



RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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Subject **FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT** Page

Thursday, 25 August 2011

| | |
|--|-------------|
| PRIVILEGE | 2657 |
| Alleged Deliberate Misleading of the House by a Minister | 2657 |
| SPEAKER'S RULINGS | 2657 |
| Comments by Member for Ashgrove | 2657 |
| Use of Parliamentary Crest | 2657 |
| Questions Without Notice | 2658 |
| Respect for Office of Speaker | 2658 |
| MOTION OF CONDOLENCE | 2659 |
| Turner, Hon. NJ | 2659 |
| SPEAKER'S STATEMENT | 2671 |
| Order of Business | 2671 |
| PETITIONS | 2671 |
| TABLED PAPERS | 2671 |
| MINISTERIAL PAPER | 2672 |
| CopperString Proposal | 2672 |
| <i>Tabled paper:</i> Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation: Notice and statement giving reasons for approval of the CopperString facility as an infrastructure facility that is of significance under the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971. | 2672 |
| MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS | 2672 |
| Queensland Reconstruction Authority; Major General Slater | 2672 |
| Work for Queensland Job Expos | 2673 |
| Education Reform | 2673 |
| Major Projects Office | 2674 |
| Major Resource Projects Housing Policy | 2674 |
| <i>Tabled paper:</i> The Coordinator-General: Major Resource Projects Housing Policy—Core principles to guide social impact assessment, August 2011. | 2674 |
| Logan, House Fire; Ambulance Service | 2675 |
| Wild Rivers | 2675 |
| Sunshine Coast, Health Services | 2676 |
| Cairns Indigenous Art Fair | 2676 |
| Foster and Kinship Carers | 2677 |

Table of Contents — Thursday, 25 August 2011

| | |
|---|-------------|
| SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS | 2677 |
| School Group Tours | 2677 |
| Food and Beverages in Chamber | 2677 |
| QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE | 2678 |
| Labor Party, Preference Allocation | 2678 |
| The Greens, Preferences | 2678 |
| Public Transport | 2679 |
| The Greens, Preferences | 2679 |
| Wild Rivers | 2680 |
| The Greens, Preferences | 2680 |
| Way to Grow Forums | 2681 |
| Gold Coast, Waterways | 2681 |
| Bruce Highway | 2682 |
| Gold Coast, Waterways | 2683 |
| 'What's Your Big Idea Queensland?' Program | 2684 |
| Child Safety Services, Deaths of Children | 2684 |
| Education | 2685 |
| Central Queensland, Bushfire Preparedness | 2686 |
| Energy Sector, Employment | 2686 |
| Gladstone Base Hospital, Mobile Phone Antennas | 2687 |
| <i>Tabled paper:</i> Document, dated July 2011, in relation to concerns regarding the proposed installation of the mobile phone network infrastructure on Gladstone Base Hospital buildings at Flinders Street, West Gladstone..... | 2687 |
| Sunshine Coast University Hospital | 2687 |
| Fire Blight | 2688 |
| MINISTERIAL STATEMENT | 2688 |
| Ministerial Expenses | 2688 |
| <i>Tabled paper:</i> Public Report of Ministerial Expenses—2010-11..... | 2688 |
| POLICE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL | 2688 |
| Introduction and Referral to the Legal Affairs, Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services Committee | 2688 |
| <i>Tabled paper:</i> Police Powers and Responsibilities and Other Legislation Amendment Bill..... | 2689 |
| <i>Tabled paper:</i> Police Powers and Responsibilities and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, explanatory notes..... | 2689 |
| First Reading | 2690 |
| LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTORAL BILL | 2691 |
| Second Reading | 2691 |
| PRIVILEGE | 2694 |
| Alleged Deliberate Misleading of the House by a Minister | 2694 |
| Alleged Deliberate Misleading of the House by the Premier | 2694 |
| PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS | 2695 |
| The Greens, Preferences | 2695 |
| Seniors Week | 2695 |
| Fly-in Fly-out Workers | 2695 |
| Cooktown and District Jobs and Training Expo | 2696 |
| Tablelands, Roads | 2696 |
| Multiculturalism | 2696 |
| Justices of the Peace | 2697 |
| Townsville Electorate, Wastewater Treatment Plant | 2697 |
| Sunshine Coast, Public Transport | 2698 |
| Electric Vehicle Charging Station | 2698 |
| Australian Party | 2698 |
| Logan, House Fire | 2699 |
| Coomera, Police Resources | 2700 |
| Harness Racing | 2700 |
| Southport Electorate, Green Army | 2701 |
| Schmierer, Mrs M | 2701 |
| Cairns Indigenous Art Fair | 2702 |
| Queensland Transport, Licensing System | 2702 |
| Moreton Bay Marine Park, Artificial Reefs | 2702 |
| Sunshine Coast, Public Transport | 2703 |
| Vietnam Veterans Service, Mabel Park State High School; Logan, House Fire | 2703 |
| Fraser Coast, Sand Erosion | 2704 |
| Redcliffe City Art Gallery | 2704 |
| Cairns Airport | 2704 |
| Vietnam Veterans Day | 2705 |

Table of Contents — Thursday, 25 August 2011

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Public Transport, Fares | 2705 |
| Bulimba Electorate, Public Transport | 2706 |
| Mackay TAFE, Asbestos | 2706 |
| <i>Tabled paper:</i> Nine photographs of pipes | 2706 |
| <i>Tabled paper:</i> Queensland Laboratory certificate of analysis, dated 12 May 2010, regarding results of asbestos testing of downpipes at Mackay TAFE | 2706 |
| <i>Wild Guide to Moreton Bay</i> | 2706 |
| Agriculture Industry, Pesticides | 2707 |
| Member for Hervey Bay | 2707 |
| <i>Tabled paper:</i> Documents regarding transfer of property at Booral in 2006 between Mr Edward John Sorensen and Mr Norman Leslie Gillespie, personal representative of the estate of Thomas Henry Taylor (deceased) and Wide Bay Water Corporation. | 2707 |
| Health Security | 2708 |
| <i>Tabled paper:</i> Extract of Queensland Health Systems Review—Final Report, pages 60-67 | 2708 |
| Autism | 2708 |
| Goats Milk | 2709 |
| Salvation Army Bundamba Corps | 2709 |
| Child Safety Services, Deaths of Children | 2709 |
| Griffith University, Gold Coast Campus | 2710 |
| Moreton Bay, Marine Infrastructure | 2710 |
| Ipswich Lions, Children of Courage Awards | 2710 |
| North Stradbroke Island, Mining | 2711 |
| Asbestos, Member for Mudgeeraba | 2711 |
| Natural Disasters, Main Roads | 2712 |
| Airport Link | 2712 |
| Wijeratne, Dr HW; Sleeper Cutters | 2713 |
| <i>Tabled paper:</i> Documents raising concerns and queries in relation to the Bundaberg Hospital. | 2713 |
| LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTORAL BILL | 2713 |
| Second Reading | 2713 |
| Consideration in Detail | 2721 |
| Clause 1, as read, agreed to. | 2721 |
| Clauses 2 to 7, as read, agreed to. | 2721 |
| Clause 8— | 2721 |
| <i>Tabled paper:</i> Explanatory notes to Mr David Gibson's amendments to the Local Government Electoral Bill | 2721 |
| Division: Question put—That Mr Gibson's amendment No. 1 be agreed to | 2723 |
| Resolved in the negative. | 2723 |
| Non-government amendment (Mr Gibson) negatived. | 2723 |
| Clause 8, as read, agreed to. | 2723 |
| Clauses 9 to 49, as read, agreed to. | 2723 |
| Clause 50— | 2723 |
| <i>Tabled paper:</i> Explanatory notes to Hon. Paul Lucas's amendments to the Local Government Electoral Bill | 2723 |
| Clause 50, as amended, agreed to. | 2723 |
| Clauses 51 to 202— | 2723 |
| Clauses 51 to 202, as amended, agreed to. | 2724 |
| Clause 203— | 2724 |
| Division: Question put—That Mr Gibson's amendment No. 2 be agreed to | 2727 |
| Resolved in the negative. | 2727 |
| Non-government amendment (Mr Gibson) negatived. | 2727 |
| Clause 203, as read, agreed to. | 2727 |
| Clauses 204 to 236, as read, agreed to. | 2727 |
| Insertion of new clauses— | 2727 |
| Amendment agreed to | 2728 |
| Clauses 237 to 240, as read, agreed to. | 2728 |
| Insertion of new clause— | 2728 |
| Non-government amendment (Mr Gibson) negatived. | 2728 |
| Insertion of new clause— | 2728 |
| Amendment agreed to | 2729 |
| Clauses 241 and 242, as read, agreed to. | 2729 |
| Insertion of new clauses— | 2729 |
| Amendment agreed to | 2730 |
| Clauses 243 to 260, as read, agreed to. | 2730 |
| Insertion of new clause— | 2730 |
| Non-government amendment (Mr Gibson) negatived. | 2731 |

Table of Contents — Thursday, 25 August 2011

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Insertion of new clause—..... | 2731 |
| Amendment agreed to..... | 2731 |
| Clauses 261 to 264, as read, agreed to..... | 2731 |
| Insertion of new clauses—..... | 2731 |
| Amendment agreed to..... | 2732 |
| Clauses 265 to 269, as read, agreed to..... | 2732 |
| Insertion of new clause—..... | 2733 |
| Amendment agreed to..... | 2733 |
| Clauses 270 to 324, as read, agreed to..... | 2733 |
| Schedule, as read, agreed to..... | 2733 |
| Third Reading | 2733 |
| Long Title | 2734 |
| REPORT | 2734 |
| Office of the Leader of the Opposition | 2734 |
| <i>Tabled paper:</i> Public report of office expenses of the Office of the Leader of the Opposition for the period 1 July 2010 to 22 March 2011..... | 2734 |
| SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT | 2734 |
| ADJOURNMENT | 2734 |
| Natural Disasters, Main Roads | 2734 |
| Grant Street, Whiteside | 2735 |
| Ashmore Road-Bundall Road Intersection | 2735 |
| Year 7 | 2736 |
| Whalan, Ms L | 2736 |
| Mining Exploration, Buffer Zones | 2737 |
| Outback Education Tour Subsidy Scheme | 2738 |
| Chatsworth Electorate, Public Transport | 2738 |
| Mission Beach, Tourism | 2739 |
| Dobinson, Mrs N | 2739 |
| ATTENDANCE | 2740 |

THURSDAY, 25 AUGUST 2011



The Legislative Assembly met at 9.30 am.

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

PRIVILEGE

Alleged Deliberate Misleading of the House by a Minister



Mr BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (9.30 am): I rise on a matter of privilege. The Minister for Education and Industrial Relations, during his time as Attorney-General and minister for industrial relations, prima facie may have committed a contempt of this parliament by making deliberately misleading statements. This most serious matter relates to the State Penalties Enforcement Register, SPER, and allegations of the former Attorney-General deliberately providing misleading information in answer to a—

Mr Lucas: 'Prima facie'.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Resume your seat. Deputy Premier, I have spoken previously about an incident where people were imitating members' voices. It is unparliamentary. There is any number of precedents for that. I ask you to desist from that. That is twice I have asked you to do that. The honourable member for Kawana has the call. I ask the House to respect that.

Mr BLEIJIE: This most serious matter relates to the SPER and allegations of the former Attorney-General deliberately providing misleading information in an answer to a parliamentary question on notice and alleged ministerial directives provided to departmental officers and ministerial staff in relation to public disclosure or otherwise of the total amount of outstanding debts recovered by SPER. These allegations relate to an answer that the former Attorney-General provided to question on notice No. 2254 tabled in the parliament on 21 December 2010. In his answer the former Attorney-General, when asked about the total SPER debt, referred to only two categories of the fine pool debt managed by SPER, which totalled just over \$300 million. When questioned on the same issue in an answer to question on notice No. 477 asked on 5 April 2011, the current Attorney-General referred me to a website that now lists four categories, totalling some \$645.3 million.

It appears that the former Attorney-General may have deliberately misled the parliament by attempting to conceal over \$300 million in unpaid fines. I believe this matter is worthy of referral by you to the Ethics Committee and I will be writing to you in that regard.

SPEAKER'S RULINGS

Comments by Member for Ashgrove



Mr SPEAKER: Yesterday afternoon there was an incident in the parliament where there was a fair amount of crossfire. I have had a chance to review that. The honourable member for Gympie sought a withdrawal of what he believed to be a personal reflection on him by the member for Ashgrove. I ask the member for Ashgrove to withdraw that now.

Ms JONES: I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: I thank the honourable member for Ashgrove for her courtesy.

Mr Schwarten interjected.


Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Rockhampton will cease interjecting. I thank the honourable member for Ashgrove for her courtesy and understanding in this matter and for upholding the dignity of the House.

Use of Parliamentary Crest



Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, recently I received correspondence from a member of the public regarding the use of the parliamentary crest by a member on letters relating to purely party political matters. Yesterday, in company with the Clerk, I spoke to the honourable member who assured me that it was a genuine administrative error and apologised for the use of the crest in such circumstances. Obviously in the lead-up to events over the next couple of months, I do remind all honourable members about the rules contained in the code of ethical standards about the use of the crest. I will be taking no further action in respect of this matter.

Questions Without Notice

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I have reviewed the *Record of Proceedings* from yesterday's question time. I believe it is appropriate that I clarify the rules relating to questions. Standing Order 113 provides that—

Questions may be put to a Minister without notice relating to:

- (a) public affairs with which the Minister is officially connected or to any matter of administration for which the Minister is responsible; or
- (b) proceedings pending in the Legislative Assembly for which the Minister is responsible (but discussion must not be anticipated).


I have previously ruled that questions that relate purely to party political matters are out of order. On 24 February 2011 I ruled—

I note that questions to a minister about personal matters or about matters pertaining to their capacity as a member of a party are generally out of order, because they do not relate to the public affairs for which the minister is officially connected or to any matter of administration for which the minister is responsible.

On 10 November 2009 I allowed a question to the Premier relating to her party on the basis that the Premier was the leader of the party in an administrative sense. Sometimes these matters can be very difficult to adjudicate, as was the question yesterday to the Minister for Finance. If I was looking at that question, as I did this morning, the question would have been ruled out of order. Often it comes down to the way the question is framed.

I would ask all members, when drafting their questions, to remember that questions must relate to public affairs with which the minister is officially connected or to any matter of administration for which the minister is responsible. Questions that make no connection to official matters will be ruled out of order.

Respect for Office of Speaker

 **Mr SPEAKER:** I wish to remind all honourable members about the very important longstanding rule inherited by the House under its Westminster traditions of respect for the Office of Speaker and those who occupy the chair of Speaker from time to time. I refer all members to report 90 of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee, which states—

In Queensland, and in many other jurisdictions based on the Westminster system, it is a recognised principle of parliamentary privilege that the character or actions of the Chair (the Speaker, Deputy Speaker and—

especially—

Acting Speakers) may not be criticised by any member except on a substantive motion. There are numerous authorities that support this principle. The principle is based on respect for the institution of Parliament—the Chair being the embodiment of the power, authority and integrity of the Parliament.

Reflections on the Chair may undermine the authority of Parliament by diminishing the respect due to the institution of Parliament. The United Kingdom House of Commons has traditionally regarded any reflections on the Speaker as a breach of privilege and contempt of Parliament.

The standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly provides examples of contempt in the House and specifically include commenting or reflecting on the actions of the chair as part of a list of actions that constitute contempt. Standing order 266(23) provides—

except by a substantive motion of censure, commenting or reflecting on the decisions or actions of the Chair, whether relating to actions inside the House or the character of the Chair in general.

Erskine May provides advice regarding reflections on the character of the Speaker and states—

... reflections on the character of the Speaker may be punished as breaches of privilege. His action cannot be criticised incidentally in debate or upon any proceeding except a substantive motion.

I have been tolerant to some criticism in recent times that has clearly breached the above rules. I have exercised restraint because the House was in the midst of considering legislative proposals of significance to the House and I did not wish referrals distracting from the issues at stake. However, the legislation has now passed and consequently the period of my showing latitude is now at an end.

I advise that I will refer any member who reflects upon the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker or the Acting Speakers to the Ethics Committee. Of course, as I have indicated the Speaker is not beyond reproach and members have the right to move a substantive motion against any ruling that I, the Deputy Speaker or the Acting Speakers might make.

In this regard, I have thought it prudent to consider what would happen should the House fail to support me when naming a member or if a dissent to one of my rulings is moved and is successful. My position is this: if the House and the various groups within the House fail to support a Speaker when trying to maintain order in the House then, in my opinion, it is not a reflection on the Speaker; it is a reflection on each member who fails to support order in the House. I see no reason for a Speaker to resign in such circumstances, as it is not a reflection on the Speaker.

In relation to dissent motions, standing orders provide for dissent motions that are simply appeal processes. They are an opportunity for the House to determine its rules. Again, I see no reason for a Speaker, a Deputy Speaker or an Acting Speaker to resign in such circumstances as it is not a reflection on the position. It is simply an appeal on a matter of parliamentary law. Judges do not resign when their decisions are overturned on appeal.

There is a mechanism to remove a Speaker—a direct motion of no confidence. It is this process that should be used to determine the removal of the Speaker. It would be perverse to enable the removal of the Speaker by an indirect subversive means such as the failure to support the naming of a member.

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Turner, Hon. NJ



Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Reconstruction) (9.40 am): I move—

1. That this House desires to place on record its appreciation of the services rendered to this state by the late Hon. Neil John Turner, a former member and Speaker of the parliament of Queensland and minister of the Crown; and
2. Further, that Mr Speaker be requested to convey to the family of the deceased gentleman the above resolution, together with an expression of the sympathy and the sorrow of the members of the parliament of Queensland in the loss they have sustained.

Today we mark the passing of a long-time servant of Queensland, Neil John Turner, who was born in Charleville on 25 June 1934. Neil was educated at the Morven State School, the Cooper Memorial School in Toowoomba and the Gatton Agricultural College. After his schooling he became a grazier in Morven.

In 1971 Neil was elected as a councillor on the Murweh Shire Council and he continued to serve on that council until 1975. Always keen to serve his community as an elected representative, Neil was selected in 1974 to contest the seat of Warrego as the National Party candidate. At that time the electorate of Warrego was held by the ALP member Mr John Aiken. In a close electoral contest at the December 1974 state election, Neil defeated Mr Aiken and was elected to this House. Neil Turner went on to serve as the member for Warrego until he decided to retire at the 1986 election.

During this period Neil served as a minister in the Bjelke-Petersen government. He was Minister for Transport from August 1983 to November of that year and then was Minister for Primary Industries from November 1983 until November 1986. During this time in the parliament, Neil also served, among other things, as a temporary chair of committees and as a member of the Parliamentary Buildings Committee from 1979 to 1983, which oversaw the building of the Parliamentary Annexe and the restoration of Parliament House. No doubt these positions equipped him well for positions that he would later hold in his career.

After retiring from this place in 1986, however, Neil Turner was to make a return. At the December 1989 state election Neil contested the seat of Nicklin for the National Party which had been vacated, given the retirement of Mr Brian Austin. As honourable members will recall, Neil ultimately won that contest but not without some hurdles. He did not win it until November 1990 and he was sworn in and took his seat in this House after the Supreme Court of Queensland sitting as the Elections Tribunal determined that in the electorate of Nicklin Robert King had not been duly elected and that Neil Turner had.

I note Neil Turner's comments at the time that, despite the problems that were evident in the Nicklin election, he did not believe that there was ever any real issue between Mr King and himself or between the Liberal Party and the National Party. Rather, it was an issue about democracy and whether the majority should rule. Neil noted that he had stood as a candidate in a democratic election and had won a majority of votes and that democracy cannot prevail unless the two are respected.


During Neil's second period in this House he served as opposition spokesman for Police and Emergency Services from 1991 to 1992, as a member of the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee from 1992 to 1995 and as a member of the Public Accounts Committee from 1995 to 1996. It was during this second period as a member of this parliament, however, that Neil Turner's best role will be remembered and that was when he became Speaker of the House in April 1996, a position in which he served until 1998 and for which I believe he will be best remembered.

As honourable members will recall, this was the period of the Borbidge government in which the coalition held 44 seats, the ALP 44 seats and the member for Gladstone held the balance of power. In circumstances with the numbers so finely balanced the sittings of parliament, I can assure you, were not always easy to control. However, as I am sure honourable members who served at that time will attest, while there was many a disagreement along the way—as there always is and always will be in a robust parliament—Neil Turner did a fine job of exercising the powers, duties and functions of the office of Speaker in a way that was fair to all members and that brought him much respect. I recall at the time

that we were a very hungry and demanding opposition, always poised to take advantage of the opportunities that were presented by a hung parliament, a parliament in which every single vote mattered and was fiercely contested, when tensions often ran very high and when debate regularly raged into the small hours of the night. Refereeing all of us needed a very firm and steady hand.

Those who served with Neil Turner will remember that he was a master of using humour as an effective disciplinary tool. I can assure you that those like myself who experienced the sharp bite of his humour and his sarcastic wit were very rarely keen to repeat the experience. I served with Neil Turner in my first term in this parliament and I can certainly attest to the fact that, as Speaker, he was always happy to provide advice and guidance about parliamentary procedure to any member of the House. He took a particular interest in new members and in ensuring that they understood the traditions, the rules and the processes of this parliament, and I thank him for that.

Neil was defeated in the seat of Nicklin at the state election in June 1998 by the current member for Nicklin, Mr Peter Wellington. As members will know, the Hon. Neil John Turner passed away on 4 July this year and a service to celebrate and remember his life was held at St John's Anglican Cathedral in Ann Street, Brisbane on 11 July 2011. I wish to place on record the government's thanks for the years of service that Neil Turner gave to the democracy of our state and to his local community. On behalf of the government, I take this opportunity to extend my sympathy and that of this House to Neil's family and his friends.

 **Mr SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.46 am): I rise to endorse the condolence motion that was moved by the Premier and to endorse the remarks that she made. I also pay the greatest respect on behalf of the LNP to Neil Turner, a long-serving member of this House, cabinet minister and Speaker who, we were all saddened to hear, passed away on 4 July as a result of stroke aged 77. Neil Turner was an outstanding member of this parliament. He was an outstanding Queenslander. He will be long remembered about this House when the history is told and the yarns and stories that make up the culture of this place are remembered.

His total time as a member spanned more than 20 years, serving two distinct communities, firstly, the electorate of Warrego in the south-west of Queensland, where he was born and where he spent much of his life, and later Nicklin on the Sunshine Coast, where he moved to retire. He was a minister in two different governments but his time as Speaker of this House is what will forever define the contribution that he made to this parliament.

He was the 30th Speaker of this parliament, from 1996 to 1998. Many from both sides of politics fondly recall—and sometimes forcibly argue—that he was one of the finest Speakers that this House has yet seen. While he was a member of this parliament, while he was Speaker and until the day he died, Neil Turner was first of all and above all else a proud son of Western Queensland. He was born in 1934 in Charleville, the son of Frederick and Ada Turner who were graziers. He went to Morven State School and then to the Cooper Memorial School in Toowoomba and then Neil completed his education at the Gatton Agricultural College. Then, as seemed a natural progression for him, he followed in his father's footsteps and became a grazier. He was also fond of telling how he worked as a shearer. I suspect that even he would admit that he sometimes overstated his prowess as a shearer and he sometimes inflated his tallies a bit late at night.

He married Ute Berg in 1960 and they had a son and two daughters. Neil Turner was active in the local community and he became a councillor on the Murweh Shire Council, serving for four years from 1971 to 1975. He decided to run for state parliament and at the December 1974 election he won the seat of Warrego for the National Party. It seems strange now but in 1974 he was the first non-Labor member to hold the state of Warrego for 66 years.

Neil Turner held the seat of Warrego from 1974 until 1986. During that period he served as Minister for Transport in 1983 and then Minister for Primary Industries from 1983 to 1986. He moved to the Sunshine Coast in 1986 to retire, living at Maleny and later at Nambour. However, he once again got involved in local politics and strongly felt something needed to be done. Believing that he had more to offer politics, he successfully won endorsement for the seat of Nicklin and ran for the Nationals at the 1989 election. No doubt campaigning in the seat of Nicklin was a very different experience to that of campaigning in the seat of Warrego, as he had done previously.

The result was very close and, after a lengthy hearing in the Court of Disputed Returns, Neil Turner was sworn in as the member for Nicklin in 1990 and was appointed opposition spokesman for police and emergency services. When the Borbidge-led government won power in 1996, Neil Turner became Speaker and he retained that position until the election in June 1998.


Neil Turner was widely respected as Speaker of this parliament for his clear decisions and for maintaining the traditions of the Westminster system, but most of all for maintaining the true spirit of the parliament. He and I had many discussions about how parliament should operate, because it interested us both. We talked for a long time about how parliament should fulfil its place in the democratic system. He was very proud of the way he ran the parliament and the way he ensured that that purpose was properly fulfilled.

Over the years I have spoken to members from both sides of politics who were in this parliament when Neil was Speaker—and I regret that I was not. I never got to serve in this parliament when Neil was Speaker. But members who were ministers in the government and members who were in the opposition, without exception, hold Speaker Turner in high regard and they refer to the way he ran this parliament as an example for others to follow. No greater respect can be paid to the Speaker of this House than to be remembered and respected by both sides of the House, both while they are serving in the position and for many years afterwards, as Neil Turner was. That is the greatest respect that Speaker Neil Turner unquestionably had from this parliament and that is the way he will always be remembered.

Speaker Turner undertook refurbishments of this parliament and of the Annexe because he understood the value of this precinct. He was instrumental in launching the Queensland parliament's internet website and provided electorates larger than 100,000 square kilometres with funding for a second electorate office because, as well as understanding the intricacies of being Speaker of this House, he understood the importance of the role of the local member and the difficulties in fulfilling that role in those large western electorates where he was born and bred.

Neil Turner was respected for his strong views, his wonderfully dry sense of humour and his friendly, forthright personality. He had a wide circle of friends, particularly throughout the south-west but also on the Sunshine Coast where he was highly respected by many and he will be fondly remembered.

I know that I speak for all members of the LNP in saying that Neil Turner was not only one of the finest Speakers of this parliament, he was not only a great local member for his electorates, he was not only a great Queenslander; he was a great bloke. He will be fondly remembered and our deepest sympathies go to his family, his wife and his children. He will be long remembered when members gather in this parliament for many years into the future.

 **Hon. PT LUCAS** (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Attorney-General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State) (9.52 am): Neil Turner served in this parliament over a period of 24 years. He of course represented the parliament in two seats. This is not in these days unusual with redistributions, but for Neil it was in the far western seat of Warrego, won from Labor and held by him for 12 years, and later in the Sunshine Coast hinterland seat of Nicklin from 1990 to 1998. The differences between the two seats and their changing demographics were quite stark, but both have very strong links to primary production in their different ways. He beat a Liberal in his first outing in Nicklin. In those days, each party of course stood for something different rather than an anodyne excuse that we see now, cultivating all but appealing to none.

I can only comment on my short time here with Neil when he was Speaker. Of the parliamentarians at that time, it was him and the then member for Lockyer, Tony FitzGerald, who was Leader of the House—both from the Nationals—who on that side stood out as people to learn from. As an aside, Denver Beanland as a minister was also someone to learn from.

Neil Turner as Speaker set a standard for those who have followed him, but it is not appropriate to assess others. It is more appropriate to use some analogies with rugby league—a game Neil played and loved—to enumerate some of his qualities in the chair. Mr Speaker, as a referee of a game that Neil no doubt is playing where he is now and as a referee of parliament, I might add my own emphasis. He did not rely on lengthy lectures. He could control a game and very rarely sent people off, and he had the respect of both sides and was beholden to none.


He loved the National Party—he was a true believer—but he treated the ALP opposition with respect. He was never weak with or toadied to the opposition or tried to cultivate us. That is why he had our respect. He never criticised his own side to us, because that would be weak. Neil was a man of strength, though I might add that sometimes his frustrations in the chair with Santo Santoro were pretty hard for him to disguise. I can recall him chuckling away when the member for Gregory very obviously and physically pulled down his ministerial colleague Mr Santoro from a ridiculous point of order. I can remember as a 34-year-old newby carrying on a bit from the back bench. Neil would gently call you up to the chair and quietly say, 'You've had a go, me boy. Next time you'll be out'—again, unobtrusive but very effective.

Neil presided over many improvements in the parliamentary precinct. He realised the value of proper facilities and their role in an effective parliament. Whilst Neil was disappointed to lose his seat, he took to his second retirement with relish. He did not demean himself by participating boorishly in attention-seeking behaviour after he left. He did not need to reinvent history by telling everyone what a great Speaker he was. He was a great Speaker and we all knew it. He and Tom Burns had a great mutual respect. Like Tom when he ceased to be the member for Lytton, he was there to support those who followed unobtrusively and when asked, not as a relic.

Neil's daughter Monica and her husband, Tim, and their family live in my electorate, so I would often see Neil when he was proudly watching his grandson Cameron playing rugby for the Wynnum Bugs. I might add, as a referee myself, that Cameron was a handful on the field, so I saw life from Neil's

perspective, holding the whistle presiding over a match. It was great to catch up with Neil, yet the only trepidation I had when I ran into him was about his handshake. In fact, I would address him from about two metres away hoping he would not extend his hand, but he was a fair dinkum bloke so he always extended his hand. It made a grip from the member for Gregory feel like a Buckingham Palace handshake from the Queen. It was like stripping a chicken carcass but I was the chook.

Neil was a fine husband, father and grandfather. He was an exemplar as a Speaker who set the standard for others to follow. I was glad to know him. Neil's beloved wife, Ute, is here today, as is his daughter Monica. To them, to his other children, Garry and Julie, and to his entire family I say: how fortunate it is that you have had his love and support but also how fortunate it is for the state that we had him as well.

 **Mr HOBBS** (Warrego—LNP) (9.56 am): Neil Turner was a very active and effective member of parliament, and I endorse the words of previous speakers who have covered much of his political life. I offer my sincere condolences to the Turner family—to Ute, to Monica, to Julie, to Garry, to the grandchildren and to his brother, Brian, and his family.

Neil was a very practical person. He saw things as right or wrong and there was nothing in the middle. After he won the seat of Warrego in 1974, he saw that there was a lot to be done and he set about doing it. New and upgraded hospitals were built in places such as Tambo, Augathella, Charleville, Mitchell and Cunnamulla. Most schools were upgraded and the railway system worked. Neil did a lot of driving, and as he travelled around he would pull up and walk over and see how the railway workers were going. He saw a need to improve the working conditions of those railway workers who were living in tents and got them better camps and working conditions.

Being a very active and competitive sportsman, Neil knew many of these men socially and on the sporting field. He was a tough man. Many members of this House felt those strong hands on a shoulder or the neck as he greeted you. Even the great international footballer Mick Veivers, the former member for Southport, would gird his loins if he saw Turner coming. Mick would joke that it was safer being trampled on the field by a French forward than dealing with Neil Turner.

Neil was a great bloke who would help anybody out. His son, Garry, recently gave a very good example of that. One day a neighbour rang up and asked Neil to give him a hand to draft cattle the next day. Neil had planned to draft his own cattle that day, but he put his own job off to help his neighbour.

The Right Worshipful Master Turner was an active member of the Masonic Lodge, and his brother, Brian, gave a masonic service to recognise Neil's contribution to the craft as part of the funeral service at St John's Cathedral. Some of Neil's masonic regalia adorned his coffin.

Neil loved to recite poetry, and many members and friends heard some of these on a regular basis. Those who were slow to get away would often hear a full rendition of his favourite, *The Pearl of them All*. While it did cross my mind that it would be a fitting tribute to Neil for members to once again share this full experience, I would, however, like to give you a shortened version and an explanation of the poem that depicts his life on the land, the reality of the way things are and the way Neil Turner faced the inevitable decisions that sometimes had to be made. He would tell the story about how the station horses were mustered in—

Gaily in front of the stockwhip
The horses come galloping home,
Leaping and bucking and playing
With sides all a lather of foam;
But painfully, slowly behind them,
With head to the crack of the fall,
And trying so gamely to follow
Comes limping the pearl of them all.
He is stumbling and stiff in the shoulder,
And splints from the hoof to the knee,
But never a horse on the station
Has half such a spirit as he;

He would go on to tell us about the exploits of this great horse, such as—

No journey has ever yet beat him,
No day was too heavy or hard,
He was king of the camp and the muster
And pride of the wings of the yard.

He talked of this great horse's serious failing health, while remembering the—

... reckless, wild rides with a comrade
And laughing, gay rides with a girl—


And how when they parted he gave her a promise—

The night that we parted in tears,
To keep and be kind to the old horse
Till Time made a burden of years;
And then for his sake and one woman's ...
So, fetch me my gun from the wall!
I have only this kindness to offer
As gift to the pearl of them all.

He would then conclude—

Here! Hold him out there by the yard wing,
And don't let him know by a sign:
Turn his head to you—ever so little!
I can't bear his eyes to meet mine.
Then—stand still, old boy! For a moment ...
These tears, how they blind as they fall!
Now, God help my hand to be steady ...
Good-bye—to the pearl of them all!

Well, old horse, you have done us proud. You stood tall while you were here. You have always stood tall in the eyes of your family, your friends, your constituents and your mates from the Queensland parliament.

 **Mr JOHNSON** (Gregory—LNP) (10.01 am): It is with a great deal of sadness that I rise to speak to this condolence motion moved by the Premier and endorsed by the Leader of the Opposition on the life of the late Neil Turner. Neil Turner, as has been said by various speakers here this morning, came into this place in 1974 with a record of local government from 1971 to 1975. I knew Neil Turner for many, many years. As the member for Warrego just said, he was a man of Western Queensland, his heart and soul were always in Western Queensland, he loved those people out there but he loved all Queenslanders. He was a true Queenslander and he was a true champion. He loved this place, he loved his Queen, he loved his country and he loved his God, and I think that is a true reflection of who the man was.

Neil Turner won the seat of Warrego from a very popular Jack Aiken. Jack Aiken was the member for Warrego, if my mind serves me correctly, for about six years. Warrego was a Labor stronghold. All that happened when Neil Turner took over was a changing of the guard—two similar blokes, two bush larrikin type fellows, two men whose word was their bond.

To win an electorate like Warrego in those times from the Labor Party was a feat on its own, and I think that showed the quality of the bloke. As the member for Warrego just said, he would talk to railway workers, roadworkers—everybody was the same. There was no difference depending on who you were—whether it was the King or just the ordinary Joe citizen. The important thing with Neil Turner is that Warrego was made up of towns like Barcaldine, Blackall and Charleville, which were all strong Labor towns then, and for Neil to win there was a feat and it showed the quality of the bloke and his relationship to the people whom he represented.

Rugby league has been mentioned here today, including by the Deputy Premier. Neil Turner was a champion rugby league player and I would not have liked to have him running at me. He used to always say that us blokes from Quilpie were cheats. We never cheated on the field but you have got to win sometime. He said, 'You blokes used to wet the sidelines so we couldn't get a go down the wing.' That was Neil's story but I do not believe that story; we would never do that out there!

I remember a night here in this place when Neil had a big bottle of Baileys Irish Cream up in his office. It was a late night and Mick Veivers was up in his room and he decided he would have a drink. So some members would go along and raid your fridge or whatever—it didn't matter whose it was, it was everybody's. Up in the end room was Mick and Russell Cooper and they had this big bottle of Irish port, which I think Neil was going to take home for Ute, but Ute never saw it. Russell and Mick drank it that night, and when they finished drinking it they filled it up with water and tightened the top on it and put it back in Neil's room. I think my colleague here the member for Maroochydore played a part in trying to divide the warring factions at the time when Neil found out what happened. They were the fun times.

I know we have our own political beliefs in this place but I think the one thing is that we keep them inside this chamber, and that is what Neil Turner certainly did. When he was the Speaker of this House, like the Leader of the Opposition said here today, he was certainly a fair Speaker, a strong Speaker and a Speaker who ruled with an iron fist. I think he was harder on the government members than he was on the opposition members, if I can say that. That was the fall of the hand at the time.

Wherever you go in this state, Neil is highly regarded, highly respected and highly spoken about. I say to Ute and the family: I know times have been difficult but at the same time there are good times. The good times are when we reflect on people's lives and think about the good things that people did.

Neil Turner certainly did a lot of good things for this state. He did a lot of great things for the people of Warrego and the people of Nicklin. May God bless his soul and may he rest in peace. Neil, thanks for the memories, old mate. You are a true champion Western Queenslander.

