hubris, and they have shown time and time again that they think they have got it in the bag. The Leader of the Opposition thinks he has got it in the bag. But there is one thing that we will do as Queenslanders, like the players at State of Origin tonight: we will fight and fight and fight and fight for this great state.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. Those on my right will cease interjecting.

Mackay Courthouse

Mr BLEIJIE: My question is to the Minister for Community Services, Housing and Minister for Women.

A government member interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: I will just ask the member to stop. It is most unparliamentary, Minister, to engage in the conduct that you are. I have ruled on this before.

Mr BLEIJIE: I refer to the new Mackay Courthouse, completed in 2004. How was it that the new building was completed without toilets for women or the disabled? Does this not show a total disregard for women and people with disabilities and a clear lack of planning from a government focused on spin instead of real outcomes?

Ms STRUTHERS: It is a question that is better directed to another minister, but I would never turn down an opportunity to have a chat about my portfolio.

Mr BLEIJIE: I rise to a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Stop the clock. There is a point of order.

Mr BLEIJIE: The question is specifically in relation to the minister's portfolio as it is in relation to women and women's amenities. That, I suggest, is particularly in relation to the minister's portfolio.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. It is entirely up to the minister whether she deems this matter to be within her portfolio. I call upon the minister.

Ms STRUTHERS: I would like to speak about women. I have been given the opportunity to speak about women. Today I will be attending the regional launch of the Advancing Queensland Women strategy. So it is a great opportunity to talk about women because for many years women have been disadvantaged in many areas.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Those on my left will cease interjecting. The minister has been asked a question; the minister is answering the question. I ask those on my left to show her courtesy.

Ms STRUTHERS: There are many issues of importance to women in this community. Earlier I spoke about domestic violence. In this community there are far too many women and children who are suffering from violence. There are many issues. Women's economic equality is the focus of the strategy I will be launching today. Women still receive about 19 per cent less pay than men. Pay equity has gone backwards since—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Those on my left will cease interjecting.

Ms STRUTHERS: I will be talking about the Women in Hard Hats program. What a wonderful program that has been, run by this Queensland government through our Office for Women and well supported by the member for Whitsunday, Jan Jarratt, and the member for Mackay, Tim Mulherin. They know how important it is that women get a share of the action in the mining and construction industries, which are generally well-paid industries. I am sure the women of Mackay want to know about issues for women such as women's economic equality, the way in which women—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Those on my left! Member for Kawana, you have asked the question. I will ask the minister to come to the point of the question that was asked by the member for Kawana.

Ms STRUTHERS: Today at lunchtime I will be joining many women at the Mackay Women's Centre. This is a multitenant centre that includes the women's health centre, the domestic violence service, pregnancy help and others. Mackay is in the unique position of having those services working under the one roof, servicing the women of Mackay. As the Minister for Women, it is very important that today I have this opportunity to speak about women and to promote our Advancing Queensland Women strategy. I thank the member for that opportunity.

Small Business, Digital Economy

Mr O'BRIEN: My question without notice is to the Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade. I was hoping that the Treasurer could lift the level of debate out of the toilet this morning and advise the House—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Come to the question.

Mr O'BRIEN:—how regional Queensland businesses are being assisted with preparation for the emergence of the digital economy.

Mr FRASER: I thank the member for Cook for his question and for his tireless advocacy for the people of the Cook electorate. He is a man who believes that the people in the regions, and especially in his electorate, deserve the same standard of service as everyone else in Queensland. That is why, as a government, we are investing in making sure that small businesses, right around the state, can participate in the future digital economy. We are running a program called Small Business in the Digital Economy. At this sitting of parliament, I am pleased to advise the House that the program will be run in Mackay on 31 May. It will give the small businesses of Mackay the opportunity to participate in the digital economy of the future, to ensure that they get the most out of the rollout of the NBN, the economic infrastructure of the 21st century that will ensure that businesses in this region and this city take advantage of all available opportunities. Also, it will ensure that the residents of the region have access to the services at the same level as those who live in capital cities and other states.

Of course, we expect those opposite will just fall into line with Tony Abbott and chant his slogan to oppose the NBN and to oppose this economic infrastructure, because they do not have a policy; all they have is an ability to chant a slogan. They do not have any policies, so perhaps they should adopt a new slogan. Perhaps their three-word slogan is 'Don't need policies'. How about 'Don't need costings'. From the way they have been carrying on lately, perhaps it should be 'Think we've won'. In reality, what has been exposed is that Campbell Newman's game plan is to get into parliament only to get his hands on the state budget and to sink money into infrastructure in the south-east corner. Perhaps their newest slogan should be 'Forget regional Queensland', because that is what will happen. It turns out that the only reason he wants to get into parliament is to direct money back to Brisbane.

Ultimately, what Campbell Newman wants is to bail out his failed tunnel projects. He is merely engaged in a great tunnel funnel. He wants to take the money and barrel it into his failed tunnel projects. Today, he is out there dressed in blue. He thinks that a pot is called a middy. He is not fair dinkum about Queensland. They are so obsessed with what New South Wales is doing, they have adopted the tactics of the New South Wales Blues. What did they do last year? They talked up their chances. They had Kurt Gidley as captain, but what did they do? They started him from the bench, just as those opposite have a leader whom they will start from the bench. The Blues talked it up, they thought they had won, they talked big and they acted arrogantly, but they did not do the hard yards or the homework. They did not develop the team, they did not invest in the future and the people of Queensland condemned them. The people of Queensland condemn the opposition like they condemned the Blues. What people will see from this government is a fair dinkum Queensland government, born and bred in Queensland, for Queensland and for Queensland's future.

Asbestos in Schools

Ms BATES: My question without notice is to the Minister for Government Services, Building Industry and Information and Communication Technology. I refer to the removal of asbestos in Mackay schools last year, which the former minister and member for Rockhampton admitted was inappropriate. I table photos taken yesterday of dangerous asbestos situations at the Mackay State High School and the Mackay TAFE.

Tabled paper: Photographs titled 'Mackay State High School' [4530].

Tabled paper: Photographs titled 'Mackay TAFE' [4531].

Can the minister explain why, after the asbestos debacle in Mackay schools last year, those asbestos health risks still exist today in two local educational facilities here in Mackay?

Mr FINN: I thank the honourable member for the question. At the outset, I would say that the issue of diseases related to asbestos is a very serious matter and that the profile of disease as a result of asbestos product has not yet peaked in this nation. It is a very serious issue. I am aware of the Mackay West State School issue. QBuild had a couple of jobs—

Ms Bates interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mudgeeraba, you have asked your question. The minister is answering the question. You will cease interjecting.

Mr FINN: At the Mackay West State School, QBuild was undertaking some work that involved a painting job and vinyl floor replacement. That work was done last year. One of the contractors for QBuild noticed some work he was concerned about in relation to the removal of asbestos. That person is a class A asbestos removalist. He is doing quite a bit of work in asbestos. Recently, he briefed QBuild on some proposals that he has for modern-day removal of asbestos. I welcome that work. Whilst he was at the school, he observed some work that he thought was not being done appropriately. He brought that matter to the attention of the QBuild regional staff and requested that it be investigated. He did some media on the matter as well.

The shadow minister quite rightly acknowledges that this matter was raised with the former minister in the portfolio that I now represent. What did the former minister do? The former minister referred it to the CMC. The CMC investigated the matters and made some recommendations to the department in relation to—

Ms Bates interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mudgeeraba, you have asked the question. The minister is answering the question.

Mr FINN: The question relates to asbestos in schools and a matter in Mackay. The matters raised that were brought to this government's attention have been dealt with. They were referred to the CMC. The CMC made recommendations regarding—

Ms BATES: I rise to a point of order. The question directly related to Mackay State High School and the Mackay TAFE, not Mackay West primary school.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable minister is answering the question. I will hear the honourable minister.

Mr FINN: There is no point of order because—

Mr SPEAKER: I will rule on the point of order. I ask the minister to—

Mr FINN: I was addressing the question that the member was asked.

Mr SPEAKER: That is why I have asked the minister to continue with his answer.

Mr FINN: That is what happened with the Mackay state school issue. The matters were fully investigated. If there are matters to be investigated, the Department of Public Works will surely investigate them. I will be very happy to receive any information that the member has in relation to safety issues in any schools. I will be happy to have that investigated.

Tourism Industry

Mr WETTENHALL: My question is to the Minister for Environment and Resource Management. The minister would be aware that the tourism industry in Queensland has hit tough times of late. I ask: can the minister outline any support the government can provide to the industry during this challenging period?

Ms JONES: I thank the honourable member for Barron River for the question. I know that he is passionate, just like all of us in the Bligh government, about ensuring that we help the tourism industry get back on its feet after the natural disasters that all of Queensland, particularly Far North Queensland and North Queensland, has suffered during summer and the beginning of this year. That is why we are taking a comprehensive and total approach to make sure we can partner and help the tourism industry get people back to see Queensland and the beauty that it contains. I am very pleased to announce today that the Bligh government will extend the current rent cap on the Great Barrier Reef islands to assist them with this recovery. This means that more than 90 places across Queensland will benefit from this decision.

We have been working very closely with the tourism industry. I am very pleased to say that the Queensland Tourism Industry Council chief executive, Daniel Gschwind, has welcomed this government decision. He states—

The industry has had a tough year and we are very pleased that the government has taken this step to protect the island resorts from any cost increases that would adversely affect their businesses. We need a strong partnership with the state government to rebuild an industry that contributes so much to Queensland.

That is why we are absolutely committed to working with them, and we have seen the passion of the tourism minister here in her home region talking about the Nothing Beats Queensland campaign. Tourism represents over 6,800 jobs to the Mackay and Whitsunday regions alone. We on this side of the House are absolutely committed to protecting the Great Barrier Reef, which generates more than \$6 billion to the Queensland economy.

We are proud of Queensland. I stand before honourable members as a born-and-bred Queenslander who will be championing Queensland tonight—but we champion Queensland every day of the week. The fact that we ensure we support the tourism industry and the islands in this region is a demonstration of that. Locally, the Mackay islands that will benefit from this decision include South Molle Island, Hayman Island, Daydream Island, Hook Island and Hamilton Island—and the member for Whitsundays will be pleased to know that that is where I got engaged. Other islands to benefit include the Cairns islands in the Far North Queensland region including Green Island, Dunk Island, Bedarra Island and Lizard Island.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms JONES: It does not surprise me that the opposition continues to interject whenever we talk about the Great Barrier Reef. We know the record of the LNP when it comes to the Great Barrier Reef. There are a lot of young Queenslanders in the audience today. The decisions we make will ensure that when they are our age they will be able to see the Great Barrier Reef. This is the LNP that voted against the Great Barrier Reef protection bill. This is the LNP that denies that climate change will have any effect on the Great Barrier Reef. We stick up for the Great Barrier Reef.

(Time expired)

Bowen Hospital, Staffing

Mrs MENKENS: My question is to the Minister for Health. In previous years Bowen Hospital had two resident psychologists, two clinical health nurses and an Indigenous mental health support worker. All have left and there are no replacements. With an area population of over 13,000, why should people with mental health problems have to be regularly turned away from Bowen Hospital?

Mr WILSON: I thank the honourable member for the question. Addressing the challenging issues of mental health is a very important part of health provision and of the public health system. Of course, positions in mental health in the public health system can sometimes be challenging positions to fill, as some other positions in regional Queensland can be. I can assure honourable members and the folk of Mackay and regional Queensland that there are a lot of people and a lot of professionals who do not realise the absolute value and joy of moving to regional Queensland and being available to take up positions in places like Bowen, Maryborough and Hervey Bay to enable Queensland Health to provide the services that we want to provide and plan to provide for Queenslanders living in regional Queensland.

We have a strategy that has been flowing through for several years now of providing more beds and more services sooner and closer to home to regional Queenslanders. That is why we are rolling out multimillion dollar expansions of the Townsville Hospital, the Cairns Hospital—we are talking about \$400 million in each case—and the Mackay Hospital, which I spoke of earlier. That is also over \$400 million. Likewise, there is the Sunshine Coast University Hospital, at \$2 billion, the Gold Coast University Hospital, at \$1.6 billion.

Whilst we are focused on our absolute commitment to ensure there are more beds and services for regional Queenslanders sooner through many programs I have not mentioned, I want to draw to the attention of Queenslanders here in Mackay and in regional Queensland that they should not trust the LNP when it comes to providing services in health. What they will get from the LNP is cuts to facilities at Bowen, at Maryborough—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Those on my left will cease interjecting.

Mr WILSON: It will cut services across our health system. It wants to sack 36,000 public servants including health staff. It opposed the expansion program of our hospitals. It opposed all of those major expansions that I have spoken of. People cannot get more services and more beds sooner and closer to home in regional Queensland with cuts like the LNP has proposed. The best example is that it has denied hundreds of people in Mackay access to the dental health program.

Mackay Region, Agribusiness

Mrs KIERNAN: My question is to the Minister for Agricultural, Food and Regional Economies. Can the minister please update the House on the progress of project delivery in the minister's portfolio area in his electorate of Mackay? However, as we know, he is a strong advocate for all regions.

Mr MULHERIN: I thank the honourable member for Mount Isa, who is very passionate about the regions. She is always at my door advocating for Western Queensland. The Bligh government is committed to regional Queensland. Through my portfolio of Agriculture, Food and Regional Economies we have seen massive investment in new research facilities around the state which will drive agribusiness forward. One in eight jobs in regional—

Mr Seeney: Whereabouts? Where was the investment in business?

Mr MULHERIN: You must have the blindfold on again.

Mr Seeney: Where?

Mr SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting.

Mr MULHERIN: There has. In Coopers Plains, Boggo Road, Townsville, Mareeba, Charters Towers—

Mr Seeney: You closed down all those research stations.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting. The minister will address his comments through the chair.

Mr MULHERIN: We have reinvested significantly in research facilities that will drive this economy. Here in Mackay there are a number of important little projects which will certainly transform industry.

The sugar industry has been a vital contributor to the local economy. The Queensland government invested in the biocommodities pilot plant. This will create the new industries of the future—new jobs that will lead the sugar industry away from only a sucrose industry into the biochemical world of bioplastics, chemicals and other renewables. We are also looking at training through a partnership with Canegrowers. We have established a delivery cycle for the Australian Agricultural College Corporation. Through Winning the Main Game, the main industry network cluster has brought together some of the most innovative companies in Mackay. One of the projects that they are working on is an innovative laser-reading technology that can optimise the conveyer belts so that they are used both in agriculture and mining.

When we look at this region we see that the government has spent \$7,626 per person on capital works compared to a per capita spend in Brisbane of \$3,588. If we look at the LNP's track record from the last time it was in power we see that it took \$80 million away from the Mackay Base Hospital redevelopment and it took money away from the marina so that it could pay for the toll road that it abolished on the Sunshine Coast. That is an insight into what is likely in store for Mackay. Going into the last election, it was going to scrap any capital works program we had on the agenda.

Those in the LNP could not find a leader within their own party in the parliament; they had to get someone from outside the parliament and outside Queensland to lead. Let us look at his track record. He deserted the people of Brisbane in their time of need. What does he want to do in relation to capital infrastructure for regional Queensland? He is on the record, when he was the chair of the South-East Queensland Council of Mayors, as saying that he thought the regions got too much money. So that is their track record.

(Time expired)

Attorney-General, Grants of Immunity from Prosecution

Mr MESSENGER: My question without notice is to the Attorney-General and Deputy Premier. I refer the Attorney-General and Deputy Premier to the Attorney-General Act 1999 section 7, 'Specific powers', subsection (1)(c), which indicates that only he may grant immunities from prosecution. I table a copy of the act.

Tabled paper: Document titled 'Attorney-General Act 1999—Sect 7' [\[4532\]](#).

Will the Attorney-General agree that the latest CMC investigation into political corruption motivated by allegations from corrupt former Labor minister Gordon Nuttall is doomed to fail and could be considered a stunt if it is not assisted, as was the Fitzgerald inquiry, by the offer of immunities from prosecution to a star witness? Given his public support for Nuttall in 2005 and obvious conflict of interest, does the Attorney-General believe he is the right person to be making that decision in this case?

Mr SPEAKER: No, I will not call the Attorney-General. I want to get some advice on that question. After receiving that advice, I will now call the Attorney-General and ask him to answer the question as he sees fit. I am satisfied, Attorney-General, that it does not ask for a legal opinion.

Mr LUCAS: No, I will not be providing an expression of opinion because of course it is inappropriate for me to do that, Mr Speaker. But I thank the honourable member for the opportunity to explain the role of the Attorney-General. The Attorney-General in many respects has a role that is unique amongst ministers in that the Attorney-General, he or she, is the first law officer and initially provides advice to the cabinet in relation to legal matters.

There are certain matters, however, in addition to that on which the Attorney-General has his or her own independent discretion. The decision in relation to indemnities is one for the Attorney-General alone. Having said that, invariably—and the honourable member would be aware of this—indemnities are granted in very limited circumstances: first of all, when the Director of Public Prosecutions recommends that you grant one. You do not just go down the road and say, 'I feel like issuing a few indemnities today. I might issue a few. How're you going, Sir. Paul Lucas, member for Lytton. Would you like an indemnity?' What you do is you are very, very serious when you issue them and you only issue an indemnity in a situation where the evidence that someone is likely to give in an open court is evidence that is likely to implicate them with a commission of a criminal offence.

On my reading of the material that was tabled in parliament the other day by the member for Burnett—one thing I have never sought to do is abuse parliamentary privilege by tabling that sort of information; that does not worry him; that is the way he sees his role and himself in this House—the material did not disclose that Nuttall had committed an offence. He was making allegations about other people. He was not making allegations that he was involved in the commission of an offence. Therefore why in principle would you grant an indemnity to someone who has not made an allegation that is the subject of them committing an offence themselves? He was saying third parties were involved in conduct, not himself. So that is what an indemnity is not for.

An indemnity is granted in a situation where someone, for example, was party to an offence—maybe a drug import or something like that—and if they gave evidence they would be entitled to claim a privilege against self-incrimination. Their evidence may have been compelled, say, before a commission of inquiry. So it is certainly not a matter on my reading of it that an indemnity would be warranted in any event. However, on any matter, were I ever to consider an indemnity—and I have actually granted indemnities in relation to criminal matters, not in relation to political matters—they are matters that relate to advice from the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mackay Region Small Business

Mr WATT: My question is to the Minister for Tourism, Manufacturing and Small Business. We have heard much about the mining, agricultural and tourism strengths of the Mackay region. Could the minister please inform the House what the Bligh government is doing to support small businesses in the Mackay region?

Ms JARRATT: I thank the member for his question and for his interest in our beautiful region. While I know that he loves his own electorate in Brisbane, I hope his experience here will lead him to consider perhaps even moving north. You never know. I certainly encourage him, along with all other members, to consider supporting our economy while they are here by getting out and enjoying some of our thriving small businesses. The member was right when he noted that the cornerstones of this region are indeed mining, agriculture and tourism—all very strong and very vibrant industries.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition. The minister is answering the question. There is no need to interrupt at this point. The minister has the call. I would ask her to be extended courtesy.

Ms JARRATT: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Fraser interjected.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition and the Treasurer will cease interjecting.

Ms JARRATT: While mining, tourism and agriculture are certainly important to this region, it is small business that is the glue that holds the economy together. In this region alone there are 14,500 small business operators. That represents over 95 per cent of all business activity in this area. So it is vitally important that we support small business to help them expand their opportunities going forward.

I was very pleased this morning to attend a breakfast held by the Chamber of Commerce here in Mackay. I thank Kylie Porter for the invitation for us to come along and hear about some of the issues for small businesses in this region. As a government, we of course have policy settings around the macro level because I believe, as does this government, that the people who have a job are the ones with the money in their pocket to spend in the local small businesses in any community.

But we also have some fantastic services that are offered right here in this region through our DEEDI service office. They provide a range of initiatives that they have particularly ramped up over the summer since the destructive weather that we have had in this region—some 10 months of almost solid rain. The Jobs Assist support program is one that has helped to build resilience in our small businesses and helped them to create jobs by taking on new employees and making their businesses more sustainable into the future. I am pleased to say that around 30 businesses have undergone the professional assessment that comes with that program.

One of the issues for small businesses in regional Queensland is about accessing the expertise that often resides in capital cities maybe not even in our own state. So the DEEDI office has been putting on 'webinars'. This is the new way of having a virtual seminar that brings together the experts in the field with the business operators so that they can take advantage of key information and key topics including finance, marketing, e-business and business planning.

(Time expired)

Sale of Public Assets

Mr McLINDON: My question without notice is to the Premier. Given the fact that Queensland's assets were sold without warning after Labor's re-election and that the LNP has already hinted at its own asset sell-off as well as privatising its own leader, what guarantee can the Premier give that there will be no further asset sales in Queensland?

Mr SPEAKER: Premier, you have two minutes.

Ms BLIGH: I thank the member for the question. As members will recall, the last election was held at the height of a global financial crisis, at a time when, not only here in Queensland but also around Australia and around the world, it was unclear just how bad the economic collapse might be. The economy was still spiralling downwards and the debate at the time was where rock bottom would be. What we knew as a government, and what we made absolutely clear and public by publishing all of the data three days before calling an election, was that the GFC was hitting Queensland very hard and that navigating our way through it was going to be a very rough and rocky road. We went to the election saying, 'This will be a rough and rocky time for us and it is the people of Queensland who have the right to decide who should lead them through that rough and rocky time.'

I made numerous comments that I could not rule in or out any economic strategy that we might have to undertake. We then spent almost—

Opposition members interjected.

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

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting.

Ms BLIGH: Governments inherit very difficult economic circumstances from time to time. They do what needs to be done. What we did—

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition, I have asked you to cease interjecting. I now warn you under standing order 253A(1). The honourable the Premier has the call.

Mr Wilson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Health will cease interjecting.

Mr SEENEY: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. I find that distasteful and offensive and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable the Leader of the Opposition has found the remarks of the Minister for Health offensive. Under the standing orders, I ask the minister to withdraw.

Mr WILSON: I withdraw.


Mr SPEAKER: I call the Premier.

Ms BLIGH: We undertook a very rigorous examination and everyone knows the outcome of it. What I do know is that the new leader of the LNP has identified that there is room for more sell-offs including, and I use his words, 'the remaining coal terminals and outsourcing the electricity power grid'. I can guarantee that Labor has done its program. We have made that public and we have achieved it. I cannot guarantee for the member for Beaudesert what will happen with this mob.

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

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Queensland Economy

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 am): While we may all wake up tomorrow having seen Queensland win the first game in the State of Origin—and I am sure we all hope so—most Queenslanders will still wake up tomorrow having lost the economic state-of-origin battle under the coaching of this failed Labor government. Tonight Queensland starts its campaign for a sixth straight series win in the rugby league State of Origin. On 15 June the gladiators of our origin team will be back on the field for game 2. They will either be looking to finish off the New South Wales team or even up the score. But just the day before, Queensland will have suffered another severe loss under this long-term Labor government—a loss in the economic state of origin.

On 14 June we will see the outcome of 13 consecutive years of Labor mismanagement and failure to plan. We will see yet more debt that will have to be paid for by every Queensland taxpayer. Where is the Queensland economic state of origin now? We are now stone motherless last. We are still the only mainland state in Australia to have lost its AAA credit rating and to have to pay more interest as a result. We are still on the way to having the highest state debt of every state in Australia, at almost \$80 billion. That is more than any other state—more than New South Wales, more than Victoria. We are still on track to record interest payments of \$5 billion a year or, put another way, \$540,000 an hour each and every hour, each and every day, each and every week, each and every month.


This is a state where economic growth is at its lowest for 30 years—one per cent growth or less; a state where business confidence has plummeted and is not yet ready to return in any strength; a state where employment has fallen for three months in a row, with the latest ABS figures recalling a net loss of 400 jobs. We just heard the Minister for Tourism and Small Business say that the best thing we can give people is a job. She is part of a government that has presided over another net loss of jobs here in Queensland and a state where deficits will total, over the four years predicted in the Treasurer's own documents, more than \$10 billion. We are spending \$10 billion more than we earn in a state with our riches—riches that are being squandered by this Labor government. It is a disgrace.

It is clear that Queensland under Labor has been coached into last place in the economic state-of-origin stakes—coached into last place each and every year for the last four years. What can Queenslanders expect with the budget due on 14 June—a budget built on weak foundations and reliant, despite what the Treasurer might want to say, more than ever on the largesse of the federal government that this year will pay an extra \$2 billion to this government because of the disasters? This government will claim that \$2 billion as its own and spend it as its own when, as the member for Hinchinbrook pointed out yesterday when he belled the cat, that is money to recover from disasters, not to go out on a vote-buying election spree that this Labor government will start embarking on very shortly.

What we should expect from this Labor government on 14 June and in the lead-up to the budget on 14 June is a spending spree of enormous proportions, as this government goes out and spends money it does not have—money that it will have to borrow and money that the taxpayers of Queensland will eventually end up paying for in cost-of-living increases—as it desperately tries to shore itself up in the forthcoming election year. We will see more and more pork being rolled out by a government that has lost all financial credibility in Australia. More and more we will hear announcements about roads, schools and hospitals as Labor tries to catch up on 20 years of neglect—20 years of failure to fund roads, failure to fund hospitals and failure to put in place the programs that Queenslanders need. It is due to the incompetence of this 20-year-old Labor government that this has occurred.

What will the taxpayers of Queensland have to look forward to? Will they have to look forward to another increase in their car registration fees, an increase that the LNP will oppose? People have been too long burdened with this Labor government. Go now and do not come back.

Premier's Disaster Relief Appeal, Allocations

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (11.36 am): It is famously claimed that Marie Antoinette responded to the cries of the poor by saying, 'Let them eat cake.' There is a modern-day equivalent here in Queensland, where Premier Bligh's government has told the state's destitute from the disasters for the last four months, 'Let them eat red tape.'

Queensland has experienced a number of disasters this year. The Bligh government's disaster response is just one of them. The failure of the Premier and her government to respond with compassion and humanity to the flood and cyclone disasters that hit our state at the beginning of this year is becoming more and more evident. Today, 4½ months after the floods—19 weeks after people lost their houses and their belongings—and 16 weeks after Cyclone Yasi, the Premier has announced what should have been done immediately after the event. People have been struggling in affected areas. They have been crying out for help. They have been met with a wall of bureaucracy.

Now the Premier has realised the message coming through, even out of the bureaucracy, that these people need basic human help. They need to be able to eat. They need to be able to rebuild their lives. They need to have human contact and reassurance that they do have the support of the community.

The funding announcement regarding St Vincent de Paul is welcome. But, like so many other organisations, St Vincent de Paul has already been out there for months trying to help people get back on their feet. They have done good work. They have helped many people. They have done it despite the government.

Waiting for the government to respond has been a futile exercise. Why has it taken the Premier four months to catch up? Why has it taken her so many rounds of funding, red tape and refusals to people in need when the message has been blatantly clear all along? This is too little too late. For every week that these people have had to fight just to put food on the table or just to get to the table the trauma has been worse. The isolation and sense of abandonment has been worse. The failure of this government has been worse.

The Premier has stated that this funding is to help people who fell through the cracks. The cracks were put there by the Premier and her government in their efforts to impose as much bureaucracy and red tape on this heartache as possible. The cracks are the result of the incompetence of this government in distributing funds given generously and spontaneously by Queenslanders and others. People are struggling to get back on their feet. They are struggling because this government has denied them timely assistance. It has denied them access to funds, donated by their own neighbours, colleagues, families and friends.


This government has literally denied them the right to refurbish their homes simply because they did not own the four walls around their lost belongings. The hard-heartedness of this government's response has hit hard at the people who lost everything and who cannot afford to re-establish. There has been an obvious need for help before this point. It is not good enough that people are still struggling. It is not good enough that day-to-day essentials have become luxuries in Queensland. The response to these disasters should have been a human response aimed at helping people get through the trauma, helping them get back on their feet. It should never have been the bureaucratic nightmare it has become, with arguments over guidelines and eligibility and people being told that they have not suffered enough and forced to endure more because the government said they did not deserve that help—basic necessities, basic necessities such as food and household goods.

There are no excuses for the Premier for people having to wait four long months before receiving this basic level of help. Premier, do not expect any accolades for this announcement. It is too little too late. It is a slap in the face for the victims who have had to endure the trauma of the floods and cyclone followed by weeks of anxiety about how to feed their families, how to clothe their children, how to return to a sustainable lifestyle. The devastation may not have been uniform, but the cold-hearted response and mismanagement of this government has been. All of Queensland has experienced the government's bungled economic management. Now we are witnessing that same slipshod approach applied to disaster relief funds.

The Premier is right in one thing: nothing can restore the lost memories, the photos and the treasured belongings. But there will also be little done to erase the negative memories of trauma and need in the months following the disasters. It would not have taken much to provide support to people in affected areas at the time they most needed it, with just a view of the situation with compassion and care and support of the people who are on the ground, reaching out to as many people as they can.

(Time expired)

Mackay Region

 **Hon. TS MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Agriculture, Food and Regional Economies) (11.41 am): I welcome my parliamentary colleagues to my home sitting of parliament. I have been a proud local member for 16 years and in that time I have seen the local region change remarkably. I want to take a few minutes to inform the House of the innovative nature of the modern Mackay economy and the opportunities and the prosperity the local region offers. Since European settlement in the Mackay-Whitsunday-Isaac region, the area has been a strong agricultural producer, particularly around the beef industry and the sugar industry. The region has also been a major exporter of primary production. With the resource boom in the Bowen Basin and now the Galilee and Surat basins, we have seen the local economy diversify to include mining and its associated engineering services that support not only mining but also agriculture. At the same time, with the advancement of transportation, the tourism industry in our region has grown further. People come to the beautiful Whitsundays for recreation and to have a great time. As a result, we have seen the local economy diversify. This is not unusual for Queensland. Mining, agriculture and tourism have been the key economic drivers of our economy. However, the Mackay-Whitsunday region is different with its innovative service sector, which underpins and supports these three major economic drivers.


The Mackay-Whitsunday-Isaac region is renowned for its innovative service sector, including engineering, finance, commerce, retailing, manufacturing and hospitality. The Mackay Area Industry Network is one organisation that clusters more than 100 small and medium size businesses in Mackay, resulting in the Mackay region growing a national reputation as an innovative hub for engineering services and innovation and bright ideas. In fact, over the next two years these leading companies alone are forecast to invest \$126 million in new user-driven innovation projects while employing 1,230 new engineering, technical and trade staff, investing in the innovative future of the Mackay-Whitsunday-Isaac region. Michael Porter, one of the world's leading experts on clustering, believes that clusters develop when there is intense rivalry and competition between companies that exist in an industry, and we certainly have that in Mackay. This is really relevant to Mackay because of the competition that is here. With each global contract companies win, they become stronger and more competitive while building the skills and capability of the sector.