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (10.06 am): I wish to echo the remarks that have been made by both sides of the House so far, particularly by the member for Warrego who pointed to the soft side that Neil Turner had. One of the things that I experienced with Neil was that his very strong hands were great for chiropractic relief as he got them around my neck on one occasion. I would invite members to think of that for a moment. That was one of those late evenings that the member for Gregory talked about. They were evenings of a coalition of kindness around a bottle.

Neil was a worthy mate to have. As members heard from that poem, he was somebody who was soft of heart as well—he was not a hard-hearted man at all. I recall when he first became the Speaker that he was denied the opportunity to actually open the session of parliament because the then Speaker would not relinquish the role. Neil had invited his father down on that occasion—and his father was quite elderly—but he was not upset for himself; he was upset for his father's memory in that regard. It is something that has always struck me whenever I have thought about him—and I have thought about him quite a deal over the years.

On one occasion when I bumped into him, he said to me that he was interested in being on a government board. I think the Deputy Premier and others have spoken about his beliefs and that he was a true believer in the National Party, but he was happy to serve the government of the day and he told me so. I raised the matter with the Premier and he ended up being on one of the energy boards and he made a good contribution in that regard—

Mr Robertson: SunWater.

Mr SCHWARTEN: SunWater, yes, sorry. He served that, as he told me he would, without fear or favour and in the interests of Queenslanders. I think it was a mark of the man who wanted to continue to contribute and a mark of this government that would put him into that position.

I want to talk a bit about the notes I have kept from him that he sent to me, and I might table them because the family might want to see them. As was referred to by the Premier, it was a time when there was much uproar in the place and, as I was timid by nature of course, I was a perfect target for somebody as boisterous as him. What he used to do is that he would get in and warn me fairly early in the day but he would always send me a note, and here is one of them that I have here. He wrote—

As a means of trying to apologise for your wife's poor judgement I will not warn you today under 123A.

Here is another one—

Even if a minister has one leg in the air you can't say so.

So he must have pulled me up on that one, too! He was quite an accomplished artist as well. In one of his notes he has drawn a reasonable caricature of me staring into a crystal ball and it says—

Guess who?

We have heard about his primary industries background and his love of the land and his love of livestock. Instead of writing 'you' in the conventional form, he used the sheep analogy. In one of his notes he has written—

Ewe still hav a 123A hanging from your head from this morning. Ha, ha?

Mr Speaker, I hope you will bear with my indulgence here because it is unparliamentary but I think it epitomised Neil. He has written—

You bloody idiot. Even if a member is a fool U can't call them one.

The next one was—

Wot wood ewe hav said about him if U didn't like him??

I do not know what this next one was about, but he has drawn a tap with drips coming out of it and he has written—

Is this a Drip of the Grout.

I do not know what that one was about. I think it was the member for Callide who said that he was one of the Speakers who really took seriously the issue of members' rights in this parliament. I remember him on one occasion picking up stones down there. I said, 'What are you doing, Neil?' He said, 'I'm going up to see Borbidge with these and tell him if one of these falls on a kid that he's responsible and not me.' As a result of it, the refurbishments happened over there. He had his time with me on that. One of his notes said—

Your room will bee last. This is my chance 2 fix ewe?


I will not say the word contained in this next one, but enlightened members will be able to pick it up. I think I have stretched the Speaker's patience enough here this morning. Another note said—

Ewe bast???d. U could be the first out.

He then proceeded to draw a skull and crossbones on the bottom of it.


I raise those because they actually give some insight into a Speaker who was fair and just. As far as I know, there is only one Labor person he terminated the membership of in here one morning. It would surprise every honourable member to know that it was not me. It was actually Matt Foley, who every day used to get up and refer to the fact that Denver Beanland had sat in contempt of the parliament. Every day Matt Foley would get up and say, 'Today is the feast of the rising sun and it is the 397,000th day or second'—whatever it was—that the Attorney-General sat in contempt of this place.' Neil knew it was coming every morning. One day Foley went too far and Speaker Turner said, 'You will withdraw that.' Foley said, 'No, I won't,' and then he said, 'Well, you're out.' As far as I know, he is the only one from our side who was ever evicted and a most unlikely candidate you would probably ever find. It showed how he was able to control the House through respect that he had from everybody.


In those days of course you had ministers who were unlimited in their speeches. We heard about Mr Santoro, who could talk underwater—mostly rot—with a mouthful of Rinso. You could see the Speaker trying to wind him up and wind him up. I saw him do it to Russell Cooper one day. The smart members got it, but Santo did not. After it was over I saw Santo going into the back room there. Every time he went like that in the future, Santo sat down! I think a mark of a person in this place is that when they leave this earth, and they leave the memories in this parliament, that both sides of the parliament can contribute in a jovial way about their passing and in a respectful way. That says it all and I do not think it needs anything further to be said. My condolences to his family. I would be happy to hand those notes on to members of the family if they want them.

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (10.13 am): Neil Turner was a gentleman, a champion and a great character who was fond of reciting bush poetry and standing up for what he believed was right. He was also a good friend. You could have no better person on your side in this parliament. Other members have talked about Neil's time as the member for Warrego, a seat he won in 1974, entering this parliament at the same time as my father, Gordon, the member for Cooroora. However, my memories are of Neil Turner, who later won the Sunshine Coast seat of Nicklin, out of which my own seat was substantially created in the 1992 redistribution. The Nicklin electorate Neil first represented, after an election and a court case, stretched from Maroochydore and Alexandra Headland up to Buderim and west to Nambour and Palmwoods. Neil had successfully made the transition from a bush seat to a coastal area, bringing his brand of humour and humanity to bear as he served a new constituency. He loved people and he served them, no matter their rank or background.

You could say that Neil was a fatherly figure, mentoring and supporting me as I entered this place as the youngest woman ever at that time in the Queensland parliament. I say that with genuine affection but also with a touch of amusement. You see, sometimes I hear the odd person wrongly claim that I won my father's seat in this parliament. The facts are most of the population base of the Maroochydore electorate in 1992 was carved out of Neil's electorate of Nicklin and then the former seat of Landsborough and finally a part of Cooroora. However, it would be fair to say that some of the banter between me and Neil many times was similar to a father/daughter conversation. He was a genuinely caring individual who looked out for others as well as his colleagues and he was a great help in time of need.

In this parliament he excelled in his time as Speaker. There was a strength and dignity which people respected in a challenging parliament and beneath the authoritative presence the seasoned bush humour was never far away, whether in a quip or one of those famous handwritten notes he used to circulate. I also have some of those notes which strangely included cartoons and hieroglyphics to make his point. To Ute and family, I express my condolences and that of my parents, Gordon and Norma, and the wider Sunshine Coast. Neil served well and was well loved.

 **Hon. JC SPENCE** (Sunnybank—ALP) (10.16 am): I would also like to pass on my condolences to the family and friends of Neil Turner who are in the gallery today. As another recipient of Speaker Turner's notes as a shadow minister, I would like to concur that we regarded him as a very fair Speaker on both sides of the parliament. He had a terrific sense of humour and he displayed that every day that he was in the chair. I guess so much has been said about him this morning. One thing that has not been said is how immediately when Neil became the Speaker he did transform the look of this parliament in so many ways. I was never sure whether it was Neil who had the good taste or his wife, Ute, but he immediately began to make some wonderful changes around here. He replaced inappropriate paintings in so many rooms. He did good things like that. He put all of the pot plants around the perimeter here. He immediately made some fundamental changes to a parliament that had kind of been ignored, I think, by Speakers for a long time and we live with those changes today. So whether it was you, Ute, or whether it was Neil, thank you very much. Your changes have been noticed and they will be longstanding as we enjoy this parliamentary precinct. But Neil's contribution of course was much greater than that. He loved the parliament. He was a great member of parliament, as we have heard reflected here today, and he is someone who will be sadly missed by us all.

 **Mr HORAN** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (10.17 am): It is a great privilege to have the chance to talk about my great mate Neil Turner, who was a mate of so many people in this parliament during the time that he was here, and to give our fond regards to Ute, Monica, Julie, Garry and his seven

grandchildren. Neil gave enormous service to this state at local government, in the state parliament as a minister for two very important portfolios and then, as many people have reflected on today, as one of the great and outstanding Speakers of this parliament. Neil brought to this parliament a real knockabout background. It is important, given the mix of people who come into this place, to have people like Neil—a footballer, a fencer, a shearer and someone who battled away on a block that was not an easy block in tough times. He played rugby league for Newtown rugby league club in Toowoomba at a time when Toowoomba was the epicentre of rugby league, and if you wanted to make the Australian side you came to Toowoomba and played for Queensland and then for Australia in the Duncan Thompson era.

Neil was a man of great strength—I suppose because of all the fencing that he had done and all the corner posts that he had lifted. The honourable member for Rockhampton has attested to the stretched neck that he got one day here. He got a little tap on the granite walls as the division bells were ringing and Neil said to him, ‘I don’t like pain, son.’ We came in here for the division and Robbie was sitting over there, fairly red faced. Mick Veivers said, ‘You look a little bit taller, Robbie.’

People often talk about political parties and that members follow the party line. They probably do not understand the robust argument that goes on in party rooms. I remember the great effect the awful tragedy of Port Arthur had on me—the dilemma of gun control, good people and bad people and so forth—and Neil’s robust defence of people who needed firearms in Western Queensland and of good people. You have to be in the party room to understand the intensity and commitment of his defence of good people.

Neil was a very opinionated man on the things that he believed in. His son, Garry, is a surgeon in Boston in the US. Neil would go over and, in typical Neil Turner fashion, quickly make friends with about nine blokes in Boston. On every visit he would go to the pub with them and regale them about tree clearing, greenies, gun control and so on—all of his favourites topics—to the point where these guys wondered what these Australians were on about. I had a fairly similar experience with him. Neil fell on hard times for a while and was living in a flat at Warwick. We brought him up to our farm to have a look at the horses and he gave me some advice as to what I was doing right and wrong with the horses. Neil had a great love of horses. I took him down to the Bull and Barley Inn at Cambooya for a counter meal and within half an hour he had engaged the whole bar in conversation about greenies, tree clearing and gun control to the point where I said, ‘I think it’s time to go, Neil.’

In 1991, when I first stood in a by-election for election to this place, I had been a member of the National Party for only a week before the election campaign started. Neil came up and doorknocked an area. I was very inexperienced about the issues. At the time there was some gay rights legislation being debated in this parliament. Neil was in earnest discussion with a little old lady who was watering her flowers in her garden in the Kearneys Spring area of Toowoomba. He said, ‘Come over here.’ I was on the other side of the street, so I went over. Apparently, the lady took the opposite view to him and Neil let forth. After that I thought, ‘That’s it. I’m finished. I have no chance now. She’s going to tell all her friends in town.’ But, as it turned out, Neil was possibly right.

Neil had some great loves in his life. He absolutely loved his family. I remember him telling me a story about taking one of his grandkids to the Neil Turner Weir, which he was very proud of, and explaining to his grandchild—I am not sure which one it was—why the Neil Turner Weir was full of sand. I think one of the things that he tried to do was get it dredged or the construction changed so that it filled up with water instead of sand.

Neil went through some very turbulent times in his political career. He was a minister in charge of very important portfolios. He retired in 1986 from the ministry. From 1986 through to about 1989 he went through some very soul-destroying times with regard to the Fitzgerald inquiry. He was cleared totally, but that time cost him dearly financially and emotionally. I think he was left scarred. It was only about a year or two later—in about 1991 or 1992—when then current members of this House from both sides were being investigated that the CJC said, ‘Enough’s enough. We should not proceed anymore with this witch-hunt.’ Neil went through that. Then when he stood for election in 1989 he was not actually declared elected for about 15 months. He went through that whole time without any income. So they were very difficult times for him. But then Neil rose to the position of Speaker and, as I said earlier, he was one of the great and outstanding Speakers of this House.


In those times, the numbers of the House were 44-all and one Independent, the member for Gladstone. It was a very difficult time and it was only his humour and his knockabout background that enabled him to manage this House in a way that was respected by both sides. As the member for Rockhampton said, in all of that time he threw out only one person, and that was Matt Foley. I remember it slightly differently from the member for Rockhampton. Matt was, in his usual loquacious and esoteric style, waffling on and did not hear the three warnings he had received. Then when his colleagues said, ‘No, you’ve been warned three times. He told you to go out,’ he respectfully went out.

Neil made physical improvements to this place, such as the hanging ferns in pots—the maidenhair ferns—and those sorts of things. From memory, Neil reinstated the Union Jack, because he strongly believed in God and country. One of my endearing memories of him as Speaker is that he

absolutely loved the staff of this place. Whether they were the catering staff, the security staff, the cleaners or whoever, he cared about them. He took them into great consideration. One of the enjoyments of his postparliamentary life was to come back to Parliament House and visit them all. Many of them were at his funeral and it was wonderful to see that.

Neil had a great mate in Mick Veivers. They had made a pact that, whoever went first, the other would give the eulogy at the funeral. Unfortunately, at the time Mick was going in for about his sixth knee replacement so he could not get there. An example of the respect in which Neil was held in this place is that Bob Gibbs gave the eulogy on behalf of Mick Veivers and he did a wonderful job.

I think Neil will go down as one of the great statesmen of this parliament, as someone who truly cared about the people whom he represented, who truly cared about the institution that is parliament, but, above all else, who was a wonderful family man who loved Ute, who loved his children and who loved his grandchildren.


 **Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (10.26 am): I rise to contribute to this condolence motion. I think every speaker so far has encapsulated a part of Neil that is dear to them and to this parliament. It has been stated already that Neil was Speaker at a time when the numbers in this House were even. At times it was incredibly tense, and Neil used his country humour to release that tension in the House. I think that was exemplified by his photograph in the Speakers' Hall with him wearing that wig and other things. He did not wear them every day. Despite that photograph, Neil's attitude was encapsulated by the owl in his office which donned the wig at a rakish angle. I think that typified Neil's approach to managing this chamber. It was firm but fair, but it was also done with a great sense of humour.

Neil told me often that one of his aims was not to throw anyone out of this chamber in the time that he was Speaker. I am sure Matt Foley, being the only person to have been thrown out, must have deserved it. Neil also was very wont to demonstrate his prowess with a whip. I know that many overseas delegations were subjected to—or were happy to see—what he could do with a stockwhip. He kept it proudly in his office, hung over one of the coat hooks. I do not know if some of the Asian gentlemen who visited knew what they were in for when he invited them into his office, but they certainly knew what they were up for when they left!

I risk being disciplined for this, but many years ago—it was actually the year of the Mundingburra by-election—as a family we were to go north for holidays and I thought it prudent not to. Instead we went down south. I had a call from my mum to say that one of our dogs had died. The girls did not know, but while we were in Sydney we bought a puppy. When we got back here to parliament we were going to stop only 10 minutes—and that is all we did stop for—but the girls were very distressed that we were going to leave this puppy in the car. It was a shar pei-boxer cross and we shoved it in a butter box about this big. We went up in the lift to my room. We were there for only 10 minutes, but—of all the times to be in the lift with three small children and a dog—the Speaker got in the lift. John had the butter box, with his hand resting gently on the top. We get up to about level 10 and there is this movement in the box and up comes the head. Neil just stood there. The mirrors were not in the lifts at the time—thank God for that—and I thought, 'Good, he hasn't noticed.' We went up to my room and we were gone in 10 minutes. About two sittings later, when the session in here had finished and we were walking out, he asked, 'How's that ugly dog?' I never got away with it. Right up to his last visit to this place he would ask, 'How's that ugly dog?'

At a time when things were very tense in this chamber, Neil was a great person to be able to speak to. He was a man of great integrity and was, I believe, very even-handed in this chamber. I think we all agree with that. He was a man of the country. He had great country humour. To all the fellas who reckon he had a tough handshake, you are all a bunch of wusses. His handshake was very gentle. Ask any of the ladies in this chamber.

I and many others valued Neil's friendship. I know that John did. The girls valued his sense of humour. On behalf of the Independents we offer our greatest sympathy to Ute and the children and grandchildren. From my perspective, I valued Neil. I valued his even-handedness. I valued his confidence. I valued his friendship at some very difficult times. I will miss his gentleness. I will miss his friendship. I will miss his humour and his integrity.

 **Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—LNP) (10.30 am): For a period of some eight years I was privileged to serve in this place with Neil Turner. Neil became a great mate and a fantastic mentor. As the member for Toowoomba South said a little while ago, for some time Neil actually lived in Warwick. We did not know he had moved to town. He made himself known to my office when he went in there one day fairly well unannounced. I was not there at the time. He walked in and said to my secretary, 'How about a cup of tea, love?' She was wondering who this person was. She was not around at the time when Neil was actually serving in parliament. Neil started to do that on a regular basis. He would go in there and regale her with exactly the same stories that he regaled all of Mike's constituents and half the United States with as well.

Neil was a person who was a wonderful country gentleman. He was actually a son of the soil. He was fair dinkum bloke. He was somebody who had an extraordinary sense of what he knew was right or wrong and a value system that never varied in the time that he was here. If he actually believed in


something he consistently strove to uphold it. He consistently strove to put those particular principles forward, whether it be in the party room or whether it be in this parliament. Certainly after he left this parliament, as many members said, he did not mind passing on his views, but generally with Neil he spoke and you listened for a very, very long period of time. That was Neil. He was a person of great humour. He was somebody who was very passionate. He was someone who was extraordinarily colourful. He was somebody who was held in high esteem and regard in his electorate. You have to be to actually win a seat from the Labor Party that was held from the time of just after Federation.

He was indeed as strong as an ox. We have already heard in this place today about some of the exchanges with Neil, including him explaining appropriate interpersonal relationship skills to the member for Rockhampton or, indeed, the other part of the story which the honourable member Gregory did not finish telling, as I think he was going on that hunt for that bottle of Baileys or some other thing. He and Mick Veivers, whilst they were both as strong as an ox, were both very much like young mates and kids. They got into a pushy shovey in the office next to Fiona's and they relocated Fiona Simpson's dividing wall about two feet. You would not want to have been in between that. It was all in great humour. I think Fiona might have even let out a bit of a squeal along the way which was heard right throughout the parliament. Tony Elliott, who was the former member for Cunningham, told me that Neil Turner when he came into this place as a young man could jump most of the way up a flight of stairs from a standing start. That was the strength of this particular guy. Maybe that explained why he subsequently had three hip replacement operations.


He was a wonderful cartoonist and a fantastic caricaturist. I remember a particular incident when I was the government whip. It was an extremely challenging time to be a government whip in a minority government. Towards the end of question time I walked up to hand Neil the government speaking list for the next order of business. I said, 'What are you doing there, Mr Speaker?' He said, 'I'm doodling.' I said, 'What are you doodling?' He pointed to it. Keep in context that that morning the opposition had been targeting one of their ministerial favourites and he had been obliging them beyond their wildest dreams. Neil had a cartoon of a bloke in the bottom of a very, very deep hole with a shovel. I said to him, 'What are you going to do with this?' He said, 'Well, this clown doesn't seem to be getting it in words, he might get it in pictures.'

Another time he assisted me in becoming a part of parliamentary precedent. I remember it most distinctly. It was on 25 May 1997. After a very hard night of being government whip—up all night studying and crafting these terribly incisive Dorothy Dix questions to ask the minister or the Premier the next day—I rose to ask the question. The member for Murrumba, in one of his erudite moments, jumped up to take a point of order on the question and whether it was consistent with standing orders to which the Speaker said that there was no point of order. The member for Murrumba persisted. The Speaker said, 'This is a very good point. I am going to suspend the House.' He suspended the House at precisely 10.37. He called the Clerk out with him. If members will excuse me I will interpose what happened then because Neil subsequently explained it to me. He said he had had a gutful of these inane, meaningless points of order and he just wanted to teach the parliament a bit of lesson. So he called the Clerk out and out the back he said, 'How about we have a cup of tea.' They sat down and had a cup of tea and then Neil said, 'Well, I suppose they've probably learned enough. We might as well go back in.' He said to the Clerk, 'Well, Rob, what do you reckon? The Clerk said, 'I think the member for Murrumba is right.' So, Neil walked in here, found in favour of the point of order, sat me down and invited me to rephrase my question. I subsequently thanked him for assisting me to become a part of parliamentary precedent, accentuated and highlighted by a very, very long 12-minute pregnant parliamentary pause.

Neil was a wonderful bloke. He did many kindnesses for many people. He did many kindnesses for me. I remember at that time I had a very young family. This place is not necessarily a very great family place. Neil was a wonderful family man. His wife Ute was a wonderful family lady. I remember at the time Neil made available what is now known as the family room for me, my wife and my young children. For that we are eternally grateful. Neil and Ute did not only do great kindnesses for me, they did great kindnesses for other people. They significantly changed this place for the better for the future. I think all of us can be eternally grateful for that. He will always be remembered as a fantastic gentleman, a person who contributed much, not only to his electorate but to public life in this place. Not only this parliament but also Queensland will be far worse off for his passing. God bless Neil Turner and condolences to his family.

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (10.37 am): I, too, rise to pay my respects to the Turner family on the passing of Neil in July this year. My family moved to the electorate of Nicklin unfortunately after the Neil Turner era so my first introduction to the Turner family was actually through Ute. I do not know if Ute will remember, but I suspect she will. On one rather stifling day in early 2009 I was doorknocking in her Blackall Range community and I knocked on her door. Ute kindly offered me a glass of water. We got to talking about politics, juggling politics and family, the education of my kids and a whole lot more. I did not get too many other doors knocked on that morning, but I did meet a very wise woman and received some sage advice and I thank Ute for that. My subsequent interactions with Neil showed me that he was equally capable of dispensing sage advice, just not necessarily with Ute's hospitality or her diplomacy. I think his first words to me, and this was after the 2009 election and my appointment to this position, were, 'So who are you young fellow and where did you come from?'

Neil's contributions to party meetings were always robust and based on his personal experiences. He had a few favourite topics, as the members for Toowoomba South, Southern Downs and others have mentioned, but when he did speak I certainly listened. I think that came from his time as the Speaker. My biggest regret is that I did not meet Neil sooner and I did not get to know him as well as I would have liked to. To Ute and the family, my sincerest condolences. Neil was a wonderful man. He will be missed by the Sunshine Coast LNP community and by me personally.

 **Mr WELLINGTON** (Nicklin—Ind) (10.39 am): I rise to join in the condolence motion for the late Neil Turner. This morning we have heard about his humour, his fairness and his gentlemanly manner. My first real contact with Neil was when I stood for preselection for the National Party prior to 1988. I can recall the evening as if were last night. It was held at the former Big Pineapple on the Sunshine Coast. I was a young solicitor and thought I would have a go. I did not win preselection, but Neil came straight over to me. We have heard about his vice-like handshake. I thought, 'By crikey, what was that?'


Neil was a thorough gentleman. I have always reflected on Neil's conduct in that preselection campaign. Since then I have been involved in a number of election campaigns, both for council and for state parliament. One thing I can say without a shadow of a doubt is that Neil was always a gentleman and his campaigns were very fair. They had none of the grubby politics that sometimes happens during election campaigns, when some candidates and their supporters go over the top. All I can say is that Neil and his campaign team were totally fair. They ran their campaigns straight down the line, with none of the grubbiness that I have seen on other occasions. After that first preselection experience Neil said to me, 'Your day will come.'

I was reflecting on the earlier comments of the member for Maroochydore, who spoke about Neil as a fatherly figure. I used to work as a solicitor with Bradley & Bray Solicitors. Sometimes Neil would come in to reception. My secretary would say, 'There's a Mr Turner waiting to see you.' We have all heard about the cups of tea. We would meet and catch up. Sometimes I would go down to his office in Currie Street, Nambour. The office I have now is exactly the same office that he had then, opposite McDonald's, so we have the best security possible in any town. Little did I know that about 10 years later Neil and I would be in contest. At that time I was able to win the election.

Earlier this year Neil demonstrated his continued interest in our community on the Sunshine Coast at our regular Anzac Day service in Quota Memorial Park, Nambour. I looked around and there was Neil, sitting with many of his close friends, ready in anticipation for the special service.

Earlier this morning we heard about his passion for and his genuine interest in this parliament. One of the last hearings the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee held, prior to its winding up, was in relation to a bill that changed the role of the Speaker and the way this parliament operates. Neil Turner travelled to this parliament to make a personal submission about that proposed change. All of the members of the committee will no doubt reflect on his passion. Certainly he had not lost that passion and his concern for the role of Speaker and the role of this institution.


I conclude by joining other members in conveying my deepest sympathy and condolences to Neil's wife and family on his passing. I wish them all the best.

 **Mr DICKSON** (Buderim—LNP) (10.43 am): Firstly, I pay my respects to Neil's family: his wife, Ute, two daughters, Monica and Julie, and son, Garry. I first met Neil just before 2004, when he decided to run for mayor on the Sunshine Coast. I sat down with him and a bloke by the name of Arnie Barnes and they gave me one of the best educations I have ever had in politics.

I agree with every member who has spoken today. Neil was a fair and honest man. He was always ready to give somebody a kind word. However, I have shaken Neil's hands on many occasions and I disagree with the member for Gladstone: he would rip the skin clean off your hand. He was a very strong man.

The people of Queensland have lost a great son in Neil Turner. He led the way for so many people, not only on the Sunshine Coast but also out in Warrego and everywhere he went, and he left a good reputation behind him. I can only reiterate what has been said today. I can say that he was a very good friend. He came to my house regularly. He used to ring my house regularly. If my wife answered the phone he would always say, 'Is your mother there?' He was just that sort of fellow; he was always trying to put the good word across. I say that in a very polite way.

Neil was good to the people of Queensland. We should never forget people like him and we should aspire to be just like him. He was a good mate, but he is gone. I wish him all the best for where he has gone.

 **Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (10.44 am): I rise briefly to put on the record a couple of memories of the late Neil Turner. Mostly I am motivated to do so because of the very strong friendship that Neil had with my predecessor in this place, Marc Rowell. It is no surprise to me to hear the member for Gregory and the member for Southern Downs speak of the high regard they had for Neil Turner, because they came into the parliament with Marc Rowell in late 1989.


After leaving parliament, Neil continued to take a strong interest in politics in Queensland. On a regular basis he would come up to North Queensland to visit Marc Rowell and his wife, Sandy, and stay at their farm. He did that for two reasons. One was to campaign for National Party candidates in North Queensland and the other was to assist with the annual harvest of the lychee crop on the Rowell property. On many occasions when Neil Turner was in North Queensland, either campaigning for the National Party or picking lychees, as he did with the electorate office of the member for Southern Downs he would avail himself of the facilities at the Hinchinbrook electorate office, particularly the kettle and the cups of tea. He would give a fair bit of cheek to the staff of the Hinchinbrook electorate office.

One day in the Hinchinbrook electorate office Neil came across a great character of the Herbert River district, the late Aldo Moretto. Aldo was a long-serving teacher in many of the local small schools in the Herbert River district. He knew every family in the Herbert River district. When I first went to the Herbert River district, I met Aldo and he said, 'Cripps, Cripps: that's not a Herbert River name.' When he met Neil Turner, he repeated the same phrase. He said, 'Turner, Turner: that's not a Herbert River name,' to which Neil Turner said to Aldo Moretto, 'That's correct, but you may know my cousin Tina.' Everyone in the office fell about laughing, while poor old Aldo Moretto found out that he had been the butt of a joke and the victim of Neil Turner's rapier wit.

On one of Neil's trips to North Queensland to help Marc and Sandy Rowell with the harvesting of their lychees, Marc and Neil had returned to the farmhouse early. Neil and Marc had a soft spot for milkshakes. Sandy was still up at the shed packing lychees. Marc and Neil had decided to make themselves a milkshake upstairs in the kitchen. They had the blender out and they had put in all the ingredients; however, before turning the blender on they failed to put on the lid. It had the obvious and understandable consequences. All long-serving members of this House would appreciate the spectacle of Marc Rowell and Neil Turner on their hands and knees in the kitchen trying to clean up milkshake that had gone from the ceiling to the floor. To escape the wrath of Sandy Rowell, they both fled to the Hinchinbrook electorate office in town. That is a story that I will always remember.

Neil Turner made it a frequent habit to visit North Queensland to continue his enduring friendship with Marc Rowell. He loved coming up there and campaigning for the National Party and he loved coming up there to spend time with his friends. He wanted to continue those relationships after he left the parliament and no longer took an active part in politics.

I can imagine the terrible loss of Neil Turner to his family and to his friends in Western Queensland and the areas that he represented on the Sunshine Coast. He will be fondly remembered not only by those people with whom he served in this place but also by those people whose lives he touched in the many roles he undertook in the Queensland community.

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I think the greatest tribute I can pay to a former Speaker is to say something of that former Speaker from the Speaker's chair. I first met Neil Turner at a luncheon after Spencer Jolly told me he was ill. I asked the member for Southern Downs to organise the luncheon, because I had never met Neil Turner. At that stage, Neil Turner was suffering from cancer, I think. I thought it was the right thing, on behalf of the parliament, to say hello to Neil Turner.

I remember many things about that lunch and I do remember this. Everyone here has said that he was a fair Speaker, but I found that he was singularly incapable of ambiguity. I left that lunch knowing a lot about the CJC and why I should be charging the media rent in Parliament House. These were themes that I found Neil came back to on every single occasion I met him. On the last occasion I recall he phoned me and he said, 'Mate, I'm coming down to defend you with the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee.' I said, 'That's very kind of you.' He said, 'Yeah, I'll catch the train down.' I said, 'Good.' He said, 'I will drop in for a cup of tea after I have given evidence.' By then he had my staff trained to not only automatically give him a cup of tea but to also give him a ride down to the railway station when he was finished. I said, 'How did you go?' He said, 'Pretty well.' I said, 'What did you talk about?' He said, 'I told them all about the CJC and the media.'

One of the great tributes that can be paid to you as a member of this place can be seen in the people who turn up when they do not have to. It was the people who turned up to Neil's funeral who caught my eye; it is the people who have turned up today. Col Schneider is here today. He is a longstanding attendant. Col asked me to remind all of you of Neil's exploits with the whip in the Speaker's office, how he could crack the whip and take the cigarette out of a person's mouth. He usually performed this on an unsuspecting Chinese delegation who I have no doubt after that experience upgraded their position from consular to consular-general to make sure that China was still in good hands. Neil was unfailingly courteous to the staff here. I was reminded that I should go and meet with the gardeners because that is what Neil Turner used to do. In other words, it did not matter your station in life, Neil Turner had time for you, and that was one of his great attributes. That is why the number of people from the Parliamentary Service Commission were there at the funeral to silently pay their respects to Neil Turner.

The member for Rockhampton mentioned—and I know other members have mentioned—the fact that Matt Foley was thrown out of the chamber. Neil Turner told me about that. He did not ever recall that story with a great amount of pride. It would have been far better if he had gone through that parliament

without having to dismiss anybody. But having made the decision he stood by it. I thought that was a great mark of the man—that he could preside over a parliament that was that difficult and he only ever had to reluctantly dismiss one person.

At the funeral Bob Gibbs said that he had been summoned to the Speaker's office. Bob could be as genteel in his behaviour at times as the member for Rockhampton. Bob was summoned for a similar chiropractic experience around the collarbone. For additional punishment he was told to put on the Speaker's wig. Can anybody imagine Bob Gibbs wearing the Speaker's wig? Neil Turner looked him up and down and said, 'I've seen better looking sheep after a drought than you, Gibbs.'

Honourable members, the great enjoiner to me when I became Speaker was to endeavour to be a Speaker like Neil Turner. That is the greatest compliment you can pay. To his family today I say that I have worked every day to try to be the Speaker that Neil Turner was for this place.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Whereupon honourable members stood in silence.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Order of Business

Mr SPEAKER: In accordance with sessional orders, we will now proceed with the order of business and question time will commence at 11.24 am.

PETITIONS

The Clerk presented the following paper petitions, lodged by the honourable members indicated—

Health Council, Review

Mrs Cunningham, from 631 petitioners, requesting the House to ensure that any review of the Health Council structure that Health Community Councils are retained or that strong community representation is included in any restructured Queensland Health system [\[5139\]](#).

Louisa Creek, Coal Stockyards

Mr Malone, from 277 petitioners, requesting the House to not make the proposed land at Louisa Creek for coal stockyards a project of state significance and to encourage the Dalrymple Bay Coal Terminal Management and North Queensland Bulk Ports to consider all other options [\[5140\]](#).

The Clerk presented the following e-petition, sponsored by the Clerk of the Parliament in accordance with Standing Order 119(4)—

Coomabah State School

Ms Croft, from 62 petitioners, requesting the House to move the school zone road markings and signage for the Coombabah State School to north of the Turana/Columbus/Oxley Drive intersection [\[5141\]](#).

Petitions received.

TABLED PAPERS

MINISTERIAL PAPERS TABLED BY THE CLERK

The following ministerial papers were tabled by the Clerk—

Minister for Main Roads, Fisheries and Marine Infrastructure (Mr Wallace)—

[5142](#) Response from the Minister for Main Roads, Fisheries and Marine Infrastructure (Mr Wallace) to an ePetition (1709-11) sponsored by Mr Stevens, from 45 petitioners, regarding the diversion of public transport from Nerang-Broadbeach Road onto local residential streets at Carrara and a solution to the congestion at Gooding Drive, Carrara

Minister for Disability Services, Mental Health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (Mr Pitt)—

[5143](#) Mid-Year Update on Key Indicators for Queensland's Discrete Indigenous Communities: Incorporating the October-December 2010 Quarter

MEMBER'S PAPER TABLED BY THE CLERK


The following member's paper was tabled by the Clerk—

Member for Hervey Bay (Mr Sorensen)—

[5144](#) Non-conforming petition, from 315 petitioners, regarding the construction of 66 kV overhead power lines on the easement of the Hervey Bay Golf and Country Club Inc with 19 metre high power poles 15 metres from residents' back fences

MINISTERIAL PAPER

CopperString Proposal

 **Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade) (10.56 am): I can advise the House that the Coordinator-General has approved the proposed CopperString electricity transmission project as an infrastructure facility of significance under the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971. This type of approval can only be sought where the facility has the potential to be a genuine economic driver for the state and generate new jobs.


The proponent CopperString Pty Ltd proposes to build a new 1,041-kilometre long high-voltage electricity transmission line between Woodstock near Townsville and Mount Isa to enhance the reliability of power supply to the north-west minerals province. The approval of a project as an IFS does not constitute final project approval. The CopperString project is subject to a parallel, rigorous environmental assessment of its impact statement by the Coordinator-General.

For the benefit of the House and in accordance with the requirements of the act, I table a statement of reasons for the granting of the IFS.

Tabled paper: Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation: Notice and statement giving reasons for approval of the CopperString facility as an infrastructure facility that is of significance under the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971 [\[5145\]](#).

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Queensland Reconstruction Authority; Major General Slater

 **Hon. AM Blich** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Reconstruction) (10.57 am): It is some eight months since floods and cyclones devastated our state and what has been achieved around Queensland is truly remarkable. About 9,000 kilometres of state roads were damaged and today nearly 8,500 of those kilometres are open, though of course there is an extensive job to be done to permanently repair them. Of the 89 bridges and culverts affected by the natural disasters, 88 have been recovered and all 411 affected schools across Queensland are open and teaching our children. The progress that has been made has been recognised as setting a world-leading pace, but I recognise that many people are still waiting to get back into their homes and that disasters were so devastating that many communities will be rebuilding for many years.

Major-General Mick Slater has been at the forefront of Queensland's reconstruction efforts since January this year. When Major-General Slater was first appointed to take on the task of reconstruction in Queensland it was already a big job and a big ask. He was appointed to head the then Flood Recovery Task Force on 5 January. That was before the devastating inland tsunami that was experienced in the Lockyer Valley, before Ipswich went under, before the Brisbane River burst its banks and before Cyclone Yasi slammed into our northern coastline. As the task that he faced grew from daunting to immense and then to colossal Major-General Slater did not flinch. His strength, courage and leadership have been invaluable to the people of Queensland.

Major-General Mick Slater concludes his service to Queensland's reconstruction effort this month. He promised us six months and he gave us eight and has done our state a great service in that time. Major-General Slater told me that he was honoured to have been given the opportunity to serve Queensland at such a difficult time and that the people of Queensland have been an inspiration to him, and I know that he has been an inspiration to many of them. Be it the store owner in North Gympie who promised him a banana cake if he could get her a stove—which he did—his address to the executive of the Queensland Country Women's Association or when he spoke at the state lifesavers' night of nights, Mick Slater has given thousands a boost in a very difficult time.


Not everyone knows that he was also secretly embedded in the first night of the Maroons' game 3 preparations this year. The team called on him to address them in the days leading up to game 3, and he took the opportunity to call on them to remember that the sweetest moments in life are those in the work that leads to the victory. I understand that the team hung on his every word.