Mackay has changed. It is no longer simply a mining services town. Along with agriculture, tourism and engineering, Mackay-Whitsunday also has a vibrant arts community. In fact, the Premier often gloats about the Gallery of Modern Art staging Australia's first Andy Warhol exhibition. In fact, she is wrong there. The Mackay art gallery staged that in its opening exhibition. We have seen investment in this convention centre. Yesterday we were at the Central Queensland University where the Premier announced the winning tender for the development of the new skills centre on the Central Queensland University campus. We want to create a knowledge community so that we have a life beyond extraction of coal from the hinterland or primary production. That is why we have invested in the biocommodities plant at Racecourse Sugar Mill. It is about creating the new jobs—the jobs for our kids, the jobs that do not exist now but will exist into the future.

Mackay's vision is for a community that is knowledge based, that is innovative and that is exporting bright ideas. To assist in that, the government has invested heavily in projects to drive the economic development of the region, from rail to port infrastructure through to redevelopment of the Mackay Base Hospital, the cogeneration project at Mackay Sugar, the upgrade to the Airlie Beach main street and the skills development centre along with bridgeworks in the Mackay region. To manage growth and to ensure that we have that livability in the Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday region, today the government will launch the Mackay Isaac Whitsunday Regional Plan. This will be a blueprint for the future. It will provide certainty for the development sector.

(Time expired)

Domestic and Family Violence

 **Ms JOHNSTONE** (Townsville—ALP) (11.46 am): As all honourable members would know, May is Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month. Violence of any sort must never be tolerated, but it becomes even more intolerable when it is perpetrated by people who hold positions of trust within our families. The statistics regarding violence in our homes are alarming, with Queensland recording over 49,000 domestic and family violence occurrences in 2009-10. Here is another statistic for members: one in three Australian women has experienced physical violence at some stage in their lives since the age of 15, with the majority of these cases perpetrated by men against women and their children. Women are mostly assaulted at their home, often repeatedly, by a man they know and with whom they are or were engaged in an intimate relationship. These statistics are both frightening and sobering. These are matters of public importance. I want to bring to the attention of the House today a number of actions which I believe we can take to assist us in our continuous campaigning against this terrible blight on our society.

Last Wednesday, 18 May, I attended the North Queensland Domestic Violence Resource Service for the local launch in Townsville of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children, a COAG endorsed plan which for the first time is a national plan coordinated across jurisdictions. The genesis of the plan came out of the work of Ms Libby Lloyd, who was in Townsville last week for the launch, and Ms Heather Nancarrow, who I know will be a familiar name to many people in Mackay, who are chair and deputy chair respectively of the National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children. They consulted with over 2,000 Australians and reviewed over 350 written submissions in their quest to develop an evidence based action plan to reduce violence against women and their children.

The plan talks about how to make our communities safe and free from violence and there are two points that I think are pertinent to the discussion. The first one is this: we must have men playing a leading role in challenging this behaviour and, importantly, challenging discrimination and gender stereotyping. White Ribbon ambassador and Townsville police district DV liaison officer Sergeant Mark Lance spoke about this last week. Mark has been unrelenting for years in his quest to get our whole community to take responsibility in stopping abuse in our homes. Equally disturbing is the way domestic violence is often dismissed as a minor blip in domestic relationships: 'He didn't mean it', 'I'm sorry. I love you. I won't do it again', 'He's a good bloke and was probably just having a bad day' et cetera. We have heard all the defences. What is often less understood is the strong evidence that now exists about how jealousy and controlling behaviour are important indicators of violence. In fact, shockingly, controlling behaviour increases sixfold the likelihood of violence for a woman in a domestic setting. Psychological abuse is another strong indicator of violence. These are warning signs that must not be ignored by any of us.


Abuse is a game of power and control. It is not love. I urge all of us not to be afraid of challenging this behaviour. It is the responsibility of all of us to act when we think someone is unsafe. Fifty-eight per cent of women who have been physically assaulted discuss their experiences with a friend or neighbour. When we hear women speak about experiences like this we need to make sure that they know how and where they can get help. Listen to her, believe her and support her, regardless of whether she stays or leaves. The evidence also shows that gender equality makes a difference in domestic violence. Domestic violence is essentially perpetrated through unequal relationships, and power and control have long been the MO for perpetrators.

In March this year we celebrated 100 years of International Women's Day. On Labour Day I proudly wore my commemorative shirt, which highlights the achievements of women over the past 100 years. Yes, gender equality has come a long way but we still have a long way to go. The evidence shows that violence is reduced when there is greater equity and respect between men and women.

I want to finish by commending some practical work that is happening on the ground in this area. NQDVRS has been involved in the Choosing Safety pilot and there have been some amazing results. For example, improvements in security and lighting around the home not only allow a woman to continue with normal routines but there is evidence that perpetrators become discouraged and violence diminishes. It is important that this Choosing Safety project continues. I congratulate the NQDVRS and the Dovetail group in Townsville for their continued diligence, persistence and advocacy in the fight to eliminate violence from our homes.

I wish to finish with some words of wisdom from my eight-year-old son, Ethan, who just this morning was telling me that he has been learning about communities at school. When I asked him, 'What is a community?', he said, 'Communities are people who share ideas together.' If our community shares the idea that violence against women and children should be eliminated then I know we can get there. Thank you, Ethan, for simplifying what we need to do as a community.

Bruce Highway; Connors River Dam; Mackay Region, Police Resources

 **Mr MALONE** (Mirani—LNP) (11.51 am): This morning I tabled a petition in this parliament with over 5,000 signatures—indeed 5,219 signatures—from Michelle Leeson calling for a safety audit of the Bruce Highway between Mackay and Rockhampton. Mrs Leeson lost her parents, Peter and Diane Burrige, and her siblings, Mark and Kristy, in a car accident on the highway on Australia Day this year and calls for a detailed safety audit of this notoriously dangerous stretch of road. Michelle's family were travelling from Sarina to Gympie to attend a funeral when the accident occurred on a dangerous section of the Bruce Highway at Etna Creek, just north of Rockhampton.


This petition calls on the parliament to undertake a detailed safety audit and analysis of the highway between Rockhampton and Mackay with a particular emphasis on, but not limited to, the provision of overtaking lanes and rest stops, the depth of table drains and the condition of the shoulders and obstacles close to the road from the perspective of providing an adequate and safe buffer area for motorists to leave the road in an emergency situation. This petition is not about spending millions of dollars, because we know that that will not happen any time soon. It is about using some common sense and providing safe verges on the highway and clearing large trees that can be fatal when motorists are forced off the road. Those of us who travel that highway on a regular basis know only too well how deep and dangerous many of the drains are on the side of the highway. There is no room to move, there is no margin for error and if motorists are forced off the road they face steep banks and large trees on that stretch of the highway that could be cleared to save lives.

I am pleased to table a petition on behalf of Michelle but, at the same time, I sincerely regret the circumstances that led to this need for her to take this action. I call on the government to act on the request of Michelle and the other 5,000-plus people who signed the petition for the safety of all of us who travel this stretch of highway. Michelle is a brave young lady and my sympathies are with her, her husband and her young family.

I have mentioned the government's failure to plan. Another typical example of this failure is the construction of the Connors River Dam, which is to start early next year. Why is this dam being limited to just 60 per cent of potential capacity, particularly with the expansion of the Galilee Basin, which will mean a huge increase in the demand for water, not to mention the growing demands for water from coastal communities? The site of the Connors River Dam is regarded as the best site for a dam in Queensland—and there are not many of them left, I am afraid—in terms of cost for capacity. But because we are broke we are not taking full advantage of the site. By building to only 60 per cent capacity, this is a false economy. It is a bit like the situation with the Fursden Creek Bridge. When the water needs for mining are largely unmet and the coastal areas from Greenhill to St Lawrence need water for development, the Connors River Dam project is another planning failure from a broke government, which has blown \$9 billion on the failed South-East Queensland water grid.

Police numbers per head of population in Mackay are a third less than they are in the rest of Queensland. Mackay police are stretched to the limit, with one officer for every 573 residents—a figure that is well under the state average of one police officer per 434 people. No wonder the crime rate in Mackay and its region continues to be a problem and that clear-up rates have either stalled or become worse over the past decade. That is another prime example of Labor ignoring Mackay's needs.

Tourism Industry; Regional Development

 **Mr WETTENHALL** (Barron River—ALP) (11.56 am): It is a great pleasure to be here for this historic sitting of the Queensland parliament in this beautiful city of Mackay. Like so many others, I have holidayed here, lured by the stunning images of the Whitsunday islands and the most beautiful beach the in world, Whitehaven Beach. More recently, I have visited this region in my former role as a parliamentary secretary for tourism. In August last year I was on Hamilton Island to launch Queensland's Season of Sailing and announced Jessica Watson as Queensland's sailing ambassador. Earlier this year I attended our government's community cabinet meeting at Airlie Beach-Proserpine, where my friend and colleague Jan Jarratt, the member for Whitsunday—who everyone knows is an unrelenting advocate for this region—secured funding for a major upgrade of the main street through Airlie Beach. Tourism is an important industry throughout Queensland, but it is particularly important here, as it is in my home town of Cairns. So now I am working closely with the member for Whitsunday in her new role as the Minister for Tourism, Manufacturing and Small Business.

The tourism industry is going through its toughest time ever, as the industry fights the impacts of the global financial crisis and a soaring Aussie dollar, not to mention the natural disasters that have occurred at home and abroad that have hit the industry hard. That is why our government's additional

funding support for tourism marketing, infrastructure and product development is so crucial to helping tourism businesses through the aftermath of Queensland's summer of cyclones and floods and to position the industry for future growth.

I am also working very closely with my friend and colleague Tim Mulherin, the member for Mackay and Minister for Agriculture, Food and Regional Economies. The member for Mackay enjoys great respect in our team, but I know that that respect extends to every corner of this state in rural and regional communities, for which he has served as a minister. The member for Mackay understands how important the regions are to Queensland and how important it is that partnerships are forged within regions to articulate local solutions to local issues. That is a view that I share and it is also one that is shared by our government.


For example, through our Tomorrow's Regions: the Queensland Government's Partnership with Regional Communities initiative, we are supporting the work of Regional Development Australia committees. I am delighted that, in my role as Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Premier on Economic Development in the Far North, on Minister Mulherin's recommendation I am now assigned to work with the Far North Queensland and Torres Strait regional committee. I am sure there will be opportunities in the future to collaborate with the Mackay-Whitsunday regional committee. Minister Mulherin recently announced a \$480,000 funding boost to support the work of the RDA committees, and I am looking forward to working with my group to realise our vision for our region.

The regions have always been important to this Labor government. Right now, equipping people with the right work skills has never been more important to the long-term growth and prosperity of our regions. Our government is committed to growing Queensland's skilled workforce, both during the reconstruction effort and into the future. The joint state and federal Natural Disasters Jobs and Skills Package is now well underway, with more than \$23 million invested to date assisting 2,220 Queenslanders. This package combines Green Army flood and cyclone recovery projects, apprentice support and priority skills development. So far more than 700 Green Army jobs have been generated, with organisations like the Mackay Area Industry Network delivering 10 work placements in Bowen for the Gray's Beach cyclone damage revegetation project.

Similarly, through the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation, the Operation Cleanup Queensland Project is providing employment for up to 500 Far North Queenslanders whilst also helping primary producers and small business owners get back on their feet. When establishing Skills Queensland, an industry led skills commission, we listened to the requests of key growth industries to better align our apprentice and training places with the skills demands of the future.

Regional economic development is about recognising key strengths and developing new opportunities in our regions. For example, as we have heard before in this sitting of the parliament, here in Central Queensland there are opportunities in new industries like biofuels, like that seen at the Mackay biocommodities plant making biofuels from sugarcane waste, as well as the enormous skills opportunities that will come from LNG and the mining services sector. I am confident that our commitment to skills and economic development will result in an even brighter future for our regions. I thank the people of Mackay and this region for the warm welcome they have given this parliament.

Draft Barron Water Resource Plan

 **Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (12.01 pm): The draft Barron Water Resource Plan was released for public comment on 20 December 2001. For nearly a decade irrigators in area B of the Barron WRP have contested the accuracy of the science used by DERM to refuse a number of applications for additional water for irrigation purposes. DERM maintains that the science shows that no more water can be taken from surface and groundwater services for irrigation in area B of the Barron WRP. This assertion has been vigorously contested by irrigators in area B. DERM has consistently refused to listen to these landowners, notwithstanding that they have decades of knowledge about the land and water resources in the local area. A number of landowners have resorted to legal proceedings to secure the additional water allocations that they have applied for in area B of the Barron WRP. The LNP has previously drawn attention to the dispute between DERM and the irrigators in area B by moving a disallowance motion in March 2010 regarding the WRP for the Barron. Many issues raised by LNP members participating in that debate lend warrant to the objections raised by the irrigators in area B and highlight the failure of DERM to consult meaningfully with local stakeholders. A number of WRPs developed in catchments across the state have been controversial and characterised by confrontation between DERM and local stakeholders. The development of the WRP for the Condamine-Balonne, which also took over a decade to be finalised, was equally controversial and confrontational and involved legal proceedings. The process used for the initial stages of the Wet Tropics WRP in my electorate has been similarly unsatisfactory.

The LNP warned during the course of that disallowance motion that under an LNP government DERM would be forced to use robust peer reviewed science and not impose predetermined, politically motivated results that satisfied the agenda of the government. I reiterate that warning today. Despite the LNP exposing a number of the indefensible aspects of the Barron WRP, this government has perpetuated the injustice.

To their credit, a few landowners have refused to be dictated to by Labor's political agenda, although they have done so at great personal cost. During the disallowance motion the LNP referred to the case of *De Tournouer v the CEO of DNRW* heard in the Land Court where the evidence of the so-called hydrological expert for the department was strongly criticised by the presiding judge as selective, evasive, intellectually arrogant and not to be relied upon by the court. It was a scathing repudiation of DERM's position.


Legal proceedings continue to this day, in which landowners seek sustainable allocations from area B of the Barron WRP. The Land Court is once again calling into question the scientific and professional competency of the department. The court has heard evidence that DERM has acted other than in accordance with the Water Act and the Barron WRP that it imposed on landowners. It has been alleged that DERM granted a number of new applications and renewed existing entitlements without giving consideration to the sustainability of the water use and granted irrigation licences on land not suitable for irrigation. In one case an irrigation licence was renewed despite the applicant stating on the application that the licence was not in use and would not be used in the future but was being renewed to maintain the capital value of the land. I table a letter dated 23 February 2011 to the Minister for Environment and Resource Management drawing attention to these issues. This letter has not been responded to.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 23 February 2011, Mr from Keith Gould, Tableland Irrigators, to the Hon. Kate Jones MP in relation to the Barron Water Resource Plan [\[4533\]](#).

During the disallowance motion Labor MPs insisted irrigators would benefit from the opportunity to trade water entitlements created by the WRP in the Barron. The revelation that water entitlements have been improperly granted, particularly in relation to the granting of licences for inappropriate uses on land unsuitable for irrigation, and in some cases only to maintain the capital value of the land, surely jeopardises the successful introduction of water trading in the Barron WRP. His Honour Judge Smith, presiding in the Land Court, has expressed his concern about the development of the Barron WRP, questioning the plan on the principles of equity and if it was, indeed, in the public interest. Judge Smith even went so far as to suggest that he may be duty-bound to refer the development of the plan to the Crime and Misconduct Commission observing, in relation to the development of the plan, that if there is something that smells bad and looks bad then it is probably going to taste bad. That is a damning indictment on DERM and the development of WRPs under this Labor government where politics is more important than science.

Irrigators on the Atherton Tableland within the Barron WRP and water licence holders who have been maligned and treated with contempt across Queensland deserve much better. They will be treated much better under an LNP government.

Animal Management

 **Ms NELSON-CARR** (Mundingburra—ALP) (12.06 pm): I would like to highlight an issue which I have raised in this parliament in the past with regard to animal management. In a previous speech I argued against the introduction of mandatory desexing of animals. I used international evidence as well as advice from the President of the Australian Institute of Animal Management and local Townsville veterinarian Dick Murray. The introduction of mandatory desexing would not actually decrease the amount of euthanased animals in animal shelters, nor would it decrease the amount of pressure placed on those shelters. Instead, alternative measures like increasing surveillance of local animal management regulations could be a more appropriate strategy.

Today I would like to emphasise the role that pet owners have and to reiterate that for good animal management policy to be successful we need to focus on people management. Measures can be taken to reduce the RSPCA's control of unwanted pets, like introducing a management board similar to that in South Australia. But research must also be conducted so that real data can give actual figures of the numbers of animals entering shelters. It makes a lot of sense for animal management to begin with human management.

We currently have more than sufficient legislation in place when it comes to pet ownership, but scrutiny of these laws could do with some work. Currently the law requires compulsory registration of all cats and dogs, compulsory microchipping of all new cats and dogs and, at point-of-sale transfer, compulsory tattooing for desexed cats and dogs and discounted registration fees for desexed pets. This legislation was introduced to reduce the burden on shelters and pounds and the subsequent euthanasia costs in an effort to control the population of dogs and cats. These laws are certainly more than adequate and they do not need to be adjusted. Mandatory desexing will not ease the burden on shelters and pounds or ever control the population. It will have an effect, but it would be much more sensible to enhance enforcement of this legislation.

If we have a look at the facts in Townsville, only 14 out of the 120—that is 12 per cent—impounded dogs in one month were properly registered. In fact, it is estimated that approximately 90 per cent of dogs in the community are not registered. The estimation of registered cats is much worse. A 100 per cent registration rate is the only way we can relieve animal shelters. It is a bit like car registration. Registration systems that do not deliver 100 per cent compliance means that those who do the right thing are required to pay extra for the ones who do not pay. Furthermore, the animal


management service is not a single service product. Currently, animal management services include whole community and individual services. All pet owners pay a fee in order to keep both services active. Often the components relevant to individual cases deal with incidents involving pet owners who do not manage their animals carefully and sensibly.

The system in existence holds decent pet owners accountable for the expenses incurred by a different group of owners who do not manage their pets responsibly. Not only is this inequitable; it is also not at all conducive to a well-run animal management system. We need a fairer and more functional user-pays structure. Perhaps we could reshape the current system requiring pet owners to pay an annual pet registration fee to fund all animal management services. The system would better reflect the various tasks involved in providing effective animal management. I would like to propose the dissection of the services to reflect what the community and pet owners should pay in annual registration fees, and charges could be applied to individual owners guilty of infringement. I would like to table an example that has been provided to me by the veterinary society which provides the basis upon which a possible dissection could be based.

Tabled paper: Table regarding animal management service components [\[4534\]](#).

This system provides not only a better mechanism for funding animal management but also a better understanding of what animal management services are and what they cost to provide. To manage, enforce and administer the day-to-day management of dogs and cats throughout Queensland we could introduce a dog and cat management board similar to the one that exists in South Australia. It is overseen by local government and the Minister for Environment and Conservation. The executive support is provided by the department for environment and heritage. It oversees the administration and enforcement of the Dog and Cat Management Act and there are a number of things that that includes. This could work in Queensland. As I said earlier, we do not need to amend or introduce new legislation; rather, we need greater scrutiny and a more efficient means of enforcing our existing legislation to ensure that all cats and dogs are registered. To do that, we need all relevant bodies to cooperate and enforce the legislation. Councils, vets, pet shops and breeders all have a role to play.

Queensland Economy; Central Queensland, Coroner's Office

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (12.11 pm): The Labor Party has given up on Central Queensland. The Labor Party has given up on Mackay. No-one could have said it better than the young student to whom the Speaker referred yesterday, when he read from the statement hanging outside. In a nutshell, that young student said that if he were to become a member of parliament he would help reduce the bills to assist his mum. It is quite telling that a student wants to assist his mother. Let us help that student by providing some historical facts on how we can help his mother.

The first thing to recognise is where the higher fees, charges and increased pressures on the cost of living come from. They have come from 20 years of Australian Labor Party rule in Queensland. I am worried, because this morning in this place the Premier said that, essentially, Queensland is No. 1. Some economists would disagree with that. CommSec would disagree with that. If the threshold for being No. 1 in Australia is higher costs of living, higher rates, higher fuel costs—higher everything—then that is worrying. It is worrying for the people of Mackay and it is worrying for people right around Australia, because things will only get worse under this government. When we have a Premier who stands up and acknowledges that, we are indeed heading for dire trouble.

However, Can-do Campbell Newman will come to town. Can-do Campbell Newman will assist. Can-do Campbell Newman will help. Two days ago, we announced a coroner for Central Queensland to deal with issues from Caloundra to Proserpine. This is part of a can-do approach. Can-do Campbell Newman is not simply running into town sprinkling money around like fairy dust; he is coming to town and saying, 'If the LNP is elected to government at the next election, we will establish a coroner's office in Central Queensland.' Do members know why we are going to do that? Because the State Coroner recommends it. In his 2009-10 report, the State Coroner said—


In centres not served by a full-time coroner there is a risk that pressure of work and a lack of specialised expertise may mean some matters do not get the attention they need.

In my view these problems urgently require the appointment of a full-time Central Coroner in Rockhampton or Mackay so that people living between Caloundra and Proserpine can receive the same level of coronial services as those in the south-east ...

This is a part of Campbell Newman's plan to look at the issue of decentralisation, because we understand that government is not about Brisbane. We understand that government is not about South-East Queensland. Under Campbell Newman, we will be a government for all of Queensland, including the constituents in the electorates of Mount Isa and Broadwater. Their elected representatives continually come into this place and vote for rates rises and higher fuel prices, because it was the forced amalgamation of councils that increased rates in this state. The member for Mount Isa was there in the midst of it all. Shame on them! Shame on those members opposite! They continually vote to increase the cost-of-living pressures on the people of Mackay and right around Queensland.

The good news for the people of Mackay and the people of Queensland is that Campbell Newman thinks outside Brisbane. He thinks for Queensland. Under a Campbell led government, we would never have had a situation where a new courthouse does not have toilet facilities for females. Women have to go to the old courthouse to use the amenities. That would not happen under a Can-do Campbell led government.

Central Queensland NRL Bid Team

 **Mr HOOLIHAN** (Keppel—ALP) (12.16 pm): As we gear up for the first 2011 State of Origin contest tonight, I ask the people in the gallery and honourable members to consider that Central Queensland is contributing just under 25 per cent of the 18-man squad, with Matt Scott from Ilfracombe, David Taylor from Blackwater, Jharal Yow Yeh from Emu Park and Dane Nielsen, one of Mackay's native sons. Why do our talented rugby league players have to move away to play NRL football? Because we have no team in Central Queensland. However, the Central Queensland NRL bid team is working to correct that.

The Central Queensland NRL bid team, with chairman Geoff Murphy and CEO Dennis Keeffe at the helm, has a talented board with members from Mackay in the north, Bundaberg in the south and Emerald and Longreach in the west. A region of over 600,000 square kilometres is covered by the bid and encompasses four coastal shires and 12 western shires, extending to the Northern Territory, South Australia and New South Wales borders. The population of the region is approximately 600,000 with 450,000 living within a 3½-hour drive of Rockhampton.

To create infrastructure and support the regions, at a community cabinet meeting in Rockhampton Premier Anna Bligh confirmed that the Labor government is committed to building a stadium in Rockhampton if the bid is successful. If modelled on the Skilled Park complex, it would hold approximately 20,000 people and represent an estimated \$180 million to \$200 million in funding. Newman had to be embarrassed into even considering the idea.

The bid team has calculated that a team in Rockhampton would contribute approximately \$75 million to \$80 million to the economy of Central Queensland, based on the Cowboys' Dairy Farmers Stadium contribution of approximately \$75 million to the North Queensland bottom line. The bid team has attracted a major sponsor in QR National, which draws major income from the region and also provides employment to many of the families who would love to keep their sporting children in Central Queensland while providing an opportunity to learn near to home and to keep close contact with family. There are also many other committed sponsors behind the bid.


As part of the proposal, the bid company has a strategy to establish a regional educational, vocational and sport academy to be based in Rockhampton and to operate through the Central Queensland bid region. That strategy provides an opportunity to give back to the community and it will use sport as the conduit to link education and training to an employment pathway. It will also pay particular attention to the needs of our remotely located young people and Indigenous youth primarily across Central Queensland by providing access to place based programs that outreach across the vast region. It will also allow an opportunity to help disadvantaged and remote youth to gain valuable social skills and employment.

The bid team has also announced the formation of a youth team at under-13 level to compete in local and regional competitions and to put them onto a pathway that could lead them to playing for a Central Queensland NRL team. The government investment in a stadium will reap dividends and returns in social and financial terms for Central Queensland, and the playing of NRL games in Rockhampton will allow television to showcase the bid region.

The Central Queensland NRL bid has a great capacity and valuable knowledge within its team to ensure that the projected benefits come to our area. The people of Central Queensland who know the value of a national sporting team can sign the petition to grant a licence or can go to www.cqnrlbid.com.au to find out how to support the bid. Remember that an NRL team in the Central Queensland region years ago may have offered players of the calibre of Wendell Sailor and Rhys Wesser, just to name a few recent losses, and even the four players I mentioned at the outset the chance to play in a local team. I thank the Labor government for its support and I will continue to work with Geoff, Dennis and their team to achieve success for their far-sighted and sensible proposal.

One of the things that a Central Queensland NRL bid team hopes to achieve is that this area, which as I indicated covers 16 shires, becomes the best part of Queensland in which to support young people and regional people. It will mean that people who want to achieve success in elite sport do not have to move away and do not have to go to Sydney or Brisbane. The Cowboys in North Queensland proved that. The Central Queensland NRL bid, resulting in the granting of that licence, will prove that Central Queensland will remain the powerhouse for rugby league, particularly in Australia. It has provided so many top players with world-class capacity.

Queensland Rail, Privatisation

 **Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (12.21 pm): All of us in this chamber would agree on the importance of not-for-profit organisations in our community. The role that they play in the community is invaluable. I have to disagree with the Premier about the privatisation of Queensland Rail. I do not believe the people of Queensland did know that there was an intention to sell QR. There was not a clear indication before the election and people still, to this day, feel aggrieved, angry and betrayed.

Several months ago when the Hon. Rachel Nolan was minister for transport—a year or so ago—the QCWA and the Gladstone Musical Society contacted me because they had been advised that their lease payments were going to rise. Previously they were around \$700 a year. These are not-for-profit organisations that I speak of. They were advised by Queensland Rail that their lease would increase to approximately \$6,000 a year, and this is more than the turnover of the Gladstone Musical Society. I have to congratulate Minister Nolan, who sorted the matter out and the lease was returned to the prior lower amount—around \$700 plus CPI.

Sadly, these community based organisations have again been ditched by this government. On 8 April I asked a question on notice of the Minister for Transport and Multicultural Affairs in relation to the Gladstone QCWA, the Gladstone Musical Society and the Queensland Railways Institute. I asked—

- (1) Was all surplus Queensland Rail land included in the QR privatisation; if so, will the Minister list all included properties?
- (2) Does QR National intend to sell these properties; if so, will the Minister list all properties proposed for sale?
- (3) Will the Minister intervene to ensure these community based, not-for-profit organisations can operate without threat?

The response I received was—

Prior to the initial public offering of QR National, the state undertook an extensive process to establish QR National and Queensland Rail as separate entities.

These properties are owned by QR National and leased; I recommend that you contact QR National directly.

So the answer was, 'We don't want to know. We don't want to know about your problems.' These three organisations have been told they have until 31 August to move their facility, to get off. Somewhere in QR National they believe the property on which the Musical Society and the QCWA, which are adjacent to one another, are situated has huge commercial value. It is zoned as commercial land, but it is located in a cul-de-sac and is surrounded by two residential buildings—a senior citizens hall and a child-care facility. It is a dead-end street and it is isolated by an inaccessible railway corridor. So on a local government level there would be problems in approving any great commercial pursuit.


The CWA has been there for almost 80 years. It has provided a hall. Many people in Gladstone talk about the fact that they were married in the hall and had their 21st birthday there. It is a community asset and it is also used in emergency situations. They have just had the kitchen done up after a gaming machine grant.

The Gladstone Musical Society is often present at community events, providing free entertainment for senior citizens and others. The Queensland Railway Institute is a social club for railway employees, both current and retired. I know it is the place where many of the union marches start on Labour Day. So with the stroke of a pen by a QR National boffin in Brisbane these three facilities are going to be sold.

Mr Wellington: Disgraceful!

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: It is disgraceful. Our communities are glued together by these not-for-profit organisations. They give without asking for anything in return except a fair go. Neither the QCWA, the QRI nor the Musical Society should be required to move. They should be able to stay there. Whilst QR National claims to be a private entity, let us be honest, the majority shareholder is the Queensland government. There is the opportunity for government intervention to ensure that organisations like these three, which have been pivotal in our community for many years, can remain unaffected on blocks of land that do not have the high commercial value that is being touted. However, they have huge community value. These organisations need support. They deserve support. I call on the Premier and the minister to give them support.

Mount Isa, Xstrata

 **Mrs KIERNAN** (Mount Isa—ALP) (12.26 pm): As people in this House know, I represent the greatest electorate in the state.

Honourable members interjected.

Mrs KIERNAN: Okay. Geographically, it covers one-third of the state. It is possibly the smallest in terms of population but gigantic in spirit and diversity, and the people who live in our part of the state love it with a passion. My electorate and region is the outback and it includes the beautiful Gulf of Carpentaria. The member for Mackay is a frequent visitor to my part of the world. I look forward to hosting a trip along with the member for Whitsunday. We will be going to some favourite spots in the world of the member for Gregory, being Bedourie and Birdsville.

Last week saw a new direction in the future of Mount Isa, my city and its iconic Mount Isa mine. Two significant events occurred for the people of Mount Isa when Xstrata formally announced its decision to phase out copper smelting in Mount Isa and to wind down its refinery in Townsville. Secondly, Xstrata lodged its new environmental management plan with the state government in respect of its operations. It is important to set out the facts in relation to these decisions and the effect that they will have on the Mount Isa community.

Since 2008 Xstrata Mount Isa Mines has been working to bring its operations into compliance with contemporary environmental standards. For some time Xstrata has been assessing its copper business with respect to sustaining its copper business, and this is based on the reality of competing with Chinese metal processing and on the fact that the company does not believe that its smelting and refining processes can be sustained into the future. The company has stated quite clearly that its decision is not linked to the federal government's carbon tax. As we know, the major minerals which are now mined in the north-west minerals province do not come under the federal government's mining tax.

As we know, Xstrata is well recognised as the biggest jobs provider in Mount Isa. Between the two sites, Mount Isa and Townsville, some 500 jobs are directly affected by the closing and phasing out of the smelter and refinery. The government will work very closely to establish a special task force to assist workers during this transition period. The task force will involve senior representatives from Xstrata, senior officers from the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation, the AWU and the local Mount Isa and Townsville communities to ensure that workers in Mount Isa and Townsville get a fair deal.

We will see workers well supported, and we do not believe that any worker should lose their job. Indeed, with the prospects both within Mount Isa itself and in the broader region, we will ensure that a strong system is in place to make sure workers are well supported. I acknowledge Xstrata's public commitment to workers—that they will be retrained and retained—because we need them in the north-west.

Also on Friday, 20 May Xstrata Mount Isa Mines took the first step on its way to meeting contemporary environmental standards and lodged an application for a new environmental authority. Now that the application has been made, the Department of Environment and Resource Management will carry out a rigorous assessment of its application against the applicable state and national environmental standards. I am aware that over the last three years Xstrata has made investments to move towards contemporary standards and is continuing to do so into the future. DERM will, through its assessment of Xstrata's application and conditioning of its new environmental authority, identify where further improvements may be necessary and require a program of works, if necessary, to ensure contemporary standards are met.

DERM will ensure it is a transparent process. There is little doubt that a transitional program is needed. However, the expectation within the community is that there is going to be continued improvement during this period. Over the last four years we have worked extensively in our community with respect to community health and wellbeing. I believe that our future is bright and that we will continue to see new and exciting projects roll out and we will continue to improve infrastructure both for industry and for residents in the north-west.


Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ryan): Order! The time for matters of public interest has expired.

SUSTAINABLE PLANNING (HOUSING AFFORDABILITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE CHARGES REFORM) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 24 May (see p. 1576), on motion of Mr Lucas—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Ms GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (12.31 pm), continuing: The government has also recently completed the development of its policy for pool safety management plans. These plans will provide commercial businesses like hotels and resorts, for example—and there are many hotels in my electorate of Brisbane Central—with the flexibility of choosing an alternative to a pool barrier while at the same time maintaining the integrity of the system and, of course, keeping child safety paramount. These applications will be assessed by the Department of Local Government and Planning based on a range of issues affecting the safety of young children. This is, I believe, a good part of the legislation which enables hotels, because of the nature of the way they have been built, to have these plans while, of course, keeping the safety of the child paramount.

The government had previously legislated that all swimming pools in Queensland would be placed on the register by 4 May 2011, giving households six months from the introduction of the laws to complete the process of giving their pool details, either via the internet or by a telephone call, to the Department of Local Government and Planning. To assist in the processing of registering pools, the

government has also asked that all Queensland councils provide their existing pool data in bulk to be uploaded into the register. It has been great to see that councils have played their role in this. As I have said previously, I think about 230,000 pools have now been registered. I believe that councils have assisted in over 200,000 of those pools coming on to the register. So we are going to get a clear picture of exactly how many swimming pools there are in Queensland, hopefully within a relatively short period.

However, the government is very aware of the issues confronting Queensland families as a result of the January floods and Cyclone Yasi. These natural disasters have meant that state and local government resources have rightly—and I emphasise rightly—been focused on reconstruction activities, and over recent weeks it had become obvious that councils and pool owners would need more time to populate the register. Quite clearly, efforts are focused on rebuilding—and we make no apologies for that—and that has had an impact on the number of registrations that are taking place. We are keen to assist individuals, businesses and government in all aspects of the recovery process, including dealing with pool registration. The best and simplest way is to provide a six-month amnesty. This bill provides for that amnesty. This is a common-sense approach that will mean that all pools will now need to be registered by 4 November 2011. So we have a six-month grace period—pardon the pun—for pool owners to register their pools. They have to register their pools by 4 November 2011.


There is no other change to the swimming pool laws, and this amnesty does not impact upon the safety of our children as the No. 1 priority. All swimming pools are still required to be inspected at the point of sale and lease and the owners provided with a pool safety certificate. This ensures that every day more pools in Queensland meet the government's strict new standards. Indeed, every week since 1 December 2010 over 400 pools have been inspected by licensed pool inspectors and certified as compliant, and this is expected to continue into the future. I think it is fantastic that they are meeting these new standards. I know that that great advocate for child water safety particularly around pools, the great Laurie Lawrence, would be very much in favour of these new barriers, making sure that children cannot get through and drown in pools. It would have to be one of the most tragic circumstances as a parent to find your child in a pool, and unfortunately many parents, carers and relatives have had to do that.

The decision to extend the registration date does not affect other parts of the pool laws and will not compromise, as I have said and I want to stress, the safety of children which is paramount. The government will continue to ensure that the public is kept informed of changes to pool safety laws. I intend to let all of my residents in Brisbane Central know of the six-month amnesty. As I said previously, I have many pools in my electorate of Brisbane Central and I intend to let pool owners know that they now have six months, up to 4 November 2011, to register their pool if they have not already done so.

Additionally, we will continue to work with the outstanding councils—those who have not yet provided data. We will continue to work with them so that they can gather the information at a local level and feed it into the register so that we can get a really good picture of the situation relating to pools in Queensland. By 4 November all pool owners should have checked the register to ensure their swimming pool has been included. I urge people in Mackay who have a swimming pool to make sure theirs is on the register. Once this is done, pool owners have until 2015 to comply. So there is a good period of time—four years—if their pool does not comply. They have until 2015 to comply with the new pool laws, or earlier of course if the property is sold or leased before then. I think this is a really good incentive. It gives people a lot of time. If they are renovating and if they are not selling or leasing, they have a fairly good time to budget as a family to make sure their pool fencing complies with the new laws.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate that the new pool safety laws are a great step forward for child safety in Queensland, particularly around water. The government has made impressive strides in implementing a complex but necessary reform and, as more pools in Queensland become compliant, we hope to continue to reduce the number of tragic child drownings in this state. This is what I would applaud. I know that many people may think changing their pool barrier is a bit of an imposition but if, at the end of the day, it saves one child from drowning then this is law that I greatly support.

While I have the opportunity, I acknowledge that today is World MS Day. I would like to greatly support the Kiss Goodbye to MS campaign—a great campaign. My family is touched by MS. I know firsthand the tragedies of this terrible disease on your workability, on your livability and on your family. I am a great ambassador for MS and I would like to acknowledge World MS Day today and wish all of the sufferers of MS a breakthrough in research so that we can beat this terrible disease. With those few words, I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr DOWLING** (Redlands—LNP) (12.39 pm): Today I rise to speak to the Sustainable Planning (Housing Affordability and Infrastructure Charges Reform) Amendment Bill. In doing so, I believe I come from a position of knowledge of this, having spent nine years in local government at the Redland City Council and before that the Redland shire council. I was also the chair of the development assessment committee and deputy mayor. I understand the pressures that are on local government day in and day out. There are pressures when it comes to providing infrastructure such as roads and parks and recreational facilities. All of those everyday living expenses are being borne by residents.

I believe that this legislation has the ability to advance some councils but to disadvantage other councils depending upon where they are located. Infrastructure needs are very different from community to community. One size does not fit all in this regard. I suspect that this will be like so many other pieces of legislation that we have had before the House in my two years in this place—that is, there will be amendment after amendment after amendment while the government tries to get this legislation bedded down and get it right.

As I see it, this is just the latest blow. Local governments are already haemorrhaging from the policy onslaught that this government has imposed upon them. Amalgamations were not going to cost local communities anything but they have. Communities in South-East Queensland were not going to be impacted by water and sewerage charges. We have seen cost shifting onto local government by this Labor government. Local governments have lost subsidies from the state government, particularly the 40 per cent subsidy for sewerage and water costs. These are all burdens that this government has put upon local governments.

Councils are fairly restricted in their practices. They have three primary forms of income. The first is grants and subsidies that are largely determined by this place, by Treasury or by the federal government. It is very limited and very restricted. It is also very hit and miss. The second stream is fees and charges. Again, they are quite heavily regulated. They are fees for a specific service. Local government is very restricted in how it can impose them. The third revenue stream that local government has is rates. This has the ability to impose greater pressure on the ratepayers of Queensland with upward trends.

Redland City Council has suggested that, when this bill goes through, the budget that it is finalising will have another hole in it of between \$4 million and \$5 million. In fact, Redland city councillors are actively soliciting and chasing up a petition that they are going to present to parliament. They featured on the front page of the local paper recently. They are touting for signatures. They can see how this will have an impost on their council. I will go into some specifics shortly.

They actually estimate that the price ceiling on the residential infrastructure charge will actually be about \$13,000 short per allotment. That is out in the public arena. That is where they see this impact. The Redlands is an urban and near metropolitan community and it has all the expenses associated with road infrastructure and other infrastructure that councils have to provide.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr DOWLING: The state government certainly will not be picking up that cost. What will happen is that that cost will be passed on. For Redland ratepayers that will translate to between \$165 and \$200 per annum per property. That is the shortfall that my community has to pick up. That is the shortfall that this government is imposing upon my community of Redland City and on the communities of the member for Capalaba and the member for Cleveland. They are well aware of it. That is the plain, simple truth of this legislation.

It is systemic and the government has a history of this. If there is one thing this government has it is a pedigree in debt—that is, in passing on huge increases—

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr DOWLING: I take the interjection. It is in their DNA. It is in the DNA of those opposite to just pass on these expenses to communities. Even the development industry is split on this. The Redlands is not the only community that has an issue with this legislation. I am simply using the Redlands as an example because that is the community that I represent and I am representing them in this way.

The development industry is split. They are not unified when it comes to this legislation. They do not think it is fantastic. Half of them think it is a good piece of legislation and half of them think it is an atrocious piece of legislation. This piece of legislation is not carefully crafted.

I will give some examples shortly of how I see this unravelling. I hope that the minister in his summing-up will address some of the questions I have. I acknowledge that the member for Gladstone has already raised some of these issues. I hope that the minister sees fit to address those issues in his summing-up.

Labor love a one-size-fits-all approach. It does not work. It never has and it never will. These are complex issues. We cannot fix them with one line. This is headline legislation. It is not real legislation. It has not been thought through. It has holes all through it. The legacy of this Labor government will be debt and mismanagement.

When we look at the specifics of the infrastructure charge we see that \$28,000 is the cap for a three or more bedroom home. It is \$20,000 for a one- or two-bedroom home. In the Redlands we adopted a similar strategy by way of an assessment process for the southern Moreton Bay islands. The southern Moreton Bay islands are not sewered. They have a septic system. To calculate the number of metres of trenching required for their waste we based it on the number of bedrooms in their home.

Historically, most homes that go through council have three or four bedrooms. As the chair of the DA I would see the applications come through. After we adopted this strategy all of a sudden all the homes on the southern Moreton Bay islands had only one or two bedrooms. But surprisingly enough they had this new suite of rooms. They had reading rooms. They had offices. They had TV rooms. They

had sewing rooms. They had studies and computer rooms. Not surprisingly, they all looked like bedrooms. They even had wardrobes in some of these rooms. How helpful was that? By any casual assessment they were bedrooms.


Again there is an opportunity and a loophole there. That is what this government is all about. There are loopholes and exit clauses and poorly crafted legislation. Every time legislation comes before the House it is poorly crafted. Home designers will start redrawing all of their house plans. All of their house plans will be redrafted so that they only show one or two bedrooms. That is exactly where we are heading with this. This myth that this legislation is about affordable housing will not be realised. It is exactly like most of the other legislation that this government has brought before the House. It is a myth. It is a headline grabber. It pretends to be doing something. This will not achieve affordability. It is flawed from the outset.

Another issue of concern is the timing around when the moneys are paid. Ordinarily, at the time of subdivision that is when the moneys come due. If the person doing the subdivision is not the person who will do the building later on, how will we marry that up? How will we work out that fee structure? I recognise that that was largely the nexus of the question from the member for Gladstone.

So there is that timelag issue where you do not necessarily know what you are going to get. It is actually more pronounced in an industrial or commercial type entity in that the price range for non-residential is from \$50 to \$200 per square metre of GFA or built form. Again, if the subdivision is not done by the same entity as the person doing the construction, how do we marry those up? Is council left holding the bag? Is the developer going to put in an application where he says that he has X type of development that is worth \$50 a metre GFA but then onells it where someone else comes along and wants to build something that ordinarily would be costed at \$200? If that happens, council has lost out, because I do not doubt for one minute that there are costs associated with development and costs of impact—that is, the cost of providing that infrastructure.

It is absolutely and totally legitimate that developers need to bear the cost of those projects. It is the management of that that concerns me. It is the management and the process that they go through. It is not as easy and as simple as the minister would have us believe. Certainly, this legislation cannot deliver and will not deliver those outcomes. There are so many other provisions in this legislation—and I recognise that—that are worthy of support. As our leader has said, we will be supporting the legislation. We will not be opposing it, but there are provisions within it that are just ugly and that will not work.

In summary, the real cause of spiralling home costs is Labor red tape, Labor bureaucracy, Labor mismanagement, Labor's failure to deliver on infrastructure and to deliver its share of infrastructure, Labor's failure to support local government in all aspects of their roles and functions through their cost shifting—that is, through the removal of subsidies and funding. It is Labor that has mismanaged it. The other great impediment is time, and that is the one thing that this legislation does not address—the time and the cost of holding property to get it to market. The application and assessment process is far too long and far too convoluted. Far too many hands are involved in it. That is the big killer—the holding costs. What Queensland really needs is not this legislation but to get rid of this tired Labor government. It needs a can-do government representing Queenslanders—not the CBD but the whole of Queensland.

 **Mr DICKSON** (Buderim—LNP) (12.52 pm): I rise to speak to the Sustainable Planning (Housing Affordability and Infrastructure Charges Reform) Amendment Bill. In doing so, I note that on 26 May 2010 the Premier announced the appointment of the Infrastructure Charges Taskforce. Infrastructure charges do not meet the total cost of delivering necessary infrastructure. The difference between the actual cost of providing infrastructure and the amount recovered in infrastructure charges still and must be funded alternatively. The task force took into account that, despite any changes to infrastructure charges arrangements, the matter of funding infrastructure will always remain a challenge. Currently, infrastructure charges comprise one of a number of options for funding infrastructure available to local governments in Queensland. These infrastructure funding options include rates, benefited area arrangements and utility charging; funding through state and national grants and funding programs; and different options of financing. Within the bill the standard maximum residential charges will be set at \$28,000 for a dwelling with three or more bedrooms and \$20,000 for a two-bedroom or one-bedroom dwelling.

I also note that one of the objectives of this bill is to suspend the collection of charges for water distributor-retailers under the Sustainable Planning Act. This bill embraces a new adopted infrastructure charge for local government and new charges for water and waste water services based on the adopted infrastructure charges for a distributor-retailer. In South-East Queensland it is the local councils which levy infrastructure charges for the three infrastructure networks—local roads, stormwater and community facilities such as parks. The South-East Queensland distributor-retailers are responsible for water and waste water. The government is claiming that, as a result of the need for institutional changes regarding water supply in South-East Queensland, the creation of three new water distributor-retailers is warranted. The explanatory notes state—

... changes are necessary to achieve the policy objective for adopted infrastructure charges for local government and Distributor-retailers in SEQ.

They continue—

Distributor-retailers rely on revenue from water and wastewater services (i.e. user charges and infrastructure charges), to fund their operations and build infrastructure.

We know that for the three years prior to 1 July 2013 the distributor-retailers are operating under a variant of development and compliance assessment under the Sustainable Planning Act. To highlight the dog's breakfast of this water reform currently in South-East Queensland under Labor, I ask all Queenslanders to listen to this section of the explanatory notes accompanying this bill. They state—

Local governments—

councils—

are using powers delegated from Distributor-retailers to undertake assessment of a development's impact on the Distributor-retailer's water and wastewater networks and services, on behalf of the Distributor-retailers.

The explanatory notes go on—

While a local government issues a development approval or compliance permit, the relevant Distributor-retailer has the powers to set infrastructure charges for an approved development.

To recap, councils assess developments but they do not have the power to assess a development impact on a distributor-retailer's water and waste water networks in their own right. These are the same distributor-retailers that this state government legislated to give ownership to councils. The councils have to have the power bestowed upon them by the distributor-retailers to carry out the assessments on behalf of a distributor-retailer owned by the council. So when it gets to the point where the council issues a development approval or a compliance permit, it is not the owner of the distributor-retailer, the council already having conducted the assessment that sets the infrastructure charges. No, no! It is the distributor-retailer that sets the infrastructure charges even though it is owned by the local authority.

What a shambles this whole situation is. This bill intends to legislate to provide the distributor-retailer with separate powers to assess and approve development applications for the connection of sewerage networks in place of the development applications or requests for a compliance assessment. The bill provides that the state planning regulatory authority provision may set out the arrangements for a proportional split of an adopted infrastructure charge between the distributor-retailer and the relevant local government for a period ending on 30 June 2013. On 19 May 2011 the Deputy Premier is quoted as saying that the amendments would not fundamentally change the existing planning systems but would simplify the current clutter and confusion around the infrastructure charges arrangements. I am concerned that the bill may not go far enough in providing for the determination of proportional splits.

Moving to this Labor government's rapid retreat from its own system of water reform, as mentioned in the explanatory notes, South-East Queensland councils have been given an opportunity to opt out of Labor's distributor-retailers, re-establishing their local government's water and waste water businesses. A decision has to be provided by the local council to the government by 1 July. Not content with destroying a water supply system in South-East Queensland that worked well, this current debacle will see Queenslanders paying for bulk water in price rise increments in excess of 25 per cent.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ryan): Order! Member for Buderim, there is another bill before the House relating to that particular matter, so I ask you to come back to the terms of this particular bill.

Mr DICKSON: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. We need to remember who took away the 40 per cent subsidy that was given to local authorities for the implementation of water and sewerage. Where did that go? Did it just evaporate? Did it just disappear?

This government leads the people of Queensland to believe that it is going to create affordable housing. If it happens on the east coast of Australia, I am prepared to move to the west coast of Australia because this government cannot run anything in this country! It does not have the ability to deliver cheap petrol. It does not have the ability to deliver reasonably priced electricity, and it continues to go down this path of taking money from the people of Queensland directly from their wallets. This Labor government is going to introduce another system that may see some Queenslanders paying for water from their local councils and others buying water from that local distributor-retailer. I, like all Queenslanders, have no idea where the merry-go-round ride this Labor government is taking us on regarding water is going, but under an LNP can-do government we will implement Campbell Newman's four-point plan and begin to unscramble the water minister's egg.

Sitting suspended from 12.59 pm to 2.30 pm.



Dr DOUGLAS (Gaven—LNP) (2.30 pm): This bill confirms for everyone what we already knew but a hopelessly out-of-touch, rapacious Labor government would just never want to concede: Labor and Labor alone's priority infrastructure charges regime—the PIP—is a failure, a dud and a cancer. It has not just been an impediment on doing the business of bringing developed land on for sale; it has been a complete disaster that has caused probably any council area using them under their previous terms, as directed by the state government, to see their areas become building zone wastelands and, worse still, to see all the builders either go broke or leave town.

The major change in this bill is the new adopted infrastructure charges regime. It seems to be very proscriptive and driven by benchmarking. It has been widely discussed by all the speakers to this bill. The lesser changes in the bill relate to council boundary changes and delays for pool owners to register their pools. I will not discuss these changes, as I think they have been discussed at length and I support what has been said broadly in a bipartisan way.

With regard to the issue of infrastructure, the problem confronting Labor is one that it alone brought upon itself when it unrealistically believed years ago, when it was accelerating its own expenditure three times as a percentage of the growth of its own income, that the property boom would never end and that the lenders would never hesitate to fund excessive largesse for monuments to the government's own ego. But their lenders did and, tragically, Labor never believed the public would neither find out nor care. This insouciant, ignorant behaviour was always going to end up where it is now: the Premier's personal popularity in the near-fatal zone and the government's primary voting support in that cannot-be-recovered territory.

The PIP from the revised IPA morphed into the now non road tested SPA. That is what this bill says as the government attempts to recover some political credibility. When Labor in government both accepts the need to decrease the charges and does so in response to the overwhelming demands of the stakeholders, this is the reasonable outcome of the review 12 months ago. The government continues this outrageous line that stalled development is the fault of councils, not Labor's hopelessly indecent government demands upon the councils to charge these PIP fees in an environment where the government had removed the 40 per cent water and sewerage subsidy to the councils from the state.

I wish to raise this issue immediately, because I was listening to speakers opposite, and particularly to interjections from those Labor members opposite, who said that this 40 per cent subsidy to councils was wrong. I say to honourable members opposite that their own Labor federal government does not agree with them. Have any of them ever heard or informed themselves of what is called the non-residential housing scheme, which is a \$9,500 scheme that the federal government is hoping will drive housing affordability? It gets worse. One of the government's own party members—the current mayor of the Ipswich City Council—has refused to implement these dreadful PIP charges.

Then there are the water charges. With regard to the changes that will develop a new set of charges for water for distributor-retailers based on the new adopted infrastructure charges where appropriate, have government members ever considered what havoc they wreaked on the broader community with their utterly disgraceful water grid and the takeover of water distribution from councils in South-East Queensland? The public were not only conned but also subjected to cost-of-living increases that made life intolerable. They were reduced to mostly merely existing, because their cost-of-living percentage increases grossly exceeded their weekly or fortnightly incomes. The new water charges in the bill will be accepted by the LNP, but it is our sincere hope that they can be reduced further when Labor's bureaucratic dream of the super distributor-retailers is broken up totally.

These new adopted infrastructure charges that are delivered by this bill have to be accepted, because the stakeholders cannot wait. We hear them too. Labor has for too long not listened to them and, certainly, not heard the deafening roar from the public to change it. As its aspiration, the government has stated—and I quote the minister's second reading speech—

... that housing affordability is one of the key issues inhibiting growth and is working where it can to address this through improving land supply and planning processes.

This is a very reasonable aspiration, but the government has recognised it too late and its implementation strategy is a cobbled together, rushed response that I doubt will remain as it is and it will be very much in its early days of implementation. I am sorry to say to the member for Toowoomba North, who correctly stated that this bill will enable better housing affordability—that is the aspiration—that the actions of the government are too little and far too late. The factors leading to greater housing affordability are many. Honourable members, the government can never solve a problem without correctly stating that which really occurred in the implementation phase. Certainly, the government-charging regime is just one factor, but a critical one, for if the message the government sends is one that it is seeking to increase the yield beyond what the market will bear then market forces mean that development will not go ahead, as is happening now.

The Gold Coast has had the lowest numbers of new-home starts in the past 12 months since the last century. For those who falsely think that all markets are similar, I point out that at its height the Gold Coast market was 20 times that of the Ipswich City Council. We still have a net gain of 700 new residents in the Gold Coast region of that 1,500, because we lose so many as well. We have a serious problem of housing. We have—

Mr Lucas: And one of the biggest councils in Queensland.

Dr DOUGLAS: I ask the minister to listen to this. We have to address the issue. The Gold Coast has 10 times as many properties for sale now in its three greatest sales areas compared to average monthly sales periods in normal times. There is a significant inability in the \$400 to \$600 per week rental market. Potential tenants cannot afford to rent those properties for their families, but that is what they need. The false premise of the minister's approach, as expressed in his second reading speech, is that by delivering certainty this will—

... ensure feasible developments go ahead.

That is a false assumption, because once people lose confidence trust is not so easily restored. Confidence always precedes certainty and the two are interlinked. That is the developers and the purchasing public in tandem. The minister avoided the issue of the restoration of market confidence by failing to go beyond a revised set of scales of infrastructure charges and by not offering the market nor the councils any real incentive to at least take those risks again—nor those people who are risk averse, and that includes banks who, certainly on the Gold Coast, have nearly destroyed all of our second- and third-tier lenders. Risk has to be spread evenly and Labor is not sharing its load fairly. There is nothing in this bill that will reassure me, nor the market, that it understands that the government must address the rate-limiting step of demonstrating that the government is taking on at least some risk. What the bill and Labor in government falsely ascribes is that the rate-limiting step is the new cap on maximum infrastructure charges that can be charged. The former minister for local government, the member for Cairns, correctly ascribes this legislation as the PIP—just a new version. That is the problem. It is not to say that the industry does not understand nor desire that no charges can be raised. For if there were no charges there would be no infrastructure and developments would fail.

The further difficulty is that the extra regulatory hurdle, or increased red tape, in the SPRP—the state planning regulatory provision—leads to a further complication of the issue and, inexplicably, the minister says that this—

... will simplify current infrastructure charging arrangements.

The evidence to support this statement and Labor's record on the matter would lead any reasonable person to say that this provision will add cost and increase delay. Critically, it is the government's decision to base its response as a risk-averse one that imperils its approach.

The minister raised the issue on the Gold Coast and I would like to discuss that. Honourable members, one can never solve a problem without correctly stating that which really occurred after the implementation of a change. Too much of this discussion over the past two days is a mixture of truisms that are neither true nor worthy of recording. I say so because in one city—the Gold Coast—the PIP charges were implemented as soon as the enthusiastic Labor government legislated them. The Gold Coast City Council of the new century—that is starting in 2000, then 2004—effectively killed the goose that laid the golden egg and Labor egged them on to do so.

Greed was the problem. The council needed income over and above rates as a growth tax of sorts. The state government wanted a transport levy cut and wanted further levies as well. They wanted 20 per cent and they wanted it immediately. Labor wanted the balance to be loaded against the developer. Like all problems of imbalance and disaster, the seeds of that disaster were sown right at the very start. As the *Gold Coast Bulletin* correctly stated yesterday, we even had the famous bloc of Gold Coast city councillors elected in 2004 who wanted a 'develop or be damned' policy implemented subsequently, building on the PIP. Fortunately that was controlled by effectively blocking the bloc. We saw all these terrible legal cases that went against the council over the charges and all sorts of spurious claims in relation to people's reputations. Sadly, one of the councillors subsequently died well before her time.

Good developments did not necessarily go ahead as their PIP charges often did not reflect true costs. That is regrettable. The state did not care whether any other council charged PIP as long as the Gold Coast did. The lure of the recurring dollar was overwhelming. Of the tourists it believed would always come, some would come back and stay. Like all dreams and illusions, without a substantial base and fairness to all the dream would evaporate and the house of cards would fall, and that is exactly what has happened. The Gold Coast got \$1 billion behind in infrastructure despite PIP charges exponentially growing year on year with massive infrastructure to cater for this massive population that was growing. Unfortunately that is what happened. That is the truth of the matter.

At a local level, in my electorate of Gaven, a Labor heartland and the real coalface of Queensland, our unemployment rate is currently 13 to 14 per cent. Our underemployment rate is at least twice that—possibly three times that. Houses are not selling. Land development has near stopped. The two major food banks are supplying at least 300 families—and most of them are different week on week—each and every week, and children are still going to our schools hungry. Most landholders are now facing the 30 per cent increase in valuation despite property prices having slumped. The builders are all driving to Brisbane, Ipswich and even further for work to keep a roof over their heads and feed their families. Of course, many are applying for jobs in the mining industry. I have 6,000 such families based in the construction industry who live in my electorate. I also have many New Zealanders, possibly as many as 10,000. It is very hard to calculate these things because most of them are not permanent residents. These New Zealanders who have lost their jobs are not classified as permanent residents and so they get nothing. There are South Africans, Islanders and a variety of others who are also in this position.

Those opposite ask what the LNP should do. I say: look no further than my seat of Gaven. Turn those figures around within six months and honourable members will have the real solution that they have been saying to us we have to provide. The solution will be demonstrated by doing things to change

the situation in real terms. The government response is weak. Forget this nonsense about oversupply which was created by the council. That is not the problem. Focus on the public interest, not Labor's electoral solution. The problem, one might say and I believe, is Labor philosophy.

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (2.43 pm): It is my pleasure to rise to speak to the Sustainable Planning (Housing Affordability and Infrastructure Charges Reform) Amendment Bill 2011. I note the contribution by the shadow minister, the Leader of the Opposition, and his declaration that whilst we are not opposing this bill there are certainly great concerns that we have with many different elements of it. I note that had we opposed some of those swimming pool provisions we would have copped a lot of abuse in relation to safety issues. I note the contribution of the member for Gaven, too. He explained very well the history of these issues on the Gold Coast.

In relation to today's announcement about the draft Mackay Isaac Whitsunday Regional Plan, as the honourable the Treasurer said yesterday, ask not what they do; look at what they have done. Never more would that apply than in the case of this government with this draft regional plan compared to the regional plans we have had in the south-east and other regions that the Treasurer and the minister waxed lyrical about this morning.

The Integrated Planning Act and the Sustainable Planning Act were supposed to help with the times when we were getting 1,000 people a week moving to Queensland. All of us remember that former Premier Beattie and now Premier Bligh would often talk about those 1,000 people who were arriving in Queensland every week. Yet what they implemented under the Integrated Planning Act, which was brought in in 1997 by the then coalition government, was more and more regulation, more and more plans and more and more fees that were going to be paid.

On the eve of the 2009 election, when the global financial crisis was really taking effect, I remember being with the honourable member for Albert at the *Gold Coast Bulletin's* rescue patrol at which the developers very clearly pointed out to council as well that the priority infrastructure plan charges were actually already crippling business on the Gold Coast and that this would lead to significant problems. It was the Gold Coast formula that the honourable member for Cairns yesterday pointed out was the template for the rest of the state. In her contribution yesterday she acknowledged the difficulties that councils have had. She actually said—

... priority infrastructure plans and the appropriate charging policies ... have been too difficult for local governments.

They were brought in on her watch. The member for Toowoomba North also belled the cat and said—

The government recognises that local governments have been struggling with the complex charging system and that the development industry has also been hindered by this complexity as well as by the high level of charges in some areas.

That is the history of this government. They brought in these charges under IPA and under the Sustainable Planning Act and that has led to the issues that we now have on the Gold Coast.

Mr Lucas: They have lead to an oversupply on the Gold Coast.

Mr LANGBROEK: The minister talks about an oversupply. I heard him talking about this yesterday during someone else's contribution. All we have to do to see whether there is an oversupply is look at the transfer duty payments received by the Treasury. For the two years 2009-10 and 2010-11, the number of payments made has bottomed out on the Gold Coast.

Mr Lucas: That is because there is an oversupply.

Mr LANGBROEK: No, it is because there is no confidence in the market under a Labor government that has raised charges for petrol, water, registration and electricity.

There is a problem throughout the state created by this Labor government. To see this, one only has to look at the number of payments of transfer duty. In 2009-10 it was 125,683 across the state and for the six months ended 31 December 2010-11 it was 52,886. One would normally expect, year on year, a slight increase on the 62,500 for the half-year 2009-10, but for the half-year ended 31 December 2010 the actual number of transactions was 52,886.