From the cape to Charleville, from Goodna to Goondi, from Longreach to Logan, he has traversed the state and he and his team have laid the solid foundations of a stronger, more resilient Queensland. Major General Mick Slater has done a magnificent job. He has served Queensland, he has served the Army and he has indeed served our nation with dignity and diligence. Mr Speaker, I think we all take a moment today to say thanks, Mick. We salute you for your efforts.

The Queensland Reconstruction Authority's incoming chair, Brisbane born Major General Richard Wilson, begins his tenure from 1 September. Major General Dick Wilson will continue in the position until the QRA's task is complete in 2013. Dick Wilson is a Queensland, born in Brisbane in 1955. He is an

infantryman with extensive command experience at all levels, from platoon to division to his most recent posting as director of the Defence Intelligence Organisation. I know that he knows he has big shoes to fill, but his record shows that he has the character and expertise needed to take Operation Queensland into its next stage.


Work for Queensland Job Expos

 **Hon. AM BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Reconstruction) (11.01 am): Today Queensland's economy is on the verge of the next big leap forward. Our gas and resources are more sought after than ever before. We have the right stuff in the right place at the right time, and our state is ready to seize this moment. We know that as many as 38,000 construction and operational jobs will be created in the resource industry between now and 2015. I want to see as many Queenslanders as possible filling these positions. I want every Queenslander to have the chance to gain from this boom. That is why, out of the Work for Queensland summit last week with the mining industry and a number of regional mayors, I was pleased to announce a series of job expos that will help us to achieve that goal.

The Work for Queensland expos will help job seekers in high-unemployment areas plug into the mining boom. On offer will be career advice, skills assessment and jobs. We estimate that there are right now 3,500 vacancies in the resource industry, and we know that that will grow. We have been working with local councils on arrangements, and I am pleased to advise the House of the following program for the Work for Queensland expos. A Work for Queensland expo will be held in Cairns on Monday, 17 October at the Cairns Civic Centre; on the Gold Coast on Wednesday, 19 October with the venue just being finalised; on the Sunshine Coast at the Caloundra Events Centre on Friday, 21 October; in the Whitsundays at the Airlie Beach PCYC on Tuesday, 25 October; and on the Fraser Coast on Friday, 28 October at the Brolga Theatre in Maryborough.

For those who are interested in a career in our booming resources sector, I recommend they mark those dates in their diary now, and I encourage local members in all of those areas to ensure their constituents know about the opportunities and to come along to those expos.

Education Reform


 **Hon. AM BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Reconstruction) (11.02 am): This government believes deeply in the value of education and we are delivering on a strong vision for our schooling system. We are leading an exciting 10-year journey of educational reforms—most recently the introduction of the prep year in 2007, giving Queensland students a flying start into their school journey. In 2008 the entry age of year 1 was raised by six months, bringing Queensland into line with other states. We are committed to providing universal access to a quality kindergarten program for all Queensland children and we will be investing in the delivery of 240 additional services across the state by 2014.

In 2015 we will join with most other states and territories in moving year 7 to high school. This will give Queensland teenagers not only greater independence but also access to the specialised resources of high school at this critical time in their educational journey. To ensure a smooth transition state-wide in 2015, up to 20 state high schools will pilot year 7 over the next few years.

We recently called for expressions of interest from state high schools which, in agreement with their P&Cs and feeder primary schools, are keen to take part. Applications closed on Monday, and I am very pleased to advise the House that we now have 59 state high schools submitting applications to join in the trial. We have seen expressions of interest from a diverse range of schools in every one of Education Queensland's seven regions. They include some of our largest, medium and smallest high schools in metropolitan, provincial and rural settings. What this tells us is that those who work in our high school sector want to be part of making this reform a good reform and they see the benefits there for young people. Successful state high schools will be announced later this year and they will join Murrumba State High School, which will become the first state high school to open with year 7 when they start in 2012. It is expected that most schools will commence the pilot in 2013.

It is clear that Queensland state schools and their communities are excited, as this government is, about this new reform. Year 7s stand to benefit educationally, emotionally and socially from being in a school environment at the higher level that offers them some of the benefits that are not available in the primary system. By making this change, we are ensuring that Queensland students are the best equipped not only for high school but also for the world of further education and work beyond the school gates.

Major Projects Office


 **Hon. PT LUCAS** (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Attorney-General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State) (11.05 am): Queensland has a prosperous future and this government is doing what it can to help facilitate private sector investment in our growing economy. The message that Queensland is open for business is being broadcast across the country loud and clear with the \$10,000 Building Boost in full swing. This will help support an estimated 236,000 Queenslanders employed in the construction industry in this state—the same industry which generated \$20 billion worth of investments to our economy in the 2009-10 financial year. This comes on top of the \$15 billion being invested in infrastructure which is expected to support 93,000 jobs. But we will not stop there. We want to do more because the simple equation in investment in the Queensland construction industry means jobs for Queenslanders.

One of the key initiatives that came as a direct result of ideas raised during the Queensland Building Revival Forum was the establishment of a major projects office to help streamline current approval processes for important major projects. I am pleased to announce today that the Major Projects Office is open for business. From later today, developers of major commercial and industrial projects that meet set criteria will be able to download application forms at www.dlqp.qld.gov.au/mpo. Details of the criteria a project must satisfy are on the dedicated site, but, in short, we are talking about significant developments that will have complex approval processes and generate significant opportunities for Queensland communities.

The MPO has been funded with \$1.8 million this financial year and will work within the Sustainable Planning Act 2009 to facilitate and coordinate the planning and approval processes across government, while providing consistency. It will work collaboratively with local government. It will deal with major projects that do not qualify for oversight by the Coordinator-General or the Urban Land Development Authority.

We know that this is what industry wants and we are pleased to be delivering it. Already our announcement that we would establish the office has received praise from key industry players like Kathy MacDermott from the Property Council of Australia and Angus Nardi from the Shopping Centre Council. I encourage developers who believe their projects may qualify to get online, submit their plans and keep Queensland moving.

Major Resource Projects Housing Policy

 **Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade) (11.07 am): Being home to the Bowen Basin, Australia's largest coal reserve, means that we have access to some of the world's best coal reserves. Some 38 new projects are targeted for development in the next six years including 23 coalmines, as well as 12 CSG projects and three other mineral projects—creating the potential for income for Queenslanders and supporting more than 30,000 new jobs. It is important that we give the workers who staff these important projects into the future the same level of choice as everyone else—the same level of choice that Brisbane CBD workers have when choosing to live on the Gold Coast or the Sunshine Coast and drive upwards of 100 kilometres each way each day for lifestyle reasons and the same level of choice that someone who chooses to live and work in Weipa or Cloncurry or Gladstone has.

The Coordinator-General plays an important role in striking the balance between the social, economic and environmental impacts of major projects, particularly those in resource communities in regional Queensland. To this end, today the government is releasing a new policy to support the interests of communities affected by major resource projects and secure greater choice for the workers who make development of resources like those in the Bowen Basin possible. The new Major Resource Projects Housing Policy will assist the Coordinator-General to assess accommodation and housing issues in the project approvals process, and I table a copy for the benefit of all members.

Tabled paper: The Coordinator-General: Major Resource Projects Housing Policy—Core principles to guide social impact assessment, August 2011 [\[5146\]](#).


The policy makes clear that the government supports choice being provided. Fly-in fly-out is a reality; it is neither new nor temporary. The convenience of modern air travel means many workers who want it all—a well-paying job in the mining sector and to live by the beach—can have the best of both worlds. Similarly, many workers do not want to commute, preferring not to be away from friends and family. That is why choice is important and the policy reflects that fundamental principle. It commits companies to do more upfront on the impact they will have on housing and services in a town and region.

Of course, many companies do provide significant community support packages, investing millions of dollars in community infrastructure to support the towns that support them. Many communities are, however, under pressure. Local representatives, community groups and unions like the CFMEU have been at the forefront of advocating for the interests of their communities.

Importantly, the policy will also apply to the social impact assessment component of environmental impact assessments being conducted under the Environmental Protection Act. The sustainability and liveability of our regions are paramount and must be addressed as part of the EIS upfront. All proponents for new assessment processes will be required to submit a workforce accommodation strategy that includes the accommodation and location preferences of workers.

Industry, communities and all tiers of government share responsibility for achieving a balanced approach to the social and economic development of resource communities. Like most policy challenges, competing interests must be balanced. FIFO is here to stay and will increase into the future. It will help spread the benefits from the resource investment boom more broadly. It will be, and must be, a key part of the industry's capacity to get the skilled labour they need. Equally, it must be implemented in a way that provides the benefits to the local communities that are hosting the resource developments which will benefit each and every Queensland.


Logan, House Fire; Ambulance Service

 **Hon. NS ROBERTS** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services) (11.11 am): I rise to update the House on the efforts to recover the bodies of the victims of yesterday's tragic house fire at Slacks Creek, south of Brisbane. The bodies of four of the victims were recovered yesterday afternoon. The Queensland Police Service's disaster victim identification group and forensic officers will continue to work with the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service's urban search and rescue team today to further secure the site to allow for the recovery of the other victims. Police are hoping to complete this task today. The investigation into the cause of the fire will continue. Our hearts and minds are with the family and friends of the victims as they continue to deal with the terrible consequences of this fire.

On another note, the Bligh government is determined to ensure the Queensland Ambulance Service remains world class. The government has funded the recruitment of an additional 680 additional ambulance officers since 2007, ensuring Queensland's paramedic to resident ratio—which is currently around 56 paramedics per 100,000 residents—remains one of the best in Australia. The national average is currently around 43 paramedics per 100,000 residents. However, the government is also funding a sustained renewal of the Queensland Ambulance Service vehicle fleet. In 2011-12, the Bligh government is funding the purchase of 140 new or replacement ambulance vehicles. These vehicles are in addition to the 165 new and replacement vehicles funded in 2010-11 and 150 new and replacement vehicles in 2009-10. These vehicles are fitted with the state-of-the-art Stryker stretchers and stair chairs, which provide not only enhanced comfort for patients but also increased safety for paramedics. The government has also funded the acquisition of three new specialised bariatric ambulance transport vehicles over the last few years. These vehicles are based in South-East Queensland and North Queensland.

Another exciting development for the Queensland Ambulance Service's vehicle fleet is the addition of new twin stretcher vehicles. It is expected that around 100 of these vehicles will hit the streets of Queensland before the end of the year. Paramedics across the state regularly respond to cases where they are required to treat multiple casualties. Valued at \$220,000 each, the new Mercedes 519 vehicles are fully equipped and have ample room for officers to treat and transport two stretcher patients. These vehicles will replace the Ford F series vehicles, which are currently part of the ambulance fleet, and are an investment in the future of pre-hospital medical care in Queensland. The government is committed to providing the Ambulance Service with the resources it needs to continue to provide a high level of service to the Queensland community.

Wild Rivers


 **Hon. VE DARLING** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Environment) (11.13 am): Today I am proud to announce that two Western Queensland river basins, which are home to dozens of species of water birds along with endangered fish, are the latest to be proposed for protection under Queensland's landmark wild rivers legislation. The Georgina and Diamantina river basins which flow through vast tracts of Western Queensland are systems that Queenslanders can be proud of and they are a major tourism drawcard. Today's proposal to declare them as wild rivers will guarantee that they retain their beauty and largely untouched environment for generations to come.

There are currently 10 declared wild river areas in Queensland protecting unique ecosystems, rare and threatened plants, birds, and marine and estuarine species for current and future generations. Today's declaration proposal covers the catchments of the Georgina and Diamantina rivers and Eyre Creek, spanning more than 263,000 square kilometres. These basins are an extraordinary example of unique arid river systems that exhibit naturally remarkable boom and bust cycles. This declaration proposal is about preserving the river basins' natural values and biodiversity and ensuring the strong role these river systems play in the agricultural economy is protected into the future.

Queensland can be proud of this unique part of the world, and I would like to acknowledge the stewardship of the traditional owners of this country as well as the landholders who have worked to build a successful grazing industry in this unique environment. This declaration will also ensure that future developments, like surface mining, do not adversely affect the environment. It will similarly ensure that the natural waterways and extensive flooding which replenish and support native pastures are sustained. A declaration would also strike a balance between protecting the natural values of our most pristine and iconic river systems and encouraging sustainable development.

Over the next three months, the community will be given the opportunity to provide feedback on the declaration proposal. Information is now available on the Department of Environment and Resource Management website and a significant program of public meetings, information forums and meetings on stations will occur through until late November. I urge all Queenslanders to get involved in this important declaration process. The opportunity to protect relatively undisturbed river systems like the Georgina and Diamantina basins occurs only once. We do that today for the Queenslanders of tomorrow.

Sunshine Coast, Health Services


 **Hon. GJ WILSON** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Health) (11.16 am): The Bligh government is delivering more services sooner and closer to home for Sunshine Coast locals. I am pleased to advise the House today that radiation treatment services will start on the Sunshine Coast within weeks. It is the latest in a series of new services coming on line for patients in the region. Oceania Oncology has won the tender to deliver radiation therapy at the Nambour Hospital, which means up to 400 patients every year will no longer need to travel to Brisbane for treatment. This is positive news for patients, some of whom are travelling to Brisbane up to five times a week for up to seven weeks at a time. That is a long time to be away from home and loved ones during what can be a difficult and stressful time. This new service means patients can be close to home, with family and friends around them for support, whilst they are receiving treatment.

This is part of the Bligh government's commitment to ensuring Queenslanders can access the care they need in their local community without having to travel. On the Sunshine Coast, people with conditions like prostate, rectal, lung and oesophageal cancer and also melanoma patients will benefit from this new service. It is just one part of a package being delivered in the lead-up to the opening of the \$2 billion Sunshine Coast University Hospital. A \$191 million expansion of Nambour and Caloundra hospitals will deliver more than 150 new beds and services, including a new cardiac catheterisation laboratory, a new vascular surgery procedural suite, a new dedicated endoscopy procedural unit and a new outpatient neurosurgery service. The Caloundra Hospital emergency department will also be expanded to build up capacity.

It is an exciting time for health care on the Sunshine Coast. The government's massive investment in health care in this growing and important region is part of our vision for the future of Queensland. The Sunshine Coast University Hospital will be the nation's largest hospital building project, opening with 450 beds in 2016 and increasing to 738 beds by 2021. It will give Sunshine Coast residents access locally to services, including a new comprehensive cancer care centre and a range of complex surgical services including neurosurgery, cardiothoracic surgery, maxillofacial surgery and a trauma service. That means about 10,000 patients will no longer have to travel to Brisbane to access these complex services each year.

We are also working with Ramsay Health Care to deliver 110 beds for public patients at a new private hospital on the same site from 2013 to 2018. The future is bright for Sunshine Coast patients with these major projects full steam ahead and new services being delivered all the time.

Cairns Indigenous Art Fair

 **Hon. RG NOLAN** (Ipswich—ALP) (Minister for Finance, Natural Resources and the Arts) (11.19 am): It is well understood that the high Australian dollar means that a lot of the tourism sector is doing it tough. But last weekend the Cairns major tourism centre was abuzz, and the thing that was drawing visitors from around the country and the world was Indigenous art. The Cairns Indigenous Art Fair attracted 12,870 people through the Cairns Cruise Liner Terminal site alone over its four days, from Thursday to Sunday just gone. Those people were there to celebrate our state's unique feature—the presence of not one but two extraordinary Indigenous cultures. We expect to see these numbers rise significantly as satellite event and venue figures come through in coming days. Over three days locals and visitors to Cairns took in one of the great movements in contemporary visual art and they also danced to Indigenous bands and participated in workshops developing art and creative industry.


People spend their time talking about economic opportunities for Indigenous people. Art is one that is happening right now. Rather than being one movement, Queensland Indigenous art has a number of distinctive schools and people will come from all over the world to be a part of it. While the final numbers are not in yet, it looks like \$572,377 worth of work has been sold, and we know from experience that the fair leads to further sales down the track. One of the exhibitors, the Lockhart River

Arts Indigenous Corporation representing the quite famous Art Centre in Lockhart, told the *Australian* that the only regret of the organisers was not bringing more work. Organiser Robbi Neal said that from four works last year it sold 66 pieces this year for more than \$60,000.

Our government is seriously committed to Indigenous art. In the June budget we extended funding to the Backing Indigenous Arts Program for another four years. That money runs art centres in remote communities across the state and it creates the central ethical marketplace of the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair. We also market Indigenous art to an international marketplace through the specialist Queensland Indigenous Arts Marketing and Export Agency.

There are some in politics who question the value for money of investment in remote Indigenous communities. There are those on the other side of the House who have a record—for instance, at BCC—of cutting funding to the arts. Our government understands that backing Indigenous arts makes people stronger through their culture and that it means a real economy for Indigenous arts workers. Thousands of tourists in Cairns over the weekend backed that approach all the way.

Foster and Kinship Carers

 **Hon. PG REEVES** (Mansfield—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport) (11.22 am): This government has rebuilt the child protection system in Queensland and this year announced another record budget for Child Safety Services, but our work to support our most vulnerable children is not finished yet. Our eye is clearly fixed on creating a better future for all Queenslanders. I take this opportunity to thank Queensland's unsung heroes—the thousands of people who unselfishly open their hearts and homes to our most vulnerable children to give them a future they deserve. I am talking about our silent army of foster and kinship carers. However, it is a sad fact that there are more than 8,000 children in out-of-home care and there is always a need to find more carers.


That is why I have recently launched this government's most far-reaching recruitment campaign called 'Foster a Child. Foster a Future'. We launched the campaign at the Ekka because we were surrounded by the sort of family oriented people who could well be potential foster carers. We heard from Tamara, who grew up in a foster family and has gone on to be successful in her career and is also a proud and happy mother of four. She praised her foster carers for allowing her to reach her true potential in life and still maintains a close bond with them. So the 'Foster a Child. Foster a Future' campaign aims to achieve these sorts of outcomes. To help do this, we have built a website—www.fosterafuture.qld.gov.au. It features an initial self-assessment tool which helps potential carers consider what is involved in being a foster-parent and evaluate their own capacity to be a carer. If they are interested in making a formal application, they can complete an online form to get the ball rolling.

This is a state-wide initiative. We have had a similar launch in Townsville and another is planned in Cairns at the end of the month. It is supported by a community service announcement we are playing at major sporting events and by advertisements in key magazines. We are also enlisting the support of community organisations to spread the word. This is such a worthwhile campaign that I call on all of those opposite, including the LNP, not to engage in negative political point-scoring on this issue and show bipartisan support for those children who deserve to be growing up in a loving environment.


Over recent weeks I have had an opportunity to meet some of our very finest carers—those who have won the 2011 Foster and Kinship Carer Excellence Awards. The love and support these selfless volunteers offer to children and young people make you very proud to be a Queenslanders. Foster carers will tell you that they do have their challenges at times, but most will say that they never regret helping kids who may be experiencing the lowest points of their lives. I urge anyone who is able to open their hearts and homes in this way to consider becoming a carer. I also ask all of my parliamentary colleagues, including those opposite, for their assistance to put out the message that being a foster or kinship carer can make a truly positive lasting difference to a young life.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS

School Group Tours

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Before I call question time, today we will be visited by the students, teachers and parents from the following schools: Somerville House in the electorate of South Brisbane, the Star of the Sea Catholic Primary School of Torquay in the electorate of Hervey Bay, the Woodridge North State School in the electorate of Woodridge, and a special mention to the students and principal from the St Andrews Lutheran College in the electorate of Burleigh, who are in the public gallery.

Food and Beverages in Chamber

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I know we have been running late this morning, but I would remind all honourable members to not bring beverages or food into the chamber itself.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Labor Party, Preference Allocation

Mr SEENEY (11.26 am): My question without notice is to the Premier. I refer to the Premier's apology to the parliament last night and her admission that there was a preference deal with the Greens party in 14 seats, including her own seat, at the 2009 state election, and I ask: can the Premier advise what legislation was changed after the 2009 election as part of that deal? Can the Premier completely rule out any such deal for preferences at the coming state election?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. The Australian Labor Party will make its decision about its preference strategy at the time the next election is announced, when we know who the candidates are and the parties that stand. As I said yesterday, I would expect it is most likely to be a 'vote 1' strategy, but we will not be locking ourselves into any position until we know in every electorate who is standing, who the Independents are and who the minor parties are. I will not be railroaded or bullied into doing it six months prior to an election in the same way as the member opposite has been railroaded and bullied by someone who is not in this chamber.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Those on my left, the question has been asked. The Premier has the call.

Ms BLIGH: But what we do know is that, as it has done at every election, the Labor Party will not be preferencing to One Nation, yet we have still not seen a clear, articulated statement from the candidate for Ashgrove in this regard. In fact, I am sorry that I do not have it with me, but I commend to members in this regard—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Those on my left will cease interjecting. A question has been asked. I am listening carefully to the answer and the Premier is relevant to that question. I call the Premier.

Ms BLIGH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. There was a press release issued, four hours after the deputy leader had taken a position from his perspective, by someone describing themselves as the leader of the LNP, but it is the strangest press release I have ever seen. It has no name on it. It does not have a single name on it.

Mr Lucas: 'To whom it may concern'.

Ms BLIGH: It is a 'to whom it may concern'. It is the sort of thing where you would wonder why you would leave your name off it. I would expect that environmental groups, like every other major stakeholder in the Queensland community, will do as they have done every election that I am aware of at both state and federal level: they will be looking to both major parties and they will be looking to their policies and to the way they have performed in the past and they will then make a judgement and recommend to people who share their views how they should be voting. That is what the chamber of commerce will do. That is what the trade unions will do. That is what the environmental groups will do. Labor will be very happy to go to the Queensland electorate and talk about its proud record of environmental protection and environmental reform.

Of course, we know that those on the other side have no record, no vision, no policy. They will be doing what they always do—trying to get under the radar so that, should they be on this side of the chamber, they will be able to rip it down, cut it up. We know what they stand for.

The Greens, Preferences

Mr SEENEY: My next question without notice is also to the Premier. Can the Premier confirm that the imposition of a fuel tax on Queensland motorists was part of the deal with the Greens party for preferences? Did the Premier expect that Queensland motorists would forget her promise not to introduce a fuel tax as quickly as she forgot the deal with the Greens party?

Ms BLIGH: It has been a long week over there, obviously. I am only aware of one deal for electoral purposes in Queensland and it is the MOU undertaken by the Liberal National Party in the Mundingburra by-election. I am not aware of any other deal of that nature that anybody could describe of as a deal.

As I recall, the Greens made it very clear why they were preferencing to Labor in a number of seats and that was because they believed that we had a much more outstanding record on the environment. I expect they will come to both parties asking for our record, asking for our plans and then we will have to make the decision.

Public Transport

Mr KILBURN: My question without notice is to the Premier. Can the Premier outline to the House how this state government has stepped in to improve transport services in Brisbane? Could the Premier provide information about other approaches to delivering transport across the city?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for his question. The member for Chatsworth knows that Labor's busways are transforming the face of modern Brisbane. Whether you look to the south, to the east, or to the north, what you see is a busway system that is one of the most extensive in the world. So I am very pleased that this weekend I will be joining with the member for Chatsworth and others in the opening of the new Eastern Busway section between Buranda and Main Avenue in Coorparoo.

This section will see services start on Monday. And guess what? Those services will be starting six months earlier than originally planned. So this project has come in six months earlier. What we see is a dedicated busway that will go all the way from Coorparoo to the University of Queensland, to the PA Hospital, or into the city. This means that commuters can look forward to up to an hour and a half less sitting in the bus a week. It also means significant numbers of buses taken off some of our busy roads like Old Cleveland Road, which can be very busy, particularly in peak times. It will also provide an extra 103,590 seats weekly. It means 31 brand-new buses, 12 new bus stops and five new bus routes. These are the actions of a government that is driven by a passion and a commitment to public transport. We know that that is a critical part of a modern, thriving capital city. It is Labor that has built the South East Busway, the Inner Northern Busway, the Northern Busway and the Eastern Busway.

The member asks what alternative plans I am aware of for investment in our busway and public transport system. I regret to advise the member that I know of no plans from those opposite for our busway system. What I know is that over the past 10 years the Brisbane City Council has put exactly zero dollars into a single busway anywhere in Brisbane. The Brisbane City Council has taken money out of buses. It has contributed nothing to Brisbane's busway system. It has not been a council that has been prepared to work with the state government on public transport. It has worked to frustrate us at every turn. But Labor remains committed to a funded busway system that is part of a modern transport system.

The Greens, Preferences

Mrs STUCKEY: My question without notice is the Minister for Tourism, Manufacturing and Small Business. Is the minister's support for a carbon tax that will hurt struggling tourism operators in her region and across Queensland because she wants to do a Greens preference deal in Whitsunday at the next election?

Mr SPEAKER: I am going to get advice on that question. It relates to the administration of tourist operators and the carbon tax. I will allow the question.

Ms JARRATT: I am happy to answer the question. I stand in this House as the Minister for Tourism, Manufacturing and Small Business and I am always happy to answer questions that go to the substantive parts of the portfolio. So far, the questions from the shadow minister have related to federal government policy—that is, carbon pricing—and today preferencing in an election campaign. My question is: why does the shadow minister not want to stand up in this place and ask me a reasonable question about tourism—an industry that really needs our focus today? I have answered a number of questions on the issue of carbon pricing.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. The minister will resume her seat.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The minister is answering the question. There is no need for those on my left to encourage anything. The honourable minister will answer the question in relation to the administration of her portfolio with respect to tourist operators and the carbon tax. That was a legitimate question.

Ms JARRATT: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I have answered a number of questions in this place on carbon pricing when it comes to the tourism industry. What I have said again and again in this place is that if you believe, as the scientists do, that climate change is real, then you must accept that that climate change will impact on this planet. If you accept the impacts of climate change, then you must want to do something about it, because the tourism industry, without a Daintree rainforest, without a Great Barrier Reef, is not an industry. So if the member would care to start to talk up this industry that so desperately at this time needs a sense of—

Mr Wallace: Confidence.

Ms JARRATT: That is right. It is very clear that the shadow minister does not have the best interests of this industry at heart. This has been confirmed this week. Members do not have to take my word for that. This week it has been confirmed that independent industry chiefs in the shadow minister's

own area of the Gold Coast are so concerned about her negativity that they believe that her efforts in talking down the industry are adding to a drop in coast visitor numbers. I implore the shadow minister for tourism to actually be positive about this.

Mrs Stuckey interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Currumbin, please, just sit back. You have asked the minister a question. She is answering the question.

Ms JARRATT: I would implore the shadow minister to stop with the vitriol.

Mrs Stuckey interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: I will say this to the member for Currumbin: if this persists, I will warn you under the standing orders.

Ms JARRATT: Mr Speaker, you are not the only one concerned about the negativity coming from those opposite, particularly the shadow minister for tourism, when it comes to talking up an industry at this point in time with all the challenges it faces, such as a strong Australian dollar and natural disasters that have impacted on it. We need her to support the industry.

Wild Rivers

Mr O'BRIEN: My question without notice is to the Premier. Can the Premier please inform the House what this Labor government is doing to ensure Queensland's pristine waterways are preserved for future generations. Is she aware of any different policies on how to protect this precious asset?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the member for Cook for the question. As the member for Cook will know, our government, over a long period of time now, has had a deep commitment to preserving our wild river systems. Those in the cape and in the gulf that have been through the nomination and declaration process are some of Australia's most pristine river systems and they have now been preserved by this government and protected from inappropriate development forever.

I am very pleased to remind the House that the environment minister has today announced that we have embarked on the process for nomination and declaration of two new river systems, the Georgina and the Diamantina. These two river systems are the next Queensland river systems to be proposed for protection as wild rivers. These river systems flow through vast tracts of Western Queensland. Let me be clear: these waterways rate as some of Australia's greatest rivers. We have seen them draw people to them from all parts of Australia.

There are already 10 declared wild rivers, four in the cape, four in the gulf and two on coastal islands. This legislation, the Wild Rivers Act, outlines our policy. It was passed by this parliament in 2005. Those new members of the parliament who have been listening to the LNP's views on wild rivers will be surprised to know that it was actually passed through this parliament and voted for by the Liberal and National parties. The member for Moggill said, 'The Liberal Party supports the preservation of genuine wild river areas.' Remember the Liberals? Of course, on this issue they now all jump to the tune of Tony Abbott and this river protection legislation would be at risk. Where are the places that it would be at risk? It would be at risk in the cape. We know that. How do we know what the LNP stands for on mining in the cape? Campbell Newman says, 'With regard to mining, there are big opportunities for new ventures on Cape York'. Jeff Seeney says, 'Mining development on Cape York should be encouraged.'

Mr SPEAKER: Premier, refer to the honourable member by his correct title.

Ms BLIGH: But the shadow environment minister says, 'Coalmining on the cape is not something we are considering.' One says this; one says that; another says something else. It does not matter whether it is the Bruce Highway, education policy, the economy, mining, environmental protection or coal seam gas, you will find three, four and five different positions, depending on who you speak to. What you do not have is a policy. What you do not have is a vision for this great state.

The Greens, Preferences

Mr CRIPPS: My question without notice is to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Regional Economies. Is the minister's support for a carbon tax and increased regulations on struggling farmers because of Labor's need to do a preference deal with the Greens party in the lead-up to the next state election?

Mr MULHERIN: On Tuesday Treasury released its comprehensive modelling on the introduction of the federal government's carbon tax and its impact on industries, in particular the agricultural industry. It says that agriculture has great opportunities, particularly with the carbon farming initiatives legislation that we have introduced. In fact, the meat and livestock industry is expected to grow 4.9 per cent faster to 2050. Farmers will not be paying for emissions from livestock or fertiliser. The carbon price will not affect off-road use of fuel for agriculture, fisheries and forestry. There will be assistance for food producers for their high exposure to energy costs in the subsector. It will also create new industries,

particularly around bio based industrial products. A price on carbon will signal a change in behaviour. There are great opportunities that will come, particularly in the cane industry, for bio based industrial products.

The federal government has also introduced its carbon farming initiatives. This will generate new sources of income for primary producers. What we have over here is a government that believes in climate change. Those opposite are obviously sceptics and do not believe it. We believe that action has to be taken now. That is why we have expressed our concerns to the federal government and undertaken the modelling which shows overall that the impact on the economy over the period up to 2020 and through to 2050 will be negligible.

Way to Grow Forums

Mr WELLS: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Will the Deputy Premier advise the House of progress regarding the Way to Grow forums and of any alternative options available with regard to infrastructure?

Mr LUCAS: I do thank the honourable member for the question. Queensland's population is growing. As I have said on many occasions, and I think everyone in this House shares this view, the story of Queensland is a story of a regional and rural economy as much as it is an urban economy. In fact, in a country like Australia that is known for its rural sector overseas, Queensland's strong regional and rural economy is unique in the mainland states. Our population is expected to reach 9.1 million people by 2051. Along with the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Regional Economies and the Minister for Main Roads, I have gone to about 13 Way to Grow forums attended by both government and indeed non-government members in a number of different locations throughout Queensland, including Townsville, Cairns, Mackay, Rockhampton and Toowoomba.

These forums are seeking comment on documents such as the Regionalisation Strategy, the state-wide infrastructure plan, the Bruce Highway Upgrade Strategy in particular and the Townsville Futures Plan. We have had about 350 people attend the forums so far. One of the issues of greatest importance raised at the forums—and indeed what we are consulting on—is the Bruce Highway Upgrade Strategy, a detailed and very informative document about where the government wants to go. It is the No. 1 issue for people in regional areas along the coast. That is why we need to have that document.

Interestingly, when one looks at our strategy and says, 'What are the alternatives out there?', we know this: Campbell Newman, in a YouTube video report on 11 May, talked up his commitment to the Bruce Highway; in the *Innisfail Advocate* on 11 June it was reported, 'All stops out to fix the Bruce'. All stops! We know it has all stopped now. We know that those opposite will now have a Bruce Highway bullock strategy. You will be on a bullock dray to get up there. They held that position from June to August. On 17 August in the Rockhampton *Morning Bulletin* Campbell Newman said they have a policy and will not release it until after the election. The slide had begun. He had not yet told the Leader of the Opposition, as he usually does not, because the next day the Leader of the Opposition said it is soon to be released. Two days later he got the line that they will release it after the election.

Today's *Cairns Post* notes the Cairns council calling on the government to fast-track the Bruce Highway to talk about its policy with respect to the Whites Creek Bridge. The Cairns council is capable of having a policy on the Bruce Highway. They are capable of submitting into the process. The Cairns Regional Council did not say, 'We will have a policy after the next election.' They are capable of doing it, but the laziest and most well-funded opposition in Australia has gone out to lunch. They have gone out to wait for the Bruce Highway for another 50 years. It is not on. It is a most important issue. They need to show leadership.

Gold Coast, Waterways

Mr POWELL: My question without notice is to the Minister for Environment. Is the minister's failure to act on the silting of waterways on the Gold Coast because of Labor's need to do a preference deal with the Greens party in seats like Broadwater?

Ms DARLING: I thank the honourable member for the question. I am very excited to be able to answer my first question without notice from the shadow minister and talk a little about dredging. Obviously, I stand very firmly by our environmental record. We are funding some dredging—

Mr Wallace: With the council.

Ms DARLING: With the council; I thank my honourable colleague. Obviously, we have to do that considering all environmental factors. We do it well. We make sure that we do not make improvements at a cost to the environment. I congratulate my department for the full assessments they make before they undertake any dredging.

I will contrast that with some of the policies and opinions of members opposite. It is actually very interesting to have a dredging issue raised by the opposition. The external leader of the LNP has been touring the state. As we know, often he says something very different in a regional area from what he says to the people of Ashgrove. Wandering around Ashgrove, his green credentials include planting—

An opposition member: What about the Broadwater?

An opposition member: The question is about the Broadwater and dredging.

Ms DARLING: Sh!

Mr SPEAKER: I ask the minister to come back to the question.

Ms DARLING: I am coming right to it.

Mr SPEAKER: You need to demonstrate to me how your answer is relevant to the question.

Ms DARLING: Certainly, Mr Speaker. I will start, therefore, with what the LNP leader, Campbell Newman, said while in the regions with regard to what to do with silt and how he would care for the river systems. He is on the record, talking to the Cairns Chamber of Commerce, about how frustrating the Department of Environment—

Opposition members interjected.

Ms DARLING: Sh!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Those on my left will cease interjecting. As I listened to the question, Minister, it referred to silting of waterways on the Gold Coast. That is what I wrote down.

Ms DARLING: As I started my answer I acknowledged that we check the environment, we provide advice and then we are dredging riverways on the Gold Coast. However, in Far North Queensland, Liberal leader Campbell Newman was telling the Cairns Chamber—

Mrs Stuckey: The Gold Coast is not North Queensland.

Ms DARLING: If the member would just listen to the answer—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Currumbin, the minister is answering the question.

Ms DARLING: I will get there. Campbell Newman told the Cairns Chamber of Commerce that after the flooding of the Brisbane River all the silt was deposited in the streets around Brisbane. He said that he was frustrated with DERM that he could not take all that silt and put it right back in the river where it came from. While the opposition is asking for dredging requirements on the Gold Coast, LNP leader Campbell Newman wants to take that silt and put it straight back into the river system. Members opposite should look at their record. Why does he say one thing in Cairns and another to the people of Brisbane?

Bruce Highway

Ms NELSON-CARR: My question is to the Minister for Main Roads. Can the minister outline to the House what plans the Bligh government has for the Bruce Highway and is he aware of any alternative plans?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Mundingburra for her question. She knows the importance of the Bruce Highway for regional Queensland. She travels on it quite regularly. The Bligh government is getting on with the job of upgrading the entire route of the Bruce Highway, working with the federal Labor government in Canberra. Over the next four years we will spend \$2 billion on 140 projects up and down the length of the Bruce Highway.

I know that, like me, regional Queenslanders are unhappy with the Bruce Highway. It is only Labor that is getting on and doing something after years of tory neglect. After years of starvation under the tories, we are finally starting to see those long-awaited projects like the upgrades to the Cooroy-Curra section of the Bruce Highway and to the Cardwell Range section in Far North Queensland. That includes \$980 million to complete major projects that are underway and more than \$1 billion for projects yet to start.

As we have heard this morning from the Deputy Premier, Campbell Newman—the man who admits he has not driven the Bruce Highway for a quarter of a century—will not let us see his plan for the Bruce Highway until after the election. He said that he would release it; now he says that he will not. The member for Callide says that they have a written policy, but Mr Newman says that they do not. The member for Callide says that Newman will put a toll on the Bruce Highway, but we know that Newman wants to toll the Bruce Highway to fund his failed Brisbane City Council projects.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Stop the clock.

Mr SEENEY: The minister knows that is not right. I find his dishonesty offensive. I ask that he withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, you have been asked for a withdrawal.