Some of the very specific ones show that there has been a decline in confidence, and this is after the Treasurer said yesterday that business confidence was coming back in the lead-up to December, in the lead-up to the floods and the cyclones that we experienced. In that case, why had transfer duty payments by statistical division declined by about 10 per cent in different areas but in areas like the Gold Coast we saw that for the year 2009-10 there were 18,614 transfer duty payments? Surely that is a reflection of developers who cannot sell product, not building product. They are not building product because of infrastructure charges and the costs that they then have to pass on to people who are moving to the Gold Coast. The numbers declined on the Gold Coast from 18,000 to 6,672 for the half-year ended 31 December. In Brisbane, for the year 2009-10 there were 48,133 payments. This number declined to 19,567 for the half-year. That is a massive decline. Is there an oversupply in Brisbane? I do not hear the minister saying that there is an oversupply in Brisbane and that that is why they are not selling product.

Let us look at the Mackay area. In the year ended 2009-10, in the Mackay statistical division there were 4,321 transfer duty payments. In other words, 4,321 people bought properties and had to pay transfer duty. But in the half year ended 31 December, that number was down to 1,914. Obviously, there

was a very significant decrease in people's confidence because of a Labor government that has been in power for 20 years and all the issues from before 2009 that we have been highlighting. As the member for Gaven said in his contribution, they thought that the goose would keep laying those golden eggs.

We are not denying the global financial crisis. We are saying that this government took no action until it was too late. Now it has brought in a scheme that is not guaranteed to improve the situation. As we are in regional parliament, it is important for the people of this region to understand the significance of the draft regional plan that has been released to much fanfare today. They need to understand how on the Gold Coast and in other areas of the state, including North Queensland, there is considerable disquiet about the aspects of the plan that are never implemented or that end up being delayed, as we heard yesterday in the 5.30 debate.

Mr Lucas: Back to the days of Russ Hinze.

Mr LANGBROEK: The minister can make all the puerile interjections he likes, but the bottom line is that those opposite have been in power for the past 12 years. They have been in charge of implementing these plans and they have failed to do it.

While this region relies heavily on mining, agriculture and tourism, which we have heard much about, the Gold Coast relies on development, retail and tourism. Until recently, about 13 per cent of our workforce or 49,000 people were employed in the property development industry. The Gold Coast was a magnet for people from the southern states who were attracted to our climate, our affordable housing and our job opportunities. One of the most damning indictments on this government is that for the first time we have seen reverse migration. For the first time, we have seen a decrease in the number of interstate people coming to Queensland. We still have high numbers of births exceeding deaths and high numbers of overseas migration. In the 1960s when I was a child on the Gold Coast, it was a town of 50,000. That number steadily increased and the Gold Coast is now a vibrant city of 550,000 people. However, fewer people are coming to Queensland than are going the other way.

Mr Lucas: Rubbish!

Mr LANGBROEK: We have net negative migration coming to Queensland from interstate, which is what the survey showed for both last year and this year. The reason is that it can cost up to \$75,000 less to buy a property on the outskirts of Melbourne, because of infrastructure costs. A simple example was quoted to me by a small lot property developer. In 1998, under the then Integrated Planning Act, which was introduced in 1997, to develop a two-lot subdivision in a Gold Coast suburb such as Labrador it would take six pages, two council officers and six weeks to get through council. Under the provisions of the Sustainable Planning Act, it can take 12 officers, 250 pages and six months to get through council. This is what has happened over the past couple of years. Often when developments came forward, the council officers went to their valuers and the people charged with doing the work for them. They would say, 'We can't tell you exactly what you should tell your client about how much the infrastructure charges will be.' These are not just anecdotal incidents. They are well canvassed.

This situation can be laid fairly and squarely at the feet of the Labor government. Before the 2009 election, the government promised to keep the grants and subsidies that it then took an axe to, withdrawing the 40 per cent infrastructure subsidies for water and sewerage. The Gold Coast City Council was left with two choices: raise rates or pass charges on to developers. Those acts were brought in and refined by the Labor government. They have led to greater complexity in charging, which has created difficulties for people who want to invest in developments in cities around our state. We now have some of the highest infrastructure charges in the country, adding about \$50,000 to the cost of an average house.

It is a priority infrastructure plan charge where the menu was set by the state government and applied by the council, and then that plan was going to go state-wide. Yesterday the member for Cairns pointed out that priority infrastructure plans were to be done by council areas. She said, 'Gold Coast, Burdekin, Charters Towers, Cook, Mount Isa, Western Downs and Whitsunday local governments will already have adopted PIPs.' Those PIP charges started at the Gold Coast and they created problems for the Gold Coast. We have PIP charges as well as a number of different charges.

Mr Hinchliffe interjected.

Mr LANGBROEK: It is the complexity of those charges that is the problem. The former minister is trying to explain it to me from across the chamber, but he is confused about them and obviously that is leading to confusion in the marketplace as well.

On the Gold Coast, a suburban shopping centre costs around \$7 million in infrastructure charges. Just over the border on the Tweed, the charges are around \$4 million. About 18 months ago, the supermarket chain Aldi cancelled plans for two more Gold Coast stores when faced with \$1.5 million in infrastructure charges.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr LANGBROEK: Isn't it interesting that now we have the minister criticising the council? A couple of weeks ago the Treasurer came to the Gold Coast. Having destroyed a lot of the economy on the Gold Coast, what did he say was his three-point plan for doing something about the Gold Coast? Having done all that he has done to the Gold Coast economy, the Treasurer, the member for Mount Coot-tha, said, 'Get rid of the council.' He has made it wear the odium of the water charges.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr LANGBROEK: I always want LNP members to be LNP members, whether it is at council, state or federal level.

Mr Lucas: Thank you for taking it.

Mr LANGBROEK: I am happy to take it. The Treasurer came to the Gold Coast and said, 'Get rid of the council.' The second thing that he said was, 'Let's have more fly-in fly-out.' Therefore, the people of Mackay can be confident that this government has no interest in building infrastructure in the regions. The Treasurer will be simply encouraging more fly-in fly-out in areas such as the Gold Coast. The third thing he said was, 'I think we should sell what you have here in the Gold Coast better so that people know what you have.' That was the Treasurer's contribution to restoring the economy on the Gold Coast. Mr Deputy Speaker, can you believe that that is exactly what the Treasurer said? He said: get rid of the council; more fly-in fly-out and tell the Gold Coast to sell its story better. We do not need to better sell the Gold Coast's story around the country, because people know that it is a great place. We do not need the Treasurer giving us advice.

I can tell the House how well the Labor Party will go on the Gold Coast at the next election. It will not go very well after what has happened there. On the Gold Coast unemployment figures show that the number of people in paid employment has dropped from 266,800 to 266,000. Of greater concern is the 4,000 previously registered unemployed who have left the Gold Coast. The flow-on effects from Labor's economic incompetence at both state and federal levels are being felt by Queenslanders everywhere. Even if they can manage to get bank funding, who in their right mind would consider the added investment risk of what most developers and builders regard as excessive and even crippling infrastructure charges? This reality is reflected in the figures, with infrastructure receipts down 15 per cent to \$46 million in 2010.

Let us consider these figures. A recent proposal for a shopping centre on a 2.4 hectare site at Pimpama attracted a Gold Coast City Council infrastructure charge of \$2.5 million. That was reported in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* on Australia Day 2011. That development included 5,500 square metres of retail, including a major supermarket, speciality stores and a medical centre. A similar development in Camden, in south-west Sydney, attracted infrastructure charges of \$60,000 from the Camden council and \$404,000 in New South Wales state government fees. In Victoria, a similar development attracted a charge of \$297,000 from the Manningham City Council. In the city of Stirling, a similar development had a charge of \$365,000.

At Coomera charges for a 1,000 square metre retail site would set a developer back \$806,514, while costs in a comparable Ipswich suburb would be \$126,109. A development in Coomera costs six times more than one in Ipswich. That means that under this Bligh Labor government's policies infrastructure charges on the Gold Coast can be up to 10 times the cost in other states and many times the cost of those charged in other parts of the state. Another report showed that, while infrastructure charges on a low density residential block on the Gold Coast entry level suburb of Coomera would total \$36,014, costs in a comparable Ipswich suburb would be \$20,294.

As many have said, the bill seeks to cap residential infrastructure charges at \$28,000 for dwellings of three or more bedrooms and at \$20,000 for one- or two-bedroom dwellings. Depending on the development type, non-residential infrastructure charges would be between \$50 and \$200 per square metre of gross floor area. Whilst that should result in considerable reductions in charges currently levied by the Gold Coast City Council, it leaves the way open for other councils to raise their existing charges to the revised cap, as I have heard other members say, and that creates a different problem.

As usual with this Bligh Labor government, the devil is in the detail and there are real concerns that the detail is lacking. The UDIA, the Urban Development Institute of Australia, has long argued for changes to Queensland's infrastructure charges regime and for a maximum cap. However, the UDIA does not believe that this bill will achieve its desired result of delivering more affordable housing because of flaws associated with its drafting.

Mr Lucas: You're not moving amendments, are you?

Mr LANGBROEK: I will get to what we are going to do. The UDIA has argued that infrastructure charges imposed on new developments should not exceed the actual costs of the reasonable provision of infrastructure associated with the project. Under the Sustainable Planning Act 2009 and the Integrated Planning Act 1997, charges are directly related to the provision of infrastructure for developments and, as such, the charges are itemised and costed and are open, accountable and transparent. If, as the Local Government Association has already signalled, a number of councils intend to raise their infrastructure charges to the cap, there is a real flaw in the way this bill has been drafted. Indeed, as the UDIA has argued, that then becomes a development tax rather than a true infrastructure charges regime.

Queenslanders have become used to the legislative trickery and lack of transparency of the Bligh Labor government, and this bill is yet another example of that. When there is a lack of transparency, there is also a lack of certainty. Again, what developer would not think twice about a project if there was a very real concern that infrastructure charges would exceed actual costs and that any fees paid could

be used to subsidise other developments? Developers, investors and builders want certainty and they want a fair return on their investment. They certainly do not want more bureaucratic delays and interference with the application and approval processes.

A can-do LNP government will encourage builders and developers by providing the right incentives and transparent legislation so they can invest in the future with confidence. We will not place unnecessary bureaucratic obstacles in the path of investors or potential home purchasers.

Mr Lucas: Come to specifics. No policy! Campbell has copied you: no policy!

Mr LANGBROEK: I say to the minister that we will revisit this legislation in government to ensure it provides transparency, certainty and fairness, which it does not do in its current form.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms van Litsenburg): Order! The Deputy Premier will come to order.

Mr SORENSEN (Hervey Bay—LNP) (3.02 pm): I rise this afternoon to talk to the Sustainable Planning (Housing Affordability and Infrastructure Charges Reform) Amendment Bill. This is the mess we find ourselves in when governments introduce policies and regulations without costing them out. Let us go back in time so I can give an example. A few years ago the Labor government introduced regulations and minimum standards for sewage treatment plants. The regulations that it introduced raised the bar so high that over 100 sewage treatment plants would have to be upgraded. This was a huge cost. This did not cost just millions of dollars; it turned into billions of dollars. This is an example of where one size does not fit all. When we talk to people who were in that industry at that time—

A government member: One of your mates?

Mr SORENSEN: No, people actually working in the industry, not one of my mates, thank you.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member to address his comments through the chair.

Mr SORENSEN: People within the water industry said that the government could not afford the cost of upgrading most of those sewage treatment plants to that level. There were bets on at that time.

A government member interjected.

Mr Lucas: He is trying to make a point, unlike the rubbish from the last two speakers.

Mr SORENSEN: Thank you. Then there was the question of what the state government was going to do to try to meet the costs of these policies and regulations. First it would do away with the 40 per cent subsidy paid to local governments for those sewage treatment plants. It did that. It said that it would not, but it did. That is what happened. Honourable members have only to look at the con job the government pulled on the poor old mayor of Toowoomba in order to introduce a regulation regarding the drinking of recycled water. These are some of the things we have to look at. What standards have to be met to guarantee water supply in certain areas?

I move on to the infrastructure charge caps for one- and two-bedroom houses and those for houses of three or more bedrooms. This provision will be an absolute nightmare for councils to administer. A developer may come along and say, 'I'm going to develop this for two-bedroom homes.' Then there will be a studio and something else on it. It will be an absolute nightmare.

Mr Rickuss: More legislation.

Mr SORENSEN: It is just more legislation, more red tape, and it will go on and on.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr SORENSEN: The minister knows that as well as I do. It will go on and on. What will happen when somebody wants to put another bedroom on the house later on? Will they have to pay an extra \$8,000 to put a bedroom on the house when the family grows? From where I have come—and I have sat on councils—this seems to be just more red tape and it goes on and on.

The headworks charge is just one component of the cost of land. If this government was fair dinkum about some of the costs to develop land, it would look at some of the referral agencies as well. For instance, when an application is referred to Main Roads it will then attach conditions that must be met. That cost is added to the property values. Then it goes to DERM.

A government member interjected.

Mr SORENSEN: You don't.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member will address his comments through the chair.

Mr SORENSEN: Most developers or anybody else who wants to develop a piece of land would agree with me when I say that the process of going through DERM is a nightmare. It is absolutely disastrous. Members can talk to anybody up and down the coast about DERM. If they do, they will be told that DERM is the hardest department to get through because it just adds conditions. People will often get a consultant to take care of the conditions and then DERM will come back and say, 'No, that's

not enough. We want another report into this.' When they do that report, DERM then wants another report into that report, and it goes on and on. If the government was fair dinkum, DERM would be structured in such a way that it could advise of the appropriate requirements upfront. That way people would not spend years and years trying to get applications through DERM. That type of process really annoys people who try to develop land. The cost of that process is added to the cost of maintaining the land as well as the land taxes if it is held for a number of years. It goes on and on. It is ridiculous.

I move to housing affordability. I had to sit here and listen to the Minister for Community Services and Housing talk about affordable housing. I am one of those people who appreciates that type of housing coming to my area simply because many people today cannot afford houses in which to live. I will give a couple of examples. The first is of a pensioner couple renting a house. If one person were to get sick and go into high care, it would be virtually impossible for their partner to stay in rental accommodation. It would be virtually impossible to meet the growing costs of living. It is just impossible. I have seen this in Hervey Bay time and time again.

What about people with disabilities? There are people out there who suffer from sugar diabetes and they have to get their legs amputated. I had one case where a person was living in a caravan park and we found them a house to move into. So when the minister says that LNP members do not support public housing, I am one who does, because I can see that with the growing costs of living in our communities today a lot more pensioners will have to go into public housing because they will have nowhere else to go. There is the growing cost of housing, the growing cost of fuel getting from A to B in your motor car and the growing cost of electricity, and rates are going up.

Mr Rickuss: Water.

Mr SORENSEN: Water charges—the whole lot. We have to stop and have a little think about where we are going in this country today because there are people who cannot afford it. These older people in our community need to be cared for. We have to do that. If we are talking about housing affordability, let us get real about it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I call the honourable member for Mirani.



Mr MALONE (Mirani—LNP) (3.10 pm): Sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker, but I was engrossed in a conversation with my colleague.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr MALONE: That is all right. It is better than talking to you, Paul. We heard in this House this morning that a draft regional plan for this area has been released today. It is interesting to note—and I am only taking the word of the Premier who announced it—that they are now looking at providing extra land at Moranbah for housing. Well, whoopy-do! For 20 years or more they have been trying to get extra housing land at Moranbah and now the government in its wisdom is going to allow extra land under the planning act to be developed at Moranbah.

We have a situation with the expansion of the industrial area at Paget. I am not sure whether any members of the government have been to Paget to have a look at the development that is there already. There is a plan—and there has been for quite some time—for that land to expand further south towards Dundula. It is great to see that we are reinforcing the planning in respect of that matter.

This expansion will also have some implications in terms of the Peak Downs Highway, the Walkerston bypass and the service roads to the Peak Downs Highway to the area west of us, and that involves moving heavy machinery, heavy equipment and heavy fabrication out of the precinct at Paget. I hope all members of the government have had a look at the absolutely unbelievable amount of fabrication and industry that comes out of Paget currently. As I said, the development of that area has implications in terms of the Peak Downs Highway and the Bruce Highway, as well as the ancillary roads that service that area. So when I get a chance to have a look at the plan I will be hopeful to see whether all of those issues have been addressed. I understand that it is a draft plan, obviously.

It is good to see you in the chair, Mr Deputy Speaker Elmes. You are doing a magnificent job. Just be kind to me.

We are seeing huge development to the west of Mackay. Mackay, hopefully, will be the hub of the industry that services the Galilee Basin and continues to be the hub that services the Bowen Basin. The amount of work and the number of projects to the west of us is just unbelievable. I am sure that all of the government members are aware of the number of projects currently in the pipeline—certainly the opposition has been briefed. More than \$40 billion worth of projects to the west of us are ready to move. Nothing is moving currently. The issues of the carbon tax and the mining tax are creating uncertainty in the mining industry. Until there is some certainty in that area, we are going to see very little happen in that development phase.

We visited G&S, an engineering fabrication organisation in Paget, yesterday. People there indicated that once the projects they have in the shed currently are finished they have no further orders and they do not expect to be tendering for orders probably for another six months unless there is some change in the attitude of the government in terms of the mining tax and also the carbon tax. There is a

whole range of projects that they are looking at and that they are drafting tenders for, but they do not expect anything to move in the short term. They have something in the order of 1,000 employees, and they are going to find it very difficult to keep a lot of those employees if indeed they are unable to get tenders.

The real issue is that they really do want to maintain their workforce. They have a very skilled, world renowned workforce that they have trained to manufacture the tubs for the drag lines, the bucket rebuilds et cetera. They have to have projects in the shed to keep those men working. I do not think any organisation can maintain up to 1,000 employees—very well paid employees—for that period of time without some erosion of that workforce. That is just one engineering organisation. There are many organisations there in a similar situation.

In terms of the Galilee Basin, the forward planning from the government has been abysmal. Last night we heard Shane Knuth, the member for Dalrymple, mention the three corridors that are being contemplated to bring coal from the Galilee Basin through to Abbot Point and possibly into Dudgeon Point and Hay Point. I am not sure how any government could contemplate having three different coal companies creating three different corridors to go through all of those properties—and some magnificent properties—in the golden triangle to the west of us. It is unacceptable. If mining companies want to come into our country and mine our coal, they should be dictated to or should have to comply with very strict planning obligations in terms of developing their access lines, their roads and their gas pipelines. Gas pipelines are another issue.

I just cannot believe that this government has allowed these major companies to go to the extent of even surveying three different corridors. I am hopeful that the government has that in hand now and has got on top of that. As I said, it is unbelievable that we could get to this stage where they could be contemplating three different corridors. I support Shane Knuth and the people he represents in that region. It is the same with Vaughan Johnson, me and even Rosemary Menkens—we also have those sorts of issues in our electorates.

There is an easement that I would like to speak about quickly—the Stanwell to Gladstone easement. That is what it is called. Seven services are to go through that easement. The landholders have found out that those easements are now registered on their titles but they are yet to receive compensation. That easement is from Stanwell to Gladstone. There has been an ongoing challenge or there have been difficulties in terms of coming to some agreement on the compensation.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr MALONE: Well, that is fine, Paul, but the fact is that the easement is now registered on their titles.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Mirani, would you please refer to the Deputy Premier by his correct title?

Mr Lucas: I prefer Paul.

Mr MALONE: I did not hear what you said, Mr Deputy Speaker.


Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Would you refer to the Deputy Premier by his correct title?

Mr Lucas: Deputy Premier Paul.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Deputy Premier will come to order.

Mr MALONE: I will refer to the honourable gentleman as deputy leader. But this is an issue for landholders there. On top of that, seven services are to go through this corridor. Another gas company has been negotiating to put in a separate corridor in a different easement. As I said, this runs in line with a lot of the catch-up planning that has to happen or is happening under this government. It is about time that we got on top of it and got ahead of the game and started dictating terms to some of these mining companies.

I am not saying that we should discourage the development of mines; all I am saying is that it should be done under the auspices of strong government—that is, a government that knows where it is going and a government that does the planning. While we are debating the carbon tax and the mining tax nothing is going to happen in the mining industry. There is a real issue concerning certainty in the mining industry. Mackay is one of the regions that will gain tremendously as a result of the development to the west of us. We need to make sure that we are on board driving the train rather than the other way around. I hope that the Deputy Premier will take those things on board.

 **Mr O'BRIEN** (Cook—ALP) (3.20 pm): I start by congratulating you, Mr Deputy Speaker Elmes, on your appointment to the panel of temporary speakers. In my role as Deputy Speaker I look forward to working with you in that important position that you now hold.

I rise to support the Sustainable Planning (Housing Affordability and Infrastructure Charges Reform) Amendment Bill. The amendments in the bill to the Sustainable Planning Act 2009 will support the implementation of the government's infrastructure charges reforms by providing a state planning regulatory provision to introduce maximum infrastructure charges for residential and non-residential development.

The maximum infrastructure charges established under the SPRP will be set in place for the next three years. The government is also committed to placing a moratorium on the collection of local function charges for transport infrastructure. This is a major concession that will increase both the viability and affordability of new projects and housing for Queenslanders.

As significant and important as these reforms are, the government's reform agenda in this area is about much more than what happens in the next three years. It is also about implementing a new infrastructure charges framework for the long term—a framework that ensures long-term financial stability for local governments, provides viable development opportunities throughout the state and promotes more affordable housing for Queenslanders.

The government recognises that local governments and the development industry have been struggling with the current charging system. Feedback has indicated that the current infrastructure-charging arrangements are too complex and present a potential impediment to growth. Following the Growth Management Summit, the government established the independent Infrastructure Charges Task Force on 20 May 2010. The task force was asked by the government to review Queensland's infrastructure-charging arrangements and identify opportunities for long-term improvement.

In its final report the task force identified that a more transparent, certain and simple infrastructure charges framework which promises consistency and equity of charging arrangements would stimulate economic activity and encourage housing affordability. With this in mind, the government has adopted the five key principles recommended by the task force as a bedrock for the long-term reform of Queensland's infrastructure charges. These are certainty; transparency and accountability; equity and reasonableness; simplicity and consistency; and efficiency.

As the government continues to work with Queenslanders, local governments and industry to recover from the January floods and Cyclone Yasi, it is more important than ever that we have an infrastructure-charging framework in place that supports and encourages growth now and into the future right across Queensland. The government is committed to establishing an infrastructure charges framework that supports viable and affordable development into the future. We want strong local governments, a prosperous development industry and the right mix of affordable development to support our growing population.

The development of an infrastructure charges framework around the principles of simplicity, transparency and certainty will support these objectives and the government's broader planning and development reforms to encourage Queensland's social and economic prosperity. The amendments proposed in this bill set in train a complete overhaul of Queensland's infrastructure charges regime. These reforms will deliver to Queensland an infrastructure charges framework with increased certainty, transparency, simplicity and consistency and should be welcomed and encouraged by all members.

It is welcome that opposition members, despite their bleating and whining on the floor of this House for nearly a whole day, are actually supporting the bill currently before the House. Anybody who has been following this debate—and I pity them if they have been following this debate closely—would know that it has been an embarrassing performance from those opposite. Some come into this place and support the bill and then other members say that it is a terrible bill, like the member for Redlands did before lunch. Do they bother to bring amendments to the floor of the House to try to improve the bill? Do they bring positive suggestions on how the framework can be improved? No. Do they bring any evidence to the floor of the parliament to show that they have done some work on what could be done to improve the bill? No, not at all.

Mr Watt interjected.

Mr O'BRIEN: I will take that interjection from the member for Everton. What the member for Condamine said by way of interjection was that those opposite will fix it when they get into government. That may well be the case, but we have a responsibility as parliamentarians to get the legislation right. Right now we are debating the bill and the moment is now.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Order! Member for Lockyer!

Mr O'BRIEN: If those opposite think that there can be improvements made to this bill then the moment to put those amendments up is now. They should put up or shut up. If the government were given positive suggestions on how the bill could be improved then it would happily take those suggestions on board as it has in the past. I sat in this parliament when the former member for Cunningham, Stuart Copeland, brought in amendments to a bill before the House that were well thought out and reasonable. They were reasonable and sensible amendments and they were adopted by the government there and then on the floor of the parliament. There is an opportunity now, after all the bleating and all the carrying on that we have endured for nearly a day now, to put up or shut up.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Lockyer, you should return to your seat if you want to interject.

Mr O'BRIEN: The moment is now. If those opposite have some suggestions there is no better time to put them forward. The Deputy Premier is a reasonable man. He will take them on board. He is there waiting for those opposite to put forward their amendments so they can be given the proper consideration of this House now not some undefined time into the future. That is the hypocrisy of those opposite. That is the duality that they have brought to the House in the last 12 months.

These are the realities that we are facing as a state and as a nation. These are difficulties that Western nations right across the world are facing. In Queensland they are unique because we have population growth. We have had continued high population growth for over 20 years. That has been a problem that has had to be confronted by both sides of politics in this state. High levels of population growth put great demand on infrastructure and services.

What happened two years ago when we were hit by the global financial crisis is that we had to make some hard decisions about how we were going to meet the needs of that growing population. Were we going to continue to build and continue to keep people in work when we had a \$15 billion hit to our bottom line or were we going to make other decisions? There are other options that are available.

The Brisbane City Council's option in the face of the global financial crisis and its hit was to increase rates and increase taxes. The legitimate policy decision made by the LNP in the Brisbane City Council was to raise taxes so that it could continue to build infrastructure. Whether that infrastructure is necessary or whether that infrastructure like tunnels and bike facilities is working is a debate that I will not enter into this afternoon. But there are legitimate courses of action that can be taken.

We have taken the action of selling assets so that we can keep people in work. The best way for people to be able to meet their obligations, to pay their bills is by keeping them in work. That is why the bill before the House here today is an important one. It does two things. It takes the financial stress off people who are trying to buy into new subdivisions because the infrastructure charges are now cheaper. Those cheaper charges should be passed on by the developer and by the council. Hopefully, it promotes further development in infrastructure and thus keeps people in work.

That is why we have brought this bill into the House. That is why it is hand in hand with other measures that we have taken to help the most vulnerable and needy in Queensland—like introducing a subsidy for electricity and a subsidy for electricity for some people with disabilities. It is why federally the Labor government last year for the first time in 11 years increased the pension. Pensioners had to wait 11 long years under John Howard with no increase to the pension. But as soon as Labor got into power, one of the first things it did was increase the pension because we do understand the financial stress that people are under. That is why we are taking action like that and that is why the bill before the House is important. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): I call the minister.

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Attorney-General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State) (3.29 pm), in reply: Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to congratulate you on your appointment. Today and yesterday from the opposition we have seen an attempt to walk both sides of the street. It is akin to going to court as a barrister for both sides or doing conveyancing for both sides, which gets you in trouble, but not seeking to have any role in resolving the dispute at hand. Oppositions are absolutely entitled to oppose legislation when they do not believe it is appropriate and they are absolutely entitled to amend legislation when they do not see it is appropriate.

Mr Seeneey: In fact, some would say that's our job.

Mr LUCAS: That is right. That is why they call them an opposition. But it is pretty hard when members of an opposition get up and speak in opposition to legislation that they then support. That is where people who are sitting out there in that audience are entitled to be confused. People in government are paid money to resolve problems. They are not paid money to be a commentator on the world; they are paid to resolve issues and to adopt, as I like to say, a problem-solving orientation. No doubt infrastructure charges have been a challenge. Councils and developers have been squabbling about them for almost a decade without resolution. Of course, 30 or 40 years ago there was not a big argument about infrastructure charges because infrastructure was not built. We stopped building railway lines and things like that in this state in the 1920s or so and did not start building them again until the 1980s.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr LUCAS: Yes, that is true. In 1965 the Liberal Party ripped up the Gold Coast railway line in one of its great triumphs and we had to buy the right of way. I know the member for Currumbin loves talking about that.

The lack of agreement led to significant discussion at the growth summit, and one of the actions out of the summit was the establishment of the Infrastructure Charges Taskforce. The task force included representatives from industry such as Grant Dennis from Dennis Family Holdings and Chris Freeman, the former CEO of Mirvac, whom I might add Campbell Newman has told me before he has a very high opinion of, as do I; former local government BCC CEO Jude Munro, whom Campbell Newman has again told me in the past he has a very high opinion of; and Greg Hallam, the LGAQ CEO.

The final report was delivered in March 2011 and made 10 recommendations, and the government has agreed to implement every single one of them. Because it was so important, we are here eight weeks later with legislation. We have taken on this issue, and not because it particularly benefits the state government. The state government does not get the benefit of infrastructure charges from council, with one exception that I will talk about in a moment. This is money that developers pay to councils, and there has been a lack of ability between developers and councils to agree as to what is a fair price. That is the bottom line. People can make all of the criticisms here on all of the red herrings in the world about the state government and the like. It has nothing to do with the substance of this bill.

On that point, what do these infrastructure charges that go to councils pay for? They pay for new parks, land for libraries, local streets, bus stops and trunk water and sewer pipes—the water pipes that go down your street. Those are the things that they pay for. They are critical infrastructure for new communities. There have been attempts by the opposition to mislead on this issue by introducing government infrastructure spending, and I am very happy to defend our \$15 billion capital works this financial year—compared to \$6 billion in Victoria and \$7.6 billion in Western Australia—on things like the Forgan Bridge in Mackay, the Edmund Casey Bridge, the Mackay-Bucasia Road, the hospital and the like.

In his speech the Leader of the Opposition argued the developers' case. He said that cost pressures, regulation and red tape are the problem and he was gravely concerned that councils would adopt the maximum charges as standard. That is of course an issue that must be monitored and councils should not make that grab for cash. Yet immediately afterwards the member for Gympie jumped to his feet to make the case for local government that councils would be burdened with debt and higher rates. You cannot walk both sides of the street. You either support one point of view or the other, and this bill is an attempt to resolve those issues.

There are a few key points to make about this. There will always be an argument about upfront charges on a first purchaser not being shared over future generations. The point is to strike an equitable balance. I have never heard a developer say that they would rather pay more nor heard a council say that they would rather charge less. The task force came up with many unanimous recommendations. Members of the task force certainly all agreed—no surprise—that the state should forgo the local function charge at a cost to us of \$30 million to \$40 million a year. So they were happy to agree when someone else had to foot the bill, but what did we do? We agreed that we would adopt that, so we will not require the \$30 million to \$40 million that would be collected under state charges to be collected. That is a tick for the state in that we are not going to require that to be collected for us. That is a saving to developers and the like. Members opposite talk about the 40 per cent water subsidy and the like. This is a direct lack of payment that the state will have to carry.

However, one thing members of the task force could not agree on was the level of charges for residential development. They could only recommend a range of charges between \$20,000 and \$30,000, and that is exactly what we have done—\$28,000 for three or more bedrooms and \$20,000 for one or two bedrooms. Later I will address a question raised in what I thought was a good contribution from the member for Gladstone. The Leader of the Opposition claimed that it would impact on affordability and he wanted us to ensure that councils would not jack up the charges, and I mentioned that earlier.