Mr WALLACE: I withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Callide, 'dishonesty'? You will withdraw that, too.

Mr Seeney: I am sorry, Mr Speaker?

Mr SPEAKER: You said you find the minister's 'dishonesty' offensive. I think a better way to phrase it is that you find the minister's comments offensive and you ask for them to be withdrawn. You have then accused the minister of dishonesty.

Mr Seeney: Absolutely I accused him of dishonesty. I withdraw according to your instructions, Mr Speaker.

Mr WALLACE: Like a barramundi to a big poddy mullet in the water. When I was a kid growing up in Home Hill, I went to St Colman's School. We learned a little dance called the hokey-pokey. Going by his performance on the Bruce, I reckon Campbell Newman also must have learned it when he went to school down in Tasmania. It goes a bit like this—

You put your Bruce plan in, you take your Bruce plan out.

You put your toll tags in and you shake them all about.

They go beeping, beeping and they turn around.

And that's what it's all about.

That is Campbell Newman's plan to toll the Bruce. We on this side of the House will not stand for it.

This Campbell Newman needs to tell the people of Townsville his secret plan for the Bruce Highway. He says that he has already written the policy. He needs to tell the people of Cairns what his policy is. Do not tell them after the election. Release this secret policy now. Labor has a policy for the Bruce. This Campbell Newman has nothing except a toll for the people of regional Queensland.

Gold Coast, Waterways

Mr CRANDON: After that rant, my question without notice is to the Minister for Environment. What is the government doing to assist businesses along the Broadwater and Coomera rivers that are losing millions of dollars in revenue due to a lack of access to those waterways?

Ms DARLING: I thank the honourable member for the question. In partnership with the Gold Coast City Council, dredging of waterways is being undertaken. I am a bit baffled as to why the questions are continually being directed to the Minister for Environment. Of course, I make no apologies for ensuring that our environment is protected when any of these practices are undertaken. Of course, if the member would like some further detail on dredging requirements he can also refer questions to the minister who is responsible. The minister and I and our departments work in consultation to make sure the environment is protected. We believe in the sustainable development of this beautiful landscape that we live in. I am very proud of the Labor government's environmental record. I would like to—

Mr Crandon: They're losing millions of dollars—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member has asked the question. The minister is answering the question. There is too much audible conversation. The honourable minister has the call.

Ms DARLING: I was talking about the wonderful record of the Labor government. I have to say that this current Queensland Labor government has the best environmental protection record of any government that I have ever seen. We do care about the environment and we care about the environment—

Mr Crandon: At a cost of millions of dollars in revenue to businesses—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Coomera, you have asked the question. The minister is answering the question in relation to the silting of the Broadwater and Coomera rivers.

Ms DARLING: I will not apologise for our strong record of protecting the environment and enabling sustainable development. We have a wonderful green-tape reduction process going on within my department at the moment that is making sure we minimise any possible duplications for approvals, but environmental approvals—

Mr Crandon: At the cost of jobs, at the cost of businesses—

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Coomera will cease interjecting. The minister has the call.

Ms DARLING: There is often a misunderstanding from those opposite about the importance of a sustainable future for Queensland. You cannot just put a price on economic development. Protecting the environment in the way we develop our state protects the future, protects the population and protects job opportunities. In fact, it creates job opportunities. We are actually moving into a new era of valuing the environment being central to our policy making. This is what sustains us, and I make no apology for

being part of a government that has a fantastic record on protecting the environment. We are the government that protected the Great Barrier Reef. We are the government that banned broadscale tree clearing.

Mr SPEAKER: The minister will round off her answer.

Ms DARLING: We are just the best.

'What's Your Big Idea Queensland?' Program

Mr WETTENHALL: My question is to the Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade. Can the Treasurer provide the House with an update on the government's successful innovation program, 'What's Your Big Idea Queensland?' including any support it has received in the community? Is the Treasurer aware of any other plans?

Mr FRASER: I thank the member for Barron River for his question and for his support for the government's innovation program and support of small businesses to promote their ideas, to innovate new ideas and to take them to market. Along with the honourable member I recently visited Placid Pools in his electorate, a recipient of the 'What's Your Big Idea Queensland?' innovation program. That is a company that all members would do well to remember. They are out there promoting a chemical-free filtration system for pools that not only is good for the environment but also uses a fraction of the energy for pool owners in order to ensure that pools are kept clean through the natural filtration process. It is something that I am sure people will hear about around Australia and, indeed, around the world in due course.

The 'What's Your Big Idea Queensland?' program has been funded with an additional \$3 million in this year's budget. It provides \$50,000 to small businesses to try to commercialise ideas. We saw 600 applications in the last round and the next round closes on 12 September. I once again implore all members to be out there promoting it. It is a program that is focused on ideas—about getting ideas to market, about commercialising ideas—and it is for those who have an idea but are unable to get it up.

Is it then any wonder that those opposite have been out there promoting it? The member for Mirani and the member for Lockyer have been supporting the program as, indeed, has the member for Currumbin, who has gone large on supporting this program. She has been promoting it as much as she has been bagging tourism. We have also seen the member for Hinchinbrook, who in the past has been in that journal of record the *Herbert River Express* promoting the 'What's Your Big Idea Queensland?' program. I know, however, that the member for Hinchinbrook would not be so keen on the big idea that Campbell Newman had this week to, with a Napoleonic decree, pursue a 'Just vote 1' strategy. We know that there is going to be a good 15 per cent to 20 per cent of his constituents who will be out there ticking '1' for the Katter's Australian Party. We know that the member for Hinchinbrook started to shift in his seat a little yesterday. The member for Burdekin has the idea also. She has had the big idea that it might be a little bit harder. Someone should tell the member for Dalrymple. He has probably got no idea, but he is in a lot of trouble after the Katter party decided to contest his electorate.

What we see this week is a parade of Demidenkos walking in here, parroting the lines produced for them by 'Napoleon'. Mr Speaker, have you ever seen a more pathetic circumstance than the Leader of the Opposition, diminished in this place by his subjugation to the ego of Campbell Newman, coming in here and being forced to ask questions that he does not even believe in? They are pretty rancorous this week and we know why. It is because the people who are so cock-a-hoop have all been told—each and every one of them—by Campbell Newman at the last shadow cabinet meeting that none of their jobs is guaranteed. That means the member for Kawana, the member for Maroochydore and in particular the member for Moggill. There are no guarantees from Campbell Newman that any of them will be sitting on this side of the chamber. That is why they have been carrying on all week.

(Time expired)

Child Safety Services, Deaths of Children

Ms DAVIS: My question without notice is to the Minister for Child Safety. I refer to reports of the death of two children in Maryborough in 2009 who were under the care of the minister's department. Has there been any disciplinary action taken or changes in departmental procedure in response to those reported deaths? If not, why not?

Mr REEVES: I thank the honourable member for the question. The Bligh government has one of the most rigorous review processes in Australia when it comes to the death of children known to Queensland Child Safety Services. Each case in which a child who dies has been known to Child Safety Services in the three years prior to the death undergoes a two-tiered review process. In the first instance these cases are reviewed by the internal systems and practices review committee. This committee review is then submitted to the external and independent Child Death Case Review Committee chaired by the Commissioner for Children and Young People and Child Guardian. This process is in place to critically analyse the department's service delivery. All recommendations of these reviews are actioned.

I refer members to my statement made on 24 November 2010 when the Queensland Child Death Case Review Committee annual report was tabled in the House. The report has been publicly available for nine months. I can confirm to this House that every recommendation from each review conducted as part of the child death review process in the last two financial years has been acted upon. Despite attempts by the LNP and the *Australian* newspaper, I will not be drawn into talking about any specific case. Not only is it ethically wrong; it is against the law. If those opposite wish to discuss specific cases openly, they should come in here and try to propose changes to legislation. But first they would have to have a child safety policy, which they do not have. If this is an indication of what those people opposite would do if they ever held government, Queensland families have every right to be concerned.

With regard to the member's questions today and yesterday, for the benefit of the House I quote the beginning of the questions asked by the member for Aspley yesterday and today. She stated—

I refer to inquiries underway into the deaths of two teenage girls who committed suicide while in the care of his department ...

When I advised the member that I would not comment or provide details about a specific case, she stated—

I am not asking about a specific case, Minister.

Less than a minute after talking about a specific case the member for Aspley, as she did today, denied she asked about a specific case, clearly contradicting herself. I will be writing to the Speaker today asking that the member for Aspley be referred to the Ethics Committee for consideration of this matter. Either the member cannot remember what she says from one minute to the next—a bit like the opposition's policies—or she is deliberately misleading the House.

Education

Ms van LITSEBURG: My question is to the Minister for Education and Industrial Relations. Will the minister outline Bligh government initiatives to strengthen Queensland's education system and any alternative policies?

Mr DICK: I thank the member for Redcliffe for her commitment and the hard work that she does in the schools in her electorate. Those of us in the Bligh government are not only believers in education; we are doers. From cradle to career, Labor believes in giving every child an opportunity to be the best they can be, and the proof of the pudding is in the eating. The proof is in what we have done and what has been central to our mission as a government since we came to power in 1998. We see this in the early years of schooling. We are delivering universal access to kindergarten for every pre-prep-age child in Queensland—something we will roll out from 2014. We are delivering up to 240 new kindergarten services, an investment by the state of almost a third of a billion dollars. We are transitioning year 7 into high school to give those children in that prep year that we introduced into Queensland, who are now moving through Queensland schools, the best possible opportunity to learn in the best possible environment, and that is in high school with specialised teachers in a specialised learning environment. We are now implementing—and it is rolling out from next year, for the first time in the history of our nation—the national curriculum from prep to year 10 in English, maths and science, which is a consistency in curriculum. This is something that we have driven for the last half decade in this state.

In the 143 days since Campbell Newman became the de facto Leader of the Opposition what has he had to say about education?

Ms Jones: Nothing!

Mr DICK: Nothing! He has had nothing to say about education. The two great investments that Labor governments make are in education and in health. Almost \$2 out of every \$4 that the state spends in Queensland is spent on education and health. This is a man who has no idea and no policy but, worst of all, this is a man who has no interest in education, which is demonstrated by a lack of any public policy commitment.

The only thing the LNP has said in those past 143 days is what the president of the LNP, Bruce McIver, said at the LNP conference, that Queensland students were being brainwashed in Queensland schools in relation to climate change. Did Campbell Newman stand up for professional educators who write curriculum? Did he stand up for the 39,000 full-time teachers who go into state schools and teach every day? No. This was a slur on science teachers in Queensland and there was silence from Campbell Newman. This is an alternative reality. It is a *Flintstones* version of science where volcanoes—and we know that is where members opposite believe climate change comes from—and humans and dinosaurs all live in peaceful co-existence. Who is sliding down the back of the brontosaurus? 'Can-yabba-dabba-do' Campbell. He is leading the charge with Bruce 'Barney Rubble' McIver. This is not science. This is not education. It is abrogation of responsibility by Campbell Newman.

(Time expired)

Central Queensland, Bushfire Preparedness

Mr LANGBROEK: My question without notice is to the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services. I refer to the latest warnings from the Bureau of Meteorology for bushfire risk in Central Queensland, and I ask: will the minister and his management team undertake to heed and not ignore the advice of on-the-ground local rural bushfire brigade volunteers this season, which is shaping up as a real worry given the very high fuel loads across the state?

Mr ROBERTS: I thank the member for the question because it gives me an opportunity to talk about the preparedness that the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service has been undertaking for this year's bushfire season. As the member has outlined and would be aware, the fire risk for this year's season is above normal, particularly for that part of Queensland, from Central Queensland up to the coast into the northern part and into the central area.

I cannot recall all of the detail of the member's question, but I can respond by saying this: the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, through the Rural Fire Service, has been very proactive this year in engaging with local councils and other government departments who are significant landholders who have been conducting a significant number of proactive burns. Local brigades have been engaging actively with private landholders because, irrespective of what the member might believe, it is actually the landholder who has the fundamental responsibility to ensure that fire risk is addressed. So there has been a lot of proactive activity by the fire service to address the fire risk.

I might just outline for the House some of the initiatives which apply not just to the area the member has referred to but indeed right across Queensland. A media campaign will be delivered in terms of information to local residents and landholders about fire risk. Indeed, if you note what has been going on throughout regional newspapers, there has been a significant ramping up of information and advice to local communities about the bushfire risk in their particular area, in particular those areas where the risk is considered to be above normal—that is, Central Queensland to the north and out into the far west.

Every region as a minimum conducts one major and two minor exercises. So local brigades—all of those people directly involved in the response—will be involved in them. The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service has procured again this year the services of three water-bombing helicopters which predominantly will operate in the south-east. But right throughout Queensland, whether it be through helicopter water bombing or fixed-wing aircraft, there is significant engagement with the private sector to prepare for the fire risk as well.

In addition to that, in terms of engaging at the local level, there are interdepartmental committees at the state level, at the regional level and at the local level to address bushfire risk. I do not know where the member is getting his information, but I can assure him and indeed the House that rural fire brigades have been well resourced by this government. There has been a significant increase in funding in recent years. The fire service is well aware of the risk which is posed to Central Queensland, to North Queensland and in the south, and there is a lot of proactive activity underway well before the season to ensure that districts and regions are appropriately prepared.

Energy Sector, Employment

Mr RYAN: My question without notice is to the Minister for Energy and Water Utilities. Can the minister update the House on how the Bligh government is supporting young people to gain invaluable experience in the government energy organisations and can he advise of other initiatives to assist young people gain employment?

Mr ROBERTSON: I thank the member for Morayfield for the question. As he is someone who cares very much about jobs for young people, it is a very apt question for him to ask. I think it is fair to say that a lot of the debate about or attention paid to the energy sector tends to concentrate, understandably, on electricity prices. But there is also another really important story to be told, and that is about the employment opportunities that our government owned energy corporations, such as Energex and Ergon, provide for young people in terms of highly sought after apprenticeships with both of those organisations.

Over the last 12 months 170 young Queenslanders have secured an apprenticeship with either Energex and Ergon, giving them the kind of start in life that a lot of young people really do need. In 2010-11 more than 3,000 people applied for around 80 Energex apprenticeships. Ergon's 61 new recruits were chosen from more than 2,500 people vying for these positions. That gives you an appreciation of just how sought after these positions are.

Ergon is currently on its 2012 apprentice recruitment drive, with a further 75 positions on offer. With just under a week to go before applications close, there have so far been 1,045 completed online and a further 800 underway. I urge anyone interested in applying for these apprenticeships to do so quickly.

Ergon has recently reached a significant milestone—inducting the organisation's 850th apprentice in the last 10 years. It now has nearly 300 apprentices on its books and has turned out over 550 qualified tradespeople since 2002. I take this opportunity to congratulate electrical linesperson Martin Curtis, based at Energex's Greenslopes depot, who took out the coveted Energex Apprentice of the Year Award. He was among many apprentices who played a significant front-line role during the January 2011 floods and provided support to the restoration effort after Tropical Cyclone Yasi.

All of this could be put at risk with Campbell Newman and the LNP, because we know that in terms of any utterings about the future of Energex and Ergon we only need to reflect on Campbell Newman's Treasury spokesperson, who wants to sell the poles and wires. What would happen to the apprentices of tomorrow? What would happen to the opportunities for young people to get new jobs and new apprenticeships if Energex and Ergon are put up for sale? That is what the LNP Treasury spokesperson has committed to, and it has never been denied by Campbell Newman that they have a plan to privatise Energex and Ergon. The *Hansard* record speaks for itself. A vote for the LNP means a vote to sell Energex and Ergon.

(Time expired)

Gladstone Base Hospital, Mobile Phone Antennas

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. Overwhelmingly staff at the Gladstone Base Hospital object to proposals to install mobile phone antennas on the roof of block 2, and I table a copy of their concerns, without names.

Tabled paper: Document, dated July 2011, in relation to concerns regarding the proposed installation of the mobile phone network infrastructure on Gladstone Base Hospital buildings at Flinders Street, West Gladstone [\[5147\]](#).

Will the minister give an undertaking to staff that where there are overwhelming concerns about health and safety the installation will not proceed?

Mr WILSON: I thank the honourable member for the question. It is an important question and I take seriously the question as asked. Workplace health and safety is a very important issue. The particular details that the member addresses in her question are not at my fingertips, but I am very happy to make sure through the director-general that the district CEO ensures that all of the proper workplace health and safety assessments that need to be done in relation to that proposed installation—if that is what is being proposed—or any other installation meet the required Australian standards to ensure the long-term workplace health and safety of staff at that facility. I will ask the director-general to ensure that that in fact takes place.

Sunshine Coast University Hospital

Mrs SULLIVAN: My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. Can the minister please inform the House of the progress of the Sunshine Coast University Hospital?

Mr WILSON: I thank the honourable member for the question. We are absolutely committed to building a \$2 billion world-class, first-class university hospital on the Sunshine Coast. We have short-listed the project partners. We have commenced preliminary roadworks. We have announced, as I said today, that within weeks new radiation services will commence on the Sunshine Coast. As I said, there is \$2 billion in the budget for a university hospital on the Sunshine Coast.

Members may be interested to know what could be the alternative to our unprecedented \$2 billion hospital on the Sunshine Coast. The alternative put forward by one of the two leaders of the LNP is to rip \$400 million out of the budget for the Sunshine Coast University Hospital—I repeat: rip \$400 million out of the budget for the Sunshine Coast University Hospital. Not only that, LNP members say—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Those on my left.

Mr WILSON: Not only that, they say that they will actually accelerate the building of the \$2 billion university hospital for \$1.6 billion. I will tell you what progress we are having on this major project. We have—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Again, there is too much audible conversation.

Mr WILSON: Can I have the clock stopped, Mr Speaker?

Mr SPEAKER: Yes, stop the clock. I now call the minister again.

Mr WILSON: I will tell honourable members about the progress on this site. We have had independent market testing for the \$2 billion—not so for the LNP.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Kawana, I have asked.

Mr WILSON: We have undertaken a formal expressions-of-interest exercise—not done by the LNP in its proposal for a \$1.6 billion university hospital. We have done an independent evaluation of value for money—not done by the LNP. We have established a risk management framework—not done by the LNP. We have also undertaken and engaged an independent private sector partner for a co-located hospital—not done by the LNP.

It is all right for the LNP to say one thing here—of ripping \$400 million out of this \$2 billion project on the Sunshine Coast—but what do they say on the Sunshine Coast? There are five members here who have gone missing in action. They have deserted their electorates because they have refused to stand up to Campbell Newman, who has said up on the Sunshine Coast that they will deliver the \$2 billion hospital but in here they have said that they are going to rip \$400 million out of the budget.

(Time expired)

Fire Blight

Mr SPRINGBORG: My question without notice is to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Regional Economies. I refer to the federal government's decision to lift the ban on New Zealand apples which has protected our shores from the devastating disease fire blight since 1919. Can the minister give a guarantee to Granite Belt apple growers that their orchards, their livelihoods and their communities will not be destroyed by this decision?

Mr SPEAKER: The minister has one minute.


Mr MULHERIN: I thank the honourable member for the question. This government believes in free trade; it is in the interests of agriculture. The New Zealand apple industry made an application to Biosecurity Australia for the export of apples from New Zealand to Australia. That was commenced under the Howard government era—under one of your heroes, Peter McGauran. We put up a strong case around science and the New Zealand government took us to the WTO. It was then reviewed again and the federal government has made the decision to allow apples into Australia under strict conditions. I note that Tony Abbott supports that. I believe that most Australian consumers will support the Australian apple industry. I understand the industry is out promoting the Australian product.

(Time expired)

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The time for question time is over.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Ministerial Expenses

 **Hon. AM BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Reconstruction) (12.25 pm), by leave: I table the public report of ministerial expenses for the period 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2011.


Tabled paper: Public Report of Ministerial Expenses—2010-11 [5148].

The report shows that ministerial expenditure has remained at a reasonable level and that this government remains committed to fiscal responsibility. Compared to 2009-10, overall ministerial office expenditure in this financial year increased by 2.14 per cent, which is below CPI. Obviously, enterprise bargaining expenses contributed to the modest increase along with other costs, such as IT and depreciation. Overall increases were offset by decreases in areas such as communication costs due to improved and capped phone plans negotiated by the department.

Regarding my own office, expenditure in this financial year decreased by \$50,572, or 0.95 per cent, on the previous year. This decrease is due to the transfer of the Townsville office to the office of the Minister for Main Roads, Fisheries and Marine Infrastructure and the ongoing prudent management of my office to ensure costs are kept to a minimum. The public report of ministerial expenses for 2010-11 shows that ministerial expenditure is being maintained at reasonable levels.

POLICE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction and Referral to the Legal Affairs, Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services Committee

 **Hon. NS ROBERTS** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services) (12.26 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000, the Police Powers and Responsibilities Regulation 2000, the Evidence Act 1977 and the State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999 for particular purposes, and to make minor and consequential

amendments to the legislation mentioned in the schedule. I table the bill and explanatory notes. I nominate the Legal Affairs, Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Police Powers and Responsibilities and Other Legislation Amendment Bill [\[5149\]](#).

Tabled paper: Police Powers and Responsibilities and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, explanatory notes [\[5150\]](#).

The bill strengthens and streamlines police powers to enhance the ability of police to protect and serve Queensland communities, with the primary objective of making Queensland communities among the safest in Australia. The Police Powers and Responsibilities and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 reaffirms the Bligh government's commitment to ensure the Queensland Police Service continues to provide modern and effective law enforcement. This bill supports the continued delivery of quality policing services to the Queensland community.

The review of the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act was commenced by the previous minister for police, Ms Judy Spence. The review was undertaken in three stages. Stage 1 called on all members of the Queensland Police Service to draw on their operational experience to identify amendments to the PPRA that would better support the delivery of policing services to the Queensland community. Stage 2 involved the formation of the PPRA Review Committee, which was tasked to review proposals put forward by the QPS and others to ensure the act continued to meet its purposes. The committee was chaired by the member for Ipswich West, Mr Wayne Wendt, and included representatives from the Queensland Law Society, the Crime and Misconduct Commission, the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties, Legal Aid Queensland, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (Queensland) Ltd and various government departments.

Stage 3 involved an open public consultation period where an invitation was extended to the people of Queensland to provide input into the review by identifying relevant changes to the act. Subsequent to this, a draft PPRA bill was released publicly for further feedback. I would like to take this opportunity to thank both the previous minister for police and the member for Ipswich West for their positive role and contribution to this review.

The government is committed to making Queensland the safest state in Australia and this bill contains a suite of amendments to the PPRA that will contribute to achieving this goal. In this regard, the amendments to the act can be summarised as being those that reinforce safeguards to ensure police powers have sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of Queenslanders, those that give police officers a stronger platform to investigate offences, and those that enhance the safety of our police officers and the community. The government and the Queensland Police Service proactively engaged with the people of Queensland in the development of this legislation to make sure we got it right. As a result of that process, I am confident that the bill is in line with community expectations and better positions the QPS to protect and serve Queensland in a fast paced 21st century society.

Whilst the explanatory notes provide the necessary detail of the purpose of each proposed amendment, I want to speak to some of the more significant amendments. The bill provides a police officer with the power to search a minor reasonably suspected of having possession of liquor in a public place or at licensed premises. This new search power is, however, limited to a pat-down search and a search of bags in the possession of the minor. This new and limited search power will assist police in preventing young people from undertaking risky behaviours and placing themselves in situations such as violent altercations or unwanted sexual experiences. This risk was identified by the findings of the Law, Justice and Safety Committee's report *Inquiry into alcohol-related violence—final report*. Further, the Queensland Police Service 2009-10 annual statistical review indicated that approximately 11 per cent of all liquor offences, not including drunk in a public place, are committed by children aged 10 to 17 years. Searching and seizing liquor unlawfully in possession of minors is a preventative measure that is aimed at intervening early in order to prevent further harm and/or offences. Whilst the purpose of the search is to locate and seize liquor unlawfully in the possession of the minor, should any other items be unlawfully in the minor's possession and located during the search, action may be taken in relation to those items as well.

The bill gives a police officer the power to search a person who has been detained for the purposes of dealing with a breach of the peace or to avert a riot or prevent offences generally. This search power is limited to a pat-down search to locate items that can ordinarily be used to endanger the safety of any person or to escape. This search power extends to bags in the possession of the person. Any items that the person may be entitled to lawfully possess, however taken from the person while the person is detained, will be returned upon the release of that person. If an item is located that the person may not lawfully possess, the police officer may take action. The safety of our police officers is paramount and this limited search power will give greater protection to our police officers when dealing with offenders.

The bill allows a police officer of the rank of chief superintendent to authorise a controlled activity that utilises an adult civilian participant but in limited circumstances. During the initial stages of an investigation, it is often difficult to grasp the extent of the criminal activities undertaken without drawing on a civilian participant with knowledge of those activities. By way of example, the bill allows a civilian to participate in a controlled activity by introducing an undercover police officer to a drug supplier to enable the police officer to purchase a dangerous drug for evidence gathering. This allows the police to tap into the knowledge and connections that a particular civilian may have but which a police officer would not.

Currently, community service imposed in lieu of the impoundment or forfeiture of a motor vehicle is taken to be a fine option order under the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992. However, as the original order is not a fine, in the event of a noncompliance a court can only extend the order to allow community service to be performed. This presents difficulties for the courts and Queensland Corrective Services in enforcing the impoundment legislation in the event of a noncompliance and defeats the purpose of the legislation. The bill attributes a non-performance amount to the order to perform community service so that, if an offender fails to complete the imposed number of hours of community service, the non-performance amount determined by the court can be enforced. If the amount is unpaid, it will be transferred to the State Penalties Enforcement Register for collection.


The bill establishes a regime that allows a police officer to make an application to a Children's Court magistrate to take a DNA sample from a child who is not a suspect for an offence but in relation to which the DNA may assist in identifying the person who committed the offence or to establish whether the offence has been committed. A typical example is the offence of incest, where the victim has given birth to another child. A DNA sample taken from both children will provide the evidence required to prove the offence. This amendment is yet another example of the commitment by this government to protecting our children and ensuring those persons who commit sex offences against our children are held to account.

Both the community consultation process for reviewing the PPRA and members of the community who contact my office have highlighted a need to strengthen police powers for dealing with noise complaints in neighbourhoods. In response, the bill will give police officers the power to issue a noise abatement direction for up to 96 hours, or four days. This increased time period does not replace the existing 12-hour noise abatement period but is an additional tool available to police officers to combat repeat instances of nuisance noise and deal with recidivist excessive noise offenders. Anecdotal information from the QPS indicates that many members of the community are unnecessarily tolerating noise out of fear of reprisals should they make a noise complaint to the police. In this regard, the bill also clarifies that the identity of a person wishing to make a noise complaint does not need be disclosed. Importantly, officers will still be required to make an assessment of the level of noise and determine that the noise is in fact excessive in the circumstances before taking action.

Finally, I want to draw the parliament's attention to the expansion of offences for which the Queensland Police Service may make an application for a disease test order. An application may now be made for any offence if semen, blood, saliva or another bodily fluid may have been transmitted into the anus, vagina, a mucous membrane or broken skin of a victim of the offence. While the scope of the orders is tempered with the safeguard that a magistrate may only make the order where there has been the transfer of a bodily fluid, the inclusion of all offences where there is the possibility of disease transfer to the Queensland community as a whole would be a positive health outcome for victims.

This bill represents a significant step forward in enhancing the ability of our police officers to protect children, investigate offences, prosecute offenders, enforce penalties and generally preserve the peace and good order. As a result of this bill, our community will be better served by police officers who have access to powers that are necessary for effective modern policing and law enforcement balanced by appropriate safeguards. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

 **Hon. NS ROBERTS** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services) (12.37 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.


Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms van Litsenburg): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Legal Affairs, Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services Committee.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTORAL BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 24 August (see p. 2641), on motion of Mr Lucas—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (12.37 pm), continuing: Another amendment in the bill looks at the Mixed Use Development Act 1993, which predates body corporate laws set out in the Body Corporate and Community Management Act 1997. It looks at issues relating to body corporate operations and includes dispute resolution, financial disclosure and accountability on body corporate committees and also representation on committees that are fair and equitable.

The bill also addresses residential care buildings and the evacuation procedures in the event of a fire emergency. This specifically relates to further issues identified in the Childers task force report and further protective measures that refer to residential care buildings built before 1 June 2007 that have six or more residents and more than one resident who is mobility impaired and requires physical assistance to evacuate the building in the event of a fire. This will be achieved by introducing a new chapter in the Building Act 1975 to be known as chapter 7A entitled 'Fire safety for residential care buildings built, approved or applied for, before 1 June 2007'. It will have the following particulars: a definition of the term 'residential care buildings', a definition of the term 'assessment categories' for RCBs, a definition of residential care building assessors, the introduction of a fire safety standard, the requirement of an assessment of a RCB against the fire safety standards by 1 March 2012 and compliance with them within three to five years.

Further amendments in this bill relate to swimming pool fences and barriers on common boundaries. The amendments allow pool owners to make changes to the fence or barrier around part or all of the pool to comply with current pool safety standards. These changes can occur without having first to obtain an agreement from the adjoining neighbour, which will make the pool owner responsible for any financial cost that is involved in the construction and maintenance of the barrier.


The bill also amends the Sanctuary Cove Resort Act 1985. Sanctuary Cove is a fabulous place on the Gold Coast, the development of which was approved by the Albert shire council with assistance from the state government under the Integrated Resort Development Act. This amendment will allow for any further amendment of the land use plan on this site. It also amends the Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008, the Public Trustee Act 1978, the State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999 and the State Penalties Enforcement Regulation 2000.

I have reservations and concerns about the amendments in the bill that remove the control of elections from local councils to the Electoral Commission of Queensland. The first issue I have relates to the distinct difference between the local councils throughout Queensland in relation to their geographical location, the size of their council area, their financial status and the services that they are able to provide to the residents. These differences have to be taken into consideration in the administration and delivery of local council elections across the state.

When the Law, Justice and Safety Committee was looking into this issue a submission was made to it from a CEO of one council which said that that council conducted an election one year and then the ECQ conducted the election the next time. However, at the time the ECQ could not run the election so it rang up the council's CEO and asked the CEO to run the election, which he duly did. Then the ECQ charged that council double what it cost the council to run their previous election. This is a great concern for the LNP as any further costs that go on to councils, particularly remote Western Queensland councils, will be another cost to ratepayers. When we approached the Electoral Commissioner, Mr Kerlake, about the matter, he basically said that the costs of running local government elections in that particular western council were determined to be part of the costs across the state. In other words, the cost implications of the Electoral Commission of Queensland running council elections can be quite substantial to some councils in those western areas. Yes, I agree that the Electoral Commission of Queensland running local council elections will streamline the process somewhat, but I am also concerned that some local council jurisdictions will be disadvantaged, with costs presumably looked at from a state perspective by the ECQ and not on a council-by-council basis.

As part of the bill, there will be upfront costs to the Queensland Treasury for the funding of the local government elections in 2012. After that date, local governments will be issued with invoices to pay for elections for the future. My concern is how this process will be regulated and, when we give such control to the ECQ, what blow-outs in the cost there will be to councils right across Queensland, such as matters in relation to roll preparation. I note that the CEO of a council is allowed to be the returning officer if there is no-one else who is suitable and if they are not a member of a political party. The government's own explanatory notes state that there may be even potential breaches of fundamental legislative principles involved with this legislation.

The Bligh Labor government is renowned for its interference in local government issues, the biggest of which was the amalgamations, which caused enormous angst in many local governments across the state. Along with the debacle of water, which has given some councils in the south-east corner some major headaches, the Bligh Labor government has created problem after problem for local governments across the state. It is only with a Can-do Campbell Newman government possibly coming in at the next election that consultation, input and overall effective progressive legislative local government amendments will be implemented for the betterment of all local governments and their communities across our great state of Queensland.

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Greenslopes—ALP) (Minister for Education and Industrial Relations) (12.44 pm): I am pleased to make a short contribution to this important reform bill that is currently before the parliament. I want to confine my comments to those parts of the bill that relate to the reform of the conduct of elections in local government in Queensland and also to those parts of the bill that will strengthen transparency in local government elections and reinforce the need for transparency in relation to the conduct of councillors and mayors in Queensland.

I am a strong supporter of the proposal that the Electoral Commission of Queensland be responsible for the conduct of elections at a local government level. At the outset, I make a declaration that my brother is a councillor on the Brisbane City Council. Regrettably, a number of members in this House who have formerly served on councils, particularly those members of the LNP, have failed to make any declaration at all about their previous history, including their history leading up to election to this House. I think that is a regrettable thing, particularly when the LNP continues to persist with this policy position, now endorsed and championed by Campbell Newman, that councillors should be able to run for state parliament whilst serving as councillors in Queensland. That was a very significant reform implemented by Labor governments.

I have a strong view about public service. When you go to the people and you ask for their trust, you should rely and respond and recognise that trust that is vested in you. It is not good enough to take the trust of the people, as the LNP would suggest, as a councillor and then say, 'I'm going to breach that trust. I'm going to break that trust now. You have put your trust in me to represent me in local government. But that is not good enough for me now. I am now seeking higher office. I am seeking higher honours and I will now use my position as a councillor to campaign for state parliament.' It is a very regrettable thing that the LNP persists with that policy.

Of course, the reintroduction of that policy by the LNP has been foreshadowed through an amendment that the shadow minister seeks to move through this parliament to permit councillors to run for state office. That is now endorsed by Campbell Newman. Campbell Newman is the leader of the opposition, although not in this House. For the first time in 151 years of responsible government in Queensland we have a political party in this House that is led by someone who is external to the parliament, that is led by someone who is not responsible to the parliament, that is led by someone who is not accountable to the parliament, that is led by someone who is not subject to the same scrutiny as are members of the parliament, particularly the scrutiny through the declaration of interests in the members' interest register. It is a shameful and supine lack of demonstrated leadership by those members opposite. The 32 of them could not find a leader to lead themselves in this place and they had to contract out that leadership to Campbell Newman, who is not subject to the same scrutiny.

Frankly, there has not been as much public debate about this issue as there should be. There has not been as much public debate about contracting out the leader of a political organisation in a democratically elected parliament to someone who is external to that parliament. I want to put on record that I think it is a very destructive and corrosive thing to have happened in Queensland. It does not represent the traditions of parliamentary democracy that all of us in this place presumably—certainly those members of the Labor Party in this place—uphold. Even in 1974 when we were at our lowest ebb, we found a leader to lead us from within the parliament. I think it says much about the LNP—a party that often holds itself up as the protector of conservative values, as the protector of tradition, as the protector of establishment values—that it has trashed one of the most significant establishment principles in the democratic system, the most significant principle that oppositions should be led by someone who is drawn from and is accountable to the parliament.

So they persist. Now Campbell Newman—someone who is external to the parliament—has endorsed and led this policy position that councillors should be able to run for public office. He would have done that in a shadow cabinet meeting. The amendment foreshadowed by the member for Gympie and the shadow spokesman for local government affairs would have had that policy position endorsed by the shadow cabinet, led by Campbell Newman.

What a disgraceful piece of conduct by him that he should, when he is running for public office, bring back into Queensland the opportunity for councillors to run. By necessary implication, that is precisely the position he would have taken if he had been the Lord Mayor of Brisbane. He would have used the trappings of office. He would have used the substantial resources available to the mayor, including significant communication resources through a very large number of media advisors—I am

advised up to five—and through resources available to one of the most significantly funded elected public offices in the nation. He would have used that to campaign for state parliament. He persists in driving this policy principle through the parliament. I think that says volumes about him as a leader and volumes about what he would see councillors doing in Queensland.

We need that clear separation. People need to make a choice. Local government is not a part-time position in Queensland anymore. It is a position in service of the community. It is a representative position that is sometimes closest to the community. So the bonds of trust between a councillor and the constituents they represent in their council area should be very strong and should not be broken by ambition for higher office as we have seen demonstrated by someone like Campbell Newman. I strongly endorse that position.

I strongly endorse the role the Electoral Commission of Queensland will play. As an independent body it will bring greater transparency to the way local government elections are conducted in Queensland. That is a good thing for local government. It is a good thing for democracy in Queensland. No-one can challenge the independent umpire, in a sense—that state body that is responsible for conducting elections. It should be beyond reproach. It should be beyond being impeached. I think that it is something that is worthy of support. Will there be an additional cost? If there is, that is the cost of democracy. It is a cost that is balanced by the openness and the transparency that will come through that system.