The Leader of the Opposition also criticised the Treasurer for reforming local government through amalgamations and said that that would be his legacy. I totally support and endorse what the Treasurer did in his previous capacity in relation to local government amalgamations.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr LUCAS: We will talk about what they think of you west of the Dividing Range in a minute. We know that when Jeff Kennett was in power in Victoria he undertook a campaign of local government amalgamations. So we know that those opposite really think it is a good idea. We know that after the recent cyclone and flood disasters amalgamated councils showed their superior ability to come through these disasters compared to individual local fiefdoms that simply did not have the resources. I can just close my eyes and think of when in this same House—not in this same building—in 1925 the City of Brisbane Act was debated. That was Labor legislation to abolish 20 local councils in Brisbane and amalgamate them into one, and those opposite were there opposing that as well. If they had their way there would still be Wynnum town council in Wynnum—that is what they would still want—and councils in Kedron, Moggill, Toowong and all of those other places. So it is very important to remember their history on this issue.

We chose to get involved in this issue because it is just so important to jobs and housing affordability. Last year KPMG prepared a report on barriers to infill development in South-East Queensland. That report said that the cost of infrastructure charges is also affecting project feasibilities and it remained a key contributor to total project risk. Just last month the Productivity Commission report *Performance benchmarking of Australian business regulation: planning, zoning and development assessment* found that Queensland infrastructure charges were a significant problem. The report stated that Queensland infrastructure charges had risen significantly in the last five years to be the second highest in the country in 2009-10. Infrastructure charges were a key concern for industry, with a report

quoting Woolworths infrastructure charges for a neighbourhood shopping centre in an inner-Brisbane suburb increasing from approximately \$285,000 in 2005-06 to \$2.79 million in 2009-10. Increases of this magnitude have taken Queensland from being on average the most economical state from an infrastructure charges contribution point of view to being the most expensive.

That is a council-charging regime and that is why we set up the task force to attempt to deal with the issue. A report by Urbis last year found there was significant variation in infrastructure charges as a share of overall development costs. This wide spread is unmatched in any state. In Victoria it goes from one per cent to just under three per cent whereas in Queensland it can go from one per cent to 25 per cent. That is exactly why we need to set the maximum charge. I note that some people in the UDIA have said that councils should have to justify anything up to the \$28,000, which, frankly, is a bit rich when they wanted the cap pulled to \$28,000 from higher amounts when they did not care whether there was a justification for those or not by the council. So there are swings and roundabouts in this and it does require people to be reasonable, but the UDIA needs to be internally consistent.

If they want to have councils justify charges up to \$28,000, they should have been prepared to wear them if they were over \$28,000 and they were justified. This legislation seeks to strike an appropriate balance. As much as these reforms are about the dollar figure of the cap, they are equally about providing certainty. One of the issues that developers have—and I am very sympathetic to them on this issue—is when they go out and want to buy a greenfield site from a farmer or whoever they want to buy it from and they do their sums as to the cost of that development they need to know the charges regime that will operate. Then they factor all of the things in when deciding whether it is a goer or not.

In many respects, if the charges are higher or lower is less important than if it is certain, because developers do not want the goalposts moved after the event. They want to know the figure and I think that it is very important that we take heed of that issue. So you cannot have charges skyrocket over five years of developments that might have a much longer development period. It destroys the business case and it destroys the price of property. I ask members to remember that this regime will be fixed for three years. Each year it will be increased by the building cost index to make sure that it does not go up inappropriately.

The importance of our reforms has been recognised by councils and industry alike. HIA economist Matthew King told the *Gold Coast Bulletin* on 19 April that he could only see the situation becoming more dire on the Gold Coast unless council and the state government stepped in to make some changes quickly. He stated further that the cap on infrastructure charges that came out recently was a great start. Fraser Coast Mayor Mick Kruger and UDIA chairman Daniel Poacher both welcomed our reforms in the *Hervey Bay Independent* on 15 April by stating—

These reforms will make it a lot easier to calculate the charges and for developers to factor in costs when planning their developments and assessing the viability of projects.

Cullen and Couper managing director Rod Cullen told the *Fraser Coast Chronicle* on 14 April that the reforms would mean that savings would be passed on to consumers. He stated further—

It's a huge saving to the developer, so they can bring the product into the market at a lower price.

The Moreton Bay Regional Council in the *Redcliffe and Bayside Herald* of 20 April welcomed the reforms, with a spokesperson saying that they supported in principle capping infrastructure charges as it provided certainty for developers. I have to say that many councils—and the Brisbane City Council is one of them—are providing, as an incentive to development, discounts off their infrastructure charges regime in particular areas. I know that the Logan City Council has quite a competitive regime. I think that John Brent of the Scenic Rim Regional Council—and I think members opposite all know him—has a low regime to attract people as well.

Mr Hinchliffe interjected.

Mr LUCAS: He did not get out of the barrier at the trials this time. The state has taken action because councils and industry could not agree. Many speakers in this debate have recognised that affordability in Queensland is an important issue. But it is also important to acknowledge that there are limitations to what the state can do. Infrastructure charges are not the sole solution. After all, charges in Mackay are typically below the proposed cap—\$20,000 for a house in Walkerston, \$17,000 for a house in Beaconsfield and \$18,000 for a house at Ooralea.

The member for Gladstone expressed concern about the impact of the cap on Gladstone. I can assure her that typical charges in that local government area are well below the cap. In fact, the concern in Gladstone would be to make sure that the council there did not inappropriately raise the charges. I will give members an example. A house in Clinton is today charged the \$20,634, which is well below the \$28,000 cap. A shopping centre in South Gladstone would be charged \$626,156 while the cap is \$1.035 million. A shopping centre at Tannum Sands is today charged \$450,670 by the council compared to the cap of \$1.035 million. But, of course, sometimes there are swings and roundabouts, too. A shopping centre at Agnes Water would be today charged \$1.24 million compared with a cap of \$1.035 million. So councils will have to pass a resolution and they will be responsible for that in the political environment, frankly. Ultimately, councils still have that responsibility, but the state has put that cap in place.

When it comes to housing affordability, where we can act we will. But there are other drivers to housing affordability. Interest rates are the most important driver of all. Queensland has the largest new lots and the largest new houses in Australia. Queenslanders have decided that they want larger lot sizes. That means that larger lot sizes cost more. I do not have the statistics in front of me, but off the top of my head I can say that over a 20-year period—from the 1980s to the early 2000s—the average house footprint in Queensland went up by 30 per cent. People want the extra rooms and that sort of stuff. That is fine as a housing choice, but that impacts upon affordability. At the same time people are having fewer kids.

Dr Douglas: But the footprint is shrinking.

Mr LUCAS: That is not reflected in the size of lots. I will get the member some statistics that show that.

Dr Douglas: If you count all the blocks that have been developed, I think you will find that it is correct.

Mr LUCAS: No, it is not. I will show the member that. Queensland has the most competitive stamp duty rates in Australia. In terms of land supply, the ULDA is fast-tracking the work on that. The Productivity Commission endorsed the ULDA as best practice in this country.

People talk about other affordability issues. That is why we are having an investment in public transport infrastructure that is the envy of the rest of Australia. That is why, for example, in all regional cities we invested the money in increased subsidies to public transport to bring them into line with the subsidies that are provided in South-East Queensland in relation to equal distances on local bus services and the like—things like the busway and the light rail on the Gold Coast.

The member for Burnett suggested that living on a five-hectare rural residential block and harvesting your own water was somehow sustainable and affordable. Nothing contributes less to the destruction of good-quality agricultural land and lack of affordability in terms of infrastructure than that sort of housing development. That type of housing creates high infrastructure costs for the state government and councils—more roads to service, more powerlines, more sewerage pipes and more greenhouse gas emissions because people have to drive places instead of catching public transport. It is more expensive for people to live there over the life of a house as they need two cars and then they have to pay for fuel et cetera. As I said, the greatest threat to good-quality agricultural land is not mining; it is people with lifestyle and rural-residential blocks. That land is divided up and taken out of the productive land bank.

Infrastructure charges have presented a near-intractable problem for most of the past decade. It is through the policy bravery of this government that this near-intractable problem has been sought to be dealt with with equity and through striking a balance between upfront charges and intergenerational equity. That balance will get new projects out of the on-hold column and into the underway column.

Sometimes I quite enjoy the contributions by the member for Gaven, but I have to say that I did not enjoy his earlier contribution. I thought it was far short of the mark of what he would normally contribute. The member for Surfers Paradise showed why he knows nothing about policy. The member for Gaven sought to blame the state for issues on the Gold Coast. It is very interesting to note why the Gold Coast seems to be in such a poor state compared with so many other council areas. Part of the reason for that has to do with the calibre of the Gold Coast council. Members should not take my word for that; the Liberal Party ran a team against the council at the last election. Not only that, Tom Tate was the Liberal Party mayoral candidate at the last election running against Rob Molhoek, who is now the LNP candidate for Southport. So the LNP's candidate for Southport is the person who the Liberal Party ran against at the last Gold Coast City Council election. As a result they got Ron Clarke for a second term. I do not need to say anything more about that.

The member for Gaven attempted to create the view that local infrastructure charges were an issue caused by the state. The collections for the state government were about \$13 million. I ask members to balance that figure with about \$1.7 billion in spending this year—that figure is off the top of my head and I stand to be corrected on it; the Treasurer is not sitting next to me—on things like the Tugun bypass, the Gold Coast light rail and the Gold Coast Hospital, which is the biggest hospital in the Southern Hemisphere. That is what we are doing.

The member for Surfers Paradise spoke about PIPs as if PIPs were the problem in relation to charging. A priority infrastructure plan is about saying to a council, 'You have to sit down and do the planning for the infrastructure that you want to build in the future.' That strikes me as pretty good sense. That is what most businesses do—'What do we have to do over time?' There is nothing about a PIP that says that councils must charge at a particular rate as a result of having that priority infrastructure plan. Councils were actually taking a long time to come up with an appropriate charging regime if they sought to do that.

I know the Gold Coast pretty well—not as well as a resident would, but as a kid my family were Gold Coast people. I always spent my holidays down there at Christmas. I know it very well. It is a wonderful region, but it is very much impacted upon.

Dr Douglas: Keep coming.

Mr LUCAS: I will come down and see the member. The Gold Coast has suffered from what its local council has been able to do. In fact, the member for Surfers Paradise talked about infrastructure charges from the council and then talked about development charges. It was a 'Yeah, but no, yeah, but no' situation. You could have sat back and closed your eyes and thought that he had no idea what he was on about. The member told us about statistics and that Queensland had net negative migration. The problem is that in these days of access to the internet you can have a bit of a look. We had a bit of a look at what the member for Surfers Paradise—the one-time putative alternative Premier—told us. Reading from the ABS figures 3101.0 for the period December 2009 to September 2010: New South Wales, minus 10,322; Victoria, plus 2,695; Western Australia, plus 2,983; Queensland, plus 8,399. Remember he said that we had net negative interstate migration, and this is excluding births. I table that. As we say in the law, *res ipsa loquitur*—the thing speaks for itself.

Tabled paper: ABS statistics on net interstate migration [4535].

The member for Hervey Bay raised issues in relation to water. He talked about Toowoomba and recycled water. Members would remember this government's investment in relation to the Toowoomba pipeline. The state was not responsible for water in Toowoomba. They could not sort it out for themselves. They sunk the referendum. This government stepped in and helped to sort out that situation.

The member also talked about people with diabetes. That is a very serious issue in his electorate. One of the issues that is either side of the coin here is adaptable housing. Some aspects of housing cost a little bit more money upfront—more studs in the walls and taking away the hob in the shower, for example—but that extra expense upfront allows people, as they get older and arthritic or need wider door gaps as they might be in a wheelchair, to live more comfortably. We need to consider those factors in affordability. Sometimes a smaller upfront cost is relevant.

The member for Gaven is mistaken about average lot size in relation to Queensland and other states. Average lot size in 2009 for Sydney was 549 square metres; Brisbane, 603 square metres; Adelaide, 425 square metres; and Perth, 456 square metres. I table that for the benefit of the House.

Tabled paper: Document detailing housing lot sizes and dwelling mix titled 'Queensland in the Australian context' [4536].

Average lot size was smaller in 2009 than it was eight years earlier, but it is still the biggest of those other capitals.

The member for Gregory made a very good contribution to the debate, although I did not agree with everything he said. The member for Mirani also made quite a good contribution, although I did not agree with everything he said. I will comment on a couple of things he said. They were not strictly within the province of the bill but I did not take any points of order about them because I thought they were interesting points. He spoke about corridors in relation to the Galilee Basin railway lines. One of the issues that the state has is that there are three different proponents who do not want to play nicely with each other.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr LUCAS: No, let me get to it. They did not want to play nicely with each other; they all wanted to go and do things separately. One of the proponents wanted it all standard gauge but to a lesser standard than the other, and that impacts on how many curves are put in, where bridges are put and those sorts of things. The Leader of the Opposition said to me, 'That is what you have a government for,' and that is what we are seeking to sort out with them.

I will give members a classic example of it. It is now being constructed. When I was transport minister I remember sitting in a meeting at QR with the coalmining companies talking about the northern missing link. These people were paid a fortune compared to what I earn, let alone what people in the street earn. They were fighting like Kilkenny cats. They were paying out on each other and could not agree on where they wanted it to go and who would pay for it. The state government stepped in and said, 'We will determine the corridor and we will acquire the land.' This project would have been years behind if we had not done that. That is why we did it. Frankly, that is ultimately economic infrastructure. If we had actually said that we would build it, that would have taken money from hospitals, police, schools and the like. What the state did was identify and protect the corridor. The point about trying to narrow those corridors is a good one although not strictly within this bill.

The member for Gladstone asked about the one- and two-bedroom residences. It is also a good point. First of all, the vast majority of one- and two-bedroom properties are built as home units, so a person is not going to come back after the event and say that they want to build a third bedroom. Insofar as they are two bedrooms and they are houses, they would normally be spec houses. It is very uncommon for someone to buy a block of land and build themselves a three-bedroom house on it. We want to incentivise some of those better housing choices for people so they do not necessarily need to build a larger property so they can get into the market.

A real issue with young people is getting them into the market in an affordable sense. It is important to encourage that. The HIA tells us that it is very rare for one- and two-bedroom homes to be built on house blocks. If the developer can demonstrate at the building application stage that it is a genuine one- or two-bedroom product, they could then seek a refund from the local government.

In relation to non-residential where there is no indication of the finished building, local government should assume the developer could achieve the maximum floor space on the site. We are preparing the regulatory provision and we will continue negotiation with them, but what we are seeking to do is discount it off the charge. Originally the committee held the view that there should be a discount for one bedroom, that there should be no discount for two bedrooms and that the charge for dwellings with more than two bedrooms should be capped at about \$27,500. I took the view that what we would do is try to encourage two bedrooms and more. Not a lot of people have an appetite for a one-bedroom unit; more and more people want two. To encourage that, instead of having a cap for a one-bedroom dwelling at \$18,000, it was decided to have a cap for two-bedroom dwellings at that \$20,000-odd amount.

Dr Douglas: It may accelerate battleaxe development, the splitting on a single title. That is the implication. I thought that was the other thing you might lead to from the discussion of the member for Gladstone.

Mr LUCAS: I certainly do not have a problem in principle if someone wants to add a second bedroom later on. In fact, that is a great affordability issue.

Dr Douglas: If you look at the way that it is written, it will accelerate that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Member for Gaven, you will have an opportunity to speak during debate of the clauses.

Mr LUCAS: In conclusion, this is a situation where one has to have the wisdom of Solomon. On the one hand we have local government and on the other hand we have developers, and we must try to seek agreement between them that is a fair thing. In seeking to do this, the government has done a good job. We had an expert committee that advised us in relation to it. As was quoted by the Leader of the Opposition, I did make the observation that if the LGAQ and the UDIA—both extremes—are not absolutely happy about it then it probably means that we have done a pretty good job.


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

Resolved in the affirmative under standing order 108.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 19, as read, agreed to.

Clause 20—

 **Mr SEENEY (4.03 pm):** I take this opportunity to speak to clause 20, which deals with the meaning of 'adopted infrastructure charge' and sets the regulatory framework for the adoption of that infrastructure charge. It deals with such things as the maximum and when the councils can apply it. It goes to the heart of what I think has been the essential part of the debate on this bill. It gives me an opportunity to address some of the mischief that the Deputy Premier promulgated when he summed up the second reading debate. One of the best examples of the way that he misrepresented the debate was in relation to the comparison he made between what I said about councils using the regulated charge as an automatic standard rather than the maximum that I understand the bill sets it out to be and the comments by the member for Gympie about how, in some cases, the adoption of such a charge as a standard would lead to an increase in the charges that are already being made. Both comments are right.

I am aware of a number of situations, for example, with small rural councils where the infrastructure charges are currently less than \$28,000. As we consider this particular clause, the point that needs to be reinforced and that puts this whole thing in place is that no council should use the passage of this bill as a reason to increase those charges. For example, if at the moment a council has a fair and reasonable infrastructure charge of \$20,000 or \$15,000, there is absolutely no reason for that charge to be increased as a result of this bill. Can the minister confirm that? This bill establishes a maximum infrastructure charge. We have had a long debate about whether that is right or wrong. We have heard all the arguments for and against it. The bill has now passed the second reading stage, so that maximum infrastructure charge will be applied.

There is no doubt that there are also situations in which councils may believe that the actual cost of providing infrastructure is more than \$28,000. During the debate on the second reading of the bill, a number of members made the point that, where, for example, it cost the council \$40,000 per block or per title to provide the infrastructure required for a particular development, the balance—the other \$12,000 per block—would have to be met from some other source. For most councils, the only other source is their rates base. The ratepayers will have to pick up the extra \$12,000 in the example that I used, because this bill sets \$28,000 as a maximum. Once again, I am summarising. I understand that there are differences between three bedrooms and two bedrooms et cetera. I understand all of that. However, I am illustrating the argument and demonstrating very clearly—and I am seeking confirmation from the minister as we consider the detail of this bill—that what the legislation puts in place is a maximum of \$28,000 per entitlement.

As a member who represents a range of small communities, the last thing I want to see is for anybody to use the passage of this legislation as an excuse to raise existing infrastructure charges to \$28,000 when there is no justification for doing so, when there are no costs being incurred by the council to justify raising the charge. It is a very important point and it was a point that was made by both me and the member for Gympie. Clause 20, at proposed new subsection 648B(4), states—

Without limiting subsection (1), the State planning regulatory provision may—

and it sets out a number of things. The detail of those things is interesting, and I want to explore that with the minister in terms of some practical examples that may illustrate the options that are open to local authorities. Proposed new section 648B(4) states that the state planning regulatory provision may—

- (a) state different charges for different development; and
- (b) state different charges for different local governments or parts of a local government's area; and
- (c) identify, for a local government area, a priority infrastructure area ...

I would be interested to hear the minister give examples of where those different charges may apply and where those situations may require a different charge from the maximum. Without it being clearly set out in the legislation, I am presuming that what is being referred to there is a different maximum charge. It is a variation of the maximum charge.

At clause 20, proposed new section 648C provides for the minister to change the maximum adopted charge. Proposed new subsection 648C(1) states—

The Minister may, by gazette notice, change the amount of a maximum adopted charge under a State planning regulatory provision (adopted charges).

I want to clarify those two proposed sections, 648B and 648C, in relation to the variations that are possible for local authorities. I seek from the minister a clarification, most importantly with regard to the issue of the maximum charge established under this legislation being adopted as a standard. That concern was expressed quite rightly by a number of speakers in the debate. While we have given our support to the bill, a lot of members from our side of the House are worried that a genuine attempt on the part of the government to put a ceiling on infrastructure charges would, in some cases, provide an excuse for local authorities to do just the opposite—that is, bring their infrastructure charges up to \$28,000.

I have suggested to a number of people who have expressed that concern to me that the option should be there for the developer to challenge such a move in that infrastructure charge. That infrastructure charge should need to be justified, as it is now, on all of the litigation provisions that are available to a developer who believes that they are being charged an infrastructure charge that cannot be justified. That provision will still exist with the passage of this legislation. For example, if a developer was charged the \$28,000 maximum and they believed that the real cost of providing that infrastructure to their particular entitlements was \$20,000, then the opportunities that currently exist for them in the Planning and Environment Court will still exist with the passage of this legislation. I seek that confirmation from the minister. The last thing I want to see is an outcome that is clearly not in keeping with the intent of the legislation.

In his contribution to the second reading debate, the member for Redlands made the point very pertinently that this Labor government adopts a one-size-fits-all approach to most things. It comes out with a one-size-fits-all solution. 'This is the solution,' says the Labor government, but it is a one-size-fits-all solution and does not take into account that range of situations that exists across Queensland and across many electorates. For example, the situations that exist in the electorate that the minister represents are very different to the situations that exist in the electorate I represent, which comprises some 22 small communities. The challenges for developers and local governments there are very different. I fear that those differences, as the member for Redlands quite rightly pointed out, are not recognised in this legislation just as they are very seldom recognised by a Labor government that does not deal with the detail to the extent that it should.

I seek those considerations from the minister in the consideration of clause 20. Hopefully, the assurances that the minister can give in this debate will provide some comfort for people who are concerned about those unintended outcomes and will provide some guidance to local authorities that need to deal with this legislation upon its passage.

Mr LUCAS: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I agree with him that the \$28,000 maximum charge and related maximum charges are not of themselves a justification for a council to increase its charge to the \$28,000 amount. In fact, any council that does that on the basis that it can is a council that is not doing the right thing. With a few exceptions, at the moment many councils are actually discounting those charges to encourage development. The fact that they do discount their real charges means that they will still have to pay that charge in the future. They also want to encourage economic development. In the Scenic Rim, for example—I have quite a good relationship with John Brent; I think he is a good man to deal with—John Brent has taken the view that, if that council wants to encourage development, it has to have quite a competitive infrastructure charges regime. Logan is the same. For certain sorts of developments in the city of Brisbane, the infrastructure charges are quite low and this council here has also done the same. That is why I get a bit rankled when the LGAQ talks about

how this provision will result in councils being out of pocket. Frankly, if that was the argument, they would have been charging more. In fact, they have been charging less because they have wanted to encourage development.

There are swings and roundabouts in this. That is why the amount of \$28,000 was set. The range was considered to be \$20,000 to \$30,000. That may mean that in certain circumstances a council may recover more in that particular development than it otherwise would have cost it. It also means that in other developments it will recover less than it otherwise would have cost it.

Mr Seeney: That is an argument for a standard.

Mr LUCAS: The only way around that is then not to have a standard charge. In the past people have complained about a priority infrastructure charges regime and things like that where the council has to go through and calculate each of them individually.

I should say to the Leader of the Opposition—and it has been acknowledged in the report—that there is one issue on which we have undertaken to do further work with both the LGAQ and the property industry, and that is the issue of conditions. Often it is not so much the infrastructure charge but the conditions that can unreasonably impact upon the cost of the development. Conditions can be appealed against of course. However, we will want to do some more work on whether there can be better standard conditions and the like. That is an ongoing body of work that will, hopefully, be completed by the end of the year after we have had further discussions with them on that.

The honourable member referred to proposed new subsection 648B(4). That is actually the head of power for the state to do the SPRP. His attention would be better drawn to 648D(1), which is the subsection that contains the council's power. Subsection 648B(4) sets out what the state planning regulatory provision can do. There are different charges for different parts of different developments. That is why we are setting one or two different maximums and those sorts of things. One other issue I should mention to the member is that, with areas that want to be brought forward out of sequence, there is an ability to charge more than \$28,000. However, that would have to be by agreement between the developer and the council. Say, if all of a sudden you want to develop somewhere that contains no headworks or anything at all, there would be an additional cost. You cannot claim a standard charge. Those members who have been in local government would be fully aware that sometimes pipes, trunks, dams, reservoirs and the like just happen to be in certain places.

I draw the attention of the member opposite to subsection 648C(1), which is the subsection that includes the setting of the maximum charge that he asked me about. That power is qualified by subsections 648C(2), (3), (4) and (5) which say that I cannot increase it by more than the construction index. That is in the law to give that certainty.

Finally, I draw the member's attention to subsection 648D, which contains the provision for councils to decide what they are going to charge. They must positively adopt a resolution. If they do not do that, then they are stuck with their standard charges as they exist at the moment or the maximum charge, whichever is the lower. They will face the political consequences of making a resolution that is different or that increases the charge if there is no justification for doing that. There are transitional provisions for current applications. This represents a compromise, but the amount of \$28,000 is in the range of \$20,000 to \$30,000 that was recommended by the task force which represented everybody. It suggested that we come up with a figure. It did not say to have a range because then we would have the same problem that we had earlier.

Mr SEENEY: The minister's comments give me little comfort, I must say, with regard to the assurances I was seeking about the possibility at least that the passage of this legislation would in some circumstances result in an increase in infrastructure charges. I take it from what the minister has said that his view of the adopted infrastructure charge is closer to it becoming a standard charge than a maximum charge. That is of some concern to me. I do, however, take the point the minister made that local governments can, by resolution, set their charge at a lower level as they seek to encourage development. That is a commendable strategy that has been followed by a number of councils in my experience over a number of years. It is a legitimate decision for councils to take.

Councils are prepared to use their existing ratepayer base to subsidise, if you like, the establishment of a development that will result in that ratepayer base growing over time because it is to the benefit of everybody in that community that there are more people contributing to the particular infrastructure costs over time. Therefore, it is a legitimate decision for the council, on behalf of the community, to forgo some income to ensure that growth occurs. That is a legitimate strategy that has been adopted by a number of councils over time. The minister mentioned the Scenic Rim Regional Council, and it is certainly something that the council I served on many years ago adopted as a strategy for our communities. The difference, I suspect, with this legislation is that it requires two things. It requires the cost to be calculated and quantified so that the level of the subsidy is well known, and it requires that the decision is taken by resolution so the community is well aware and can make a judgement accordingly. I do not have any real problem with either of those.

The question I pose to the minister—it follows on from the issues that he misrepresented, I believe, in the second reading debate—is with regard to a situation where a council sought to refuse an application for development because the infrastructure charges would be considerably greater than the

adopted infrastructure charge. If, for example, a council believed that the actual cost of providing the infrastructure ran to something like \$100,000 per entitlement or \$100,000 per block and under the terms of this legislation the maximum charge is set at \$28,000, that particular council would be looking at a significant impost on the existing rate base. The question I pose to the minister is: would that, in his view, be a valid reason for the council to refuse the application? Would that differential between the actual cost of providing the infrastructure and the regulated maximum cost the council could charge under this legislation, leaving aside all the other issues, be reason enough for the council to refuse that application?


Mr LUCAS: I have sought advice from my departmental officers, who tell me that simply the answer is no. Rather than that being a matter of infrastructure charge, potentially that would be subject to appeal. That is putting aside the issue about sequence developments because they are a different issue, and I know that the member understands that.

I think the issue in terms of people not jacking up charges to \$28,000 is very important, and the member raised it correctly. We need to send a message loud and clear to local government that we will seek to monitor how this is implemented. I will make the point, though, that the range recommended by the working group on which they were represented was in the vicinity of \$20,000 to \$30,000. We took \$28,000 at the upper limit of that range. That was essentially the figure that they indicated to us privately they were prepared to accept. It did not happen when it went public, but that is life. The earlier part was the answer to that question.

Clause 20, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 21 to 45, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

 **Hon. PT LUCAS** (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Attorney-General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State) (4.24 pm): I move—


That the bill be now read a third time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Long Title

 **Hon. PT LUCAS** (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Attorney-General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State) (4.24 pm): I move—


That the long title of the bill be agreed to.

Question put—That the long title of the bill be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Correction of Record of Proceedings

 **Mrs MENKENS** (Burdekin—LNP) (4.25 pm): I seek leave to make a personal explanation.

Leave granted.

Mrs MENKENS: It has just come to my notice that a figure I quoted yesterday evening in my speech on the private member's motion was incorrect. I wish to correct the record. There are three coal trains held up on the Abbot Point rail line due to the derailment.

WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY BILL

SAFETY IN RECREATIONAL WATER ACTIVITIES BILL

Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

Work Health and Safety Bill resumed from 10 May (see p. 1283) and Safety in Recreational Water Activities Bill resumed from 10 May (see p. 1284), on motion of Mr Dick—

That the bills be now read a second time.



Mr MALONE (Mirani—LNP) (4.26 pm): I rise to speak on the bills—

Mr Watt interjected.

Mr Shine: I haven't seen you in parliament so often.

Mr MALONE: Thank you very much.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wendt): Order! The member for Mirani has the call. Members on my right, please cease interjecting.

Mr MALONE: I rise to speak to the Work Health and Safety Bill 2011 and the Safety in Recreational Water Activities Bill 2011. I wish to put on the record my extreme disappointment, indeed frustration, with the government and the minister about the way in which these bills have been handled—or, should I say, mishandled and mismanaged, because that is what has happened. I suppose after the mismanagement of everything else, why should we expect anything different? But the way these bills have been handled is a dog's breakfast. They were introduced into parliament on 10 May this year—2011; that is, two weeks ago—and they were a long way down the list of bills to be debated. Indeed, they were Nos 11 and 12. That was until today's program, which has brought us to the debate we are having now. There has been little opportunity to look through and examine the bills.

Yesterday we were advised that a briefing would be provided to the opposition at 4.30. It was a little later than that—probably a quarter to five—when we actually met with the officers. That was terrific and would have been fine if the bills were simple bills, but they have been rushed through at the last minute. It is shambolic the way this government operates. How on earth can anyone absorb all of the information in a 400-page bill at a last-minute briefing from three public servants? I stress that it is not their fault; it is the fault of the minister and this government for the way in which they have handled this legislation. This is a disorganised government that serves up a 400-page bill with an 11th-hour briefing. I must stress that the Work Health and Safety Bill is a very important bill. It does provide a national framework for workplace health and safety.

I ask the minister to tell us what industry and stakeholder consultation has taken place. Has anyone in the industry or the employers—those people who actually provide jobs in the real workforce and have to deal with this legislation on an ongoing basis—had this legislation run past them by the minister and his department? Has the minister discussed the implications of this bill with industry groups and stakeholders? I would be interested to hear the minister enunciate that.

I understand that the Queensland Law Society has not even had time to comment on this legislation. There will be others in my team who will actually talk about that issue. This is template legislation that very few people have had time to look at and examine in detail at this stage. Nobody has been properly briefed. I am sure that no-one in industry—no employer—would have a clue what this legislation contains and what impact it will have in terms of extra costs for compliance and administration.

Ms Grace: It has been going on for ages.

Mr MALONE: I take that interjection that it has been going on for ages. The reality is that from my discussions with industry groups they are not aware of it. I would like to hear the minister's comments along those lines. Those additional costs will be the last thing on the minds of those opposite because who on the other side has ever had to deal with this type of nonsense in the real world?

The main object of the bill is to provide a balanced and nationally consistent framework to ensure health and safety in the workplace. That is great in theory. The LNP is unhappy with some aspects of the bill and we will raise a number of issues with a number of clauses in the bill. As I have stated, there has been virtually no time to really consider the bill in depth and I do not believe there has been proper consultation.

This bill is supposed to harmonise workplace health and safety laws due to pressure from the Council of Australian Governments, COAG, to implement nationally harmonised laws. I note on page 5 of the explanatory notes that the national Decision Regulation Impact Statement for a Model Occupational Health and Safety Act concludes that the cost and benefits of the national model WHS Act are not readily quantifiable. This is of great concern. It is of great concern that we are rushing down the track of a national template for which there is no readily quantifiable benefits. That is not a great start, I would suggest.

The Work Health and Safety Bill is based on national model legislation that is committed to the harmonisation of workplace health and safety laws. Because of the mismanagement of the legislation and the undue haste in bringing it before the parliament, the LNP will reserve the right to bring this bill back to the parliament and put forward amendments if that proves to be needed.

Interestingly, the passing of this bill through the parliament possibly tomorrow means that Queensland will indeed be the first jurisdiction in Australia to have passed this legislation. I am not quite sure about the need to rush this legislation through the House. As an old farmer I smell a rat. This is of great concern. The fact that we are racing ahead with this legislation when it has not been properly considered by any other jurisdiction in Australia and has not been passed in any other jurisdiction in

Australia is of concern. In essence, the LNP is saying that we do not trust Labor to deliver meaningful outcomes with this legislation. The LNP in government would move quickly to ensure this legislation works in Queensland for Queensland businesses and employees.

There are some key issues in this bill that need to be carefully considered. While the LNP will not be opposing the Work Health and Safety Bill 2011 we will be seeking clarification of a number of the clauses about which we have concerns. I will speak briefly about the main areas of concern for the LNP.

I turn first to clause 172 of the bill which deals with the abrogation of privilege against self-incrimination. That is one of the two major changes under the bill. This really is an outrageous attack on the fundamental right to remain silent and not risk self-incrimination. The right to remain silent is a fundamental right for all people when being questioned by police or government officers.

Mr Hoolihan interjected.

Mr MALONE: That is an interesting point, member for Keppel. We are seeing more and more legislation come through the House—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! Members need to direct their comments through the chair.

Mr MALONE: I was responding to an interjection. More and more we are seeing this type of legislation come through the House. I recollect that with amendments to the Vegetation Management Act, the Fisheries Act and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Protection Act we saw the reverse onus of proof taken from the people of Queensland. That stems from the basic common law principle that it is the state's role to prove the guilt of an accused person, not the accused to prove their innocence. Additionally, no negative conclusion can be drawn from the accused relying on their right to silence when the matter goes before the court.

What members on the other side wish to do with clause 172 is remove this fundamental right that has been the basic principle of our society and our legal system for hundreds of years. I find it incredible that members on the other side who purport to stand up for the principles of justice are even contemplating this change. I wonder how many members have actually read and understand the implications of the proposed changes. Given the member for Keppel's interjection, he obviously understands exactly what they are doing.

Where are the former solicitors and where are the former legal workers who should be forcefully demanding this clause be struck out? Are they not here because the loss of this right to remain silent will only apply to employers? I could imagine the reaction from the unions and trades hall if any government attempted to make this sort of attack on the fundamental rights that applied to workers. The current right to refuse to answer questions as part of an investigation on the grounds of self-incrimination must not be removed. The very notion that this should apply is outrageous and the LNP will be opposing this attack on that fundamental right.

A government member interjected.

Mr MALONE: I have been an employer for a long time and my workers were always happy.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members should direct their comments through the chair.

Mr MALONE: I was provoked.

Ms Grace interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Brisbane Central!

Mr MALONE: Another key amendment to the legislation changing the jurisdiction where matters will be heard is also something the LNP will be opposing strongly. Our Magistrates Court system is already seriously overloaded, facing already seriously lengthy delays in hearing matters. The change in the bill, included in clause 255, requiring prosecutions to be heard in the Magistrates Court by a magistrate rather than in an Industrial Court is ridiculous. This will mean that appeals will no longer be heard by the Industrial Court of Queensland but will instead go to the District Court and then on to higher courts in the general system. Magistrates already have far too many matters to hear without the additional load of cases that would come from the implementation of the Work Health and Safety Bill 2011.

The Industrial Magistrates Court is the correct court for the hearing of issues related to workplace health and safety, as is the present situation. The change that members opposite want to bring through clause 255 will not just take matters to the overloaded Magistrates Court system but will also add substantially to the cost and add enormously to the time taken to hear matters. What those opposite want is to remove the fundamental right to remain silent and at the same time place prosecution matters in the already seriously overloaded Magistrates Court system which will add costs in terms of long delays in matters being heard. One really has to ask what role members opposite see for the Queensland IR system and the Industrial Court. What role will the Industrial Court have in this current scenario now that they have handed so much of our IR system to Canberra and removed matters to the Magistrates Court with this bill?

Another issue of concern is that the bill seeks to broaden the definition of a worker through clause 7 to include labour hire contractors and subcontractors. By expanding the definition of a worker under the new legislation, the obligations of a person conducting a business or undertaking—PCBU—will be greater. While the concept of a person conducting a business or undertaking has been retained, to date the responsibility has been limited to a definition of worker which excluded contractors. We will be looking very closely at clause 7 and examining its full implications.

I turn now to workplace entry by WHS entry permit holders. By definition of this legislation, a relevant worker in relation to a workplace means a worker—

- (a) who is a member, or eligible to be a member, of a relevant union; and
- (b) whose industrial interests the relevant union is entitled to represent; and
- (c) who works at that workplace.

It will be interesting to hear how the minister justifies this provision. It most definitely reads as just another opportunity for union representatives to enter a workplace with little or no real justification.

The bill will bring tougher penalties. The penalties under the new legislation for breaches have increased markedly, both in terms of financial penalties and jail terms for company officers and individuals. An increase in the penalties that can be imposed against a corporation will result in a closer examination of the ability for companies and their officers to insure against such risks both in legal and premium costs. Indeed, the cost to industry, small business et cetera under the penalties regime will certainly be increasing.

I return to the issue of persons conducting a business. In Queensland PCBUs have a statutory obligation to ensure workplace health and safety. This standard will be amended to ensure health and safety to the extent that is reasonably practicable. This change will mean that the current almost strict liability will be removed and it will allow more scope for defending prosecutions. The bill would therefore see the removal of standards ensuring safety. With regard to a deemed offence for executive officers, the Work Health and Safety Bill 2011 will see the removal of a deemed offence for executive officers. This will require a new due diligence to be placed on company officers under the new laws that must be observed. A hands-on approach within business will be required by all company officers. Quite frankly, without this legislation, most companies work within that scope in that they do consult with their employees on a regular basis. With regard to consultation, the increased consultation obligations with the implementation of this bill will see employers needing to consult with their employees and other duty holders by law. As I said, at present many employers consult with their employees on a regular basis without the enforcement of a law.

With regard to workplace health and safety officers, if the Work Health and Safety Bill 2011 is introduced workplace health and safety officer positions will no longer exist. Given the numbers in this House, we can assume that that is going to be the case. Health and safety representatives would be retained under the new laws and would have powers beyond those they already hold, including a new power to direct unsafe work to stop.

In terms of asbestos, asbestos obviously is a real concern to anybody who works within industry and indeed right across the general population due to the health risks involved. The changing of the definition of asbestos in clause 309 of this bill seeks to ensure that ceramic items and tiling are not included in asbestos audits. Obviously, research has shown that the short fibre known as asbestiform mineral silicates do not cause harm in the form that they take in making flexible fibres, so therefore we support this clarification. I have had no real opportunity to discuss this with people who are expert in that field, but I assume that the research done and the legal and technical aspects of this proposal have been fully explored. After speaking to the officers, that appears to be the case. As I said, we absolutely support that.

The LNP supports the introduction of a review of the operation of the workers compensation scheme to be completed at least once in every five-year period. As the minister will prepare a report about the outcome of the review and then report those findings to the Legislative Assembly, transparency and accountability of the scheme should be assured. This is welcomed because the LNP has deep concerns about the management of WorkCover. Members opposite have ignored and brushed aside the need for a decent, no holds barred review, but this review is long overdue. I recollect the mess that we inherited when coming into government in 1996 and the huge amount of debt that was owed under the WorkCover scheme that was in place at that time.

Mr Hinchliffe: Santo sorted that out, did he?

Mr MALONE: He certainly sorted more out than you guys did, that is for sure. I now turn to the Safety in Recreational Water Activities Bill. What a shambles! What a mess! What a waste of precious legislative time that is so typical of this long-term government. This bill was supposed to be about greater safety and greater protection of water based recreational activities—snorkelling, diving, surfing, jet skiing, windsurfing, parasailing et cetera. One has to look very hard to even find a mention of that in the legislation. Indeed, this bill does nothing of the sort. It is a total waste of our legislative time and an attempt by this government to say that it is addressing serious water safety issues when in fact it does nothing of the sort. This bill is a nonevent and it will do no more than what was contained in the previous bill that it replaces. It takes nearly 50 pages to say what could be said in two.

Mr Dick: I hope you read the second reading speech.

Mr MALONE: I have. There are some vague increases in penalties and an even vaguer requirement for operators to preserve incident/accident sites for inspectors. Exactly how you do that on water—out on the reef and in the surf—I have no idea. I cannot see the point or the relevance at all of some of the issues contained within this bill.


Can the minister point to a well-constructed, practical clause in the legislation that will improve the safety of recreational water activities in Queensland, importantly for tourists, and where? I can find very little to substantiate the need for this bill, except to replace what is already existing. During consideration in detail, could the minister point out how this legislation will improve safety? Quite frankly, I cannot see anything in the bill, but maybe I am not wearing the rose coloured glasses that the minister will be wearing when he replies to my speech.

Mr Dick: Who writes this stuff for you? You didn't write this, surely.

Mr MALONE: Absolutely. There is nothing specific in this bill relating to those activities—snorkelling, diving, surfing, jet skiing, windsurfing, parasailing—nothing at all. As I said, the bill is vague and my understanding is that it does no more than what is in the existing legislation. I conclude by saying that the opposition will not be opposing the bill.

Government members interjected.

Mr MALONE: I thought I would leave that to last. Madam Deputy Speaker, I am being interjected on here. The opposition will be raising the issues. As I said, we accept that national template legislation is important. I think the way this legislation was brought into the House raises some questions. I would have liked the opportunity to have further discussions with industry groups to find out their concerns about this legislation. But we are dealing with this legislation tonight and tomorrow afternoon. We accept that the government has the right and the opportunity to do whatever it wants. As I said, the Liberal National Party has concerns about the way in which this bill has been introduced. I think being the first state in Australia to pass such legislation demands that we have some accountability, because other jurisdictions will reflect on what has been said in this House about this legislation. It is important that in this case we have a clear understanding of the legislation and I certainly will be raising some issues as we go through the process of passing this legislation.

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (4.52 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Work Health and Safety Bill 2011. The purpose of the bill is to provide for work health and safety legislation as part of a system of national work health and safety laws. The bill sets out the legal duties and operating requirements that are to be applied on a nationally consistent basis to all parties responsible for work health and safety, however, with some key changes.

In relation to the removal of privilege against self-incrimination, one of the major changes is that the current ability to refuse to answer questions as part of an investigation on the grounds of self-incrimination will be removed. In relation to change in jurisdiction, the amendments in the legislation will require prosecutions to be heard before magistrates rather than industrial magistrates. I will leave that matter to my colleague the member for Kawana to discuss further.

There is a broadened definition of 'worker' to include labour hire, contractors and subcontractors. Although the concept of a person conducting a business or undertaking as the obligation holder has been retained, to date the responsibility has been limited to a definition of worker which excluded contractors.

Government members interjected.

Ms BATES: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am glad that I have provided some humour in the House this afternoon about this very serious issue of workplace health and safety. In relation to the removal of the standard of ensuring safety, the obligations placed upon PCBUs and others is to ensure workplace health and safety. This standard will be amended to ensure these health and safety aspects to the extent that it is reasonably practicable. Currently, there is a reverse onus of proof requiring the executive officer to establish a defence. These provisions will cease to exist under the new laws. Again, I will leave that issue to my learned colleague to discuss.

In relation to increased consultation obligations, although many employers consult with their workers and other duty holders as a matter of course, this consultation will now be a legislative requirement under the new laws. Health and safety representatives will be retained under the new law and will have powers beyond those they already hold.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the chamber. Could members please keep their conversation to a minimum.

Mr Schwarten: Hear, hear! She's making a good contribution, too.

Ms BATES: Thank you very much. I take that interjection from the member for Rockhampton. These new laws will also include a new power to direct unsafe work to stop. I will now direct my comments to the amendments to the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003 which

provide for a review of the workers compensation scheme every five years, a strengthening of insurance and data-collection arrangements in the construction industry and provisions to assure workers' entitlements to accrue leave whilst they are on workers compensation.

The amendments that apply specifically to the building and construction industry are designed to create whole-of-project relationships and will aim to improve safety, compliance and rehabilitation and influence cultural change in the industry. In April 2010, the government established a working group comprising building and construction industry employers and unions to investigate workers compensation arrangements in the construction industry. Issues raised by the working group included concerns about premium compliance and rehabilitation and return-to-work outcomes. But even hardened Labor supporters are appalled by this arrogant, out-of-touch, on-the-nose Bligh Labor government.

Government members interjected.

Ms BATES: There you go. I did not disappoint. In a transparent and panicked response to yesterday's rolling blockade on the M1 and the unions descending on the Department of Public Works in Brisbane and subsequent protest by the BLF, we witnessed the minister and the Minister for Government Services, Building Industry and Information and Communication Technology make token gestures towards sham contracts. After being bullied into a review by their union mates, the minister could not hold his nerve for more than an hour before announcing the review. The minister admitted that the review was needed to give him a better idea of issues affecting building sites, but he has failed to commit to any action at all. The minister is out of touch with the building industry, and his only solution is to get other people to find the relevant issues for him.

Mr Finn: What would you do?

Ms BATES: I take that interjection by the minister for the building industry. I would probably go and take some photographs. Between this lot and their federal Labor mates, who have allowed these sham contracts to continue, what hope do subcontractors have? In the recent federal budget new reporting requirements were flagged as draconian and politically driven by Bligh Labor's union colleagues. This knee-jerk reaction by the minister is all about state and federal Labor working in tandem to rid Queensland's building and construction industry of self-employed contractors.

The changes will create a massive new layer of red tape for the building and construction industries and have wider impacts on the economy. They will mean that every building and construction industry hirer of a contractor must report every cent paid to that contractor and each contractor to their contractors. This is a Labor led attack on our struggling building and construction sector. Every self-employed contractor will be hit hard. Where will it end? Will the IT industry be next? Queenslanders in the building and construction industry have the right to be their own bosses and should be supported in their efforts to strengthen the industry.

I turn now to the amendments to the definition of 'asbestos' in the bill. A technical amendment to the definition of 'asbestos' is required to clarify that only asbestiform mineral silicates are considered to be asbestos. The current definition inadvertently captures non-asbestiform mineral silicates, found in products such as imported decorative stone tiles, which do not have the particular characteristics that can cause asbestos related diseases. But I am sure many of the victims of mesothelioma in this current day and age were also told that there was no danger there as well.

Today it is appropriate that I again bring to the attention of the House a very serious local issue in Mackay which is putting the students of both Mackay TAFE and Mackay State High School at risk of a daily dose of asbestos. Yesterday, I was shocked to visit these two educational facilities—

Mr DICK: I rise to a point of order. It is dishonest in the extreme to say that students are being placed at risk each and every day at schools in Mackay and at the TAFE. It is dishonest. It is offensive. I ask the member to withdraw.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Does the minister take it as personally offensive?

Mr DICK: I do as the Minister for Education.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask for a withdrawal.

Ms BATES: I will withdraw any comments that the minister found offensive. This government is also good at excluding other materials in its bill, just as it excluded asbestos removal from its asbestos management plans in Mackay. The bill before the House makes changes to the definition of 'asbestos' and the minister is always happy to change the rules on its management.

Yesterday, as I said, I was shocked after visiting these two educational facilities in Mackay, where it is clear that QBuild and the Department of Public Works continue to ignore this deadly problem. At the Mackay TAFE there is an imminent risk of asbestos sheeting plummeting to the ground from metres above, where the sheets are dangerous and have been disregarded by contractors.

Mr Dick: Are you sure of this?

Ms BATES: Absolutely positive. I take the interjection from the minister. I was accompanied by someone with an A class certificate in asbestos removal. Local contractors have directly warned authorities about this issue yet these sheets have been left to rot. Labor has not learnt its lesson after the scandal of asbestos removal only last year when Mackay State High School had broken walls in a play area where asbestos was clearly visible. This Labor government has been aware of this situation for six months and has failed to act, which is atrocious.

In the *Daily Mercury* last year programmed maintenance services branch manager Mark Lee said staff who were not trained in asbestos removal were unaware that sanding was hazardous. This is an unbelievable statement. The government maintains that it has a sound asbestos register, yet these workers were unaware of the dangers to not only students but it seems to themselves. The situation for Mackay students did not get much better last year when a whole year 11 biology class from Mirani State High School was quarantined after the roof of their classroom sagged and dust fell onto students below. They were made to shower in their uniforms and belongings such as shoes, backpacks and uniforms, which were then taken away for testing. The previous minister for public works, Mr Schwarten, outlined the plight of QBuild workers in answer to a question on notice in 2009 when he responded—

QBuild does not hold an 'A' class asbestos removal licence.

As we can see from the above examples, QBuild workers do come into contact with asbestos at our local schools and clearly have not been trained in its proper handling. The minister in his answer stated—

529 (or 56%) QBuild staff have completed asbestos-specific training and hold a 'B' class asbestos removal licence which permits them to remove ten square metres or more of bonded asbestos containing material.

Yet in 2011 we still have our government workers removing and/or maintaining asbestos material in our schools without the proper training and licensing.


On 16 December Mr Schwarten put out a press release on a report into the handling of asbestos at Mackay West State School. In it he admitted that QBuild failed to follow correct procedures. The release stated—

Public Works Minister Robert Schwarten said the report prepared by Ashdale Integrity Solutions found that State Government builder QBuild failed to follow appropriate processes for the decontamination of asbestos at the school.

Furthermore, Mr Schwarten did not release the full document because, as he told Queenslanders, it contained personal information. One can only assume that there was further damning evidence that QBuild failed to follow correct procedures.

Our new minister revealed in an answer to a question on notice just how widespread the problem of asbestos in schools was. Between December 2010 and January 2011 during the school holiday period QBuild conducted asbestos removal in an astonishing 124 schools. Obviously the previous minister did not take asbestos removal seriously otherwise these projects would have been completed a long time before December 2010.

I ask the current minister: how many of these workers who undertook these projects had completed the required asbestos removal training? Examples of incorrect asbestos removal can be found the length and breadth of this state. The newly appointed minister must take the action that his predecessor did not and ensure that all asbestos materials in all schools and other government buildings are handled by licensed tradespeople so that no more people are put at risk. I again ask the minister today to urgently investigate the asbestos at the Mackay TAFE and the Mackay State High School not only for the students but for the workers involved in the removal of asbestos. As I said, I personally took the time yesterday to inspect these sites. The issue of the continuing exposure of students to dangerous asbestos needs to be fixed and fixed today. Queenslanders deserve open and honest government. The LNP will not ignore these experts who warn of dangers in the identification and removal of asbestos related materials in our schools.

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Cleveland—LNP) (5.04 pm): I rise to address the Safety in Recreational Water Activities Bill 2011 as part of the cognate debate of this bill with the Work Health and Safety Bill 2011. Whilst I acknowledge the importance of the more broader provisions of the latter, the focus of my contribution today will be recreational water activities. I acknowledge the contribution and concerns of the shadow minister about the broader WHS legislation. According to the explanatory notes of the bill, the stated main purpose of the Safety in Recreational Water Activities Bill 2011 is to ensure the safety and health of people for whom recreational water activities are provided by a person conducting a business or undertaking.

The bill sets out the operating requirements and legal duties to be applied in Queensland: to protect people against harm to their health, safety or welfare by minimising or, where possible, eliminating risks in the provision of recreational water activities; to provide information, advice, education and training; and to secure compliance through appropriate and effective enforcement measures among other matters. The highest level of protection from risks and hazards arising from the provision of recreational water activities as is reasonably practicable should be afforded to all people taking part in recreational water activities and people present during those activities.

The provisions of the Work Health and Safety Bill 2011 also apply to a person conducting a business or undertaking that provides recreational water activities to ensure the health and safety of workers at a place where the person is providing recreational water activities. Since the national model WHS Act and regulations will not specifically regulate recreational underwater diving and snorkelling, to continue to regulate this important industry sector in Queensland it has therefore been necessary to prepare new stand-alone legislation, the Safety in Recreational Water Activities Bill. As such, it is the aim of this bill to maintain Queensland's high standards of safety for the recreational water activities industry.

Recreational diving and snorkelling are regulated in Queensland under the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995. The provisions made under the act are part 14 and part 15 of the Workplace Health and Safety Regulation 2008 and the Recreational Diving, Recreational Technical Diving and Snorkelling Code of Practice 2010. The regulations and code of practice for all recreational diving and snorkelling will be remade under this bill. I further note that the definition of 'recreational water activities' in the bill has been drafted broadly in the event that the government wishes to regulate other similar activities in the future, and a case could be made that other activities should be considered in the near future.

This bill will apply to the provision of recreational water activities by, as I said, a person conducting a business or undertaking. This bill will operate in tandem with the WHS Bill covering the field only in relation to the safety and health of people for whom recreational water activities are provided. As such, Queensland regulations and codes of practice for recreational diving and snorkelling are remade.

I have pleasure in rising to speak to the diving and snorkelling provisions of this bill, which deliver a framework of regulations within its provisions but which also play a role in terms of potentially heading off another undeclared issue further down the track. The essence of that strategic role is understandably not something covered within the explanatory notes to the bill, nor is it something that I respectfully suggest all members would be necessarily aware of, but it is of vital importance nonetheless and it also is one of a series of reasons why the opposition will not oppose its passage through the House. In saying that, I want to take a few minutes to address this and other pertinent matters, because while members on our side are not opposing this bill, we do not, however, support all of the policy directions of this government when it comes to marine, boating and fishing issues that impact on our coastal lifestyle and marine industries. In fact, the lock-up of the oceans and the 'ban boaties and fishers' attitude of this government under the influence of the green parties is hurting marine industries and those who rely on them for a living and causing pain to everyday mum-and-dad fishers, boaties and others who cherish our coastal lifestyle.

It is unfortunate that those opposite, in other contexts, are driven by a small but influential band of environmental theorists whose only experience with Queensland water is to seek to stop as many Queenslanders as they can from enjoying it. A can-do Queensland government will not apologise for allowing recreational water leisure activities within our environment and will not make Queenslanders feel guilty for enjoying our coastal and bayside lifestyles, as this Labor-Greens alliance seeks to do. Rather, we will encourage Queenslanders to enjoy their coastal lifestyles and, at the same time, to live sustainably and responsibly in terms of our marine environment. A can-do Queensland government will protect both our marine and coastal environments and our right to live within those environments.

I return to the bill specifically. Firstly, I want to be on the record congratulating the Queensland diving industry and its participants for achieving the highest standards in the world in terms of diving safety, for their commitment to appropriate training and for their commitment to the Queensland marine environment. I also want to be on the record congratulating the Queensland diving industry and its participants for having designed the strictest and most professional regime of diving practices in not only Australia but also the world. For more than 20 years the Queensland diving industry, including recreational diving and the training of new scuba divers, has had in place a code of practice. For two decades now Queensland has had an effective code of practice. Other states are only now starting to think what a code of practice might mean for them. Basically, this bill embodies the Queensland diving industry's existing code of practice in a legislative framework.

Therefore, despite the obvious duplications and overlaps with the WHS Bill, which runs in parallel with this legislation, this bill is one that has our support. Why? If you were diving in Japan you would have a one-in-15,000 chance of something going fatally wrong. If you were diving in the United States you would have a one-in-100,000 chance. If you were diving in Australia in a state or territory other than Queensland you would have a one-in-120,000 chance. However, if you were diving in Queensland, where the industry has had a code of practice and the most strict regime and commitment to safety in the world, you would have a one-in-400,000 chance. I say again: you would have a one-in-400,000 chance of something going fatally wrong. Let us keep that one incident in perspective. Apart from a couple of widely publicised exceptions and the controversial circumstances surrounding them, the majority of those cases involved people who suffered from medical calamity that could not have been anticipated in advance. You are more likely to enter the next world while on a golf course than being face to face with a fish and alongside a member of the Queensland diving industry.

However, tragedies do occur and we need to recognise that in some sports risk minimisation is an appropriate course of action to follow. The fact is that, for the most part, we have been very successful in minimising that risk in Queensland. According to industry research undertaken in conjunction with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, there are 1.4 million dives per year on the Great Barrier Reef. Each year there are some four million to eight million recreational visits to the Great Barrier Reef and around two million pay the Great Barrier Reef marine tax. Many of them are scuba divers and snorkellers. With such volumes of visitations, it is imperative that we have the highest levels of safety.

Queensland's leading level of dive safety is something that, in the first instance, was driven by the industry through its code of practice. That code has been supported in this place by a series of governments of different persuasions and the bill before us today is one that I understand is supported by organisations such as Dive Queensland. Dive Queensland is a non-profit membership based incorporated association advancing marine related tourism activities in this state. Dive Queensland is a member of the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators, and I understand that AMPTO also supports this bill. About 50 member organisations are with AMPTO and some of those have hundreds of employees. Pro Dive, which conducts about 1,500 dives a year, and other industry-leading operators will also affirm the direction and code of practice. Why is that? Because it is based on the same code of practice that they have had in place for 20 years.


I also acknowledge that it is my understanding that there has been very good cooperation and liaison between WHS and the operators of dive businesses. Other departments could learn from this. Provided that the downstream inspections and implementations are carried out in a cooperative manner similar to these consultations, no problems exist.

We need to understand that the duplication in parallel legislation comes about because of the desire in Queensland to specifically include diving operators as a category. Why is that? Because they are not specifically included now in other states. While there is an overarching desire to harmonise WHS legislation throughout Australia via COAG, later it would be possible, but simultaneously totally unacceptable, for Queensland scuba divers, Queensland snorkellers, Queensland's outstanding dive industry, Queensland's thousands of volunteer environmental divers and Queensland's marine tourists to be swept up in new provisions introduced in other states and then subsequently harmonised back with Queensland. Some individuals in other states are now trying to come up with their own code of practice and have it incorporated in legislation. Should that happen, I suggest it would be inappropriate to have unproven codes and rules that are developed interstate being foisted onto Queensland through a reverse harmonisation process. By specifically including the dive industry now in the Queensland legislation, this can be and should be the model that other states adopt. Figuratively speaking, let us have the dog wagging the tail and not the tail wagging the dog.

Already Queensland has the highest standards in the country and amongst the highest in the world. We need to protect that. We do not need Queensland's diving industry possibly being overridden, in a bureaucratic sense, by future legislation introduced in other states and then retrofitted to our diving and snorkelling industry through COAG's well-intentioned harmonisation. Our industry has the record and should be rewarded for that effort by being identified as it is in this bill's provisions. That is our understanding. Let others rise to Queensland's high standards. That is the viewpoint of the industry and the industry's most experienced occupational health and safety officers.

Finally, I make this point: as a marine sciences graduate I have done a considerable amount of diving and snorkelling, including on the Great Barrier Reef, in many parts of the Bass Strait and along the southern coast of New South Wales. From my diving and snorkelling experience in different states I have found that Queensland's industry accreditation, training and safety standards are outstanding.

Diving and snorkelling are key parts of the Queensland lifestyle and must continue to be seen in that way. A coastal lifestyle and a marine interface are vitally important threads in the fabric of this state. The volunteers working on environmental programs related to reef issues in Queensland and the commitment of people like Tony Fontes from Diving Careers and the Order of Underwater Coral Heroes do not go unsighted by our side. When Queensland divers go on overseas diving holidays, they look for people trained in this state and, fortunately, there are many of them. With those reservations highlighted, I support the recreational water activities aspect of the bill.

 **Mrs SMITH** (Burleigh—ALP) (5.17 pm): This afternoon my particular interest is in the Safety in Recreational Water Activities Bill 2011. Recreational diving and snorkelling are an iconic part of our tourism industry for both Australian and international enthusiasts. They are popular activities, but they are not without an element of risk. The fact is that recreational diving and snorkelling activities are challenging for dive operators due to those risks.

I am neither a diver nor a snorkeller. The sound of my own breathing underwater spooks me. However, at the start of every week my electorate officer Liza, an advanced scuba diver, comes to work with some great diving adventure stories. Liza describes diving as a very peaceful activity and likens it to discovering another world. She describes the life that exists underwater, from enormous gropers to the tiniest seahorses. One of her more fascinating stories was about her recent dive on the SS *Yongala*, which was sunk in 1911 whilst travelling from Mackay to Townsville.

However, diving and snorkelling activities are conducted in a potentially hostile environment in which some risks can be predicted but not controlled. The Queensland government established a comprehensive regulatory regime for recreational diving and snorkelling under the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995 in response to community and industry concerns about safety in those activities.

In developing the regulations and code of practice, the government consulted widely with key stakeholders involved in recreational scuba diving and snorkelling. It also established a workplace health and safety unit of dive experts in Cairns. The unit provides specialist services and advice to operators to improve diving health and safety throughout Queensland. There can be no doubt that the industry here is one of the best, if not the best, regulated dive industries anywhere in the world. The Queensland dive industry is aware of the potential damage to its operations from significant incidents that harm divers and snorkellers. It is regularly consulted by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland on ways to improve safety.


Everyone understands the need to minimise risks and to assure tourists that the Queensland scuba and recreational diving industry is well regulated. There has been a recent challenge to the Queensland regulatory regime for health and safety in recreational diving and snorkelling because of the national harmonisation of workplace health and safety laws. Most of the jurisdictions involved in harmonisation do not support specifically regulating this industry, but they do not oppose Queensland's interest in preserving its own regulations.

Although it became clear that action would be needed to retain existing safeguards, the government was not prepared to proceed without careful consultation with industry stakeholders and interested parties. The views of operators and the relevant unions were sought and Surf Life Saving Queensland was consulted. The dive industry voiced concern about the prospect of losing the regulations it helped to develop. It recognised the probability that, without regulations, illnesses and deaths associated with recreational diving are likely to increase and that participant numbers may increase.

The solution that the Queensland government has developed in consultation with stakeholders, the Safety in Recreational Water Activities Bill, will enable the government to continue to protect people accessing commercially organised recreational diving and snorkelling. The bill will reassure the community and visitors and maintain Queensland's safety reputation.