I would also like to place on record my grave concerns at comments made in the House yesterday by the shadow spokesperson for justice matters and the member for Kawana. There was some exchange in the House yesterday about the conduct of the member for Hervey Bay when he was mayor in relation to a financial transaction involving him. That was well litigated yesterday. Frankly, what the shadow spokesperson for justice affairs, the member for Kawana, said was that he regarded that as a private affair. He said it was a private matter that the member for Hervey Bay was involved in when he was a duly elected mayor. It is of grave concern that someone who would be providing advice to the cabinet, someone who would be the first law officer of Queensland, would suggest that a financial transaction involving an elected representative at the local government level, an elected councillor, involving the council upon which he sat, was a private matter.

The member for Kawana is developing a reputation for coming in here and making allegations about a whole range of individuals who serve in this place. This is a gentleman who is long on rhetoric but short on facts, long on allegations but short on the substance to support them. To think that someone who seeks to hold high office, ultimately as the Attorney-General of Queensland, would defend that sort of transaction as a 'private matter' should be of grave concern to all Queenslanders. I want to put on record my very grave concerns that he should seek to defend transactions by councillors involving the very council that they are involved in as a private matter. They are public affairs that should be subject to full scrutiny and accountability. Just as members of this House have to put any financial transactions on the register, so too should councillors be subject to the same level of high public scrutiny. Similarly, ministers of state in Queensland are under the very high standards set by this Premier and previous premiers and have to divest themselves of shareholdings of any public or private company. That is the standard we set. We are required to divest ourselves of those shareholdings when we become a minister. Why? Because it avoids not only any actual conflict; it avoids any perception of conflict of interest. To think that the member for Kawana could have come in here yesterday and defended a councillor, who of course subsequently ran for public office, involved in a financial transaction with his own council, as being a private matter is of very grave concern.

Mr Schwarten: Sends a shiver up the spine.

Mr DICK: I take the interjection from the member for Rockhampton. It does send a shiver up the spine. It sends a shiver up the spine in relation to that honourable gentleman if he was to become the first law officer of Queensland advising the cabinet of Queensland on legal affairs. Pride, as they say, cometh before a fall. I will let the gentleman's conduct otherwise speak for itself, but we will keep an eye on what the member for Kawana says. As I said earlier, he is someone who likes to make allegations about others very freely and very liberally but very rarely comes up to proof or standard.

Vesting the responsibility in the Electoral Commission of Queensland will, of course, create an independent central oversight body for the conduct of all elections at a local government level in Queensland. That is a very important thing. It follows on from reforms we have driven through local government to deliver a better service to Queensland and to deliver better local government. I commend the Deputy Premier, Attorney-General and Minister for Local Government for this significant reform bill and I commend it to the House.

 **Mr HOOLIHAN** (Keppel—ALP) (12.55 pm): In speaking to the Local Government Electoral Bill I should indicate that I have a brother in local government. He is a councillor for the Longreach Regional Council. We do not discuss those matters which are relevant to local government. He certainly complies with all the requirements under the Local Government Act. While listening to some of the speeches on this bill yesterday, I was embarrassed to be in the same House as some of the people who were making

those contributions. It was nothing short of political thuggery towards a member of government, namely the member for Ashgrove, and it was concerted bullying. I would like to endorse the comments by the member for Greenslopes in relation to the member for Kawana, particularly in view of the later comments made by his associate, the member for Buderim, in terms of conflict of interest. I have a grave concern that conflict of interest is not understood by these people.

Mrs Sullivan: Like the separation of powers is not understood.

Mr HOOLIHAN: I will take that interjection: like the separation powers is understood by very few of these people. There seems to be some suggestion that the state government has no power or no right to make laws in relation to local government. I would commend to those members of the LNP who seem to want to suggest that that they have a look at the Constitution of Queensland 2001 which requires this state to have a strong system of local government. They can have a look at section 70 or 72. It is around the early 70s, in any event. The Constitution of Queensland sets out that we make provision for local government and we set the parameters. The parameters were set in terms of amalgamation. The parameters are now being set under this bill in terms of how an election will be carried out. I am sure that people who sit in this House can recount many times when there has been a suggestion that the local council conducting the election is very suspect in terms of counting and in terms of some of the things that are done. That is not a reflection upon the CEO, who is usually the returning officer, but it certainly is a reflection on some of the people who are directing the returning officer.


This bill seeks to give the power to conduct elections to the Electoral Commission of Queensland. Every one of us has to trust the Electoral Commission of Queensland. Why can't the LNP? I would like to know. Perhaps somebody will stand up and tell us the story. We heard very long and convoluted arguments about standing as a candidate. Not one person who made that contribution—and I must admit that a couple of people on our side might have made the same mistake—understands what happens with a local government councillor. The Local Government Act does not say that you have to resign. It says that when you become a candidate for the Legislative Assembly you automatically stop being a councillor. A candidate under the Electoral Act is defined as being a person who has been nominated and accepted by the ECQ as a candidate for a state election, which may be only 26 days.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.30 pm.

Debate, on motion of Mr Nicholls, adjourned.

PRIVILEGE


Alleged Deliberate Misleading of the House by a Minister

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (2.30 pm): I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. Yesterday in question time the Treasurer claimed that I said the following in regard to the Queensland Building Boost, and I quote from *Hansard*—

The Building Boost has been described variously by the shadow Treasurer as a poison pill and, hysterically, as part of a direct attack on the Australian way of life.


On 17 June, during deliberations on clause 134 of the Community Ambulance Cover Levy Repeal and Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, I said something in relation to the removal of the principal place of residence concession that did include the words 'poison pill' and 'a direct attack on the Australian way of life'. I make it clear that was in respect of the removal of the principal place of residence concession and in no way referred to the Building Boost. In this regard, I believe that the Treasurer has intentionally and deliberately misled the House and I will be writing to the Speaker on that basis.

Alleged Deliberate Misleading of the House by the Premier

 **Mr EMERSON** (Indooroopilly—LNP) (2.31 pm): I rise on a matter of privilege. I refer to the Premier's comments, made in the House today, that over the past 10 years the Brisbane City Council has contributed nothing to Brisbane's busway system. I suggest there is a case for the Premier to answer as she has misled this House. Brisbane City Council contributed to busway projects, including the Eleanor Schonell Bridge and the Inner Northern Busway. I will write to the Speaker in that regard, asking that the Premier be referred to the privileges committee for the matter to be decided there.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

The Greens, Preferences


 **Mr SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.32 pm): This morning it became apparent that Queensland is likely to see a repeat of the dodgy preference deal that dominated the 2009 election. In the 2009 election, the Labor Party traded 14 seats for one in a preference deal with the Greens. Everyone wondered why it was 14 seats to one, until the parliament was recalled.

When we were recalled as a parliament we dealt with legislation that was the other part of the deal. This government traded away the legislative power of this House to introduce legislation to fulfil the deal that it had with the Greens. The legislation was an extension of the wild rivers legislation, but it had nothing to do with wild rivers. It was all about a dodgy preference deal. The reef protection legislation that imposed an impost on farmers in North Queensland had nothing to do with reef protection. It was about a dodgy deal for Greens preferences to save the government. Queensland motorists are still paying the price for the dodgy preference deal. They are paying an extra 8½c a litre following the loss of the fuel subsidy that the Premier and the Treasurer promised they would not remove. They did remove it because it was part of the deal with the Greens for the preferences they thought they needed to get themselves re-elected.

At this election we will see the same sort of dodgy preference deal that the Premier ruled out yesterday. No doubt overnight she felt some heat from some nervous backbenchers, because today she has done a backflip. She has slithered and slid backwards, trying to get some wriggle room so they can repeat that sort of dodgy preference deal. The people of Queensland should be aware that this government will do anything to stay in power. They will trade away their pride. They will trade away the pride of this parliament and the legislative power of this parliament for Greens preferences to do a deal to try to save a failed government.

(Time expired)

Seniors Week


 **Ms CROFT** (Broadwater—ALP) (2.34 pm): This week Queensland celebrates the valuable contributions of seniors to our communities with Seniors Week 2011 promoting the countless benefits of a positive attitude to life at any age with the theme 'Positively Ageless'. I say: happy Seniors Week to all Broadwater seniors.

Last week I hosted a morning tea for many of my local seniors. Guest speakers came from a number of government agencies to inform attendees about valuable advice that can keep them safe in their homes, active in our community and informed about services provided. It was very well attended. It was an important opportunity for me to listen to the views of seniors living in my electorate and to talk with them about the active lives they lead.

I wish to congratulate Mrs Carol Faron, who on Tuesday was presented with a Premier's award for Queensland seniors. Carol was one of 15 winners of this award, which recognises seniors over 60 who have made a significant difference in their communities. Carol, aged 72, has been a volunteer on the Centacare Southern Star Community Services Advisory Committee for almost a decade, providing support to people with a disability and their families. I would like to say a big hearty congratulations to Carol.

I take this opportunity to also congratulate six couples living in the Broadwater electorate who are celebrating 60 years of marriage. I was very pleased to have been able to join Mr and Mrs Ray Saffer, Mr and Mrs Eric Hughes, Mr and Mrs Stan Fortune, Mr and Mrs John Watt and Mr and Mrs Uno Kivikink to share in the celebration of their 60 years of marriage. That is such a wonderful milestone in their lives. I would like to say congratulations to them. It was a pleasure joining with them for afternoon tea in my office to present them with certificates to commemorate this wonderful milestone.

Fly-in Fly-out Workers


 **Mr MALONE** (Mirani—LNP) (2.36 pm): It has been the position of the LNP that workers and their families should have choice in terms of living arrangements when they are working in the mines in Central Queensland. The federal government is now carrying out an impact study on the practice of fly-in fly-out. It is a bit late for the likes of the former member for Fitzroy to raise the issue when both his state and federal Labor mates have all along supported fly-in fly-out. This is about choice. It is not about dictating to workers, their families and their employers.

What do those on the other side have to say about mineworkers and contractors who, for example, have their family home in Brisbane, the Gold Coast or the Sunshine Coast, which is where their wives work, their children go to school and their friends and relatives live? Are we going to say to

those people, 'Your job is in Moranbah'—or Dysart, Middlemount et cetera—'and that is where you are going to live'? What is the sense in uprooting families and forcing them to live in centres where infrastructure is already under stress?

Alternatively, there are families who wish to remain together and they should be able to opt to live in the regions and the mining communities. Personally, I have never supported a 100 per cent fly-in fly-out situation for the mining communities. The LNP has never supported 100 per cent fly-in fly-out in the mining communities in Central Queensland. This is a very clear position that we will be taking to the next election. Those opposite do not seem to know what they want or, perhaps more correctly, are not prepared to say clearly what they want.


Cooktown and District Jobs and Training Expo

 **Mr O'BRIEN** (Cook—ALP) (2.37 pm): Last Wednesday, 17 August I had the great pleasure of joining with the mayor of the Cook Shire, Peter Scott, and the president of the Cooktown Chamber of Commerce, Mr Greg Whittaker, to officially open the Cooktown and District Jobs and Training Expo. It was the second year of the Cooktown and District Training and Jobs Expo and it was a great day of fun, interest and opportunity.

The expo was held at the new, fabulous Cooktown Community Events Centre. It provided job seekers of all ages and those looking for a different job or career with the opportunity to access a wide range of providers, advisers and information. The jobs and training expo linked local job seekers with local employers and provided information to students about training and employment opportunities in Cooktown, the surrounding district and across Queensland. It provided an opportunity for experimental learning at trade stalls and the opportunity to 'have a go at a trade'. It provided a forum for students and the unemployed to speak with people who have achieved their career goals, who could then explain their pathway to success and showcase student talent.

The expo was well supported by businesses and government departments, at federal, state and local level. The Cook Shire Council was there in force, as was the Department of Main Roads. Rio Tinto had a lot of interest from Indigenous people looking to work in its mine at Weipa. Small businesses such as the Cooktown bakery were represented. Government departments such as the Queensland police were there, as was the Australian Defence Force Recruitment Centre. It was a very well organised and successful expo. I thank Fran Maddern, the chairperson of the Cooktown and District Jobs and Training Expo Planning Committee, for putting together a great day that provided students and older people in Cooktown with access to the great opportunities that exist in that area.

Tablelands, Roads


 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—LNP) (2.39 pm): Yesterday I tabled on behalf of Tablelands residents a petition containing 4,085 signatures with regard to the deplorable condition of the Gillies Highway from Atherton to Lake Eacham. The petition calls for the minister to upgrade this major tourist route as a matter of priority to ensure the safety of all road users. The minister has said that work will commence on the stretch between Barron River and the Marks Lane turnoff by the end of 2011.

Residents are growing tired of this government making the same commitments year after year to fix long-term issues on the Tablelands but only providing bandaids solutions to major deficiencies in our road network. The Gillies Highway is a major highway for the Tablelands region. There are over 8,000 bike riders from the Far North Queensland region who ride this road frequently. The condition of the road poses a danger to all road users.

It is not only the Gillies Highway that is in urgent need of major work. The Tablelands produces half a billion dollars in gross revenue and yet we have some of the worst roads in Queensland. The appalling condition of major tourist and freight routes throughout the Tablelands network is affecting everybody from motorbike riders, tourism and transport operators to locals in the form of rising car repair costs.

The work that has commenced on the road into Atherton from Yungaburra is long overdue, but it is only the start of what should be an urgent priority. The Tablelands road network needs a major overhaul to support the growing population, to get agricultural produce to market, to improve tourism and to prepare for the upcoming wet season. I call on the minister to make the upgrade of the entire Tablelands section of the Gillies Highway an urgent priority for the safety and benefit of all road users.


Multiculturalism

 **Mr CHOI** (Capalaba—ALP) (2.41 pm): Queensland is an exciting multicultural state with a world renowned reputation for being a great place in which to live, study, work and raise a family. Today Queensland boasts a population of approximately 4.58 million, with one in six individuals being born overseas or as a result of their parents migrating to this great state. Whether they came by planes or by boats, these migrants have made huge contributions to the economic and social fabric of Queensland.

The Queensland government recognises that culture—shared traditions, values and ideas—is essential to identity for individuals and groups. We understand that cultural heritage is important and we know that cultural diversity is fundamental to, and beneficial for, our evolving Queensland identity and the lifestyle that we enjoy. That is why the Premier and the Minister for Multicultural Affairs recently launched a new Queensland multicultural policy, A Multicultural Future for All of Us.

This new policy forms the blueprint for the holistic approach to how we welcome and include migrants into our community. A Multicultural Future for All of Us promotes unity in our society and a sense of belonging for all Queenslanders regardless of our cultural, linguistic, religious or ethnic backgrounds. The policy celebrates the traditions and values of all Queenslanders and advances our state's social, economic and civic identity. The new policy focuses on six key policy areas of legislation; language and communication; service delivery; skills and employment; regional and developing communities; and community inclusion. This new policy, coupled with the proposed introduction of the multicultural recognition bill, will cement the importance of multiculturalism to the state and secure it for our future. I urge all members to obtain a copy of this policy and to promote it within their communities.


Justices of the Peace

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (2.43 pm): I want to say thank you to the JPs in our communities and across the state. Today I want to raise the issue of training and accreditation that is provided to justices of the peace and commissioners for declarations in Queensland. Previously, community justice advocacy groups such as the Queensland Justices Association—QJA—had the opportunity of providing training courses for JPs and commissioners for declarations applicants in conjunction with the training course provided by the justices of the peace branch of the department. The QJA is a registered training organisation and therefore is qualified to facilitate training accreditation courses.

The Bligh Labor government is centralising the training of JPs and has taken away the ability of community justice groups to offer training services to ensure that our JPs and commissioners for declarations have the option of choice of training and accreditation. These groups are being absolutely taken for granted by a government that is more interested in bureaucracy and revenue raising than in ensuring that optimum best practice is undertaken by our JPs and commissioners for declarations through the provision of a range of training course options. The New South Wales justices of the peace have had to ensure the same level of Labor Party bureaucracy that is more focused on processes than outcomes. The O'Farrell Liberal government now has the task of unscrambling the egg.

The QJA has been in existence since 1918 and currently represents 5,680 members across 29 branches and contact groups in Queensland. It is also the only RTO in Queensland that has been delivering JP training as TAFE ceased offering that course in 2008. Why is the Bligh government more interested in revenue raising and centralising control of training than in providing training options for Queenslanders who want to be a JP or commissioner for declarations? These positions are voluntary positions and the government is driving up the costs for those wishing to assist the justice system in Queensland. It is another shameful example of a government that stands for broken promises, budget blow-outs and poor governance, and our JPs deserve better in their communities.

Townsville Electorate, Wastewater Treatment Plant

 **Ms JOHNSTONE** (Townsville—ALP) (2.45 pm): I would like to update the House on tremendous progress which is being made on a major project in the Townsville electorate. The new wastewater treatment plant at the Mount St John site in Townsville is one of the largest infrastructure projects of its kind ever undertaken in the region. It is a \$189 million overhaul which will help the city meet its long-term future needs.


Townsville is a growing city and it is a city that has a major role to play in Queensland's future. The next 20 years will see literally tens of thousands of people head north, settle down and call Townsville home. That is why projects like the wastewater treatment plant are so important. Funded by all three levels of government, this state-of-the-art facility meets tough environmental requirements and puts in place the basic building blocks for the future growth of Townsville.

While knowing that this investment for our future is progressing smoothly and is due to finish on time is great news, I was very pleased to hear recently of the immediate impact that its construction is having on our Townsville economy. I have been informed that over 80 per cent of all subcontractors and supplies utilised on the job site have, in fact, been sourced from the Townsville area. Since the project began over two years ago, as many as 2,300 workers have walked onto the site, with hundreds of locals on the ground carrying out work on the project during the peak period of construction. This equates to scores of happy households and families with food on the table directly benefiting as a result of this valuable investment. It means putting local building suppliers and small businesses in the Townsville area ahead and reaping the benefits financially. It means that economic rewards remain for the north for Townsville to claim, instead of disappearing along with contractors who have been flown in from somewhere else.

I would like to congratulate Baulderstone on its tremendous efforts in sourcing locals to build local infrastructure which will benefit their families for decades to come. I would also like to highlight that this project recently clocked up one million hours free of lost-time injury. This is proof of that company's commitment to safety on the job. I congratulate everyone.

(Time expired)

Sunshine Coast, Public Transport

 **Mr DICKSON** (Buderim—LNP) (2.47 pm): Congratulations are in order today. Firstly, I want to congratulate Mr James Birrell. James is a registered landscape architect and the director of Conlon Birrell Landscape Architects on the Sunshine Coast. James has a vision. His vision is for an elevated light-rail system on the Sunshine Coast. James is supported by his father, Jim. I also congratulate Jim for his involvement.

Their vision is now a step closer to becoming reality. Last week James gave a presentation to the Sippy Downs and District Community Association meeting. In that presentation he presented a very detailed plan. Congratulations must also go to the Sunshine Coast council, which yesterday agreed to form the Sunshine Coast Light Rail Task Force to develop infrastructure plans for a project which will cost about \$2 billion. The light-rail train would run from Caloundra South north to the airport with the potential of being expanded into Noosa and across to Sippy Downs.


All LNP members on the Sunshine Coast are united in supporting the concept of a light-rail system. The commuters on the Sunshine Coast need and deserve surety when it comes to public transport. For too long this Labor state government has treated the people of the Sunshine Coast like second-class citizens. The CAMCOS light-rail promise by Labor is a standing joke on the Sunshine Coast. Why would it not be because it is not due to be delivered until 2031? In fact, the people on the Sunshine Coast call it the 'ghost train' because they do not think they are ever going to see it.

I would like to congratulate all those who have been a part of this proposition to date. I do congratulate the Sunshine Coast council. This is a project they have managed to get off the ground without the assistance of the state government.

It is about time this government had a vision for the future to deliver public transport. They cannot even run a bus service. The bus service on the Sunshine Coast did not run for days at a time. Do honourable members know what this government did about it? Absolutely nothing! It did not step in. It sucked up to the union and it would not help the people get from A to B. That is what Labor governments give us every day of the week. Nothing!

(Time expired)

Electric Vehicle Charging Station


 **Mr RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (2.49 pm): In 2007 the average car accounted for almost half of all transport related greenhouse gas emissions in Queensland, which is equivalent to more than nine million tonnes of carbon dioxide. As we move to a low-carbon world and future, electric vehicles will not only become more popular because they provide a more cleaner, greener alternative to the average petrol car but also be essential to our low-carbon world and low-carbon future.

I was very pleased this month to join the member for Buderim and the Minister for Environment at the official opening of Queensland's first public electric vehicle charging station. This new public electric vehicle charging station provides a sneak peak at the new cleaner, greener era in Queensland motoring—and it is just around the corner. The charge-point facility at Village Green on Mons is a public electric vehicle charging facility. It provides the necessary infrastructure for the electric vehicle future, which is, as I said, just around the corner. As the Minister for Environment said at the official opening, electric vehicles offer consumers a zero-emission transport option when we recharge with 100 per cent renewable energy, and of course we want Queensland to really embrace the benefits of electric vehicles.

Members of this House will be very pleased to know that I was the star of the show to some extent at the official opening because, as part of the official opening, someone needed to drive an electric vehicle. So I drove the electric vehicle from Caboolture to the Sunshine Coast, and I can tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that not only was it exciting—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Unfortunately the member's time has expired.

Australian Party

 **Mr McLINDON** (Beaudesert—TQP) (2.51 pm): I stand here today as a proud member of Katter's Australian Party. Is the next state election going to be an exciting time? Absolutely it will be. The straw that broke the camel's back was when there were 1,000 farmers at Oakey and not one member of the LNP—all of those former Nats sitting on their hands! On 24 November last year a moratorium on coal

seam gas was voted on in this parliament and every single one of the LNP members voted with the ALP. There is very, very little difference and that is why it is going to be the Australian Party that will be the credible option at the state election coming up.

Let us take assets sales as an example. We already have the Gladstone port on the radar, and the power stations are already earmarked post election for another assets flog-off. We will be a point of difference at the next state election and the people of Queensland will not be taken for granted. We will make sure that with our candidates, as they roll out from next week onwards, there will be a credible option at the polls.


We have already released our payroll tax policy, increasing the payroll tax threshold from \$1 million to \$2 million. Queensland is in a two-speed economy and nothing is being done for those in the slow-speed economy. But we will do something. We will make sure that small business is the backbone of Queensland into the future. We will have rock-solid candidates from Beaudesert to Cook to Mount Isa to Cairns to Townsville to Rockhampton—and I am glad the current member for Rockhampton is leaving at the next election because we have a good man in Shane Guley lined up for that seat.

We have a great team coming out next week, and I can tell you now that this election will not be taken for granted. The LNP has no politician in the parliament who is their leader—no politician. They have no policies and they now do not even want preferences. This is not a lay-down misere. We will not take any of those votes for granted. I can tell you now that this next election is going to be extremely exciting because at last Queenslanders will have a credible option.

(Time expired)

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Order! I call the honourable member for Waterford for four minutes.

Logan, House Fire

 **Mr MOORHEAD** (Waterford—ALP) (2.53 pm): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Yesterday was the darkest day in the young history of the City of Logan. It was a dark day for the Samoan and Tongan communities who call Logan home. But, most of all, it was the darkest day for the Taufa and Lale families of Slacks Creek.

The loss that these families have suffered, in the loss of 11 precious lives, is impossible for anyone to comprehend. While the families are fortunate to have the strong ties of family and community wrapping around them, I do not think that even they yet understand the enormity of the tragedy that has occurred.

I want to share with the House my experience with Jeremiah, a man who only yesterday lost his wife and five children. Yesterday morning I sat on my haunches before Jerry expressing my condolences and offering my support. With the modesty and humility for which the Pacific Island communities are renowned, Jerry stood up and offered me his seat. Jerry is so unselfish, even in his time of greatest need. Jerry is a much stronger man than I. He held it together yesterday when I could not.

The Samoan and Tongan communities of Logan are very strong. These communities have strong leaders and strong family ties. This could not be clearer than at the vigil that has been established at the intersection of Wagensveldt Street and Veldt Street at Slacks Creek. The communities have come together as one family to stay while the tragic work of removing the deceased continues. At this time of grief, the best our community can do is support the strength that is there on show.

After parliament finished last night I returned to the site. The family were preparing for a night together at the site. When I arrived this morning, the family were stronger for a night shared, regardless of the cold and the rain. I want to thank Premier Anna Bligh, Police Minister Neil Roberts, member for Woodridge Desley Scott and Mayor Pam Parker for their support for our community yesterday. Your compassion and support for our community's pain is much needed support at this time.

The community and faith leaders have shown strong leadership. I would like to thank John Pale and Lemalu Tautalasoo from the Voice of Samoa; Reverend Gwen Bishop and Reverends Sione, Lu'u and Apartchan from the Uniting Church; as well as ministers from the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

I want to thank the Queensland Police Service, particularly Superintendent Noel Powers, Inspector Michael Dowdy and Senior Sergeant Mike Pearson. QPS officers have worked closely to ensure that the response and recovery has been conducted in accordance with the Samoan and Tongan cultures. Every request that I have made to QPS on behalf of the family has been accommodated to ensure that grieving can start while the investigation continues. The process of recovering loved ones continues as we speak, with three more bodies recovered this afternoon.

I would also like to pass on the appreciation for the firefighters of the QFRS and, in particular, their speedy response to emergency calls. Education Queensland and the Department of Communities, particularly housing services, have gone beyond the call of duty.


Our community organisations have also leapt to provide support, particularly Captain Sue McGuigan from the Salvation Army. I encourage anyone to ring the Salvos to contribute to the appeal fund established for the family. Thank you also to the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, of whom Jeremiah was a member. The AMWU are working with Jeremiah's employer in protecting his employment at this time of need.

Finally, I would like to thank the staff and volunteers of my electorate office who have spent yesterday helping me provide clothes for Jeremiah and his family and who are at the scene today while I am in parliament.

Logan is a proud community. We are a community that struggles but wins. In our community it is people that count. That is why we all share the grief of Logan's loss of 11 of our greatest treasures. Tonight the people of Logan will join together to say our own prayers and to say to the Lale and Taufa families that we love them and stand beside them in their darkest hour.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Congratulations on a heartfelt speech.

Coomera, Police Resources

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (2.57 pm): This Labor government is weak on organised crime and indeed on crime of any sort. One of the impediments to fighting crime is resources, or lack of resources. Take the Coomera police district, for example. Here we have a police district with one police officer for every 1,150 or so residents, compared to the state average of around one police officer for every 350 residents.

If you were a crime figure, where would you be likely to 'hide'? Would you hide in an area that has an abundance of police? Or would you hide where the police are overworked and underresourced? Welcome to the Coomera police district. On the numbers, the workload for officers in the Coomera police district is around three times the average in the state. I believe that our officers are the best of the best, but they can only do so much.


The start of the solution is something that I have been calling for for quite some time—a tactical crime squad. A full tactical crime squad comprises 14 officers. A tactical crime squad is relieved of the day-to-day duties that general duties police are required to undertake. They are out there, in the marketplace, being more proactive, piecing together the intelligence needed to attack organised crime organisations as well as making life uncomfortable for the petty criminals that prey on our community. These criminals prey on the Coomera police district community in particular because they know we are light on police numbers.

The police minister has announced the formation of a tactical crime squad for the Coomera police district, and for that we are grateful. But why go halfway? Why allocate seven officers when it is clear, with the spike in crime on the northern Gold Coast, that we need a full squad now?

We have the resources—the minister said as much on Tuesday. He said that a number of the new intake have been allocated and then he said there are 14 officers still to be allocated. Minister, I can tell you where we need at least seven of those officers to be allocated. We all know that the Coomera police district is the most underresourced police district in Queensland. Indeed, it would seem that the Coomera police district has something like 20 per cent of the workload and only 10 to 15 per cent of the resources. If we want to fight crime, then let us have the resources allocated to get the maximum bang for our buck. Let us allocate a full 14-officer tactical crime squad to the Coomera police district now.

(Time expired)

Harness Racing


 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (3.00 pm): I rise to highlight to the House once again the vindictive and autocratic decision making of Bob Bentley and Racing Queensland over the harness-racing industry in Queensland. Last Sunday, in a deliberate move to stymie betting turnover on the stand-alone harness-racing meeting at Parklands on the Gold Coast, Racing Queensland transferred the institutional Sunday thoroughbred gallops meeting at the Sunshine Coast to Saturday night, racing in direct conflict with Toowoomba Gallops night racing, which is now also an institution. This Machiavellian scheming by Bentley's crew also damaged the Toowoomba Turf Club's thoroughbred meeting turnover, which suited his warped, squaring-up mentality over Toowoomba Turf Club's failure to jump on board the Racing Queensland bandwagon of racetrack takeovers. All credit to chairman Bob Frappell and his board for hanging tough against the Racing Queensland steamroller.

Patrons at the Parklands harness meeting were denied the opportunity to bet on a Queensland Gallops meeting, which thwarts the fiscal ideal of cross-code betting and cost both racing codes much valued betting turnover. As Bentley himself insists, all avenues to maximise tote betting, which is the industry lifeblood, must be taken. This begs the question: why would Bentley take away a golden opportunity for Sunday gallops betting on the Sunshine Coast from the Parklands tote? The answer is simple: spite.

Unfortunately, that sad mentality is the hallmark of the dysfunctional decision making of the Racing Queensland control body. Bullying and intimidation are synonymous with Queensland's racing control body. If any harness-racing participants and supporters need to be reminded about their options at the next election, they have two choices. If they vote Labor, they get another long-term dose of Bentley medicine. If they vote for the 'Can Do Campbell' LNP team, they get a political party that will support and promote their industry and give harness racing the respect it deserves. There are thousands of harness-racing enthusiasts across Queensland who deserve support from their government rather than neglect as is currently the case.

(Time expired)

Southport Electorate, Green Army

 **Mr LAWLOR** (Southport—ALP) (3.02 pm): Ten Gold Coast job seekers have started earning and learning in a work environment that most would envy. Nine men and one woman are working on Wave Break Island, Doug Jennings Park and Federation Walk at The Spit as part of the Queensland government funded Green Army project. Under the government's Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative, funding of \$190,000 has been provided to the Department of Transport and Main Roads to coordinate the Green Army project in partnership with the Gold Coast City Council. The project is giving 10 local long-term unemployed people 20 weeks of paid work as well as providing training and other job related assistance to help put them in a better position to secure ongoing employment once the project is finished.


Projects of this magnitude do not occur overnight. In fact, a small campaign began in 1982 to change the status of this area from park so as to preserve it specifically as an environmental park, given the unique nature of The Spit area. The Federation Walk Coastal Reserve continues to be rehabilitated and revegetated by Lyn Wright's organisation, the Friends of Federation Walk, as well as the Main Beach Progress Association and other groups.

This Green Army project will complement the great work being done for Federation Walk. The Green Army recruits will be involved in planting, weed management, repairing and restoring tracks, rubbish removal, selected clearing to provide access and reduce fire hazards, landscaping and basic construction work. All participants will be able to benefit from the regular paid work that provides them with income, new skills, new contacts, a recent work history and the opportunity to show potential future employers what they are capable of.

I thank the Gold Coast City Council for the significant role they have played in this project to help participants move on to sustainable employment or further training. I visited the site last week and met the participants. I congratulate the Green Army, the Gold Coast City Council and the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation for working together on this essential project. Queensland's Green Army commenced on 1 July 2009 and the government has committed \$57 million over three years to create 3,000 jobs.

(Time expired)

Schmierer, Mrs M

 **Mr SORENSEN** (Hervey Bay—LNP) (3.04 pm): I am sure that all members of the House would know Mrs Miriam Schmierer of Hervey Bay who turned 112 years of age last Saturday. Mrs Schmierer is the oldest person in Australia. Her life spans across three centuries. Mrs Schmierer has broken some records with her astounding age.


For her 112th birthday this year, I would like to reflect on her written address to this parliament last year. Last year Mrs Schmierer reminded us all that the world is not ours but loaned to us by our creator and that his eyes are upon us. It is little wonder that Mrs Schmierer is loved and respected by all. I feel very privileged to know this wonderful lady and I have listened to her message of wisdom from her very kind heart and mind. Mrs Schmierer will always let you know that her faith, her spiritual life with God and her family are the most wonderful things in her life.

Born in 1899 on a dairy farm at Mount Whitestone in my esteemed colleague Ian Rickuss's electorate and thus having lived in three centuries, Mrs Schmierer has seen lots in her life. Miriam has seen 24 Premiers of Queensland, 38 Queensland Governors and 10 Popes, and her life has spanned every Prime Minister of Australia, since Edmund Barton in 1901. On her birthday on 20 August 1924, she married Grenville Schmierer, whom she met at Woodmillar. Grenville was a cream carrier who later became a dairy farmer, and the farm is still in the family in Gayndah. Grenville and Miriam had two sons, Austin and Merv. Her husband and her two sons have predeceased her.

I would like the House to acknowledge with me the amazing lady who is Mrs Schmierer. May God continue to bless her and keep her safe. Let us wish her a happy birthday.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Cairns Indigenous Art Fair


 **Hon. D BOYLE** (Cairns—ALP) (3.06 pm): Last week, residents of Cairns as well as visitors to Cairns enjoyed four days of the third annual Cairns Indigenous Art Fair. This was originally a project that came out of the Indigenous arts program. It was led by and championed by Premier Anna Bligh and, three years on, what an explosion of art was present for us to enjoy.

This year was a big step up in terms of the professionalism. That is what the thousands of visitors said after they viewed the fair. The art fair was based around the new cruise liner terminal facility, which is of course on the waterfront in Cairns. It is a spectacular venue and it is spectacular inside.

It was a big step up in terms of the professionalism of the Indigenous artists who came from communities right around Queensland, including the Torres Strait. It was also a step up in terms of their paintings and the diverse forms of art, including pottery, sculpture and this year the performing arts. Probably the stars of the performing arts were the Mornington Island dancers with a kind of dance ballet of contemporary style. We were all blown away by their talent and their confidence and the spectacular living these people are able to enjoy for themselves and for their families.

There were many people who made this a success and they need to be thanked. I want to mention two in particular: Avril Quail, who was the artistic director and the first Indigenous artistic director of a Cairns Indigenous Art Fair; and Mr John Stafford, who is the director of visual arts, craft and design at Arts Queensland. Over many years, he has been a supporter of regional arts, not least the Indigenous arts. I thank them. I thank all involved because this benefited the tourism industry around Cairns and, most importantly, the employment prospects of Indigenous artists.

Queensland Transport, Licensing System


 **Dr DOUGLAS** (Gaven—LNP) (3.08 pm): An epidemic of administrative failure within the Queensland Transport licensing system has plagued more than 200 law-abiding drivers on the Gold Coast. Recently, a young constituent approached me terribly distressed after finally completing all of her provisional licensing requirements without ever receiving an infringement only to be told that she was not eligible to upgrade to her open licence. Queensland Transport told her that, although they had recorded on the system that she had completed all the requirements, an online technical error was preventing her from upgrading. My constituent complained to the customer service officer. However, she was told that there were up to 200 other provisionally licensed drivers who were in the same situation and there was nothing that could be done to assist her. She was told she would need to wait another two years before she would be able to progress to her open licence.

If this example is not bad enough, another resident told me of their nightmare experience with Queensland Transport after attempting to renew their licence. They were issued with a certified paper in place of their licence as the Queensland Transport licence card system was not working that day. They were told they would need to come back to their office when the new card was ready.

Upon finally receiving their licence, they were wrongly demoted back to a learner's licence. The driver attempted to rectify the situation. However, the officer told the driver that there was nothing that could be done and that she was not legally allowed to drive on her own and that she would have to resit her learner driving test and pay the incurred costs. What a joke! So after obtaining her full licence, she needed to resit her driving test. I would like to see the transport minister's licence demoted and for her to be told to resit her driving test all due to a technical error. I call on the minister to immediately investigate this massive technical error within Queensland Transport so young drivers are encouraged and rewarded for good driving and not penalised. The message that we should send to learner drivers who do their 120 hours—learner's licence, time restricted provisions, driving lessons, driver testing, red P-plates, green P-plates—and pay all of the costs is that we welcome them on our roads. We want safe roads, safe drivers and no tragedies.

(Time expired)

Moreton Bay Marine Park, Artificial Reefs

 **Mrs SULLIVAN** (Pumicestone—ALP) (3.10 pm): I rise to report to the House that the Queensland government has completed its 2009 election commitment to install six new artificial reefs within Moreton Bay Marine Park, providing enhanced recreational fishing opportunities. These artificial reefs include Wild Banks east of Bribie Island, North Moreton north of Moreton Island, Harry Atkinson Reef in central Moreton Bay, West Peel Island in southern Moreton Bay, East Coochiemudlo Island in southern Moreton Bay and South Stradbroke Island east of South Stradbroke Island. Massive structures were last weekend lowered into the three remaining sites—Wild Banks, North Moreton and South Stradbroke Island—comprised of a number of 17-tonne fish cubes designed and built specifically to create a reef that would attract reef fish species and pelagic fish such as mackerel and wahoo, which are popular amongst game fishers. These offshore reefs incorporate best-practice modern designs and


have been manufactured in Queensland by local companies. Costing \$2 million and coming in on budget, the reefs will provide alternative fishing opportunities for park users following the expansion of marine national park green zones in March 2009 where all forms of fishing are prohibited.

The reefs have been designed and located to maximise their benefits to a range of fishing techniques, including spear fishing, bottom fishing for reef species and game fishing for pelagic species which swim through the water column. Moreton Bay is renowned as one of Queensland's most popular fishing spots and these new reefs will enhance that reputation as a fishing paradise for recreational fishers.

I was accompanied last weekend to the North Moreton artificial reef site by members of the Bribie Island Volunteer Marine Rescue or VMR, Maurie Doyle and Peter Anderson; Mr Justin Foster, this year's youth member for Pumicestone; and Mr Kelvin Challenor, president of the Toorbul Fishing Club, to witness the laying of 25 fish boxes. Unfortunately and very disappointingly, the weather was too rough and the boxes could not be lowered into position then. They were, however, able to be lowered the next day when weather permitted. I want to express my thanks to Gold Coast Queensland Parks and Wildlife staff Mr Adam Coleman and Ms Katya Thompson, who picked us up from the Bongaree jetty. They appreciated the local knowledge of the area from the VMR members which allowed us to get to the drop site by the quickest and safest route.

(Time expired)


Sunshine Coast, Public Transport

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (3.12 pm): The Bligh government has given Queensland a dam without a pipeline and then a pipeline without a real dam and, in the latest silliness, a bus transport system without buses. It is completely grotesque to hear the transport minister and Premier in the parliament this week boast about their record on public transport and yet remain silent about a disgraceful failure to provide buses to the whole of the Sunshine Coast region throughout a long-running dispute for the best part of two weeks. We saw a situation where a region of 350,000 people for one week had no bus services and for another week had only partial services, and this has caused a great deal of distress. But where was the Premier and where was the minister? They were absent. They were silent, certainly in this place, and they let down some of the most vulnerable people who depend on public transport. I have heard stories of people who lost their jobs when they complained that bus services were not there or unreliable because of this long-running dispute. Others had their medical appointments cancelled.

Where was the minister who was responsible? Completely absent! We heard the minister and the Premier this week boasting about public transport, but they were silent about this long-running dispute, which has also caused a deal of difficulty for the bus drivers involved. Public transport is an essential service. The minister and this government are responsible. They cannot just step in front of the cameras when it suits them and then avoid their responsibility with regard to such a basic issue. I realise that most members in this place have cars and can drive themselves, but to have a whole region of 350,000 people without buses for the best part of two weeks—certainly completely no bus services for one week—is unacceptable. The pensioners and those who rely on these services have called on this government to act rather than wash its hands the way it has done.

(Time expired)


Vietnam Veterans Service, Mabel Park State High School; Logan, House Fire

 **Mrs SCOTT** (Woodridge—ALP) (3.14 pm): Since 1998 our Logan and Albert subbranch of the Vietnam Veterans Association has had a close association with Mabel Park high, coming together to lay wreaths and remember the battle of Long Tan and those who lost their lives throughout those long years of the Vietnam War. The motorcycle chapter come with their magnificent machines, proudly wearing their badges, to share with other members of our community from our Logan and Greenbank subbranches of the RSL, our Legacy ladies and other men and women who served during that time. The ceremony last Tuesday had special significance with the knowledge that on Thursday Delta Company of the 6th Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment was to receive its unit citation for gallantry from the Governor-General after 45 long years. Other medals of great significance would also be awarded to individuals.

The Mabel Park school leaders take an active speaking role in that ceremony, as well as raising the flags and also blending their voices in singing the national anthems of both Australia and New Zealand. Our Mabel Park singers are Pacific Islanders and the harmonies of their beautiful voices add dignity to the ceremony. Today our Mabel Park high and our primary school across the road are cloaked in deep sorrow and are struggling to come to terms with the loss of a number of their students in the tragic fire which has utterly devastated our entire community. The ceremony last week at the school was one of very great significance. We gathered to finally acknowledge after 45 long years the rectification of


one of our nation's greatest military injustices. We honour all those who served in Vietnam, our longest running war, and we ask all to keep our students and staff as well as our Mabel Park families in their thoughts and prayers along with all those who have been affected by our tragedy.

Fraser Coast, Sand Erosion

 **Mr FOLEY** (Maryborough—Ind) (3.16 pm): I rise to bring to the House's attention the need for the Fraser Coast council to undertake sand pushes to stabilise the beaches along the Fraser Coast. The sand push trials recently at Urangan and Torquay were commenced in March 2011 to ascertain the success of June replenishment utilising mid-upper beach sand. The results over the short term have demonstrated a benefit derived from the utility of the profile, general amenity, reduced escarpment and protection for vulnerable vegetation. The trial sand pushes were carried out by a posi-track bobcat in a short time, demonstrating that it has a low impact on both the environment of the beach and the utility of the beach, and low-tide sand pushes are an excellent way of restoring what is washed away, often by tide, and protecting the homes along those foreshores and parks.

The Fraser Coast has approximately 112 kilometres of coastline accommodating communities from Burrum to the north to Tinnanbar to the south. Every coastal community is being affected by erosion. These communities have very strong and valid concerns for their shoreline and the effect that coastal erosion is having. I have quite a few constituents, especially in places like Toogoom, who are very worried about the disappearing sand dune affecting their housing. I would urge the state government to do anything that it possibly can to facilitate—whether it needs a carve-out in legislation or whatever—those coastal communities being able to do a low-tide sand push, which is very non-invasive, and also to consider the need for the Burrum Heads boat ramp as a matter of urgency.

Redcliffe City Art Gallery


 **Ms van LITSENBURG** (Redcliffe—ALP) (3.18 pm): It was a tribute to the vision, creativity and management skills of current curator Karen Tyler and predecessor Tim Lynch that the Redcliffe art gallery was one of three regional galleries that were funded through the Regional Galleries Partnership Program, which is funded by the Queensland government through Arts Queensland and the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, which is an initiative of the state, territory and Australian governments. The \$30,000 funding will develop an exhibition that will show in the Redcliffe gallery next year and then tour the state. This exhibition will be a confluence of Chinese and Australian culture, melding the ancient Chinese culture with the young, dynamic Australian culture and coming up with something exciting and unique. Artists Joe Furlonger, Jun Chen and Pamela See, who have all worked in China, have been commissioned to create this exhibition. The funding for this exhibition gives these artists certainty as they develop their work for the show.

It values artists by creating a career path for them, because it gives artists another avenue through which to be funded and to gain a profile and renown for their work. As a multicultural community, Redcliffe and Queensland need to reflect multiculturalism in our art and our exhibitions. The Chinese culture has been a part of Queensland from its inception and it is appropriate that Chinese culture is showcased.

This exhibition will also raise Redcliffe City Art Gallery's profile across the state and we hope to attract artists to our creative hub and families to visit our fabulous city for holidays. This funding for arts demonstrates the Bligh government's commitment to achieving our Toward Q2 goal of creating a strong and vibrant community, which feeds into a strong, growing economy through the promotion of the arts. This Labor government is rolling out small treasures such as this funding for our regional art galleries in a huge number of spheres, ensuring that our Redcliffe and our state economy—

(Time expired)

Cairns Airport

 **Mrs STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (3.20 pm): At a recent meeting with Cairns tourism stakeholders the dilemma facing the general aviation industry based at the airport was raised by members of the Australasian Aviation Group who are concerned about the potential loss of hundreds of jobs. They said that Deputy Premier Paul Lucas had seen firsthand the effects of the two-speed economy. The tourism, building and retail industries are all struggling whilst out at the airport general aviation is thriving. But there are genuine fears that that may change. Labor sold the Cairns Airport to private enterprise two years ago and the new owners have developed the draft land use plan and put it out for comment late last year—a plan due to be submitted to the Deputy Premier for his approval. If given the go-ahead, this plan would allow the bulldozing of all general aviation businesses, the Royal Flying Doctor Service, the Bureau of Meteorology, the aviation fuel depot and the Fire and Rescue Service station, replacing them with retail and office blocks.

Stakeholders wonder why a general aviation industry that is working in harmony with the regional economy is being stifled. Why are the owners of Cairns Airport considering building another shopping centre in an already glutted Cairns and why is a successful general aviation industry, which is helping to


keep the Cairns economy afloat, being interfered with in this way? Where is the airport transition plan for aviation businesses? Who will pay for the relocation of aviation businesses and the new buildings that they require? What will the new lease costs be? What will the impact be on the greater Cairns economy?

In September during the debate to privatise the Cairns Airport the member for Cairns said—

There is good control written into this legislation to ensure that we do not have a Harvey Norman or a Bunnings on the airport site and that that land is not misused for other commercial purposes.

The Cairns Australasian Aviation Group asks the Deputy Premier to honour the pledge made by his colleague Desley Boyle that there will not be retail or office development on the western side of Cairns Airport to displace the present general aviation industry. I add my request to the Deputy Premier.

Vietnam Veterans Day


 **Mr WATT** (Everton—ALP) (3.22 pm): Last week it was my privilege, together with my colleagues the member for Ashgrove and the member for Ferny Grove, to participate in a ceremony at the Gaythorne RSL to recognise Vietnam Veterans Day. The ceremony was an opportunity to honour the contribution of all those who served and suffered in the Vietnam conflict. The fact that we recognise Vietnam Veterans Day is a relatively recent development, perhaps reflecting the ambivalent feeling that many Australians have had towards that complex war. But now, on 18 August each year we commemorate those who served on a date that coincides with the Battle of Long Tan in Vietnam, where we lost 18 brave young Australian men. The Vietnam War was long. The 10 years of Australian involvement was one of the longest of modern conflicts. Fifty thousand Australians served in Vietnam, 520 were killed in action and almost 2,400 were wounded. Of course, those losses were outnumbered by losses from other combatant countries, not to mention among the Vietnamese people themselves, but the sacrifice of Australian soldiers there is well worth recognising.

The Gaythorne RSL ceremony was attended by a couple of hundred people and was addressed by the president of the RSL, Merv Brown. I would like to quote from Merv's speech. Reflecting on his own service in Vietnam, Merv said—

In the heat, danger and physically punishing environment of Vietnam all the glitz of civilian life was gone; fast cars, the footy and making a dollar were no longer of great importance. What was of real importance was the need for absolute trust in one another at all times, mateship, teamwork, leadership and a strong sense of doing the right thing by one's platoon, ship or aircraft crew.

In speaking on behalf of all Vietnam veterans, Merv noted that, even though the war has been over for more than 30 years, regrettably there are still many veterans who need assistance because of their war experiences. I want to thank the Vietnam Veterans Association, the RSL and the many other organisations who assist our veterans with their difficulties and I honour those who have given so much in the service of our nation.

Public Transport, Fares

 **Mr EMERSON** (Indooroopilly—LNP) (3.24 pm): As a regular user of public transport I am often asked by other commuters why the state Labor government keeps putting up fares. Why did fares go up 20 per cent last year and a further 15 per cent this year? Many commuters do not realise that the government has already announced further 15 per cent increases every year for the next three years. That will see fares double in cost in just five years under Labor.


But why are the fares doubling? It is all part of Labor's plan to get commuters to pay for Labor's financial mismanagement and the \$85 million debt that it has racked up. It is all part of Labor's plan to get commuters to pay for the \$100 million a week in interest payments on that debt. That is why we have already seen two fare rises and there are three more fare rises to come.

Of course, Labor MPs do not like to tell their constituents about the three more fare rises that Labor is planning. That is to be expected. But what was extraordinary this week was that the transport minister's own director-general also appears to have been kept in the dark over Labor's plan to wind back subsidies and make passengers pay more. During the hearings this week of the transport committee the director-general was asked about the cut in subsidies and getting passengers to pay more. He told the committee, 'I am not aware of that.' So the director-general has been left in the dark and Labor MPs want to keep commuters in the dark about the three more fare rises.

As the state government's own TransLink Tracker has confirmed, commuters believe that public transport is becoming less affordable. The growth in passenger numbers on buses has already fallen in the face of the most recent fare increases. Three more fare rises, which are caused by Labor's financial bungling and waste, will have a further impact on commuters. Is it any wonder commuters have been kept in the dark?

(Time expired)


Bulimba Electorate, Public Transport

 **Ms FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (3.26 pm): Providing good public transport and beating traffic congestion are big priorities for the Bligh Labor government and they are big priorities for me. Already for the Bulimba electorate travel times have been slashed because of Bligh Labor government initiatives—12 minutes each way off peak-hour commuting time on the Gateway Bridge route and through the Eastern Busway eight minutes each way in peak times. With the imminent introduction of almost 74,000 new weekly bus seats in the Bulimba electorate and new, quicker routes there will be relief from crowded buses and over 65,000 cars will be taken off the road per week, reducing travel times even further. The new services will coincide with the opening this weekend of the \$466 million Eastern Busway extension and are significant additions to our world-class busway, which moves more than 60 million people each year.

This sort of investment in public transport is evidence of our real commitment in this important area. It is a stark contrast to Campbell Newman's record which, quite frankly, is scary. For a city such as Brisbane, which has a population that is increasing steadily and a corresponding increasing reliance on public transport and more cars on the road, it is a battle to address traffic congestion. We are talking about the Campbell Newman who stripped \$38 million from the council's public transport budget in the last two years.

What about traffic congestion? I have been bemused to see that the LNP candidates across Brisbane are all sending out the same template brochure talking about beating traffic congestion. I will tell members what a joke that is for my area. We have done the hard yards with the Eastern Busway and the Gateway Bridge and we are getting results. But what is the other major traffic congestion area for us and who is responsible for it? It is Wynnum Road and the LNP council is responsible for that. What has the LNP done to address this issue? Nothing. In fact, in 2008 Campbell Newman announced that he would fix it but, quick as a flash, nothing happened. I understand that it now will not happen until at least 2016. I want to make sure that my community does not ever have to suffer under this lack of sincerity. We need a government that not only talks but also delivers on the big issues, and that is the Bligh Labor government.

Mackay TAFE, Asbestos

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (3.28 pm): The growing asbestos crisis at Mackay TAFE today takes yet another dramatic turn in what is the ongoing saga of the Bligh Labor government's continual denial of the dangerous asbestos issues at Mackay. Asbestos issues in block A have been trivialised by the Minister for Government Services, Building Industry and Information and Communication Technology on numerous occasions here in this House. I have already referred the minister to the Speaker for misleading parliament. Today I table a series of shocking photographs and an independent laboratory test revealing that nine out of 10 downpipes in block C at the Mackay TAFE site tested are contaminated with deadly asbestos fibres.

Tabled paper: Nine photographs of pipes [\[5151\]](#).


Tabled paper: Queensland Laboratory certificate of analysis, dated 12 May 2010, regarding results of asbestos testing of downpipes at Mackay TAFE [\[5152\]](#).

This new, damning evidence is further proof of a Bligh government cover-up, making a mockery out of building industry minister Simon Finn's personal guarantee of safety to students and staff. Even blind Freddy can see that these ageing cement pipes are a major public health risk. Independent test results conclusively prove it 100 per cent. But Mr Finn is still out there maintaining that there is no safety risk to people on the TAFE site.

The most disturbing aspect of all of this is that these downpipes are not even included in the latest Mackay TAFE asbestos removal tender, which closed on 13 July, and there are no plans to replace them. Clearly, these cracked and contaminated downpipes should be replaced as a matter of urgency, and so should the minister. Minister Finn has had ample opportunities to rectify the situation and come clean, but he continues to cover up despite the mounting damning evidence to the contrary, preferring to play cynical political games at the expense of our students and staff. The minister has demonstrated an appalling lack of judgement and was guilty of breathtaking pomposity and arrogance throughout the deepening scandal. Enough is enough! He has to go.

As a registered nurse I have seen firsthand the horrors of asbestos related diseases and I will fight to my dying breath to make sure that Queensland students are protected from exposure to deadly asbestos fibres and are not exposed to dishonest and self-serving Bligh government ministers who are more concerned with saving their own political skins than with the welfare of our students.

Wild Guide to Moreton Bay


 **Hon. JC SPENCE** (Sunnybank—ALP) (3.30 pm): I was very privileged this week to join the Queensland Museum in launching the new edition of the *Wild Guide to Moreton Bay*. The first edition of the wild guide sold out in 2007, so one can imagine that many people will be interested in this latest

edition that features more than 1,700 updated species and plants. It is in a very easy-to-read, two-volume format. I would say it is one of the most important publications to come out of the Queensland Museum this year. The book includes identification guides to coastal marine plants, insects, birds, reptiles, mammals and marine fish as well as a dazzling array of marine invertebrates, small organisms and animals that often go unnoticed.

Since 2005 the scientists of the Queensland Museum have identified a remarkable total of 53 new species in Moreton Bay, showing just how much more we have to discover about our marine world. There are a number of scientists who worked on this publication. They were led by Jeff Johnson, Peter Davie and Dr John Healy. There were a number of other scientists involved in this wonderful publication and I thank them. I think scientists are probably underpaid and undervalued in our society. The work they are doing on our behalf is tremendously important.

This book is an identification guide that will serve fishermen and anyone who loves Moreton Bay very well in the future. I would like to acknowledge Ian Banks, a diver from the Gold Coast, who has contributed hundreds of his own personal photos to the Queensland Museum to be used in this publication. It shows that we are relying on not just the paid staff of the Museum but also unpaid volunteers who are working very hard every day to contribute to our knowledge of the great diversity of this resource on our doorstep. I commend this publication to all members.

Agriculture Industry, Pesticides


 **Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (3.32 pm): I rise today to call on the Bligh government to step up its efforts to challenge the recent proposal by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority to ban the use of the agricultural herbicide diuron. The APVMA has raised concerns about the use of diuron, which it claims presents a risk to aquatic ecosystems. Since the APVMA's sudden and unexpected announcement some belated consultation has occurred with rural industries, but there is still enormous uncertainty facing the agricultural sector.

Both the Minister for Agriculture and the Minister for Environment need to take this issue seriously. The Minister for Agriculture needs to acknowledge that if growers lose this herbicide from their farming toolbox—there is currently no equivalent replacement product—there will be significant economic losses in the form of lost productivity and higher costs of alternative weed control methods because diuron is an effective product for the purposes of pest weed control, and the Minister for Agriculture should know that.

The Minister for Environment should be challenging the decision of the APVMA because the banning of diuron will actually have a perverse environmental outcome. The Minister for Environment needs to understand that the withdrawal of diuron will force farmers to control pest weeds with alternative products and farming practices. The fact is that alternative products will not be as effective as diuron in managing broadleaf weeds and vines in cropping areas and may have to be applied more frequently to achieve effective control. Farmers may also be forced to use more mechanical control methods of cultivating soil more often than is currently necessary in an effort to control pest weeds, increasing the potential for any dissolved sediments or nutrients or chemical residues to run off into the aquatic ecosystems that the APVMA is supposedly concerned about. The voluntary efforts of farmers to reduce the amount of agricultural chemicals such as diuron being used have once again been ignored by a Labor government.

(Time expired)


Member for Hervey Bay

 **Hon. RE SCHWARTEN** (Rockhampton—ALP) (3.35 pm): I table a number of documents which prove, firstly, that the member for Hervey Bay was a beneficiary of a land deal with the council of which he was the mayor and that he shared in at least \$673,332; secondly, that the member failed to declare that he had a beneficial interest in this deal before the council settled on it; and, thirdly, that he retrospectively declared an interest in it.

Tabled paper: Documents regarding transfer of property at Booral in 2006 between Mr Edward John Sorensen and Mr Norman Leslie Gillespie, personal representative of the estate of Thomas Henry Taylor (deceased) and Wide Bay Water Corporation [\[5153\]](#).

I also make the point that in the council report it was buried away on page 167 of a 174-page document, so it is hardly transparent. I would be very keen to hear the member make an explanation. He had a two-minute opportunity this afternoon to clear up this matter. I know that the shadow Attorney-General thinks this is not a public interest matter, but \$673,000, or thereabouts at least, is a considerable amount of money for the ratepayers of Hervey Bay to have paid to the mayor. All of this, of course, may have an explanation. I certainly would ask that the honourable member explain this to the House. I would ask that Campbell Newman, as the leader of this group, even though he is not in here, force this gentleman to do so.

Health Security

 **Mr McARDLE** (Caloundra—LNP) (3.36 pm): On Tuesday of this week I rose to make a few comments in relation to Queensland Health and issues facing this state as a consequence of our location in relation to South-East Asia, in particular Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. Today I want to use the short period of time that I have to talk in part about the Queensland Health Systems Review of 2005 by Peter Forster. The document is a well-known document in medical circles. It highlights a number of areas within Queensland Health that at that point in time were focused on to allow Queensland Health to develop into the future. The document has been used on many occasions to plot the future of both Queensland Health and other health services right across the state. I table a series of pages—pages 60 to 67 inclusive—that deal with a topic called 'Queensland Health culture'.

Tabled paper: Extract of Queensland Health Systems Review—Final Report, pages 60-67 [[5154](#)].

In particular, they highlight a number of points when dealing with the culture that Queensland Health needs to look at. They are leadership, team building, developing relationships between staff and managers, fair and effective grievance processes, ongoing monitoring of organisational culture and accountability. In fact, at page 62 Mr Forster makes this comment at paragraph 4.4.1 under the heading 'Leadership'—

The most critical ingredient in achieving the cultural change required is the changed style and behaviour of leaders within Queensland Health and its health services. It is the leaders who set direction, align different constituencies and motivate and inspire staff.


He then says—

Leaders will come from all sectors of health services, especially clinicians.

We know that bricks and mortar are being built right across this state to ensure that the structure is in place to deliver health services. What needs to occur with that is a change in culture. That culture must come from leadership within the hospitals individually, from the districts and from the minister's office. Bricks and mortar deliver the venue; they do not deliver the culture or address the need to overcome limited resources.

(Time expired)

Autism

 **Mr KILBURN** (Chatsworth—ALP) (3.38 pm): Since being elected to this place I have been advocating on behalf of parents of children with disabilities and in particular children with autism. I was able to take a parent with a child with autism to visit the education minister to speak about the particular issues they face in the education system, and I was very pleased to have a visit from the Minister for Disability Services, Curtis Pitt, to the Camp Hill State School to talk with parents about the issues they face.


I have spoken about the need for this government to support Autism Queensland's push to get funding from the federal government for a collaborative research centre to be set up into autism and all the issues surrounding it. Last month I was very happy to be approached by local constituent Mrs Loretta Lather, who arranged a meeting in my electorate office for parents of adults with autism. These are people whose children have been through the education system and are now facing all the difficulties that arise with having an adult child with autism.

The meeting went for about three hours as the parents told me of the difficulties they had faced as their children have grown up through the education system and as they have worked to provide the best life for their children after the school experience. I was so impressed by the commitment of those parents as they continue to advocate on behalf of their children and for their desire to ensure that future parents of children with autism—who, as we all know, grow up to be adults with autism—will have better access to support and resources than they did.

A number of common themes ran through the discussion, including the need for a variety of options for education for their children, including both mainstreaming and specialist programs; the need to ensure that life skills are part of the education program to ensure that when they finish school they have the best possible quality of life and the greatest amount of independence; and, most importantly, the need to find employment for adults with autism. They have asked me to ask the minister if we could find ways to support business to ensure educational employment opportunities for—

(Time expired)


Goats Milk

 **Mrs PRATT** (Nanango—Ind) (3.40 pm): Several years ago, the banning of raw cows milk caused controversy in this House and quite heated debate. There were times when many members of parliament whose own children and family members had to or chose to drink raw cows milk—members from the Labor side—passed information to the Independents to help fight the ban. They felt they could not bring that information into the House. Now, Food Standards Australia New Zealand is reviewing the sale of fresh goats milk products, with representatives of Queensland Health and Safe Food Queensland amongst those on the review panel.

Over the past couple of days I have received several letters from people who would like it known that they would protest any move to ban the sale of fresh goats milk products. They argue the benefits of the fresh goats milk for themselves and others. They argue that often people who have cows milk protein allergies can drink goats milk with no ill effects. Goats milk has smaller fat globules, which means it is naturally homogenised and easily digested.

They say the diseases that are in cows milk, brucellosis and tuberculosis, have never been known in goats in Australia and in the states and territories raw goats milk is permitted under a special permit. They believe it should be an individual's right to drink raw goats milk if he or she so chooses. They state many arguments in favour of the consumption of raw goats milk and its products. They would like to know why, after all this time, these bodies are making this ridiculous decision.

Salvation Army Bundamba Corps


 **Mrs MILLER** (Bundamba—ALP) (3.42 pm): Last Sunday I was delighted to attend the Salvation Army Bundamba Corps celebration of 125 years of worship and service in our community. In our community we thank God for the Salvos. The worship service included an official reopening of the church and hall, which had been flooded in January. It was reopened by Commissioner James Condon. CSM Brad Strong asked that I thank our Labor government for allowing the Salvos to use the Blackstone State School and the Bundamba State Secondary College for their services and activities whilst their church was being renovated.

The children's corps, the Sunbeams and the Moonbeams, were presented with their awards. There were two soldier enrolments and eight acceptances of adherence. The Salvation Army is growing around the world, I am pleased to advise the House, and it is growing in our community. More people are putting on the Salvos uniform and doing God's work in our area. My cousin, Brian Mole, composed a new march for the day, called *The Proclamaire*, and it was played with much enthusiasm by the senior band.

The day's message was delivered by Commissioner Condon. It was called 'Watch for the new things in your life'. He said it was a day of new beginnings for the Bundamba Corps, serving God and the community. He said that nothing is impossible with God—five powerful words of faith, five powerful words of belief, five powerful words to guide our lives. Lunch followed and there was a band concert in the afternoon.

As we celebrate the blessings and achievements of the past 125 years, we look forward to future years of the Salvation Army in Bundamba and the new centre in Goodna. The Salvation Army Bundamba Corps has been the spiritual home for generations of people in our community. As one retired officer said to me over lunch, 'To God be the glory, Jo-Ann'. Amen.

Child Safety Services, Deaths of Children


 **Ms DAVIS** (Aspley—LNP) (3.44 pm): The Bligh Labor government's management of the child safety portfolio has left the system in crisis. The people who are being betrayed by the mismanagement, bureaucratic tangles and overburdening of staff are primarily the vulnerable children across the state. There is no better illustration of this than the cases of children who are known to Child Safety dying. There are inquiries underway into two deaths in 2009. Sadly for the other 82 children known to Child Safety who died that year, there has been no real action by this incompetent minister.

Almost half of the children who died were aged between zero and four. Sixty-five children were living at home at the time of their deaths, eight were in out-of-home care, two were self-placed—which is a controversial and terribly managed issue in itself—and three were living independently. Tragically, nine of those committed suicide and five died as the result of fatal assault. Those who committed suicide included a 10-year-old girl. Seven of the nine young people who suicided had a history of substantiated or alleged child abuse.

This is a real tragedy. It is costing young lives every year. It is claiming young people who see nothing but despair, who are caught in a system that does not listen to what they have to say and is more concerned with ticking boxes than providing opportunities and futures for those young children.

Those children are known to Child Safety. Nearly 40 per cent of all the children who died had a history of system involvement. Another quarter had repeated concerns raised. Twenty-seven per cent had one previous concern raised about them. There is an urgent need to change our child safety system, to put the welfare of the children as the priority. This government has repeatedly failed and the cost is just too high to our community and the young lives lost.

Griffith University, Gold Coast Campus

 **Mrs SMITH** (Burleigh—ALP) (3.46 pm): For anyone looking to study at university, the Gold Coast is home to four: Central Queensland, Southern Cross, Griffith and Bond universities. Each offers a variety of subjects and courses, combined with a lifestyle that is second to none. Today I want to highlight the success of Griffith University and its Gold Coast campus. The university opened its doors in 1975 with 451 students. This university continues to fly under the radar. When I speak with year 12 students and ask where they are hoping to undertake tertiary study, they tell me they want to study at UQ, Monash or some other interstate university. Perhaps Griffith University is too close to home or, more likely, we do not promote this excellent campus that is on our doorstep.


Widely acknowledged for its strengths in health, Griffith's Gold Coast campus boasts state-of-the-art facilities, including the \$36 million Griffith Centre for Medicine and Oral Health. As host of the new multibillion dollar Gold Coast University Hospital, scheduled for completion in 2012, Griffith will give researchers across the medical sciences access to new technologies. This will provide the perfect complement to Griffith's leadership in new drug discoveries and innovative health research.

Much of Griffith's success is thanks to the groundbreaking research being undertaken. Griffith made international headlines with Professor Michael Good's malaria vaccine breakthrough that could save millions of lives. At a recent meeting with the university's vice-chancellor, Professor Ian O'Connor, he told me how as a fledgling campus they would seek out researchers to come to Griffith; now researchers are knocking on their door, wanting to join the team.

Griffith opened its doors in 1975 with 451 students and was the very first university in Australia to offer degrees in Asian studies and environmental studies. Currently it offers over 300 degrees across five campuses and is home to more than 40,000 students from over 124 countries. Recently Griffith was placed in the top 8 Australian universities for social sciences research and placed seventh in Australia for its law school by QS World University Rankings.

(Time expired)

Moreton Bay, Marine Infrastructure


 **Mr DOWLING** (Redlands—LNP) (3.48 pm): I begin my contribution by thanking the Minister for Main Roads, Fisheries and Marine Infrastructure for a recent response to issues raised by me and my community with regard to a series of safety issues in and around Moreton Bay—namely, Rocky Shoal, the jetty steps of Victoria Point and channel markers leading into Raby Bay.

However, I ask the minister to revisit a number of other issues that were also highlighted in the same correspondence. Those issues include the lighting of channel markers leading into and out of Victoria Point, Redland Bay and Eprapah Creek. Those are well-used waterways, day and night. In the Redlands we are blessed with relatively safe and easy access to and from Moreton Bay via three local ramps. Those are Weiman Creek at Redland Bay, Victoria Point and Eprapah Creek.

The other outstanding issues that we have are dredging and lighting. With the growth in the area, streetlighting, residential development and the numerous boat moorings in the area, it is becoming increasingly difficult to see the current channel markers. This issue is raised by boating clubs, fishing clubs, local volunteer marine rescue groups and the local air and sea rescue group. It is an important local issue. I ask the minister to reconsider his position on this, due to the growth in marine activities in and around Moreton Bay.

It is a genuine safety issue and it is something that the local fishing clubs and the local recreational boaties are concerned about. These are boaties who come from right across South-East Queensland. They are not just peculiar to my electorate or that of my neighbour in the north or west. It is a wonderful waterway and it is a privileged part of Queensland to represent. I ask the minister to revisit that issue of lighting those channel markers as a genuine safety concern.


Ipswich Lions, Children of Courage Awards

 **Mr WENDT** (Ipswich West—ALP) (3.50 pm): In common with a lot of MPs, I put a number of functions in my diary every year. The first one I put in is the Ipswich Lions Children of Courage Awards ceremony. This is an awards ceremony that recognises children not through a competition but simply because they are doing it tough. These awards act as an achievement and an encouragement for their future. They help these children to believe in themselves and to increase their self-worth.

A couple of weeks ago I attended the function at which there were 11 recipients. There was Makayla Gibson, who suffers from diabetes; Kevin Matengarufu from Zimbabwe, who has severe learning difficulties; Jack Diehm, who suffers from allergies; Harrison Parker, who suffers from autism; Esau Manutai, who is recovering from a life-threatening accident and has been forced to wear a padded helmet for some period of time; Angus Birrell, who suffers from Down syndrome; Asta Kunde, who has PFFD, which is proximal femoral focal deficiency; Amelia Parnell, who suffers from cerebral palsy; Mikaela Williamson, who suffers from cystic fibrosis; Jarrod Whelband, who has marked impairment in the development of his fine and gross motor skills; and Jesse Warner, who suffers from diabetes. All of these 11 children were there on the day and were absolutely ecstatic to receive an award which entailed a little medal which we hung around each of their necks as well as a certificate and a Lions soft toy.

May I take the time to actually congratulate the Lions again on a fabulous awards ceremony. In particular I congratulate my good friend who organised all this, Graeme Vass, who is the head Lion in that regard, and also the president, John Isager, and of course Vanna McGreevy, who was the emcee on the day. When you actually go through the stories of some these young children you realise how lucky you yourself are in the first instance but also, being a parent—as most of us are in this chamber—how lucky we are to have children who do not suffer from some of these illnesses and disabilities. I take the opportunity to congratulate the Lions Club of Ipswich again. I look forward to their next ceremony on 1 January next year, which I will be putting in my diary.

North Stradbroke Island, Mining

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Cleveland—LNP) (3.52 pm): On Tuesday I tabled a petition from the North Stradbroke Island community sponsored by island resident and organiser Robyn Mortimer. Following the emotion charged rally on Straddie called 'Anna, don't shut Straddie down' held at the Dunwich sports ground on Easter Saturday, more than 1,500 infuriated island residents and supporters have come together to sign a petition calling on the government to reconsider its plan for the island. The large number of signatories strongly reflected the feelings of the majority of the locals when they gathered a few months ago to protest the government's ill-conceived, politically motivated and rushed plan for the island. The petition states—

We the residents of North Stradbroke Island wish to register our strong disapproval of your government's recent decisions to prematurely close down the island's mines and to turn 80 per cent of the island into national park. There is still time for you to meet and talk to the bulk of the island's three communities. There is still time for you to consider the actions that have already caused residents a great deal of stress and angst. There is still time for you to give us back our future.

I have consistently opposed the government's plan for North Stradbroke Island because it is not supported by the community. It will lead to large scale job losses in the mining and small business sectors and still more than a year later the government has provided no economic transitional plan and it does little for the environment.

The North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability Bill was a politically motivated and rushed bill containing harmful measures that I could not support. In particular I objected to DERM's unsafe mine path that the member for Ashgrove championed in her legislation. The member for Ashgrove was more worried about preference deals with the Greens party in her electorate than the safety of miners.

Ms JONES: I rise to a point of order. I find that offensive. There was no unsafe mine path.

Dr ROBINSON: I withdraw. It was a relief that the minister backed down and agreed in mid-July to the LNP's position on the mine path. Unfortunately, common sense has not been extended to other aspects of—


Ms JONES: I rise to a point of order. There was no LNP mine path. I ask him to withdraw. There was no LNP mine path and he is misleading the House.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! There is no point of order.

Dr ROBINSON: Unfortunately, common sense has not been extended to other aspects of the Premier's rushed plan for the island. The Premier seems to forget that the island is inhabited by a community of 2,500 people and 220 small businesses and has its own economy, schools, police stations and other services.

(Time expired)

Asbestos, Member for Mudgeeraba

 **Hon. SD FINN** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Government Services, Building Industry and Information and Communication Technology) (3.54 pm): On Tuesday and again today the member for Mudgeeraba spoke of issues of asbestos removal at the Mackay TAFE. As I have said in this House on a number of occasions, there are ongoing asbestos rectification works at this TAFE college. They are


clearly identified on the asbestos register, and the removal of asbestos is tasked by my agency when requested by the relevant agency. There has never been any suggestion that there is not asbestos in the Mackay TAFE.

On Tuesday the member tabled the complete BEMIR register. The member may not understand this, but that register is a list of asbestos locations in Queensland. It is a list of public buildings that may contain asbestos and a listing does not necessarily mean dangerous material. Any dangerous material in a Queensland public building is removed immediately. However, the facts of the matter have never bothered the member for Mudgeeraba.

There is one thing that we come to this place with at the start of our careers and that is our parliamentary integrity. The extent to which we hang on to this and the respect of our colleagues is determined by the way we debate the issues of the day, the language that we use and the rigour and discipline that we apply to the facts of matters. Let us be clear about asbestos: the reason there is a massive list of public buildings with asbestos is due to the absolute zeal for the product by the pre-1989 LNP government. Since the election of the Goss government not a single sheet of asbestos has been put into a public building. The LNP government poured asbestos into our schools, hospitals and other public buildings and continued to do so for 15 years following its becoming aware of its danger.

The asbestos injured people, whom the member claims to have nursed, did not come into contact with it as a result of a Queensland Labor government. The LNP knew the dangers in 1974. Labor was campaigning for a register then. The register that the member tabled on Tuesday was a register that Labor brought in after Labor had campaigned in opposition. It is Labor that banned the use of asbestos and it is Labor that is working with the legacy that the members opposite left us with.