Dive tourism provides significant follow-on effects to the local economy ranging from the hire of vessels and accommodation to the contribution to local small businesses. On the Gold Coast, we are blessed with our beautiful coastline and warm waters. The expansion of the local dive industry would be of great benefit to our city.

I commend the minister, the department and the many dive industry representatives and government representatives who have helped to achieve this positive outcome for a vital component of our tourism industry. All the people consulted support the retention of the current regulations for recreational diving and snorkelling through the new bill and no-one supports deregulation or self-regulation or any fundamental change to the regulations. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Hon. JH JARRATT** (Whitsunday—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Manufacturing and Small Business) (5.22 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Work Health and Safety Bill and the Safety in Recreational Water Activities Bill, which have been cognated for debate today. The Work Health and Safety Bill comes from a COAG agreement on the national seamless economy which looks to harmonise a series of legislation across all states and territories of Australia. This particular bill that is before the House today is of significant benefit to many of our businesses in this state that actually operate across jurisdictions. They may have a head office in Queensland or in another state but branch offices anywhere around the country. So to not have to comply with six sets of work health and safety legislation would be an enormous benefit in terms of savings of both time and often money for those businesses.

Mostly today, I want to direct my attention to the Safety in Recreational Water Activities Bill and to say how pleased I am to see the support of the member for Cleveland for this bill. It is fantastic to see because, indeed, this is something on which Queensland stands alone not just in the nation but also in the world in terms of the quality of our safety record. That, of course, is borne out of the legislation and regulations that sit around the industry. I was also really interested to hear his suggestion that we might further regulate the industry. It is not like those opposite to call for more red tape and more regulation, but I am pleased to see that they do acknowledge that there are times when regulation is actually a benefit to the community broadly and to business specifically.

As has been said here previously, Queensland waters and Queensland industry offer some of the best diving and snorkelling adventures on earth. Like others in this chamber, the first time I put on a mask and actually looked at the coral garden beneath the water—it was off Low Isles—I literally hyperventilated. I could not believe the beauty of the stunning scene that was before me. So off I went to do a diving course and, from there, an advanced open water diving course. It is truly a most wonderful world down there, especially with the Great Barrier Reef on our doorstep. We are just so fortunate.

The Great Barrier Reef, with its tropical islands and warm waters, is home to a huge and colourful kaleidoscope of reefs, shoals, coral caves and the odd shipwreck, all with that exotic tropical marine life in abundance. As I have already said, we can also boast to be the safest marine tourism destination in the world thanks to the existing legislation, and the facts speak for themselves. We would all agree that any injury or fatality in the water is a tragedy, but the statistics in Queensland stack up well. For every 400,000 visitors holidaying in Queensland waters, on average there is just one death. As I said, any loss of life is tragic, but our track record is outstanding compared to the rest of Australia and the world. In the US, for example, one in every 100,000 visitors will lose their life undertaking marine activities and in Japan there is one fatality for every 15,000 visitors. I think the record is a very stark indicator of the absolute success that our legislation provides the industry. In fact, the industry has fought for these standards, knowing that it will protect it and its reputation and therefore its members' businesses.


Of course, recreational diving and snorkelling are a very important part of Queensland's tourism industry and equally important is our reputation as the world's safest marine tourism destination. It is no accident that we have that good safety record, with the sector strictly regulated by Queensland's strong work health and safety laws. Strong safety standards form part of our competitive advantage and, therefore, it is important to maintain and build on this reputation as a safe diving and snorkelling destination.

Approximately 3.5 million people are involved in recreational diving and snorkelling activities each year in Queensland. It is estimated that diving and snorkelling inject around \$1.4 billion per annum into the Australian economy, with more than half of all recreational dives taking place in Queensland. So given the significant economic benefits that diving and snorkelling deliver to the Queensland economy, it is important to ensure that those who visit Queensland enjoy these activities in safety.

Despite our good safety record, there have been tragedies in the past. This is part of the reason that the Queensland government takes the safety and protection of divers and snorkellers so seriously. As highlighted in the minister's second reading speech, Queensland is the only state that comprehensively regulates the recreational diving and snorkelling industry under occupational health and safety laws. The Queensland government believes that the adoption of uniform safety laws across Australia is an important regulatory reform and a significant achievement. However, this government is not prepared to compromise in any way our capacity to maintain safe standards in the dive sector.

As the national model Work Health and Safety Bill 2011 does not include diving, we are proceeding with stand-alone legislation to ensure that the strict safety standards in Queensland's dive industry are maintained and safeguarded. This bill has strong support from industry associations such as AMPTO and recreational dive operators as it will maintain Queensland's very high safety standards among stakeholders in the industry. As I have said, it is the industry itself that has, over the last 10 years or so, driven the strength of the regulations that apply to its own industry because it knows the protection it affords its members. This government is certainly not prepared to lose those protections, given the importance that these activities have for our tourism industry, to the Queensland way of life and, of course, to our economy.

We want to ensure that tourists are safe and protected when they visit our great state. It is certainly great coming to dive or snorkel on the Great Barrier Reef. It is a very important part of the experience of many of the visitors to our state. We want them to be able to enjoy that unique natural attraction with the highest level of confidence. We want to ensure that businesses operating in the sector meet the highest levels of compliance. This legislation will protect existing standards and ensure that Queensland continues to deliver unrivalled diving and snorkelling experiences in the safest possible regulatory environment. I commend the minister for both of these bills.

 **Ms FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (5.29 pm): I rise to speak in this cognate debate in support of the Work Health and Safety Bill 2011, the main aim of which is to secure the health and safety of working people and workplaces through the elimination or minimisation of risks. The health and safety of working people is a high priority of the Bligh Labor government, and we make no apology for that. Queensland under Labor has always had strong workplace health and safety laws—most recently those enacted under the Queensland Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995. This bill continues that work which has been carried out over a long period of time by the government to ensure there is a regulatory environment to enshrine good practice in this area. We recognise that there is always room for improvement, so this bill contains improvements to the standard of work health and safety in Queensland and elsewhere in Australia.

I sat appalled to hear the contribution of the member for Mirani, who is the shadow minister for industrial relations at the moment—though it is hard to keep up with who on that side is in favour with Campbell at any one point in time. Why was I appalled? Because it was clear that the LNP has no interest in the work health and safety of working people at all. A working person has the right to go to work and know that they are going to come home in one piece. The families of a working person have the right to be confident that their loved one is going to come home in one piece from work. That is why governments need to be vigilant about implementing strong work health and safety laws, but the LNP clearly is not.

The LNP have not been interested enough in this policy area to know that the debate about the national work health and safety laws has been going on since 2008, and they have not been interested enough in work health and safety laws to know what that debate has been about. They have not been interested enough to be in touch with industry and key industry stakeholders to understand the extensive consultation that has occurred both nationally and within this state, and they have not been interested enough in work health and safety to understand the strong input that has been provided by those groups. No, their contribution to this critical debate has been to flick through the bill and pick up a couple of clauses here and there that they do not like. Their response to this bill is just more of the same. It is not about policy. It is not about consultation. It is not about having a well-thought-out plan. It is just about throwing a couple of bombs and walking away. Well, Queensland working people deserve better.

The implementation of harmonised work health and safety laws across Australia benefits everyone—workers and employers. Under this new legislation, businesses operating across state boundaries will have certainty and consistency in the work health and safety laws that apply to the operation of their business, no matter where it is in Australia. And this same consistency and certainty will apply to workers as they move around to different workplaces across the country.

One of the most significant improvements proposed is the specific duty that will apply to officers of corporations and unincorporated bodies such as clubs and associations. Under the model Work Health and Safety Act, these officers will have a duty to exercise due diligence to ensure that the person conducting the business or undertaking meets their work health and safety duties. This duty to exercise due diligence is a positive and proactive obligation on these officers who have the capacity to significantly affect the corporation's financial standing. This is different from what we currently have in Queensland.

Under the current legislation, the accountability on officers only applies after there has been a contravention by the corporation. That is, if the corporation is found to have committed an offence then each of the corporation's executive officers has committed an offence in failing to ensure the corporation met its obligations. Under these existing arrangements, executive officers have as a defence that they exercised reasonable diligence.

Under the model Work Health and Safety Act, the duty of officers is a positive one that will require officers to proactively take steps to ensure the business or undertaking meets their work health and safety obligations. This means that officers will need to acquire knowledge of health and safety matters and keep that knowledge up to date. It means that they will have to understand the health and safety risks involved in the operation of the business or undertaking, and it also means that they will need to ensure the business or undertaking has both the resources and the processes in place to eliminate or minimise health and safety risks and to respond to incidents when they do occur.

This is going to ensure that all the executive officers involved in running the company are accountable, that all those involved in running the company have the responsibility to ensure that the health and safety of workers is looked after on a day-to-day basis. This has to be better than only holding people to account when something goes wrong. Rather than waiting until things go wrong, we want to know that the business is doing everything it can to ensure that the health and safety of workers is not compromised in the day-to-day operation of the business.

Under these provisions, a work health and safety inspector can, during a routine inspection of a business, ask an executive officer to show evidence that they are meeting their due diligence requirements. The inspector can issue them with an improvement notice if they cannot demonstrate due diligence. It is a pity that other states and territories were not able to see the merit in requiring businesses to employ a workplace health safety officer. Under current health and safety laws in Queensland, workplace health safety officers are employed to provide information on the hazards and risks in the workplace. These officers were included in the recommendations of the national review team from which the model work health laws were developed. Unfortunately, the recommendation was not accepted by other states.

While there will not be a legislative requirement for workplaces to have a workplace health safety officer when the laws come in next year, Queensland is in the unique position of having these trained safety advisers in place. Businesses that retain their trained safety adviser will have a valuable resource available to assist the business and its officers in meeting their work health and safety obligations. I commend the inclusion of these new requirements for officers in the model work health and safety laws.

There are two other aspects of this bill on which I would like to particularly comment. One is the capacity it provides to make sure workers will have a greater say in how their workplaces operate safely. This bill recognises the benefits of the timely and effective resolution of work health and safety issues by requiring work participants to engage in processes to achieve that outcome. In the new environment, any person conducting a business or undertaking has a duty to consult with workers who carry out activities for the business or undertaking if these workers are, or are likely to be, directly affected by a matter relating to health or safety at work.

In terms of representation of workers, employees who are working within each business or undertaking are grouped into work groups that entail each group being represented by an elected member—the health and safety representative. The use of work groups provides a more effective method of representation because they can be based on the needs of the particular workplace.


Finally, I refer to the technical amendment to the definition of asbestos which is required to clarify that only asbestiform mineral silicates are considered to be asbestos. The current definition inadvertently captures non-asbestiform mineral silicates, found in products such as imported decorative stone tiles, which do not have the particular characteristics that can cause asbestos related diseases.

I took great offence at the throwaway comment of the member for Mudgeeraba, who implied that people with mesothelioma could somehow doubt that this amendment had been thought through with their best interests in mind. I know that this amendment has been discussed thoroughly with the excellent Queensland Asbestos Related Disease Support Society and that they are comfortable with this amendment. The government takes very seriously its responsibility to ensure any legislation around asbestos is watertight, and the advice of the Queensland Asbestos Related Disease Support Society is invaluable in this regard.

I have a strong personal commitment to continuous improvement of work health and safety legislation in this state. Unfortunately, this commitment has been fuelled by the particular link between work health and safety and asbestos. We know that it was too long before anyone really realised the damage that asbestos can do. With the strong manufacturing history of the Bulimba electorate, this has meant that too many workers were being exposed to asbestos at dangerous levels. Now we have a number of local people—and it is a number that is too high—suffering from asbestos related disease. That is why I am proud of the Queensland government's record on asbestos management. We took over from a conservative government that refused to acknowledge the dangers and that kept using it when building public buildings.

Some 16 years ago asbestos related disease was only just being recognised as a compensatable disease. But, at that point, it was still being allowed by the Queensland government with just a 'be careful' warning. Now we are dealing with the people who contracted the disease at that time. Now operators have to be qualified and licensed to remove and dispose of asbestos. Now, as soon as one gets their medical diagnosis, they go on the register. The legislation and WorkCover arrangements have been progressively amended as we have found out more about the disease. I am sure that the minister will speak eloquently about the amount of money that is being committed to asbestos removal and management across this state.

We must be vigilant in protecting Queenslanders in their workplace. That is why I support this bill. I congratulate the minister for his work and his dedication in bringing this important bill to fruition. I would like to acknowledge Paul Goldsborough and his team from the department for their outstanding work in this area over a number of years. I commend this bill to the House.

 **Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (5.41 pm): I rise to speak to the Work Health and Safety Bill and Safety in Recreational Water Activities Bill in this cognate debate. Whilst I respect the member for Bulimba, can I take issue with one comment that the member made. She claimed that the LNP do not care about workers' safety. Can I say that I believe every single person in this chamber is concerned about workers' safety. If the auditorium were full every single person here would have concerns about workers' safety. I do not think any of us want to see a family member leave home and not return well and whole.

We have had an incident in Gladstone only this week where a young man—I say he is young; he is in his 50s—went to work on a construction site and had an accident. He is in hospital now. He is at least a single amputee and he may be a bilateral amputee. I know that the unions have stepped in and there are meetings with the company involved in relation to the safety implications of that incident. However, for all of us, it is a terrible situation when somebody that we know or indeed someone we do not know goes to work and does not come home. This region is well acquainted with that with the mining industry inland from here. I think every single one of us has a concern about workers' safety and a concern about the people in our community.

I thank the minister for the briefing afforded to the Independents. I apologise that I do not have their last names, but I thank Paul, Barry and Aldo for the time they gave. They were able to answer all of the issues that we raised.

The nationalisation of workplace health and safety is a logical step. Skills portability in Australia is an accepted norm. We have major contractors like Golding Contractors and Bechtel working in my electorate that have contracts interstate and, in some instances, overseas. Some of their workers move with the contracting jobs. It will be excellent for workers across Australia to know that irrespective of the state they are in the workplace health and safety obligations will be the same and the protections will be the same. I believe that nationalisation is welcome.

There are changes to the Workplace Health and Safety Act to repeal the dangerous goods act and also to provide a head of power in the bill for the regulations to be re-established. We discussed in the briefing the extent of workplace health and safety inspectorates. It was acknowledged that there are places other than workplaces where these inspectors need to be afforded the opportunity to visit.

One area which is becoming quite common, for want of better word, is the lifts that are in homes to assist people with mobility challenges. There are water lifts and those sorts of things. I know that there are residents in my electorate who have had water lifts installed so that the occupants can quietly enjoy the benefits of living in their own homes. Those lifts, whether a water lift or an electronic lift, need to be safe for not only the impaired but also other users.

We did have some concerns about the ability for officers to go to places other than workplaces. The lifts was one example. The other example that was given was a home in Ipswich where there was a significant cache of explosives found in a garage. Had those explosives been detonated, accidentally or otherwise, it would have caused a significant community incident. In those extreme circumstances I certainly agree that inspectors need those powers. What my concern would be is if those powers were used indiscriminately or without justifiable reason. The advisers clarified that that was not the intent. We were also advised that mining is going to be aligned under the workplace health and safety legislation, but it is not contained in this bill as it is not quite ready yet.

I think the member for Bulimba gave an excellent contribution in relation to the changes to asbestos recognition. Nonasbestiform will be excluded. It was inadvertently included in the asbestos legislation. Like many Australians, we have been angered by the activities of some companies because, after they knew of the dangers of asbestos, they continued to use asbestos materials and then, when it became evident, they fought the obligation to pay compensation. We will find in times to come that there are things that are happening now that will be questionable in hindsight. I think as soon as that information is known steps should be taken to protect families and individuals.


This bill will also amend the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act in that it will ensure that accrued holidays and sick leave will be reinstated as a right of accrued leave for people on WorkCover. If someone has been injured at work it is already a very difficult and emotional time. After a reasonably short period of time they are on a reduced income and to lose that holiday and sick leave accrual is an added disbenefit. I welcome that change.

There is also a change to allow for appeals to the Director of Public Prosecutions. If a family member or an injured worker or a union believes that the department has not adequately prosecuted an employer for an incident this will move the process from the Industrial Relations Court to the criminal court system. We were advised that employers wanted this process. My underlying principle is that provided the workers that will be caught in this process are treated fairly, with dignity and transparently I believe that will be a welcome change.

The duty of care placed on an employer will be changed to what is reasonably practical to comply with the regulations and comply with the code. The example that we were given was a very practical one. A small business with a relatively modest turnover may have old machinery. Under the current jurisdiction, an officer could direct for that machinery to be replaced. The example was given of a family business with a turnover of \$50,000 or \$70,000. If they were directed to replace, say, a forklift because it was not unsafe but old, then that could be more than that business was worth. This allows for the reasonably practicable test to be given to those directions.

The other issue I want to speak about is the changes to recreational diving. Sadly, over the last few years Queensland has got a reputation for one incident in particular that was not attributable to the company but rather to an intent on the part of a married man. It brought negative publicity to our diving industry. Generally, the industry works well and wants to work responsibly. Whilst other states will not have this regulation—they certainly do not have the level of water recreation that we do—it will reinstate the standards for the teaching of diving. It will transfer the existing regulations to the Safety in Recreational Water Activities Bill—I am told that it will just be activities such as diving and whitewater rafting—but there is no intent to regulate all sorts of water activities, and I am pleased to hear that.

Both of these bills deal with the safety and wellbeing of individuals and families in both recreational settings and workplace settings. As I said, all of us want to see people at work dealt with safely so that they can return home to their family and be reunited healthy and well. I support the bills.

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (5.51 pm): Today, to the delight of those members opposite and in full anticipation, I rise to contribute to the cognate debate on the two government bills, the Work Health and Safety Bill 2011 and the Safety in Recreational Water Activities Bill 2011. For ease of reference and for the benefit of government members opposite, so as not to confuse them, I will deal with each bill separately.

Mr Malone interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the shadow minister. We certainly would not want to make it too complicated in dealing with two bills at the same time, so I will separate them in the debate today.

Ms Jones: You're not funny; you're just embarrassing. They're walking out.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the member for Ashgrove that she absolutely agrees that I should deal with them separately so she gains a full appreciation and understanding of the issues involved.

Today the shadow minister started his contribution by noting that, considering there are some 400 pages of legislation, there has been very little time for consultation. The minister interjected that there has been a draft bill since December 2009 in terms of the national framework that was being looked at. That may in fact be correct, but the issue remains that the bill we are debating today was introduced on 10 May 2011. We are not debating a bill that was introduced some time ago; today we are debating a bill that was introduced into the House on 10 May 2011, some two weeks ago. I understand why the minister would interject and say that everyone has known about this for a long period of time, but I would point out to the minister that upon my contacting the Queensland Law Society in terms of its view on the bill its absolute response was that it had no time to prepare for the bill that we are debating today.

Mr Shine interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the member for Toowoomba North. The Queensland Law Society plays a vital role in the consultation process on bills that are debated in the House, and I for one know that many members on both sides of the House look upon its advice in order to delve into issues that we may address at the time of debating a bill, particularly during consideration in detail. However, we will not have that opportunity because this bill was introduced only two weeks ago and we are debating it today. Nevertheless—

Mr Malone: We were actually advised only on Friday that this bill would come before the House.

Mr BLEIJIE: Indeed. I take the interjection from the shadow minister that we were only advised last week that the bill would in fact come before the House in Mackay during the regional sittings. On that note, the opposition had a briefing yesterday, just before the briefing for the Independents. I thank the three gentlemen who attended the briefing and who attempted to answer our questions. I thank them for that briefing. That we were advised on Friday that this bill would be debated during the regional sittings of parliament and we were given a briefing the day before is a sad reflection on the minister—not the participants at the briefing but the minister. I do thank those three gentlemen who—

Mr Dick interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection; the minister is not resigning. I thought I had got him there and I thought he was on the ropes and he was going to announce his resignation as a minister of the Crown. I am bitterly disappointed, but I still have many pages to go. Maybe by the end of my contribution we can convince the minister to understand his own incompetence in this place so we can get the outcome that we on this side so desire. We so desire that outcome.

The bill contains relevant provisions that amend the workers compensation scheme to include five-year reviews commencing from 2012 and other associated entitlements which are able to accrue whilst a worker is on leave under the workers compensation arrangements with the employer. In 2008 a meeting of the Council of Australian Governments signed an intergovernmental agreement for reform in occupational health and safety which has led to the development of national work health and safety laws. Recent national agreements at COAG meetings under the national partnership agreement to deliver a seamless national economy have set the agenda and framework for national work health and safety laws that cross state boundaries. Under the national partnership and review of occupational health and safety legislation, the Commonwealth, state and territory governments have to enact the national model work health and safety regulations by December 2011.

In April 2010 the Productivity Commission released a report titled *Performance benchmarking of Australian business regulation: occupational health and safety*. Queensland workplaces were identified in that report as the most dangerous in the nation, with the highest death rate and seriously high injury rates reported. I take on board the comments made by the member for Gladstone that all members of the House would always seek to ensure Queensland workplaces are as safe as they can be. Close friends of mine lost their son in a workplace health and safety accident. He worked for a scaffolding firm in Brisbane. He was killed two years ago when the scaffolding collapsed. I for one would always support legislation that enables us to contribute to safer workplaces because I have seen it happen—both as an MP, through correspondence with constituents, and personally, having been affected by good, close friends of mine losing their young son, who was married with young children.

There is no doubt—and I have said it in debate in this place many times—that Queensland is overregulated. One can see that when one looks at statistics on the number of pages of regulations in this state. I think at last count it was about 70,000 pages. It is probably more than that now, but Queensland is certainly one of the most overregulated states. And it all comes back to the Labor Party—the Queensland government—because anything it does always has to entail more paperwork, more red tape and more bureaucracy for business, for employees, for employers, for politicians, for members of the public, for the good people of Mackay.

Under Labor governments, we always have an overregulation in anything that they touch. Queensland workers have seen more red tape and bureaucracy from this government—a government that is certainly focused on spin rather than on delivering real outcomes for Queensland workers. Queensland is a state that relies heavily on industry, such as mining, construction and manufacturing, to sustain the economy and jobs for Queenslanders. Accordingly, we need workplace health and safety regulations that protect Queenslanders in their workplaces, with the emphasis on safety in conjunction with high productivity to reduce our workplace deaths and serious injury rates and still maintain competitive advantages. When we look at workers compensation schemes in Queensland, we see that for a long time there has been a serious financial cloud hanging over them—since the Beattie government was elected in 1998. When we look at the WorkCover board, we see that it is still heavily stacked with union bosses.

Ms Grace: Rubbish.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take that interjection from the member for Brisbane Central who says that that is rubbish.

Ms Grace: It is.

Mr BLEIJIE: Okay. I take the interjection. The member says that that is rubbish. I point out to the member for Brisbane Central that the WorkCover board still has on it the Labor Holdings founder Ian Brusasco, the General Secretary of the Queensland Council of Unions, Ron Monaghan, and the Queensland State Secretary of the Australian Workers Union, Bill Ludwig. We are talking about workers compensation schemes and workplace health and safety. I am certainly talking about the WorkCover board, which includes heavy union bosses, which has been denied by members opposite in their interjections.

In an article in the *Courier-Mail* of 4 April 2010 the President of the Queensland Chamber of Commerce and Industry, David Goodwin, stated—

I think management needs to be investigated and they need to have a look at its internal protocols.

The same article stated—

Trilby Misso chief executive Graeme McFadyen said the public had been 'hoodwinked' and the picture being painted by the Government was a facade.

Mr Watt interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take that interjection by the member for Everton. The only people who were storming were the bunch of union members in Brisbane who I saw on the news. If we are talking about stampedes, then let us talk about the union stampede in Brisbane yesterday. I saw a report—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ryan): Order! Member for Kawana, you are fully aware of the terms of the bill. I ask that you come back to the terms of the bill.

Mr BLEIJIE: Indeed, Mr Deputy Speaker. Thank you—

Mr Hoolihan interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Keppel.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Speaker, thank you for your protection from the member for Keppel. I always appreciate it when you come to the protection of those opposite.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Kawana, I have asked you to come back to the terms of the bill and I expect you to do that.

Mr BLEIJIE: Indeed. In 2009-10, WorkCover compensation payments of \$1.283 billion were paid out to injured Queensland workers—an increase of almost 30 per cent in just two years. Common-law claims continue to spiral out of control and they increased by 36 per cent on figures for the previous year. In fact, in June 2010 the Bligh government had to rush through legislation in an attempt to revive the WorkCover scheme for industry compensation cover. I note that since then industry professionals and the members of the legal community whom I have talked to have said that those laws that were introduced have certainly brought under control some of the aspects of that potential ballooning of costs. I fully acknowledge that. The legislation included a cap of \$300,000 on claims and other contributory negligence factors that were, in fact, long overdue. I know that I have constituents in my own electorate who have had to recover from significant workplace injuries. At times their subsequent dealings with WorkCover have caused mental anguish and suffering rather than offering vital financial assistance to help them and their families while they recover from injury. It is incumbent on governments to have in place workers compensation schemes that not only are viable for the taxpayer but also support injured workers and their families while recovering quickly from a workplace injury and then returning to work. The workers compensation scheme must be sustainable as well.

The bill before the House includes a provision for a review of the operation of workers compensation schemes in Queensland at least once every five years. The bill also contains a technical change to the definition of asbestos, which states that asbestiform mineral silicates are considered to be asbestos. The change is intended to ensure that asbestos related diseases are appropriately covered.

My main concern with this legislation is the change in the jurisdiction that will require the prosecution to be heard before a magistrate. Appeals will also be heard before the District Court and then go on to the High Court in the general system of justice in Queensland. Indeed, the shadow minister in his contribution talked about the jurisdictional changes. I note that at the time there were some interjections—saying that that was not the case and that nothing had changed. In fact, there has been a change, because the categories of offences will be heard by magistrates and judges in the District Court and then through our general courts system in Queensland.

It is no secret that our general courts are already backlogged and struggling to deal with the enormous case load that is presented to them. The government should be considering measures to reduce this workload and not put more pressure on a system that is at times bursting at the seams. We are not trying to be smart about this issue. We are not trying to be cheeky about raising this issue. I am simply saying—and this matter was confirmed in the briefing yesterday in terms of the three categories of offences that we will have and the court system that will hear them—that this change will impact on our current judicial system. I am simply making the point that our courts need assistance. I just ask the minister in his reply to take into consideration the comments that were made by the members opposite in terms of the jurisdictional change and what additional resources will be potentially applied to the Magistrates Court and the District Court to take on this extra workload.

I think this is a legitimate issue that the opposition should be raising with the minister. We only have to look at the issue that I talked about in parliament this morning in terms of jurisdictional issues—which, of course, this bill deals with—and the State Coroner and magistrates in the regions, particularly in the central region, acting as coroners. Those magistrates need assistance in terms of reducing that coronial workload. So when we look at the whole aspect of our judicial system, I ask the Attorney-General to provide advice to the opposition as to how he sees this matter playing out in terms of jurisdictional change. I look forward to that contribution from the minister.

It comes as no surprise that the opposition is fully cognisant of the fact that, without properly resourcing our courts, this jurisdictional change will impose an extra workload on the courts. That is why this morning in this chamber I talked about the establishment of another coroner to help ease the workload of the Magistrates Court in central and regional Queensland. Perhaps if the government accepted our policy on that issue it would assist the government with this bill, because it would relieve the pressure on the magistrates in regional Queensland and that would allow those magistrates to take up the slack that this bill has the potential to create.

The estimated cost of the Work Health and Safety Bill is not determined in legislation, but I recognise the impact that these changes will have, particularly on business. There is a recognised cost for the Queensland based businesses that meet consumer demand across state boundaries. Clearly, in these circumstances national law will reduce red tape. That is something that business needs desperately. In fact, it has been desperately crying out for that for some 20 years.


Clause 172 of the bill provides for the abrogation of the privilege against self-incrimination. The minister mentioned this. I note that in the explanatory notes to the bill this privilege is waived to compel the provision of information currently available for regulators across Australia and that the focus of this provision is on determining the facts leading to the breach of workplace health and safety rather than on subsequent prosecution. This provision is to identify the cause of safety breaches so that further injuries or potential loss of life can be prevented.

The bill will, in fact, remove a long-established privilege against self-incrimination. This privilege entitles a person to refuse to answer any question or produce any document if the answer or the production would tend to incriminate that person. This common law privilege has been recognised and is supported through evidentiary legislation and is fundamental to the principles supporting our legal and justice system.

The bill provides regulators with strong, heavy-handed, excessive powers to obtain information to help them make workplaces safe. These powers require people questioned under the act to produce documents and answer questions even if it means they may be incriminated or exposed to a penalty in doing so. I recognise that the withholding of information may compromise the ability of regulators and inspectors to ensure ongoing workplace health and safety protections. Our workplaces must be safe, but surely there must be some protection afforded to those required to provide such information. The website of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General states that the purpose of part 9 is to provide a framework for inspectors to perform their functions effectively, in particular with powers to obtain information.

I conclude by thanking the shadow minister for his contribution. I echo, support and endorse his comments entirely. I reject in their entirety all the interjections from those members opposite and the nonsense that they speak. I thank the shadow minister for his worthwhile contribution.

(Time expired)

 **Mr DICKSON** (Buderim—LNP) (6.11 pm): I rise to contribute to this cognate debate. The main purpose of the Safety in Recreational Water Activities Bill is to oblige a person who is providing recreational water activities through a business or undertaking to others to ensure the health and safety

of those people. Within the bill there are certain legal duties and operating requirements which must be applied in Queensland to protect people against harm and to ensure their safety. There is also an obligation to eliminate or minimise risks in the provision of recreational water activities. Appropriate enforcement measures will be employed in ensuring compliance by providing appropriate advice, information, education and training so that people at or engaged in recreational water activities are given the highest level of protection from hazards and risks as is reasonably practicable. The bill states—

A 'recreational water activity' is an activity carried out—

- (a) for the purposes of recreation; and
- (b) on, in or under waters.

Activities such as diving and snorkelling can be classified as water activities. Of note is that this act deals with recreational water activities only in the context of them being provided by a person in the conduct of a business or undertaking and under the management or control of the person.

Something which came to mind when considering the term 'undertaking' was whether or not this could be applied to surf club personnel who were instructing and or training other club members such as junior nippers and cadet lifesavers. The types of training and instructional activities could include using surf club boards, inflatable boats with outboard motors and surf skis. However, I note that a volunteer does not commit an offence under division 3 for a failure to comply with a health and safety duty for recreational water activities.

For the purposes of this bill, the term 'volunteer' is defined to mean a person who is acting on a voluntary basis, irrespective of whether the person receives out-of-pocket expenses. The definition then states that whether an individual is a volunteer for the purposes of the bill is a question of fact that will depend on the circumstances of each case. I would be seeking some clarification from the minister as to whether the provisions of this bill could apply to our volunteer lifesavers.