Natural Disasters, Main Roads

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (3.56 pm): It has now been some eight months since the disasters that occurred in early January this year. I am pleased that in many locations that physical damage inflicted by the disasters, both flood and cyclone, have been repaired. I was pleased to hear that Grantham is moving on and that its people are putting their lives back together after the allocation of new blocks on higher ground.

I am frustrated, though, when I see government propaganda such as the Operation Queenslanders newsletter that was put out at the Ekka. I note on the back that it states that, as a result of the disasters, some 9,170 kilometres of state roads were damaged and that, as of 1 August, 8,482 kilometres of state roads were repaired. That apparently equates to 92.5 per cent. I readily accept that the road damage that occurred in the Glass House electorate should—and has rightly—waited until far more urgent works are completed. I have been patient and I have constantly called on the constituents of Glass House to do the same. Our inconveniences were far more minor than those caused by disasters to the south, west and north. The patience of me and the people of Glass House is starting to wear thin. As I said, it has been nearly eight months. That 7.5 per cent of roads remaining that are still damaged include the Kilcoy-Beerwah Road at Peachester and the Maleny-Stanley River Road at Boorooben. Both of these roads are still under traffic-light operation because one lane is out of action. Most important, and most appalling, is the Palmwoods-Montville Road at Hunchy.

Recently I received a letter from the department of main roads dated 26 July. It states that the contractors have recently been moved on to other projects until additional design work is finished. This is a road that has been closed since March 2010 and subsequently was redamaged in January 2011 and we are still waiting for the design work. While we are waiting the contractors have been moved off-site. Our people in Palmwoods and Montville have been patient enough; I have been patient enough. Minister, please repair this road and do so quickly.

Airport Link

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Skills and Mining) (3.58 pm): Gordon Park residents are upset and angry about a letter sent late last week from local councillor Fiona King, and so am I. Councillor King's letter is full of mistruths about the temporary closure of Richmond Street where it meets Stafford Road. Worse still, Councillor King is playing politics with the good people of Gordon Park and I would like to set the record straight.

The temporary closure of Richmond Street, required as part of the Airport Link/Northern Busway project, is bound to cause a level of inconvenience for local residents. However, the alternative would be an extensive, very noisy set of night works.


It is precisely because of this inconvenience that Councillor King has been given a number of briefings on the road closure, has been kept fully informed of the planned closure and has been given the opportunity to have input into the construction program—in the same way I have been as the local state member. It is also disappointing that Councillor King in her letter deliberately withheld the fact that

her council, the Brisbane City Council, approved the road closure. It was a King hit that they did not deserve. It is not the first time Councillor King has engaged in what can only be described as deceitful behaviour when it comes to this project.

It is now well over a year since I wrote to the then lord mayor, Campbell Newman, and Councillor King raising legitimate concerns over the council's inappropriate classification of Richmond, Bradshaw and Thistle streets in Gordon Park. I asked them to give serious consideration to reclassifying those streets as residential roads. It is a simple solution at no cost to council. Better still for local residents, their local streets would be identified as being for local traffic only and not suitable for heavy vehicles. It is now very apparent that Councillor King made no effort whatsoever to do anything about this—nothing at all.

I am sad to say that Councillor King's failure to get the council to fix this problem is symptomatic of her ongoing failure to deliver even the simplest, most basic services to the residents of Gordon Park. They are still waiting for traffic calming, despite repeated requests to council. Councillor King should stop playing politics and start delivering for our local community.

Wijeratne, Dr HW; Sleeper Cutters

 **Mr MESSENGER** (Burnett—Ind) (4.00 pm): I table letters from the women of the Pregnancy and Birth Protection Network.

Tabled paper: Documents raising concerns and queries in relation to the Bundaberg Hospital [\[5155\]](#).

The women would like the Premier to answer their questions about their negligent medical treatment. I have brought to this place on many different occasions serious concerns I have about the performance of an overseas trained doctor, a Dr Wijeratne, at Bundaberg Base Hospital. I do so again. Many victims of the doctor have described him as a butcher. I believe them. This government, senior Health bureaucrats, union leaders, nurses and other doctors who have worked with Dr Wijeratne know that he is a butcher. He is the subject of a significant number of official complaints and numerous unofficial complaints which have been covered up. They have magically disappeared into the black hole which has become the Queensland Health complaints system.

How can a doctor with such an appalling, incompetent, butcherous record of treatment have an official AHPRA registration which is as clean as a whistle? How can a doctor who regularly abused and insulted his patients—pregnant women—and brought them to tears have an AHPRA registration without a blemish on it? Quite clearly the AHPRA system is broken. How else would a doctor who a cabinet report says was the subject of a significant number of complaints in 2005—up to one complaint a week—have a clean record?

The Queensland government has allowed Queensland Rail to put in place a new process for buying wooden railway sleepers which is guaranteed to wipe out the jobs of up to 400 Queenslanders—sleeper cutters and indirect jobs. The head of QR, Mr Paul Scurragh, has confirmed to me that 25 per cent of the officially approved wooden sleeper tenders are not from Queensland. He and his executives deserve to be condemned. This government deserve to be condemned. They should protect Queensland jobs instead of giving them to other places and overseas locations.


(Time expired)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTORAL BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from p. 2694, on motion of Mr Lucas—

That the bill be now read a second time.


 **Mr HOOLIHAN** (Keppel—ALP) (4.03 pm), continuing: Prior to the lunch break I had started to deal with the point about a candidate under the Electoral Act and the number of members who had stood up and mentioned that people have to resign. I make the point—and it is relevant to what will follow—that you do not have to resign. Under section 155 of the Local Government Act, when you become a candidate for the Legislative Assembly you automatically stop being a councillor. It is that simple.

I was assisting the Hon. Warren Pitt when the Local Government Bill and the Local Government Electoral Bill were being considered. I would never support any amendment to allow people to remain a member of a council while they campaign for this House or for any other House. The ratepayers elect a member of a council to work as a councillor for four years. I actually had a councillor—the member for Rockhampton mentioned this—run against me in 2004. It is a real difficulty because ratepayers are not getting any value for what they are paying for. We currently have councillors in my own area of the Rockhampton Regional Council who run businesses. They are supposed to be full-time councillors. The

division 3 councillor runs a music production business. This is what ratepayers' money is being used for. I do not see that it should be allowed to be used to pay people to politic and to run for other levels of government when they have been asked to be a councillor for four years.

The other amendments which are foreshadowed by the honourable the Deputy Premier relate to conflict of interest. I was appalled yesterday, as anyone who does not torture the English language would have been, at the comments of the member for Buderim in relation to conflict of interest. He would have been better off not saying anything because by opening his mouth he showed how little he knew. He has no concept of conflict of interest and, sadly, it appears that all of the members who are speaking about changing the Local Government Electoral Bill so that it reflects their wishes seem to have none, either. For the Labor government it has been a badge of honour to make sure we have a fully functional and effective local government. This bill will ensure that, and it is the last in a suite of acts which started with the council amalgamations.

I also point out that, although a lot of members have made comments on small parts of the bill, this is an omnibus bill. It deals also with the safety of residents in facilities. It deals also with the safety of people in relation to fences and dividing fences where it is a pool fence. I commend the bill to the House. I believe that it will ultimately produce a strong and effective local government, free of any taint of manipulation by a government which was the hallmark of local government before 1989 and was the ultimate reason for the Fitzgerald inquiry. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Dr DOUGLAS** (Gaven—LNP) (4.06 pm): There is little that I can add to the detail of the proposed changes to the local government electoral process that the shadow minister, the member for Gympie, has not raised. But I would like to state those thoughts from someone who has assisted, both directly and indirectly, in a major local government process on the Gold Coast. I would like to clearly state at this point that not everyone who has a contrary view to Labor policy on this matter is necessarily wrong. That seems to be pervasive in the views that I have heard from some of the government members—not all of them, but the consistency of this is almost shocking. I think that in this parliament we actually have a balance of views.

The principal aim of this bill is to transfer responsibility and administration of elections from the council to the ECQ. In legislative terms, it is bringing four parts into one. The consequence of the bill is that the ECQ will run the elections and back-charge the individual councils to do this. The other minor changes in the bill are to the Electoral Act 1992, the Sanctuary Cove Resort Act 1985 and the Building Act 1975 to improve fire safety and to enable pool owners to access a neighbour's yard to modify an existing boundary fence to meet the new specific pool regulations. That is to be supported.

The shadow minister has proposed a small number of amendments to improve the bill and to address a number of wrongs. He has given a number of good reasons for proceeding with these. I do not share the member for Keppel's opinion on why the member for Gympie's approach was incorrect. It is no secret that the Beattie bill banning councillors from standing for state seats and having to resign from council to do so needs to be changed.

The member for Keppel has correctly said that, by definition, they are deemed to be no longer members. Irrespective of whether that is the case, I believe this should be reversed. It is a fundamental breach of a person's rights and provides the state with arguably fewer skilled future members. Under normal circumstances, those people would otherwise have a reasonable chance of election to higher office. For too many, now the risk is not worth the decision. Tragically, for the communities they represent as councillors, there is diminished progressive representation. I will go into detail about that later.

The move to have the ECQ run the elections has both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages may not be outweighed by the alternative. Every speaker has stated the obvious—the cost is the most significant impediment. That cost has really to be worn by the ratepayers or clawed back in charges by councils for a range of other services. This may not be entirely fair to ratepayers who did not really understand what they were getting themselves in for. It goes without saying that everyone would accept the government's agent—the ECQ—has a range of charges that cover everything. It is not quite the issue of the \$180 that some US defence contractors charge for a single screw, but there are charges and a charging regime that is nearly impossible to understand or swallow.

There is an ongoing presumption by some government organisations that they can charge fees that are not only exorbitant but also not reflective of true cost. I have always wondered how some government departments decide what percentage of costs they should charge and what contingency charge needs to be included.

Interestingly enough, the fee to stand in an election has increased from \$150 to \$250. This is a significant impost and there is no explanation really for it. It is always easy to charge these fees when you are not the ones paying the charges. It may be that this is the time to move to a situation where it might be justified. But, similarly, people in places like Forsyth and other similar councils—and there are a variety of them in Queensland; remember, we are regionally distributed and some of these areas do not have many people but they are very large areas—are suddenly going to face a significant impost.

The logic of some of these decisions is in parallel with those decisions to force council amalgamations, and of course the shires of Noosa and Douglas particularly come to mind as locals there did not wish to be amalgamated and they fought it bitterly.

I am a little concerned about some of the minister's lines from his second reading speech, particularly when he referred to the legislation being—

... the final stage of the review of local government legislation started in late 2006.

Kevin Rudd claimed that he was going to have local government recognised in the federal Constitution when he came into government. I see that the current federal government leader, Julia Gillard, has just appointed a new committee to review this. That committee is led by a former justice of the Supreme Court of New South Wales, Justice Jim Spigelman.

It would seem that responsible government members believe that local government is the most important level of government. This was elegantly described by the member for Waterford and he used the example of the park at the end of the street. I too share his warm, fuzzy views on local government. In my case, I am a very strong supporter of the Gold Coast City Council, but then again I was a supporter of the previous council—the old Surfers Paradise council—and also the Albert shire. My wife Suzie is obviously the councillor for Surfers Paradise and she has a program every day that would terrify most state members and it never stops.

The Gold Coast City Council has elections that the ECQ coordinates, merely by virtue of the size. This is the second largest council in Australia after the Brisbane City Council, with 224,000 individual dwellings alone within its boundaries. By involving the ECQ, it probably enables a smoother, more transparent, professional process but it does come at a significant cost that it has to seek to recover.

There is one major problem that this bill does not seem to address and it probably should have. The recent electoral funding process that Labor championed may well deliver a group of politicians and parties that have no connection with their communities, businesses and organisations and it is the same for their respective parties. All the changes in the world regarding the ECQ will have no effect on their real lack of true representation, by virtue of total governmental party and election funding.

Arguably, it can be used as a two-way observation, in that Labor could claim that it has had to prevent councillors standing for state representative seats because it would be impossible to beat them any other way. From a non-Labor position—in our case the LNP—it would deliver what the unions were already providing for Labor itself as a party. For all the other lesser parties—including The Greens, The Queensland Party, et cetera—they just do it for the even larger amounts of money which is coming their way under this process. The public lose a greater amount of money and they also lose their only real means of getting to be heard.

In fact, we heard yesterday the member for Nudgee, Mr Roberts, speak eloquently about Ken Vaughan, and certainly there were other similar speeches. The member for Nudgee spoke about the days of letterboxing and how Ken Vaughan went about that as a representative member. He was a great old-style Labor member of parliament, and at this stage I would like to acknowledge that. But we will not see that anymore.

What we have currently is a democracy but what is being proposed is not a democracy. This is not a fair electoral system of process. Individuals will never be beholden to communities. It is dictatorship by another means. Is the ECQ just going to be used as a means to achieve these highly undesirable outcomes—in this case, to locally distributed regional state councils? Is anyone in either party in authority ever considering that this system we now have is becoming progressively ludicrous? At what point does someone say that we potentially have a situation where parliamentarians and parliament itself are so unrepresentative that they need to get a real life change? Will they have to address the fact that we have moved closer to the abyss of an unrepresentative swill? I think that step is potentially one too far, just as the first and second electoral funding steps were. I think Labor needs to step back and, interestingly enough, I think this bill brings this to a head.

I would highlight that in one notorious election—in 2004 on the Gold Coast—a current mayoral aspirant led a so-called pro development bloc. Fortunately, the bloc could not get total control—that was an amalgamated council—and a subsequent inquiry struggled to get a full and clear picture of what was planned. Possibly, the ECQ process allowed for voters to get a better say, and democracy in local government at that stage triumphed. We would certainly like to see that happen again, but under the systems that are currently coming into play I do not think that is the case.

In the Gold Coast situation, vast sums of money certainly changed hands. Reputations were ruined and many felt they had been cheated. In my wife's case, the bloc took retribution and did everything they could to destroy her. A subsequent court case was held which was an absolute travesty of justice. She survived at great cost.

I would hope that these events never occur again. I believe, unfortunately, that the electoral changes we are currently seeing are actually making sure that they will. I believe that those who have not learned from their mistakes are most likely to repeat them again. One can only hope that, in a democracy, voting administered by the ECQ will prevent these kinds of malignancies rising again.

Stakeholders do not seem to be challenging this widely, and this is probably a telling point. Maybe amalgamations have bought their silence. Maybe they are just mortally wounded enough that they do not want to fight. There are amalgamated councils which do want to fight and I believe they are not being heard. I am very interested in one, the Douglas shire, because critically my grandfather was the member for Cook and it is named after him. The history of that area is one that is unique to Queensland. They are very, very decent, hardworking people. It is a struggle to get by in those areas. I am looking over to the other side of the House at the member for Mulgrave and other members from outside Brisbane—the member for Waterford, the member for Toowoomba North, the member for Albert and the member for Mackay.

These are great Queensland communities, and I include in that group the area represented by the member for Ipswich West. In my life I have had the great privilege of working in many of these places as a medical officer and have been both permanently stationed in such places and held locum positions. The great strength of our community in Queensland is the fact that we have a regional system and those in regional systems actually seek to gain representation to make sure that they are heard because their individual needs are very different. They have similar general needs, but they need to be heard and there is a potential for them not to be heard because they will be subsumed in the greater party politic, and that is the main impact of these electoral changes. That is not to say that the ECQ has a direct part in that, but it being the agents of the process it may well deliver a situation whereby we have a paralysed system because we do not have people who truly represent their areas. Individual champions do exist still in parliaments and they come from both sides of parliament. I take the minor interjection—

Mr Lucas: I didn't interject; I pointed at you.

Dr DOUGLAS: Yes, that is right. I think this is a very important point. When people have this rush to the head where they think they can solve everything by allocating money and not having to go through the hard work and that, just because the times have moved on, the days of older style members such as Neil Turner, as we heard earlier today, who stood in two seats and Ken Vaughan are over does not mean that the types of processes they went through to link into their communities, hear their stories and represent their interests were wrong. In fact, time is really very fleeting and what happened 30 years ago is just a blip on the map. We really need to take a hard look at ourselves and I think we are going too far forward. The member for Gregory more than likely will have a bit more to say because he is from one of those areas where this is particularly important.


Local government seems to be a mixture of different beings to Labor in government. If its members oppose government, they are accused of being dirty rotten scoundrels. They are routinely pilloried, just like the mayor on the Gold Coast. I do not always agree with the mayor, but I tell you what: he is a great Australian and, for those who have not realised, I think he is the patron of the 2018 Commonwealth Games bid. Whilst he did not win every race he ran, this man gave a life of professional service, sporting service and honourable and dignified service to the community, but he routinely gets put up and gets smashed all because he stands up for his community, and there are other councillors doing the same. It is not appropriate to have a go at local councillors who are literally just trying to do their jobs.

I would implore people and certainly those on our side of politics that should in time we join the government benches it would be entirely inappropriate if we get up and start criticising local councillors. As I say, they are to be respected and I heard lovely comments today both in the House and on the radio about Pam Parker in Logan shire. They were entirely appropriate comments because there has been a terrible disaster in Logan with these poor people, particularly children, having lost their lives. We need to embrace local councillors. We do not need to criticise them. It is important that we ensure that their elections are fair and that they are run properly and we assist them and do not impose costs on them that are entirely unreasonable. We also need to facilitate whatever they need, and some of the suggestions that were made by the Law, Justice and Safety Committee should have been followed but have not been.


When councillors do a good job—and I acknowledge that sometimes that happens—people should get up and say, 'Yes, they've done a good job.' It is appropriate to reward people and actually acknowledge when they have done the right thing because that makes people want to do the right thing repeatedly. For local communities when people do very small things, particularly when it is expensive relative to the size of their budget, we need to acknowledge what they have done and we do not need to pillory very minor things when we are looking at it from a much bigger perspective to those of a much smaller perspective. When we talk about this polarisation and the lack of balance, it says a lot about the issue of damaged relationships.

Heaven help us if the shoe were ever on the other foot under the current inquiry that Jim Spigelman is going through with his rather diverse committee, which does look a bit loaded but, nonetheless, it does look like that that is what it is proceeding to do. Just imagine the situation where the local government might well have recognition under the federal Constitution and let us say that the Labor Party goes back onto the government benches. You would not want to be in a situation where we are continuously deriding and kicking local government. If we are going to have arguments with local

governments, we have to make sure we do it in private and do not go out and slay them in public but find out what their issues are, because most of the time, just as has been said in every document—I have this massive file from Mary Westacott—there are still lots of part-timers and not all full-timers and they are just trying to do good community work. One would hope that under this minor change with the ECQ we can make their job a little easier.

 **Ms GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (4.25 pm): I rise to support the Local Government Electoral Bill 2011 and in particular want to make a few comments on the amendments to the Mixed Use Development Act 1993. This act was passed in 1993 and covers eight mixed use development situations around the state. There are six others around the state, but in particular there are two in my electorate—Cathedral Place and Central Brunswick in Brisbane. Quite clearly it has been found that there are provisions under this legislation that do require modernising and there is a review of reform packages currently being developed. I want to welcome a number of packages of amendments to the Mixed Use Development Act which are responding to pressing equity issues raised by lot owners. I want to thank those constituents who have come to see me in relation to this matter. They have taken their time and I have assured them that the government is acting and I very much welcome the amendments brought forward by the Deputy Premier and Attorney-General today.

The complex and multitiered body corporate structure as set out in 1993 does not adequately support contemporary community living. Stakeholders have shared concerns that the Mixed Use Development Act may not reflect commercial realities and result in decision making that is not in the collective best interests of lot owners and the broader community. These mixed use development communities need more confidence in the equity and transparency of body corporate management and decision making in the interests of the whole community, and that is what this bill is delivering. Consequently, this interim package of amendments provides some parity with the Body Corporate and Community Management Act 1997. The new requirements of the bodies corporate governed by the Mixed Use Development Act will include direction on a number of things that are included in the body corporate and management act such as the appointment of proxies, auditing, a number of ways of conducting voting arrangements, nomination and election of executive committees. The package also introduces mixed use development communities to principles of contemporary body corporate frameworks. This is a wonderful step in the right direction that I know my constituents are very much asking for, and I commend the bill to the House.

 **Hon. PT LUCAS** (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Attorney-General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State) (4.28 pm), in reply: I thank honourable members who have contributed to the important debate surrounding the Local Government Electoral Bill 2011. This bill is an important step in delivering on the government's commitment to create a robust local government sector and represents four years of work to modernise the local government electoral process. The bill before the House consolidates the current local government electoral provisions from four legislative instruments into one, reducing the legislative burden, and provides a one-stop shop for the conduct of local government elections. Where possible, the bill reflects the requirements for the election of members to the Legislative Assembly of Queensland under the Electoral Act 1992. For example, the structure of that act and the grouping of provisions has been replicated in the new bill. The nomination fee of \$250 for candidates for election has been aligned and voters will be able to cast a prepoll vote without satisfying any criteria under both pieces of legislation.

In addition to the functions of the Electoral Commission of Queensland under the state Electoral Act, the bill provides the ECQ with the additional function of conducting and administering all local government quadrennial elections, by-elections and fresh elections. By giving the ECQ a mandate to oversee and administer all local government elections, we will be creating an independent central point of coordination and administration.

The bill also contains two minor sets of amendments to the Building Act 1975. One set of amendments regulates the construction of pool safety barriers on common boundaries. The other set of amendments will improve the fire safety of Queensland's older residential care buildings. The bill provides that, under certain conditions, a pool owner may construct a pool barrier without reaching an agreement with their neighbour. Strict limitations have been placed on this right to ensure that barriers are similar to any existing fence and meet the requirements of a sufficient dividing fence. These amendments have been drafted to complement the provisions of the Neighbourhood Disputes Resolution Act 2011. Together, the two pieces of legislation will provide a comprehensive regime for dividing fences that recognises and incorporates the different safety imperatives that apply to pool barriers.

Many of the state's residential care buildings also expose vulnerable Queenslanders to an unacceptably high risk of injury and death. Since the Childers backpackers tragedy, the government has made significant improvements to the fire safety of high-occupancy buildings. This bill extends the fire safety program to older residential care buildings. The recent tragic events at Slacks Creek are a sober reminder of the danger that fire can pose. I would like to take this opportunity to pass on my condolences to the families of the victims and the community who are providing so much support at this time.

I thank honourable members, including opposition members, for their support of the amendments regarding residential care facilities. The member for Buderim in particular displayed a detailed knowledge of the issues involved and a good understanding of the proposed reform. The member for Mudgeeraba stated during her contribution to the debate that MP 2.3 does not specifically define what are considered high-, medium- and low-risk buildings. I am advised that, unfortunately, that demonstrated a misunderstanding of both the bill and the draft Queensland Development Code. To assist the member I will clarify the position.

Under the bill, a building's assessment category determines the time frames in which it must comply with the new fire safety standard. If a building falls within assessment category 1 it must comply within three years of commencement. Buildings in assessment category 2 are given up to five years to comply. Assessment categories are defined by the construction materials and the number of storeys that comprise the building. For example, a multistorey timber-frame building is highly flammable and not easily evacuated. As such, it presents a high risk to residents and will fall within assessment category 1. These buildings must upgrade within three years and install sprinklers. This is the only satisfactory method of protecting the occupants. However, buildings framed with brick or concrete are less flammable and are granted more flexibility in compliance because they present a lower risk to their occupants. These category 2 buildings will have up to five years to comply. They will also have more compliance options to meet these new fire safety standards.

We know that we cannot rely solely on evacuation and evacuation procedures. In fact, in some situations evacuation itself can be a real hazard. In a fire where elderly residents cannot practically be evacuated from a building, it is necessary to improve the inherent safety of the building so that residents can remain in place and await the intervention of the Fire and Rescue Service.

The member for Mudgeeraba correctly identified that high buildings will have only have one option and that is to install sprinklers. That is because the building industry, building owners and managers recognise that a maintained fire sprinkler system is the single most effective way to reduce the risk of fire. The benefit of fire sprinklers in any fire emergency situation is that they impact immediately and effectively. An activated sprinkler head also sets off alarm warnings through the fast movement of water into the sprinkler pipework. When that is connected to the fire brigade, as is proposed in this code, that ensures the earliest possible turnout of the fire brigade. That is why the government has decided to make sprinklers mandatory for high-risk buildings.

The member for Gladstone made the point that the reforms must be practical, and I could not agree more. I can assure the member that every effort has been made to work with the industry to produce a common-sense and practical approach to this reform. That includes funding a practical, performance based assessment of each residential care building. This assessment will determine what upgrades, if any, are necessary to improve a building's fire safety or provide reassurance for the residents and their family members. The government is very aware that the code must be practical. That is why we are working so closely with the industry to get it right. A number of opposition members supported the reform in principle but have allowed themselves the luxury to criticise the likely cost that this reform involves. You either do it or you do not. If they do not want to have the cost, they should oppose it. But, of course, that is the wrong thing to do.

The Bligh government has consulted broadly and will continue to consult on the implementation of these reforms. I have personally met with representatives from Aged Care Queensland and I know that Ministers Hinchliffe and Roberts have also liaised extensively with the industry on this issue. As a result we are well aware of concerns about the industry's ability to self-fund the required upgrades. But, as members are no doubt aware, the Commonwealth is responsible for the funding of this industry. I commend recent federal governments for engaging the Productivity Commission to suggest ways of restoring and strengthening the industry. However, this government cannot afford to wait any longer to introduce these much needed reforms.

Previously, federal governments failed to fix the problem. That is like saying that the Brisbane City Council says to a new retirement village that they have to put in some traffic lights or something like that and the council should meet the cost rather than the proponent. In fact, the Howard government, in response to this issue in 2004, provided the residential care industry with a one-off payment of \$3,500 per resident for fire safety improvements—this amount equated to approximately \$1.93 million in funding for an average size building—and a total of approximately \$95 million in funding was distributed to Queensland service providers. The money was handed over with very few conditions and no follow-up or auditing—as you would expect from the Howard government. There was no accountability in terms of how the money was to be spent. Given the difficult financial position that Commonwealth funded industry has faced in recent times, one might suspect that many operators used this money to retire debt rather than to upgrade the fire safety of their buildings. We are acting now to protect Queensland's aged and infirm. In order to minimise the strain placed on industry, high-risk buildings have been given three years to upgrade to the fire safety standard. Buildings representing lower risk will be given five years. Additionally, buildings of lower risk have been provided with multiple compliance options and they may choose the one that best meets their financial needs.

I should say that it is really important that federal governments meet their responsibility to fund the aged-care sector. They have not in the past. They need to address that issue. I do not care whether it is a conservative or a Labor federal government; they need to do more in that space. People have every entitlement to expect that they will receive that funding. In the past it has been a real problem for them. That is why we have seen licences that have gone out to tender that have not been taken up by the non-profit or the for-profit sector. The government makes no apologies for proposing these life-saving reforms. It is committed to working with the federal government and with the industry to ensure they strengthen and improve this crucial sector.

During the consideration in detail of the bill I will be moving several technical amendments to assist with the effective administration of local government elections by the ECQ which were requested by the Electoral Commissioner. Further amendments to the Local Government Act 2009 and the City of Brisbane Act 2010 will also be considered. These amendments will clarify a councillor's obligations with respect to potential conflicts of interest by reinstating a councillor's power to manage their own potential conflicts of interest. A failure to adequately manage a conflict of interest by a councillor will be dealt with through misconduct avenues. The chief executive officer of the Department of Local Government and Planning will retain a power to refer such a matter to either the Regional Conduct Review Panel or the Remuneration and Discipline Tribunal.

Amendments to the Local Government Act will also ensure that community police officers retain their necessary legislative authority to undertake their duties at the request of the Torres Strait Island Regional Council until the rollout of Queensland Police Service's sustainable policing model later next year.

Further amendments will also be made to the Building Act 1975 to correct an anomaly that currently restricts the Minister for Local Government appointing deputy members to the Pool Safety Council. The amendments will reinstate the original intent of the legislation by providing that the Minister for Local Government is empowered to appoint deputies for all members of the Pool Safety Council.

I note that the bill has been considered by the Scrutiny of Legislation secretariat. The secretariat noted the intent of the bill and that reasons for possible breaches of fundamental legislative principles have been addressed in the explanatory notes. There were no further issues or questions raised by the secretariat.

I would also like to thank honourable members for some of the other contributions to the debate. I will respond in detail to some of them. Firstly, the honourable member for Gympie, as well as other members opposite, talked about the government shifting costs to councils and local communities. Nothing could be further from the truth. Since 1998 the government has, in fact, provided over \$4.4 billion worth of support to councils, thereby reducing the burden on local communities. Not only have we contributed significantly to local government infrastructure; the structural reform process has seen a reduction in the number of councils from 157 to 73, the abolition of 115 local governments and 11 joint local governments, a reduction in the number of mayors or chairpersons from 157 to 73 and a reduction in the number of councillors from 1,250 to 526. I would have thought that, for people who are conscious about the cost to ratepayers, members on the other side would acknowledge that that is a significant saving for ratepayers. If we still had 1,250 councillors and 157 mayors, not only would the ongoing cost to ratepayers of more elected members be higher but also the election costs would be increased owing to the higher number of individual ballot papers that would be required.

The member for Gympie said that the LGAQ's research has revealed that the costs levied on councils by the ECQ for the 2008 elections were on average double the cost incurred previously, when councils conducted the elections. I am not sure how these costs were calculated by the LGAQ, but the Becker report on these elections notes that measuring the cost of council conduct of elections is very difficult and probably not done with any degree of accuracy. Of course they are not. The councils had not needed to. The costs would have been hidden everywhere because they had people, who had other council jobs to do, at the same time dealing with election issues. However, I am able to advise that the cost for the conduct of the 2008 local government elections by the ECQ was \$6.07 per elector compared to \$7.68 per elector for last year's federal election, which was conducted by the Australian Electoral Commission.

I would point out that, unlike federal elections, both state and council elections have electoral visitor voting for elderly and infirm members of our community. Clearly the conduct of elections by ECQ is very economical. While the honourable member was off the mark on these two issues, he was right when he said the bill was about strong democracy. It is very hard to put a price on transparency, integrity and strong democracy and to give communities what they expect and deserve when it comes to the election of their local representatives. That is probably why the bipartisan committee recommended that the ECQ conduct local government elections and appoint returning officers rather than making council CEOs the returning officers and giving them a choice about whether they will do it themselves or not. It is simply bad practice to give someone who is the CEO of the organisation, directly accountable to the mayor, the ability to run an election. It is asking for trouble and asking for lack of confidence in them.

The honourable member for Warrego and former shadow minister raised an issue to which I am sympathetic. This issue relates to the open discussion between the ECQ and councils on the careful management of election costs. Local knowledge about the placement and the number of polling booths needed in a local government area, for example, should be utilised. As such I make the point quite categorically on the record here that I urge the ECQ and councils to work together in this regard. I will be watching how closely the ECQ are able to work with councils. There are plenty of ways that the ECQ can engage with councils that do not relate to an interference with the important independence of the ECQ. They should be talking to the councils to coordinate issues and to try to do things as effectively as possible that in no way compromises their independence as an electoral organisation.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the member for Bundamba relating to movement of electors between the Ipswich and Brisbane City Council local government areas and the associated apparent discrepancy between the numbers of people in the Brisbane City Council, Gold Coast and Moreton Bay divisions when compared with Ipswich City Council divisions. This is an important issue, the consideration of which falls within the jurisdiction of the independent change commission established under the Local Government Act 2009—not this act.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution from the member for Gladstone regarding the council chief executive officers also being returning officers. I have dealt with that issue before. It is about making sure that they are professional and independent. Imagine if you had the head of the Department of Premier and Cabinet running the Queensland state election. I know what the opposition would say then. We all remember the days of the filing cabinet held up at 'whispering' Wendy's office in the Executive Building. When Mr Sherman wanted to find out where the redistribution was, the filing cabinet disappeared. We all saw then the way the Nationals did redistributions.

Under the opposition's proposed amendment, councillors could use their roles as a training opportunity for election to higher office while they are serving a term as a councillor. I ask: if you were an employer, imagine if one of your employees said, 'Listen, I'm just thinking about going for another job. Will you hold my job open for me while I go and apply for another one?' The simple fact of the matter is this: the founding fathers, when they formulated the federal Constitution, made it crystal clear that if you are a state member of parliament and you are running for office federally, then you have to resign that office once you nominated your candidature. And for very good reason. The view was that if you wanted to expose yourself to a different electorate to be elected in, then you should be prepared to face the people. If they are happy and confident about your decision to brass them on one front then you should be prepared to face them in the election, not have two bites of the cherry. That is my objection to it. Frankly, I could not care less whether it is about LNP or Labor members. The principle is a really important one. That is why we will be vigorously opposing the opposition's amendment in this regard.

The member for Kawana decided to waste his time discussing amalgamation which, of course, is not canvassed in this bill. I thought I would enlighten members as to the benefits the Sunshine Coast has reaped due to amalgamation. That region's 151,000 ratepayers will face a lower than anticipated increase in rates in 2011-12 of 5.12 per cent. The budget is touted as laying the foundations for financial sustainability for the next decade. I do note that Campbell Newman's 22 per cent rate increase happened under a non-amalgamated council, the City of Brisbane being amalgamated in 1924 under a Labor administration. Further, the Sunshine Coast Regional Council delivered on its target of \$13.5 million of efficiency dividends for 2009-10. It has delivered about \$13.5 million in operational savings since amalgamation and it plans for another five, I am advised, in savings for the financial year 2010-11.

We know that amalgamation has meant that rate rises in some areas, such as the Sunshine Coast, have been lower than expected. I pointed out Campbell Newman's record in Brisbane. He has pledged to deamalgamate local councils which would result in these same rate increases being forced on every Queensland resident in every Queensland town as councils struggle to cope with the cost of deamalgamation under their plan. New South Wales clearly knows that it is a bad idea so why does Campbell Newman not know this? Let us have a look at the history of this. When talking to most local government officers—certainly when speaking to them post the flood and cyclone—they freely admit that the larger councils have given them an opportunity to operate more efficiently. The member for Toowoomba South spoke about the Toowoomba Regional Council. I cannot think of a council of its nature that is more effective—and it is a conservative council essentially—and has a broader range of representation than it. In fact, it is one of the success stories, I think, of amalgamation. Of course, it is easy to appeal to people and say you do not want to do the amalgamation. All the member for Gaven and conservatives like him who reckon they are students of history need to do is walk straight into the Members' Reading Room, pick out *Hansard* from 1924 and read who the people were who opposed the City of Brisbane Act. It was members of their side of the House who opposed it. I ask those opposite to think of what they would say today if we said we want 24 individual councils: the Wynnum town council, the Kedron council—all of those individual councils. The fact is that conservatives time and time again oppose these issues and it takes Labor to have foresight. Of course it is not just Labor in Queensland

that we can note. If the other side of politics had some foresight and the ability to take on tough decisions it could actually do it as well. The Kennett government did it in Victoria far more severely than it was done in Queensland. In the Kennett Victorian local government reforms 210 councils were reduced through a compulsory amalgamation process to 78. They have a new government in Victoria. Have they announced any deal amalgamation?

Mr Dickson: They are thinking about it.

Mr LUCAS: They are thinking about it, are they? They have scrutinised it with an extreme 'scrut'—I do not know if that is a word, but it sounds good. The simple fact of the matter is that they know full well that this had to happen. They know full well that it is the most effective way of administering local government. If people like Campbell Newman, who has said that one day states would be abolished, even thought that, how could it be done with local governments the size they were? It does not make logical sense to follow through that natural progression. What we need is sustainable local governments and we have more now than we ever had in the past. Talk to the mayor of Bundaberg. She took into her council area councils around her that were essentially bankrupt. The greater strength, size, support and competency of Bundaberg gives those people in those communities a future. Talk to people like Ray Brown, the great mayor of Dalby, who will tell you they now can afford to have environmental health officers. Individual small councils could not do that. They have a level of competency now. Local government reform was not my baby, unfortunately. It will go down as one of the great achievements of Andrew Fraser as a minister in the then Beattie government. It was wonderfully done, might I say.

In conclusion, this electoral bill does a number of things: firstly, it brings into line largely with the state electoral act the provisions that relate to local government elections; secondly, it provides for those elections to be conducted by the independent Electoral Commission—the Electoral Commission also conducts state elections; thirdly, it undertakes a number of minor amendments in relation to other matters such as pool fencing and the like; fourthly, in cooperation with the Integrity Commissioner and, indeed, the Local Government Association of Queensland, it has tidied up a number of provisions with respect to conflict of interest and this makes it a little bit more contemporary.

Before I commend the bill to the House, I thank my opposition shadow for his cooperation in relation to dealing with the matter. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Clause 1, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 7, as read, agreed to.