A clear example of the provision of a recreational water activity is a commercial diving business that provides recreational diving trips to the Great Barrier Reef with all the necessary training, equipment and supervision. In that regard, I note that three weeks ago, on 5 May, a diving instructor from the Gold Coast who had been charged with manslaughter walked free from court after a magistrate found they had no case to answer. The diving instructor had been charged over the death of a 20-year-old student who had drowned during a scuba-diving excursion in April 2009. The magistrate ruled that police had not established a prima facie case against the instructor. The magistrate noted that the current legislation—the Workplace Health and Safety Act—stated that the onus was on the employer, not the employee, to ensure diving client safety.

Accordingly, within this bill a person conducting a business or undertaking provides a recreational water activity if the recreational water activity is provided under the management or control of the person. Clause 18 states—

While providing recreational water activities at work, a worker must—

- (a) take reasonable care that his or her acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of persons for whom recreational water activities are provided; and
- (b) comply, so far as the worker is reasonably able, with any reasonable instruction that is given by the person conducting the business or undertaking to allow the person to comply with this Act.


In relation to the work health and safety of workers, the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 will apply. The Work Health and Safety Bill currently being debated will apply to a person conducting a business or undertaking that provides recreational water activities to ensure the health and safety of workers at a place where the person is providing recreational water activities. In that regard, on 30 January 2009 a National Review into Model Occupational Health and Safety Laws was completed. The review acknowledged that the health and safety of Australian workers is a key concern of all Australian governments.

All workers have the right to a safe and healthy workplace, as has been mentioned by many other speakers tonight. I think we all agree with that. Additionally, employers have the right to expect that workers and visitors to their places of work will cooperate with occupational health and safety rules. There is a plethora of occupational health and safety laws across Australia aimed at preventing workplace death, physical and psychological injury and even disease. I also note that, for the purposes of this bill, the term 'health' is defined in its broadest sense and covers both physical and psychological health. Broadly, there has been a similar approach by all the jurisdictions to regulating for safer workplaces.

The system enacted a principal OHS act outlining common law duties of care, supported by detailed regulations and codes of practice, and a system of education, inspection, advice and compliance activities. Breaches of the system could, where appropriate, result in prosecution. However, despite the similarities across the jurisdictions, there remain differences as to the form, detail and substantive matters in OHS legislation, particularly in regard to duty holders and duties, defence mechanisms and compliance regimes, including penalties. Harmonisation of work health and safety laws throughout Australia is one of COAG's priorities.

On the question of consultation, it appears that all relevant dive operators and other recreational scuba-diving and snorkelling industry stakeholders have been consulted on the implications of the Work Health and Safety Bill for their particular industry. The proposal for this bill to ensure the continuation of their health and safety regulations and code of practice for recreational scuba diving and snorkelling has strong support from recreational dive operators.

I appreciate what the minister has put forward. This is good for the people of Australia, for our workers, and that is why we are supporting this bill. I also commend those on our side of politics for what they have said today.

 **Ms van LITSEBURG** (Redcliffe—ALP) (6.18 pm): I rise to support the following cognate bills, the Safety in Recreational Water Activities Bill and the Work Health and Safety Bill. This latter bill harmonises work health and safety legislation in other states of Australia. This harmonisation of legislation, in line with COAG's national partnerships agreement to deliver a seamless economy enabling all Australians to work under the same guidelines, is a result of having a federal government that is able to work in partnership with the states to ensure better outcomes for everyone across Queensland and Australia.

Nationally harmonised work health and safety laws will enhance workplace health and safety outcomes, cut red tape and strengthen Australia's productive capacity and business competitiveness. Harmonised safety laws will deliver national productivity savings of \$180 million, with estimated savings to the Queensland economy of more than \$30 million. Inconsistent work health and safety laws and inequitable safety standards across jurisdictions and industry sectors cause confusion for businesses. Inconsistency also leads to duplication and inefficiencies for governments in the provision of policy and regulatory and support services. The changes to work health and safety legislation will not be at the expense of the safety of Queensland or Australian workers. The harmonised laws ensure that all types of workers are protected from workplace health and safety risks, because the duties of care extend beyond the employer/worker relationships that currently exist in most work health and safety laws. The new laws also facilitate effective participation for workers and the representation of their interests in health and safety at the workplace.

The harmonised legislation will ensure that businesses can comply with one set of consistent laws, regardless of which state or territory they are operating in. This critical regulatory reform will reduce the costs borne by businesses in complying with inconsistent health and safety laws right across the country. Instead of spending time developing systems to comply with each jurisdictional requirement, multistate businesses will be able to focus on developing and implementing effective company-wide prevention strategies. Of course, workers will also be better off under this bill, as it will enhance their safety at work.

However, the Work Health and Safety Bill has a comprehensive plan to assist employers in the transition to the model work health and safety laws. The plan will ensure that all Queensland businesses are given all the information they need to understand what they need to do to comply with the model laws when they commence. Workplace Health and Safety Queensland will be partnering with industry to deliver presentations on the model work health and safety laws throughout the state. Those presentations will cover all aspects of the model laws, that is, the act, the regulations and the code of practice. The focus is on what is different and what is new in the model work health and safety laws. It is expected that the seminars will commence in a few weeks.

There will also be targeted presentations for industries that will have particular regulations that apply to them under the model work health and safety regulations. For example, specific regulations will apply to the construction industry and there will be some differences from current construction regulations. Importantly, there will also be specific presentations for small businesses to assist them through this transition.

The Workplace Health and Safety Queensland website will be a key source of information on the new laws and will provide a wide range of resources on the model work health and safety laws for businesses, workers and the community. Already there is a great deal of information on the website about the model, including links to the new bill and explanatory notes, PowerPoint presentations, frequently asked questions and answers, as well as a series of tables that highlight the differences between the model Work Health and Safety Bill and the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995.

Safe Work Australia is also developing interpretative guidelines to assist businesses to understand key concepts in the model work health and safety laws. This will include guidelines on what is reasonably practicable and the new positive duty on executive officers to exercise due diligence. These guidelines will be published on the web as soon as they are available. Another important resource that will be available is a range of fact sheets that are currently being developed by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland. They will provide practical advice on what is required under the new laws and how to comply with them. These fact sheets will be progressively published on the Workplace Health and Safety Queensland website and will be available for distribution by inspectors and during seminars and presentations.

Harmonisation benefits will soon flow through to employers, workers and their communities. The state government is committed to minimising health and safety risks in the recreational water activities for which Queensland is famous. We all know that scuba diving and snorkelling are popular recreational activities for Queenslanders, Australians and overseas tourists on our spectacular world-class Great Barrier Reef and in the balmy waters right along our coastline, including off the islands around Mackay and beautiful Moreton Island in my own electorate of Redcliffe, where our fledgling tourism industry is beginning to gather pace.

Diving is a high severity risk and diving incidents may result in serious ailments that could result in permanent incapacity or death. A 2008 report prepared by Divers Alert Network Asia-Pacific for the Australian Water Safety Council found that between 2002 and 2006 there was an average of 10 scuba related and 12.4 snorkel related fatalities per year in Australia and an estimated scuba fatality rate of 0.57 per 100,000 dives for Queensland. The 2008 report concluded that this fivefold difference is likely to be largely due to different diving conditions, but it may also reflect different diving patterns and, quite probably, the effect of Queensland's regulation of these activities.

With the help of the dive industry, the Queensland government established its comprehensive regulatory regime under the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995, in response to community concerns following several fatalities and recommendations for task forces to inquire into those deaths. Now Queensland has both regulations and a code of practice for recreational diving and snorkelling.

Despite the preparation of the Queensland Recreational Diving, Recreational Technical Diving and Snorkelling Code of Practice 2010, recently the government faced an unexpected challenge to its regulation of health and safety in this vital part of our tourism industry during the national harmonisation of work health and safety laws. Most of the jurisdictions did not support including specific regulations for recreational diving and snorkelling under the national model legislation. While it was clear that action would be needed to retain Queensland's safeguards, the government was not prepared to introduce additional legislation without careful consultation with industry stakeholders. The views of operators in the recreational diving and snorkelling industry and the relevant unions was sought at consultation forums held with operators in Cairns this year. A workshop was held with operators in Brisbane, and Surf Life Saving Queensland has been consulted.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads and the Department of Communities were also consulted about the issues. They supported the Safety in Recreational Water Activities Bill and the regulation of water activities. There is no doubt that all stakeholders support the retention of the current regulations for health and safety in recreational diving and snorkelling. I would like to thank the minister for ensuring that our recreational water industry will now continue to have its safeguards so tourists can come here in safety. This bill will assist in keeping our recreational water industry strong, and our tourism industry in Queensland relies on this. I commend this bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Ms Van Litsenburg, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT



Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (6.30 pm): I move—
That the House do now adjourn.

Gold Coast, Cost of Living



Dr DOUGLAS (Gaven—LNP) (6.30 pm): With living costs going through the roof and unemployment at 8.1 per cent across the Gold Coast, the number of people relying on volunteer groups to keep afloat is at a record high. The Gold Coast Combined Chamber of Commerce and Nerang chamber president, Bob Janssen, has disputed this figure. He has said that in my electorate the figure is closer to 13 per cent.


Good fortune, good health, good education, good family and networks, and good government should ensure good results for all. When bad government replaces good, the impact is proportionally much greater on those who are unemployed or underemployed and those employed in anything other than the government ranks. Twenty years of Labor in Queensland has left residents in my electorate on the Gold Coast with bare cupboards, with cold showers and in the dark. Furthermore, three years of federal Labor has taken us from a national positive equity of \$80 billion to \$130 billion in the red.

This is creating an underclass in our society in which one of my constituents tells me at least daily that they are powerless to change their status because they cannot keep up with the increases in the cost of living or, more correctly, the cost of existing. These are people with families. They are not homeless but genuinely have fallen on hard times and are relying on charity just to exist. We are now talking about real poverty. Residents must choose between paying for a roof over their heads or putting food in mouths. This is a dire situation and this is the new underclass—a substandard living in our proud, developed nation. But this status is not something we should be proud of.

As a part of National Volunteers Week I recently hosted a morning tea for all the people involved in volunteering in my electorate. A group of homeless men performed a song and another man recited a poem about how his life had changed dramatically from being a high-flying businessman prior to his investments failing. He now lives in a tent. We also had a forum with those working for the homeless and needy. The forum consisted of Vicky Va'a, the Nerang Neighbourhood Centre coordinator. She is at the hub of a number of community services for the needy. There was also Bob Crowle, representing St Margaret's Church at a homeless and needy barbecue that they hold every Tuesday night. There was also Louise Jennings, who runs Loaves & Fishes Soup Kitchen, which operates out of the community hall. Norma Ritchie runs Busy Ladies, Carrara and Kylie Rogers represents the Dream Centre, which does much for the needy including food parcels. They distribute more than 230 parcels at a food bank weekly. They have just celebrated the release of their new operation called ARK'd, which stands for Acts of Random Kindness, at which we handed out food parcels for these very needy people.

More importantly, the forum highlighted the struggles of the new underclass and the homeless as well as the gap that voluntary organisations fill in these people's lives. For example, in my electorate alone, as I say, there are 300 families accessing food hampers each week and it is not the same families every week. In fact, they are often different families. So there are multiple families and the numbers are growing. These voluntary organisations are filling the gap that bad governments such as this one create with constant living cost increases. It has to stop.

Premier's Disaster Relief Appeal, Allocations

 **Hon. RE SCHWARTEN** (Rockhampton—ALP) (6.33 pm): I rise more out of sorrow than joy tonight to correct some of the misinformation that we have seen from the Leader of the Opposition, who is obviously a mouthpiece for he who abandoned Tasmania. Both his parents were from there, but he also abandoned the people of Brisbane at the time when they needed him most. I think it is particularly low that there has been an attack on the administration of a system of which I have been part, along with the member for Gregory. I do not want to drag him into a political discussion about this because I think this is above politics. I certainly did not make any comment about the whereabouts of the member for Callide during the floods. I think it is beneath this parliament for the sorts of statements we have heard over the last couple of days to be made.


We have seen that \$84 million has been paid out of that fund since it started. By my calculations, that is about \$100,000 an hour since it started, or about \$1 million a day. In my view, it is a pretty noble effort for a system that had to get cranked up, get the accountabilities in it and all the rest of it. I think it is a low act to suggest that the people who voluntarily serve—leaving aside the member for Gregory and me, who receive no remuneration for that—are not trying to do the best thing for the investment and for the trust that has been placed in us by the people of Australia who donated to this campaign. It is a very worthwhile campaign.

Just in the last fortnight, for example, we have seen \$12.8 million paid out as people begin to understand the process and get their claims in. We have seen nine out of 10 people satisfied with it. So far, 28,418 individuals in Queensland have received assistance from this fund, which has been belittled by the Leader of the Opposition. I think it is a disgrace and a contempt of this parliament that it has been treated in this way.

My honest view of the public servants who are working on this is that they are working under the pump. We have to balance the community interests of saying, 'We want this money to go to the people who need it,' and getting it out the chute as fast as we can with ensuring that the fund maintains the public dignity and accountability that everybody expects it to have. I challenge the Leader of the Opposition to a debate in this place so he can point to the person who has rorted this system and who has misunderstood it and mismanaged it. That has not happened. It is despicable that we are here defending what I think is a great system that we have put in place that is ramping up on a daily basis and is providing more and more Queenslanders with support. Every single day, every single hour, millions of dollars are being paid to the people who need it the most.

(Time expired)

Racing Industry

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (6.37 pm): Again I am forced to rise on behalf of the racing industry to highlight the gross fiscal mismanagement and neglect of the Labor Party sanctioned Racing Queensland board in wasting valuable racing industry prize money funds fighting court cases that Racing Queensland repeatedly loses. Labor heavyweights Bill Ludwig and Bob Bentley tried to hide behind legal protection in their current case against the Queensland Harness Racing board but were thwarted by the judge, who directed them to proceed with the case as quickly as possible and again awarded costs against Racing Queensland.

Minister Mulherin should tell the people of Queensland how much this wasted court appeal cost Queenslanders in the racing industry and why Racing Queensland board members are trying to dodge the accusations of the harness industry about how they were tricked by Bob Bentley into joining Racing Queensland under false pretences. When will the Bligh Labor government learn that this Racing Queensland board is losing votes for it all over Queensland? It is either sheer Labor arrogance or a total disrespect for the importance of the racing industries by Labor boffins ignorant of the economic and social benefits of racing to all Queenslanders.

The recent outstanding appearance by the world's best racehorse, Black Caviar, at Doomben Racecourse saw unprecedented media interest, and a packed racecourse enjoyed the true meaning of racing enthusiasts' holy grail. Congratulations must go to the chairman of the BRC, Kevin Dixon, his board and his CEO, Steve Ferguson, for their outstanding promotion and delivery of an unforgettable day in racing's annals. I noticed that Labor luminaries such as Wayne Swan, Bob Bentley and Tim Mulherin turned up to bask in the media spotlight generated by this freakish public idol, yet when it comes to supporting and building the racing industry they make themselves scarce and flick-pass all decision making to hide behind the skirts of Racing Queensland.


I also note that, nine months after the removal of the only greyhound representative from the board of Racing Queensland, there has been no replacement and there is no voice for the greyhound industry on this failed, Labor inspired board which does not really give a fig about the greyhound industry and its many participants all over Queensland.

What about the mythical \$18 million redevelopment of the Mackay Turf Club? That proposal was based on the flawed proposed sale of Albion Park which will never eventuate and an \$80 million government contribution that has failed to materialise 18 months down the track. It is more Labor spin, subterfuge and secrecy that is the hallmark of a government bereft of ideas, finance and a commitment to the truth.

On my recent trip to northern and western clubs in Queensland I was submerged in hope and desperation by club members that the can-do LNP would win the next election to right the wrongs done by Racing Queensland.

(Time expired)

Cyclone Shelters

 **Ms NELSON-CARR** (Mundingburra—ALP) (6.40 pm): I would like to talk about cyclone shelters tonight. The decision to construct 10 category 5 rated cyclone shelters in North Queensland is reaching actualisation. It is a great innovation. We in North Queensland are all very aware of the severity of the weather systems, particularly the one that crashed into the North Queensland coast earlier this year, as we have heard again tonight. Yasi truly was a remarkable display of nature with its force and ferocity. It is very possible that we could face another system like Yasi in the future, so developing cyclone shelters to a suitable standard has been on the drawing board for some time.


But of course cyclones, while a fact of life for North Queenslanders, are not a constant threat and nor is their aim constant. The decision to construct these cyclone shelters as multipurpose buildings is really very sensible and far sighted. Since the announcement, my electorate office has received many suggestions for further developments. If we are lucky enough to avoid another Yasi sized cyclone, these shelters will not be an economic black spot but will instead provide enormous value for the community with benefits all year round.

I would like to mention one suggestion which is a first-rate submission and comes from an organisation close to my heart. I speak of Pimlico State High School, which would provide an excellent possibility for a category 5 cyclone shelter. It is actually in the member for Townsville's electorate. It was in my electorate for many, many terms; it is a wonderful school. What I like about this submission though is its obvious and significant benefit to the school and the wider community. It would also capitalise on existing resources and ongoing maintenance that are already in place in the school. The very advanced submission is an extremely clever combination of public shelter, teaching, performance, amenity and the capacity to capitalise on the already significant community contribution which Pimlico State High School has in place.

The proposal to encompass a cyclone shelter at Pimlico State High School has received significant support. Both past and present parents of the school have contacted my office personally, as well as by letter and email, claiming their support for this development. Pimlico State High School has a longstanding reputation for excellence in music and the arts, and this proposal to build a combined cyclone shelter and auditorium is an excellent opportunity to further recognise Pimlico State High School's outstanding contribution to its students, staff and the Townsville community. It would provide a long anticipated cyclone shelter but also improve the existing performing arts centre. If you have a look at this proposal, you will see that it is close to a hospital. It is on a secure power grid. It is not in a storm zone or a flood prone area. Pimlico has been used as an evacuation centre in the past and it is known to the public.

(Time expired)

Gregory Electorate, Roads

 **Mr JOHNSON** (Gregory—LNP) (6.43 pm): I wish to bring to the attention of the House tonight the deplorable situation regarding the road from Clermont to Alpha and on to Tambo in my electorate of Gregory. The Clermont to Alpha road is now going to carry heavy mining equipment as well as the conveyance of livestock for type 1 and type 2 road trains, as well as domestic traffic. There is 120 kilometres in the Isaac Regional Council that is unsealed and 37 kilometres of a narrow four-metre seal. This road would break a snake's back. For the carriage of livestock it is a deplorable situation. I wonder what the RSPCA would think if they got behind road trains on this road.


There is 100 kilometres that has vertical and horizontal alignment not suitable for the potential traffic and speeds. There are old timber bridges on Native Companion Creek and the Belyando River crossing. There is access to Kevin's Corner, which is going to be a major mine that is going to jack some 60 million tonnes a year when it is operating at full commercial value. I have to say again that this is 50 kilometres north of Alpha. Most of that road between Kevin's Corner and Alpha is sealed, but it is a narrow seal which is totally unsatisfactory when it comes to heavy mining equipment and heavy road transport. Possible improvements to Kevin's Corner would cost \$30 million. To realign the north end of this road would cost \$75 million. That is without being sealed; that is just to realign it. It would cost another \$65 million to seal that road along that new alignment.

To widen the Peak Downs Highway in the Belyando shire would cost \$20 million. I interjected yesterday on the Minister for Main Roads to say that \$4.7 million to patch up roads in the Belyando shire is an absolute disgrace. If it was \$47 million the job would nearly be done, but \$4.7 million is an insult. To widen the Capricorn Highway between Emerald and Alpha would cost \$90 million and to improve the Belyando Crossing would cost \$15 million.

These are roads that are going to carry heavy mining equipment, livestock and tourist traffic. It is absolutely paramount that this government prioritises those dollars that are jacked out of these mining areas and this region in question so that we can see those mining royalties come back to us and at the same time advantage the whole state. I call on this government to show leadership in developing this project in question.

(Time expired)

Cairns Base Hospital

 **Hon. D BOYLE** (Cairns—ALP) (6.46 pm): I wish to update members of the House on the progress of the major redevelopment and expansion of Cairns Base Hospital. This is a redevelopment of more than \$450 million, and I am pleased to inform honourable members that it is going well and that new areas of the hospital are already opening and others are under construction. When the redevelopment was announced, there were some on site who were concerned that it might be a 'bandaid'. Maybe people did not understand how much \$450 million is. But now that these new facilities are beginning to open—the size of them, the extent of them—it is demonstrably so that this is a huge expansion of our Cairns Base Hospital.


I am pleased to say that the completion of the expanded emergency areas has been well received, with flexibility allowed for patients in different kinds of distress including those with mental distress and young patients in crisis, who have some special areas. I am pleased also to say that the building is complete for our new radiation oncology service and that it will not be many months before I hope the Minister for Health will be in Cairns officially opening it. We will then have our first patients treated in Cairns and they will not need to go to Townsville or Brisbane for treatment, as they have had to do until now.

Mr Wilson interjected.

Ms BOYLE: I thank the minister very much for the interjection. I am pleased to say, too, that we have a huge car park adjacent to the hospital. That has been necessary not only because there are so many staff now at our hospital and so many visitors to the hospital but because we needed to clear the northern end of the site ready for the new clinical services building, block D. Block D will house nearly 300 of the 450 beds that the completed hospital will have—that is two-thirds. Of those 290 beds that will be in this new block D, I am pleased to inform honourable members that nearly half of those will be single rooms. Gone are those dreadful old public hospitals where we had these huge wards of six or eight or even 10 beds and no respect for privacy and family needs.

I was pleased to turn the sod for block D the other day. It will proceed now over these next couple of years and is several years away from opening. May I also let honourable members know that at the same time work is shortly to start on the birth centre, on intensive care and on the special baby care nursery. The redevelopment of these health facilities in Cairns is proceeding well indeed.

Redlands Electorate, Jetties; Dawson, Mr B and Dickinson, Mr C

 **Mr DOWLING** (Redlands—LNP) (6.49 pm): Tonight I rise to raise an issue and to extend a very genuine offer to the Minister for Transport in delivering two new jetties at Victoria Point and Coochiemudlo Island. I have been buoyed and very much uplifted by the contribution earlier today by the member for Cook. He gave all members on our side of the House an undertaking that the government would welcome positive contributions and constructive input. That is what I intend to do.

Tonight I make this very genuine offer to the Minister for Transport to help in the design and the location of those two jetties at Victoria Point and Coochiemudlo Island. It is, however, a little difficult to provide that advice when Queensland Transport have point-blank refused to allow me access to the report. The report is titled *Coochiemudlo Island jetty and Victoria Point jetty: accessibility upgrade options and options analysis*. Council officers have been ordered not to allow me to see or have a copy of that report. I ask the minister if there is any way I could be provided with a copy of that report.

I have a long history in the area. I understand the locations. I understand the waterways and the conditions that will prevail there. One of the jetties is a point jetty. It is exposed. One of the other jetties is out where it captures the southerly swells. The swells in Moreton Bay can be in excess of a metre. Conventional designs will not work. I am mindful of the fact that the jetty we have there at the moment has had issues. The most significant issue obviously is that there is no disabled access. It is a staired jetty so there is no disabled access. The Victoria Point jetty is a relatively new structure in need of a retro fit. The deck was not terribly serviceable. It does not have an all-weather shelter.

I thank the government for funding of \$10 million. I hope that council agrees to accept that very generous offer from the state government prior to the June deadline and that those works proceed. It is important to the people of Victoria Point and Coochiemudlo Island.

I also draw to the attention of the House two young men from my electorate, Ben Dawson and Cameron Dickinson. They are two young men on a mission. It is their intention to skateboard around Australia. They are going to do it as part of their gap year. They are in year 11 at the moment. They are going to skateboard around the country.

I was able to push a skateboard with them for about four kilometres on the weekend. I had a lot of fun with Ben and Cameron and British adventurer Dave Cornthwaite. I wish them well on their training ride, which is scheduled to commence in June. They are going to skate to Gympie and back. I wish them well. I wish them a safe trip. For anyone who wants to follow their exploits, their page on Facebook is Boarding Downunder.

(Time expired)

Indigenous Communities, Gambling

 **Mr O'BRIEN** (Cook—ALP) (6.52 pm): As the Deputy Premier informed the House yesterday, this week is Responsible Gambling Awareness Week and the government is taking important steps to promote responsible gambling habits right across Queensland, including in Cape York Peninsula's Indigenous communities and on Thursday Island. The Bligh government takes problem gambling very seriously, and Queensland is leading the way on gambling reform.

As the Deputy Premier said, fundamentally in a democracy people have a right to enjoy themselves in pastimes such as gambling, provided it does not do damage to themselves, their family or the broader community. The government is taking steps to assist people with their gambling choices.

When he was the minister responsible for liquor and gaming, Peter Lawlor increased support for those affected by problem gambling. He funded a program to improve the gambling help information and support services provided to Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. This program is delivered by Lifeline. To that end, Lifeline has produced some wonderful material that targets Indigenous communities.

Gambling in Indigenous communities manifests itself in different ways than in mainstream communities. With the absence of TABs and pokies, card schools are the main form of gambling. Each community has different card schools of varying size and they play a game that, as a person who plays cards at Christmas time with my family, I must admit I do not understand. I do not think members will find it in Hoyle. I have seen some big card schools, too—some with hundreds of dollars in the middle of them. Of course, when we are dealing with people who generally survive from week to week, big losses can mean big problems for families and communities.

That is why Lifeline has used its state government funding to produce some high-quality information booklets to assist people understand and control their gambling behaviour, especially if it is becoming a problem for them. The booklets present the information in a culturally appropriate manner and in a way which is relevant and engaging to people in communities. It was developed with the strong input of Indigenous people. I seek the leave of the House to table the booklet for its information.

Leave granted.


Tabled paper: Bundle of brochures in relation to gambling help [\[4537\]](#).

The booklet has also been distributed on Thursday Island, which does have a TAB and pubs with poker machines. As members will note when they peruse the booklet later, that is also relevant in those circumstances.

Lifeline is doing more than just distributing the booklets. It has recently visited a number of Cape York communities and Thursday Island to meet and partner with stakeholders and to better understand how they can help assist individual communities help their members deal with these problems. If a person thinks they have a problem with gambling, I strongly recommend the Gambling Helpline on 1800858858. To finish, let me quote Ashley Gordon, an Aboriginal gambling researcher, who said—

The communities where gambling is under control often have strong leadership, strong cultural values and a strong determination to help their people.

Queensland Floods, Recovery Assistance

 **Mr HOPPER** (Condamine—LNP) (6.55 pm): The Darling Downs was hit with several severe flooding events in December 2010 and January 2011. This flooding caused massive damage to cropping, farm infrastructure—including head ditches, drains, sumps and ring tanks—roads, fencing and machinery. Much of this infrastructure still requires reconstruction. Winter crops were unable to be harvested and summer crops were lost due to water inundation, erosion and the time spent underwater without sunlight and heat. Significant financial losses have been experienced.


The Darling Downs Cotton Growers Association organised three mental health workshops. Let us call them 'better health' workshops. Simple changes make differences. These workshops took place during February to provide information and support to those landholders affected by the flood events. I attended one of these workshops with my colleague Lawrence Springborg. This same organisation would like to provide three follow-up workshops to continue to support the communities and individuals who are still experiencing difficulties. This is serious business.

These workshops were funded through the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation. Funding was provided by DEEDI for a senior farm financial counsellor, located in Dalby, to provide further ongoing financial counselling support to affected landholders. Unfortunately, this funding will expire on 30 June this year. I met with the minister this morning to discuss the continuation of funding to ensure landholders who have been affected can access assistance after 30 June, when many landholders will experience the reality of their low yields and poor-quality cotton that will attract large dockages. I thank the minister for his time and concern for the landholders involved and their communities.

Having funding to provide follow-up workshops is essential to make certain that necessary support and information can be offered to landholders who will experience financial and psychological challenges once the picking season has been completed. I have personally visited many of the affected families and acknowledge the distress that many of them are feeling. I urge the minister to consider extending this funding as soon as possible to assist and support families in rural and regional areas.

Some of these farmers are now out contracting. They have left their families at home on their farms. Their farms have been totally destroyed, as has the infrastructure on their farms. They have to either get contractors in to rebuild or do it themselves. I asked one farmer how much this would cost and his answer was some \$300,000. That is just to put the infrastructure back in place so he can continue farming. That is without the costs that will be incurred from the loss of crops and the damage these floods did.

World MS Day

 **Mr WETTENHALL** (Barron River—ALP) (6.58 pm): Today is World MS Day, the aim of which is to raise awareness about multiple sclerosis—a chronic disabling neurological disease suffered by some 20,000 Australians. MS is the most common chronic condition affecting young adult Australians and it affects seven times more women than men in Queensland. I know what people with MS have to endure only too well, as my mother, now in her 88th year, has lived with MS since her diagnosis when she was 32. Although now frail, she has combined regular physical exercise with a very strong will and a positive attitude to keep the disease at bay for so long. This is an attitude and approach to life that I admire and that I have observed in many other people I have met with MS.

World MS Day this year focuses on employment issues for people with chronic disease such as MS. Raising awareness of MS with employers, reducing workplace discrimination, providing flexible workplace arrangements and promoting government services available to employers are all positive steps that can be taken to keep people in employment. The Bligh government is committed to helping people with MS. More than \$5 million in recurrent funding is provided to the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Queensland to deliver a range of support services, and of course in last year's budget we introduced the medical heating and cooling rebate which is of particular support for people with MS.

Community fundraising also provides vital funds for research and support services. One such event is the annual 24-hour Megaswim. This year, led by the Trinity Beach Lions Club, the event was held for the first time in the Far North and has so far raised over \$21,000, well on its way to the target of \$30,000. Exercises like swimming are especially important for people with MS. The Trinity Beach Lions Club and the multiple sclerosis gym group are proof that good exercise works wonders and has positive benefits for participants with MS.

I want to acknowledge Mr Alan Docherty and all the local Lions who helped organise the event and Dan Sweetman and Amy Rymer from the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Queensland. I also want to thank the Trinity Anglican School for making its excellent pool available for the event and its director of swimming, Mr Bill Evans, for his support. Most of all though, I want to thank the 152 swimmers who took part and their support teams. They ranged in age from eight to 80. The octogenarian, Thelma Bryan, swam 80 laps of the 50-metre pool and raised well over \$2,000—a remarkable and inspirational achievement by any measure. We all look forward to the day when a cure will be found for this mysterious disease.

Question put—That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 7.01 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, Langbroek, Lucas, McArdle, McLindon, Male, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Mickel, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nicholls, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Powell, Pratt, Reeves, Rickuss, Roberts, 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