Clause 8—



Mr GIBSON (4.50 pm): I move the following amendment—

1 Clause 8 (Additional functions and powers of electoral commission)

(1) Page 24, line 24, after 'commission'—

insert—

'and when local government is responsible for conducting election'

(2) Page 24, line 25, 'For'—

omit, insert—

'(1) For'.

(3) Page 24, after line 27—

insert—

'(2) However, if the local government's area includes a large rural sector, large remote areas or extensive island areas, approval of the local government must be given to conduct a local government election in the area.

'(3) If approval is not given under subsection (2) for an election, the local government is responsible for conducting the election and the expenditure incurred in conducting the election.'

I table the explanatory notes to the amendment.

Tabled paper: Explanatory notes to Mr David Gibson's amendments to the Local Government Electoral Bill [[5156](#)].

The amendment has been circulated in the chamber and, indeed, many speakers have already spoken about it. I note the Deputy Premier also referred to it in his summing-up. There has been some representation with regard to the amendment.

The amendment is designed to ensure that a local government—using exactly the same wording that exists within the bill for choosing to go to a postal ballot or having the option of going to a postal ballot—would also be given the option of conducting their own election. The rationale behind this is that if the Electoral Commission of Queensland is going to be conducting a postal ballot, that can just as easily be conducted by a local government authority or that authority may choose to contract it out and, in doing so, bear the costs of it. We believe this amendment addresses a fundamental problem with clause 8. I note that the Deputy Premier has already indicated that the government will not support this amendment.

Under clause 8, I raise a concern with regard to the negotiation of costs with the ECQ. We note the previous experience from the 2008 election. I am quite happy to accept that that was the first time the ECQ took that on board and I am sure many lessons were learnt from it. I believe that, as a fundamental principle, there should be an opportunity for councils to have a discussion before the event rather than, as we saw, for example, having bills presented and councils passing motions not to support them.

In this amendment we have taken from the bill the particular wording used when a postal ballot is triggered. With this amendment we are endeavouring to enable councils to conduct their own elections. The amendment acknowledges that many of these councils are 'large rural sector, large remote areas or extensive island areas'. Those are parts of our great state of Queensland that are not in the backyard of the Electoral Commission. It is not the commission's primary area of service. The commission would be reliant upon local knowledge. It would be reliant upon individuals in those community areas to conduct an effective election. Enabling a local government to step into those arrangements and conduct its own election or contract it out, if it chooses to do that, we believe is a very sensible amendment. I commend the amendment to the House.

Mr LUCAS: I note that the government opposes the amendment moved by the shadow minister. The object of the amendment is to allow regional and remote island councils to conduct their own elections if they decide that to be more suitable than having them conducted by the ECQ. We do not support the amendment for a number of reasons. Firstly, it sets a different standard for regional, remote and Islander councils. The problem with running an election internally is that, after the event, you cannot go back and sort it out if an allegation is made that the council did it the wrong way or improperly. People might have complaints about costs in relation to the Electoral Commission of Queensland, but I am not aware of any complaints about the commission not acting honestly, appropriately or impartially.

As I said before, the honourable member has made a point about negotiation in relation to costs and those sorts of things. I believe it is appropriate for the Electoral Commission of Queensland to be sensible in its discussions with councils. Councils do have local knowledge when it comes to polling booths and they do have a role to play in making suggestions in a non-political way, particularly in a state such as Queensland which is very large and diverse. I travel around the state a lot, but I could not claim to have any local knowledge about where particular polling booths should go in a remote council area. It is important that they have that discussion.

An honourable member: There were 60 booths in Toowoomba.

Mr LUCAS: Exactly. That is a matter of engagement, because the Electoral Commission does things with respect to state elections as well. No doubt after the next election we will review how that cooperative role has worked. The government's proposed arrangements remove all perceptions of a conflict between the roles of a CEO and the returning officer. It has the bipartisan support of the committee. As I indicated, the government opposes the amendment.

Mr GIBSON: I take the Deputy Premier's objection to the amendment, but I come back to the clause. I refer to the opportunity to negotiate the price beforehand. Taking on board the Deputy Premier's points, is it the government's intent that the Electoral Commission could provide an estimate of costs to a local government so that it is aware of the costs? In that way they may say, 'Based on our experience, that appears to be excessive. We believe if you did X, Y and Z you could save some of that money.' There could be some of that discussion beforehand. If the House is not going to pass the amendment, in the spirit of it we would be looking for the opportunity for local governments to be informed before an election so that they can have some input into the potential cost of running the election.

Mr LUCAS: In response to the shadow minister, I am advised that the Electoral Commissioner has advised officers of my department that he is prepared to speak to councils with respect to an estimate of what he thinks the costs will be. Of course, as the honourable member acknowledges, the

government's position is not that if they do not like it they can go and see someone else. I strongly make the point that I expect the Electoral Commission to talk to councils and negotiate with them with respect to matters that do not impinge on the independence of the Electoral Commission, but that militate in favour of efficiency and doing things the smart way. Councils should be able to say, 'You don't have it at this hall if it annoys people; you are better off at that hall because that is where they always do it.' That should be standard practice.

Division: Question put—That Mr Gibson's amendment No. 1 be agreed to.

AYES, 36—Bates, Bleijie, Crandon, Cripps, Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, Foley, Gibson, Hobbs, Hopper, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, McArdle, McLindon, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Nicholls, Powell, Pratt, Robinson, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Rickuss, Sorensen

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

Resolved in the negative.

Non-government amendment (Mr Gibson) negatived.

Clause 8, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 9 to 49, as read, agreed to.

Clause 50—



Mr LUCAS (5.05 pm): I move the following amendment—

1 Clause 50 (Declaration of early polling booths)

Page 48, line 16, '11 days'—

omit, insert—

'14 days'.

I table the explanatory notes to the amendment.

Tabled paper: Explanatory notes to Hon. Paul Lucas's amendments to the Local Government Electoral Bill [\[5157\]](#).

This amendment makes the clause consistent with when a prepolling period starts under clause 73 by providing that the time fixed for voting at an early polling booth may start 14 days before polling day.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 50, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 51 to 202—



Mr LUCAS (5.06 pm): I seek leave to move amendments en bloc.

Leave granted.

Mr LUCAS: I move the following amendments—

2 Clause 79 (Applications to cast postal votes in local government elections that are not postal ballot elections)

Page 68, lines 25 and 26—

omit, insert—

'Ballot paper—(*insert name of local government area*)'.

3 Clause 80 (Distribution of ballot papers to electors for postal ballot elections)

Page 69, lines 12 and 13—

omit, insert—

'the words 'Ballot paper—(*insert name of local government area*)'.

4 Clause 81 (Applications to cast postal votes in postal ballot elections)

Page 70, lines 24 and 25—

omit, insert—

'Ballot paper—(*insert name of local government area*)'.

5 Clause 82 (Distribution of ballot papers to particular electors whose address has been omitted from a voters roll)

Page 71, lines 11 and 12—

omit, insert—

'paper—(*insert* name of local government area)'.'

6 Clause 99 (Returning officer's duty after counting votes)

Page 88, line 24, '(1)'—

omit.

7 Clause 99 (Returning officer's duty after counting votes)

Page 89, lines 5 to 14—

omit.

These amendments do a number of things. Amendments Nos 2, 3, 4 and 5 provide for the unsealed reply-paid envelopes provided to voters in full postal ballots for completing a postal vote or whose address has been omitted from a voters roll to include only the name of the local government area rather than information about a particular division or ward. As the Electoral Commission of Queensland advises, it is difficult to estimate the number of envelopes that may be required for each division. The object of the amendment is simply to minimise wastage when printing postal envelopes for elections. All return envelopes for a particular division or ward will be returned to the same returning officer and enclosed declaration envelopes will have the division number recorded on them so that the information will still be captured.

Amendments agreed to.

Clauses 51 to 202, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 203—



Mr GIBSON (5.08 pm): I move the following amendment—

2 Clause 203 (Leave to local government employee to contest local government election)

(1) Page 148, line 21, after 'government'—

insert—

'councillor or'.

(2) Page 148, after line 32—

insert—

'(4) A local government councillor who nominates as a candidate for an election is entitled to a leave of absence, for a period of not more than 2 months, to contest the election.

'(5) A local government councillor may use any entitlement to accrued leave with pay as leave to which the councillor is entitled under subsection (1).

'(6) A local government councillor is not entitled to payment of salary or wages for any period of leave taken under subsection (4).'

Again, this amendment has previously been circulated in the House and has been spoken to. Having listened to those members opposite who have spoken to this, I say with some disappointment that their understanding of this amendment has drifted from the sublime to the sheer ridiculous. The position of the member for Ashgrove was that if this amendment were somehow passed then Campbell Newman would be Lord Mayor of Brisbane again and would be able to use his resources to campaign. That clearly shows how out of touch she is, or her failure to understand this simple amendment. It is an amendment that is consistent with both LNP policy and the policy of the previous National Party which was in existence for some time.

I note the arguments that have been put forward by others, and they are arguments that are mired in the past. They are arguments that somehow we cannot trust individuals to conduct themselves appropriately when taking leave without pay from being a local councillor for that period until the election is held. If they are successful, of course the provision remains that they would have to resign as councillor the moment they become a member of the Legislative Assembly. If not, they are then permitted to continue in their duties as a councillor. Indeed, this is consistent with what exists within this bill in relation to local government employees. It is recognition that they should not have to resign their position, whether they be the CEO of the council or a groundsman or a rubbish man working in that council. They are able to take on board the experiences that they have gained whilst working there and use that to move forward.

If we take the government at the absolute purity of its argument, that we cannot trust any of our councillors to conduct themselves appropriately should they wish to run for state office, then the government is saying that we have a fundamental problem with the councillors in this state. I do not believe that to be the case.

Mr Lawlor: It is removing temptation.

Mr GIBSON: I do not believe that those councillors are corrupt or evil. I do not believe that we need to remove temptation. I take the interjection because if we use that argument then we should also ensure all union officials do the same. There is currently the case of a union official from the Health Services Union who is facing allegations of inappropriate use of his union credit card for campaigning.

What we have in this country and this state are very robust provisions. If an individual does something wrong, let us hold that individual to account. Let us not lower the standard to a point where we say to all local government officials, 'We do not trust you. We do not believe that you can effectively take leave whilst campaigning for local office.'

Much has been made about councillors progressing. Why would we want to enable them to progress to state government or to federal government? I note that to progress to the federal government they do not have this barrier. The Hon. Deputy Premier invokes our founding fathers of the Constitution to say that they knew it was a problem for state members. Clearly they did not see it as a problem for local government. They did not see it as a problem and have not since. To date we have not seen a bill being put through the federal parliament that bars local councillors from running for office in the federal parliament. So I do believe this is entirely appropriate.

I do believe that this is about enabling the very best individuals. Let us recognise that anyone who stands for public office—regardless of their politics, regardless of the level at which they stand—does so primarily because they believe they can make a difference. I think that those who serve at a local government level who then believe that they can make a difference at a state level should be enabled to do that with appropriate safeguards. This amendment enables us to achieve that. This amendment will provide consistency. I believe this amendment is good for local government and, more importantly, good for the state of Queensland in ensuring that we do have the very best of our local councillors who wish to run for state government being able to do so without any artificial barriers being placed before them.

Mr LUCAS: The government opposes this amendment for reasons that I have indicated previously, as have many of my colleagues on this side of the House. The fundamental issue with this amendment actually is not so much the issue about whether councillors can behave themselves or control themselves after they become a candidate for a state seat. That is correct in relation to any candidate regardless of their employment. One would expect that they would behave appropriately with respect to their employer and their other conflicts that they need to manage. I do not think that is the argument that is in any way near the strongest point in relation to this matter.

The fundamental issue is that, if you are elected to office as a council for a four-year term, you have indicated to the people who voted for you that you intend to serve them for that four-year term. You have entered into, if you like, a contract or an agreement with them on that basis. If you seek to re-enter into that contract in a different fashion whereby you think, 'I don't want to be your councillor anymore and I want to be elected to a different office,' then it is not unreasonable in those circumstances for your 'employers'—the people of your division, or indeed municipality if you are a mayor—to say, 'Okay. We want to have an opportunity to adjudicate on you again,' because you have walked away from your four-year agreement with them. It is a very, very simple principle, I would argue, to uphold.

It is not particularly onerous in the sense that it does not apply if you are a candidate—and usually candidates are selected long before elections. It does not require you to step down as a councillor whilst you are a candidate. It requires you to do that upon the time that you nominate, when you officially become beyond any shadow of a doubt someone who is a candidate in that election. And I do not think that is an unreasonable impost. But, as I said before, as a councillor you have signed up for a four-year term. You have entered into an agreement and a contract with the people who voted for you that you would be around for that period of time. You have then torn it up because you do not want to do that anymore. Imagine if I had a job as a solicitor working in a law firm and I said to the boss, 'Sorry. I'm just going to go down the road and apply for a job with someone else but make sure you hang on to my job for me, will you?' You can imagine how well that would go down with your boss. You would want a pretty understanding boss.

The member for Gympie raised the issue about the constitutional founders did not deal with this issue in relation to local government in the Constitution. That is a question that someone might ask that I think does deserve and warrant explanation. Let us have a look at what the Constitution said about local government. I will tell you what the Constitution said about local government. The member for Southport will know what it said about local government.

Mr Lawlor: Zero.

Mr LUCAS: Zero. So the Constitution did not even recognise local government. So how would it then have turned its mind to the role of local government councillors in relation to their candidacy for federal elections when it did not even recognise it? That is what the Constitution thought about it. Had it recognised local government, the honourable member for Gympie might have had an argument with some validity. Having said that, the constitutional founders did look at the issue of candidacy for federal elections for state members of parliament, and they made it crystal clear that as a state member of parliament, if you want to tear up your three-year contract that you have as a member of the Queensland parliament and run for federal parliament, you face the electors of your state seat if you lose, and this is exactly the same provision.

The High Court decision in relation to the legislation when Queensland sought to make those provisions in relation to local government councillors simply said this: 'State of Queensland, it is not for you to regulate candidates in relation to federal elections and that is the decision.' It did not say it disagreed with the provision, because in fact it did not strike down the provision in relation to state elections and councillors. It said simply that this is not a matter within the remit of the state. That is what it said.

The reason the provision is not in the Constitution for local government is not that they did not have a problem with it; they did not even recognise local government. So there is a principle involved here, and it is an important principle. You sign up for a period of time. You should then be prepared to face the people if you want to tear up that contract. That is what any reasonable employer would do. That is what anyone with a reasonable view of the body politic would do as well. That is why we oppose the amendment.

Mr GIBSON: The Deputy Premier has given us an argument in which he says if you are an employee and you said to your boss, 'I am looking for another job,' you would need to have a very understanding boss. Clearly the Deputy Premier is not an understanding boss, and he would then be looking to remove the provisions for local government employees to take leave whilst they seek to run for office. His argument is if you say to your employer, 'I'd like to do something different. I'd like to run for state office,' then you should—

Mr Lucas: In competition.

Mr GIBSON: His example was that if I were a lawyer and I went down to the law firm and said, 'I want to go somewhere else,' I would have to have a very understanding boss. What we have here is not in competition. It is state and local government. This is the problem we have with the Labor Party: Labor Party members see local government as a competition. They think they are in competition with them rather than working in partnership with them. It is a simple concept, but the Deputy Premier has now let the cat out of the bag. He wants to ensure local government employees are sacked because they cannot say to their boss, 'I want to do something different.'

With regard to the comments by the Deputy Premier on the Constitution, I acknowledge that the Constitution makes no reference to local governments, but I also acknowledge that there is a great deal of discussion at the moment to ensure we do see a recognition of local government within that. I certainly have not heard of any discussion occurring from his federal colleagues in Canberra that when local government is recognised they will be moving to bar local councillors from running for federal election without resigning at nomination.

The question I put to the Deputy Premier is: is this Labor Party policy? Will we see it being rolled out across not only the state of Queensland but also the country when hopefully local government is recognised in the Constitution?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for the question. The honourable member may not remember the history here, so I thank him for the question. What is Labor Party policy with respect to constitutional recognition of local government? I do not know what the federal government's current point of view is because you would have to frame a particular question, but I do know the history of it.

I can remember when the Hawke-Keating government proposed a referendum for constitutional recognition of local government, and who sunk it? Peter Reith and the Liberals and the Nationals. That is what happened. Do you remember that 'Vote No' campaign and the ads that said 'Vote No!' and the duck being shot out of the water? It was going to ruin the country if we had constitutional recognition of local government. So I thank the member for the question and I thank him for giving me the opportunity to point out the record of Tories when it comes to local government. We on this side of the House love local government.

I will say one thing to the honourable member to clarify one issue for him. He said that if those at the federal level had an issue with respect to local government councillors running for federal elections they would change the law. It is a constitutional matter and arguably they would have to change the Constitution, which would require amendment, I would have thought. I have not had a look at that, but I

would have thought that would be the case. There has never been a suggestion that this would apply to employees. Employees are seen as a quite different category. I think people can distinguish between elected officials and others. As I indicated, the government opposes the amendment.

Division: Question put—That Mr Gibson's amendment No. 2 be agreed to.

AYES, 35—Bates, Bleijie, Crandon, Cripps, Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Flegg, Foley, Gibson, Hobbs, Hopper, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, McArdle, McLindon, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Nicholls, Powell, Pratt, Robinson, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Rickuss, Sorensen

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

Resolved in the negative.

Non-government amendment (Mr Gibson) negatived.

Clause 203, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 204 to 236, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clauses—



Mr LUCAS (5.30 pm): I move the following amendment—

8 After clause 236 (Amendment of sch 2 (Dictionary))

Page 198, after line 7—

insert—

'Division 4A Amendment of Building Act 1975 relating to Pool Safety Council

'236A Act amended

This division amends the *Building Act 1975*.

'236B Amendment of s 246EK (Members)

Section 246EK(5)—

omit.

'236C Amendment of s 246EL (Appointment of deputy members)

'(1) Section 246EL(1), 'member, mentioned in section 246EK(3),'—

omit, insert—

'member'.

'(2) Section 246EL(2), 'a member,'—

omit, insert—

'a member who is a representative of the department or LGAQ,'.

'(3) Section 246EL(2), from 'the member,'—

omit, insert—

'the member represents.'

'236D Amendment of s 246EX (Presiding at meetings)

'Section 246EX—

insert—

'(2) If the chairperson is absent from a PSC meeting, but the deputy chairperson is present, the deputy chairperson is to preside.

'(3) If the chairperson and deputy chairperson are absent from a PSC meeting, a member chosen by the members present at the meeting is to preside.'

'236E Insertion of new ch 11, pt 13

'Chapter 11—

insert—

'Part 13 Validation provision inserted under the Local Government Electoral Act 2011**'307 Validation of particular appointments to PSC**

- '(1) If, before the commencement of this section, the Minister purportedly appointed a person as a deputy member, the person is declared to always have been validly appointed as a deputy member.
- '(2) Anything done or omitted to be done by a person mentioned in subsection (1) as a deputy member that would have been valid and lawful under this Act had the person been validly appointed is declared to always have been valid and lawful.
- '(3) If, before the commencement of this section, the Minister purportedly appointed a deputy member to be the deputy chairperson of PSC, despite section 246EM(1) the deputy member is declared to always have been validly appointed as the deputy chairperson of PSC.
- '(4) Anything done or omitted to be done by a deputy member mentioned in subsection (3) as deputy chairperson of PSC that would have been valid and lawful under this Act had the deputy member been validly appointed is declared to always have been valid and lawful.
- '(5) To remove any doubt, it is declared that a quorum for a PSC meeting can be, and could always have been, made up of any combination of attendees if the number of attendees at the meeting is, or was, more than half of the number of persons appointed as members of PSC at the time of the meeting.
- '(6) In this section—

attendee, for a PSC meeting, means—

- (a) a member; or
- (b) a deputy member, including a deputy member to whom subsection (1) applies, acting for a member who is absent from the PSC meeting.

deputy member means a deputy appointed under section 246EL(1) to act for a member.

member means a person appointed under section 246EK(1) as a member of PSC.'

'236F Amendment of sch 2 (Dictionary)

'Schedule 2—

insert—

'LGAQ means the LGAQ Ltd. under the *Local Government Act 2009*, section 287(2).'

Amendment agreed to.

Clauses 237 to 240, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—



Mr GIBSON (5.31 pm): I move the following amendment—

3 After clause 240 (Insertion of new ch 3, pt 5)

Page 200, after line 22—

insert—

'240A Amendment of s 155 (Disqualification because of other high office)

'Section 155(3)—

omit, insert—

- '(3) A person automatically stops being a councillor when the person becomes a member of the Legislative Assembly.
- '(4) To remove any doubt, it is declared that a person is not disqualified from being a councillor only because the person is a candidate for a Legislative Assembly election.

Example—

A person who is a councillor may nominate as a candidate for election as a Legislative Assembly member but must resign on becoming a member of the legislative assembly.'

Non-government amendment (Mr Gibson) negated.

Insertion of new clause—



Mr LUCAS (5.32 pm): I move the following amendment—

9 After clause 240 (Insertion of new ch 3, pt 5)

Page 200, after line 22—

insert—

'240A Amendment of s 153 (Disqualification for certain offences)

'Section 153(5)(a), '175,'—

omit.'

This is one of a number of conflict-of-interest amendments. We consulted with the Local Government Association of Queensland and the Integrity Commissioner, and we sought input from the CMC as well, to regularise and make simpler issues such as conflict of interest. I understand that it is supported by the opposition so I will not speak further.

Mr GIBSON: Yes, this amendment does have bipartisan support. I think it was more an interpretation rather than the actual letter of the previous local government bill, but in recognising that we also take on board that the LGAQ has been very vocal in this matter. It wanted to come to a solution. We do commend the government for introducing these amendments. Hopefully this will ensure that council meetings are not bogged down in a range of unnecessary conflict of interest declarations.

Amendment agreed to.

Clauses 241 and 242, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clauses—



Mr LUCAS (5.33 pm): I move the following amendment—

10 After clause 242 (Amendment of s 166 (Filling a vacancy in the office of another councillor))

Page 201, after line 8—

insert—

'242A Replacement of s 175 (Councillor's conflict of interest at a meeting)

'Section 175—

omit, insert—

'175 Councillor's conflict of interest at a meeting

- '(1) This section applies if a matter is to be discussed at a meeting of the council, or any of its committees, and a councillor at the meeting—
- (a) has a conflict of interest in the matter (the **real conflict of interest**); or
 - (b) could reasonably be taken to have a conflict of interest in the matter (the **perceived conflict of interest**).
- '(2) A **conflict of interest** is a conflict between—
- (a) a councillor's personal interests; and
 - (b) the public interest;
- that might lead to a decision that is contrary to the public interest.
- '(3) The councillor must deal with the real conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest in a transparent and accountable way.
- '(4) Without limiting subsection (3), the councillor must inform the meeting of—
- (a) the councillor's personal interests in the matter; and
 - (b) if the councillor participates in the meeting in relation to the matter, how the councillor intends to deal with the real or perceived conflict of interest.
- '(5) Subsection (6) applies if a quorum at the meeting can not be formed because the councillor proposes to exclude himself or herself from the meeting to comply with subsection (3).
- '(6) The councillor does not contravene subsection (3) by participating (including by voting, for example) in the meeting in relation to the matter if the attendance of the councillor, together with any other required number of councillors, forms a quorum for the meeting.
- '(7) The following must be recorded in the minutes of the meeting, and on the council's website—
- (a) the name of the councillor who has the real or perceived conflict of interest;
 - (b) the nature of the personal interests, as described by the councillor;
 - (c) how the councillor dealt with the real or perceived conflict of interest;
 - (d) if the councillor voted on the matter—how the councillor voted on the matter;
 - (e) how the majority of persons who were entitled to vote at the meeting voted on the matter.
- '(8) For subsection (2), a councillor who is nominated by the council to be a member of a board of a corporation or other association does not have a personal interest merely because of the nomination or subsequent appointment as the member.

- '(9) To remove any doubt, it is declared that nonparticipation in the meeting is not the only way the councillor may appropriately deal with the real or perceived conflict of interest in a transparent and accountable way.'

'242B Amendment of s 178 (What this division is about)

'Section 178(3)(c), '176(2)'—

omit, insert—

'175(3), 175(4) or 176(2).'

'242C Amendment of s 180 (Assessing complaints)

'Section 180(12), from 'the record'—

omit, insert—

'the part of the record that relates to outcomes of written complaints—

- (a) at the council's public office; or
(b) on the council's website.'

'242D Insertion of new s 180A

'After section 180—

insert—

'180A Preliminary dealings with complaints before hearing

- '(1) This section applies if the chief executive officer refers a complaint to the BCC councillor conduct review panel.
'(2) The BCC councillor conduct review panel may, without conducting a hearing of the complaint, order the complaint, or a part of the complaint, be dismissed or struck out if the panel considers the complaint or part is—
(a) frivolous, vexatious or misconceived; or
(b) lacking in substance; or
(c) otherwise an abuse of process.
'(3) If the BCC councillor conduct review panel acts under subsection (2), the panel must give written notice of the order to the chief executive officer, the accused councillor and the entity that made the complaint.'

'242E Amendment of s 181 (Notifying councillor of the hearing of a complaint)

'(1) Section 181(1)—

omit, insert—

'(1) At least 7 days before the hearing of a complaint by the BCC councillor conduct review panel, the panel must give the accused councillor a written notice about the hearing.'

'(2) Section 181(3)—

omit.

'(3) Section 181(4)—

renumber as section 181(3).'

Amendment agreed to.

Clauses 243 to 260, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—



Mr GIBSON (5.33 pm): I move the following amendment—

4 After clause 260 (Insertion of new ch 3, pt 5)

Page 208, after line 15—

insert—

'260A Amendment of s 155 (Disqualification because of other high office)

'Section 155(3)—

omit, insert—

- '(3) A person automatically stops being a councillor when the person becomes a member of the Legislative Assembly.

'(4) To remove any doubt, it is declared that a person is not disqualified from being a councillor only because the person is a candidate for a Legislative Assembly election.

Example—

A person who is a councillor may nominate as a candidate for election as a Legislative Assembly member but must resign on becoming a member of the legislative assembly.'

Non-government amendment (Mr Gibson) negatived.

Insertion of new clause—



Mr LUCAS (5.33 pm): I move the following amendment—

11 After clause 260 (Insertion of new ch 3, pt 5)

Page 208, after line 15—

insert—

'260A Amendment of s 153 (Disqualification for certain offences)

'Section 153(5)(a), '173,'—

omit.'

Amendment agreed to.

Clauses 261 to 264, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clauses—



Mr LUCAS (5.34 pm): I move the following amendment—

12 After clause 264 (Amendment of s 166 (Filling a vacancy in the office of another councillor))

Page 209, after line 15—

insert—

'264A Replacement of s 173 (Councillor's conflict of interest at a meeting)

'Section 173—

omit, insert—

'173 Councillor's conflict of interest at a meeting

'(1) This section applies if a matter is to be discussed at a meeting of a local government, or any of its committees, and a councillor at the meeting—

(a) has a conflict of interest in the matter (the **real conflict of interest**); or

(b) could reasonably be taken to have a conflict of interest in the matter (the **perceived conflict of interest**).

'(2) A **conflict of interest** is a conflict between—

(a) a councillor's personal interests; and

(b) the public interest;

that might lead to a decision that is contrary to the public interest.

'(3) The councillor must deal with the real conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest in a transparent and accountable way.

'(4) Without limiting subsection (3), the councillor must inform the meeting of—

(a) the councillor's personal interests in the matter; and

(b) if the councillor participates in the meeting in relation to the matter, how the councillor intends to deal with the real or perceived conflict of interest.

'(5) Subsection (6) applies if a quorum at the meeting can not be formed because the councillor proposes to exclude himself or herself from the meeting to comply with subsection (3).

'(6) The councillor does not contravene subsection (3) by participating (including by voting, for example) in the meeting in relation to the matter if the attendance of the councillor, together with any other required number of councillors, forms a quorum for the meeting.

'(7) The following must be recorded in the minutes of the meeting, and on the local government's website—

(a) the name of the councillor who has the real or perceived conflict of interest;

- (b) the nature of the personal interest, as described by the councillor;
 - (c) how the councillor dealt with the real or perceived conflict of interest;
 - (d) if the councillor voted on the matter—how the councillor voted on the matter;
 - (e) how the majority of persons who were entitled to vote at the meeting voted on the matter.
- '(8) For subsection (2), a councillor who is nominated by a local government to be a member of a board of a corporation or other association does not have a personal interest merely because of the nomination or subsequent appointment as the member.
- '(9) To remove any doubt, it is declared that nonparticipation in the meeting is not the only way the councillor may appropriately deal with the real or perceived conflict of interest in a transparent and accountable way.'

'264B Amendment of s 176 (What this division is about)

'Section 176(3)(c), '171(3) or 174(2)'—

omit, insert—

'171(3), 173(3), 173(4) or 174(2)'.
'

'264C Amendment of s 177 (Assessing complaints)

'Section 177(12), 'the record'—

omit, insert—

'the part of the record that relates to outcomes of written complaints'.
'

'264D Insertion of new s 177A

'After section 177—

insert—

'177A Preliminary dealings with complaints before hearing

- '(1) This section applies if the department's chief executive refers a complaint of misconduct to a regional conduct review panel or the tribunal.
- '(2) The regional conduct review panel or the tribunal may, without conducting a hearing of the complaint, order the complaint, or a part of the complaint, be dismissed or struck out if the panel or tribunal considers the complaint or part is—
- (a) frivolous, vexatious or misconceived; or
 - (b) lacking in substance; or
 - (c) otherwise an abuse of process.
- '(3) If the regional conduct review panel or the tribunal acts under subsection (2), the panel or tribunal must give written notice of the order to all the following—
- (a) the chief executive officer (if any) who originally assessed the complaint;
 - (b) the department's chief executive;
 - (c) the accused councillor;
 - (d) the entity that made the complaint.'

'264E Amendment of s 178 (Notifying councillor of the hearing of a complaint of misconduct)

'(1) Section 178(1) and (2)—

omit, insert—

'(1) At least 7 days before the hearing of a complaint of misconduct by a regional conduct review panel or the tribunal, the department's chief executive must give the accused councillor a written notice about the hearing.'

'(2) Section 178(4)—

omit.

'(3) Section 178(3) and (5)—

renumber as section 178(2) and (3).'

Amendment agreed to.

Clauses 265 to 269, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—



Mr LUCAS (5.34 pm): I move the following amendment—

13 After clause 269 (Insertion of new ch 9, pt 2, hdg)

Page 210, after line 19—

insert—

'269A Insertion of new ch 9, pt 3

'Chapter 9—

insert—

'Part 3 Transitional provision inserted under the Local Government Electoral Act 2011

'294 Continuation of particular local laws of Torres Strait Island Regional Council

'(1) A prescribed local law in force immediately before 1 January 2012 continues in force until the earlier of the following—

- (a) the local law's repeal by the Torres Strait Island Regional Council;
- (b) the end of 30 September 2012.

'(2) However, that Council may, by local law, amend a local law continued under subsection (1) while it continues under that subsection.

'(3) In this section—

prescribed local law means any of the following local laws—

- (a) Badu Island Council By-Law No. 2 (Law and Order);
- (b) Boigu Island Council By-Law No. 2 (Law and Order);
- (c) Dauan Island Council By-Laws 1995;
- (d) Erub Island Council By-Laws 1995;
- (e) Hammond Island Council By-Law No. 2 (Law and Order);
- (f) Iama Island Council By-Law No. 2 (Law and Order);
- (g) Kubin Island Council By-Law No. 2 (Law and Order);
- (h) Mabuiag Island Council By-Laws 1995;
- (i) Mer Island Council By-Laws 1995;
- (j) Poruma Island Council By-Laws 1995;
- (k) Saibai Island Council By-Laws 1997;
- (l) St Pauls Island Council By-Laws 1995;
- (m) Ugar Island Council By-Laws 1997;
- (n) Warraber Island Council By-Laws 1997;
- (o) Yorke Island Council By-Laws 1995.'.

Amendment agreed to.

Clauses 270 to 324, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, 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) (5.35 pm): Prior to moving the third reading of the bill, I thank the honourable member opposite for his courtesy and efficiency in relation to disposing of the matter. Notwithstanding the fact that the opposition had a number of issues with which it disagreed with the government in relation to the matter, I thank him for that. It does him credit in that regard. I thank officers of my department as well for their assistance to both me and the opposition in relation to the matter. I move—


That the bill, as amended, be now read a third time.

Question put—That the bill, as amended, 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) (5.36 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.

REPORT

Office of the Leader of the Opposition

 **Mr SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (5.37 pm), by leave: I table the public report of office expenses for the Office of the Leader of the Opposition for the period 1 July 2010 to 22 March 2011.

Tabled paper: Public report of office expenses of the Office of the Leader of the Opposition for the period 1 July 2010 to 22 March 2011 [[5158](#)].

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

 **Hon. PT LUCAS** (Lytton—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (5.37 pm): I move—

That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 9.30 am on Tuesday, 6 September 2011.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

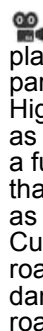
Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

 **Hon. PT LUCAS** (Lytton—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (5.37 pm): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.


Natural Disasters, Main Roads

 **Mr RICKUSS** (Lockyer—LNP) (5.37 pm): I rise to highlight the fact that planning, planning, planning needs to be done by Main Roads with regard to roads issues in South-East Queensland and particularly the Lockyer electorate. There is sufficient planning for major arterial roads like the Warrego Highway but, as has been highlighted with the recent flooding during summer, minor arterial roads such as Forest Hill-Coominya road, the Gatton-Esk road and those sorts of roads do not really have a plan for a full rebuild and a full restructure of those Main Roads roads. They are still very important arterial roads that need to be looked after. This has been highlighted even more given some of the major cuttings such as the Minden-Marburg cutting, the Toowoomba range cutting, the Blackbutt Range and the Cunningham range. They were virtually all cut during the summer's disaster, and that is where good road maintenance is a priority. Verges of the Cunningham Highway past Boonah are in quite a dangerous state. There needs to be long-term planning so appropriate money can be allocated for those roads so that rebuilds can be done.

I call on this government and the minister to ensure that this long-term planning is put in place so that if we face summers of such disasters again the appropriate management and the appropriate design work is already done in the office so that these roads do not collapse into the state they collapsed into this last summer. I realise there were extreme conditions, but still four or five major cuttings and major highways were virtually cut off all around South-East Queensland. Planning does need to be done appropriately so that these roads can be maintained and managed to an appropriate standard. I also read in a flood report about the debris that needs to be cleaned out from the creeks, particularly creeks in the Lockyer Valley. I had a meeting with Minister Nolan and some of her officers this afternoon, so that is starting to progress forward.

Unfortunately, it is a funding issue. That has started to be managed, but there needs to be good consultation with landholders, councils and DERM staff—right across-the-board—so that people understand the issues and understand their responsibilities. That is really where we need to be. Some of the regulations from the Water Act 2000 have blurred the lines a bit between landholders, DERM and councils. So the sooner we can get some of those issues cleaned up, the better off we will be. Hopefully, that will be done before the next wet season.

Grant Street, Whiteside

 **Ms O'NEILL** (Kallangur—ALP) (5.40 pm): Grant Street in Whiteside has a low-level crossing across the North Pine River and direct access to Lawnton and points south and runs through a beautiful almost rural area. This quiet street was mostly used by locals and it experienced low traffic numbers. This means that it has been a long-used access for pony clubs and trail riding as well as recreational riding, cycling and walking to avoid busy Dayboro Road to get to the pony club, to join up with many kilometres of designated riding trails or just to get to school or work. Since the floods, this street has been closed to protect the community from danger associated with releases of water from North Pine Dam and to protect Seqwater land. This closure means that the community must travel along busy Dayboro Road, with high volumes of traffic travelling at 80 kilometres per hour, to get through to Lawnton and places south. It is no place for cyclists, pedestrians and certainly not horses but particularly ponies and children.


Children and adults have used this trail to get to the southern side of the river and to the pony club since it was built. Although no-one wants the community put at risk owing to water releases from the dam, horse riders and others in my electorate want safe, convenient access to continue their recreational activity, competitions and events easily and safely.

The Moreton Bay Council website lists horse riding as one of the activities and experiences available in my area. Indeed, one of the main attractions of living in a rural area is the opportunity to own and ride horses. This community has a large number of horse riders because they chose to live here in a rural area. The community is not asking for vehicle access; they are asking for foot, cycle and horse access only for people to be able to walk, trail-ride or cycle to either side of the river, for children to use this path to ride to school so as to avoid Dayboro Road, and even for Dayboro trail riders to ride from Dayboro to the Old Petrie Town pub.

I note from DERM's website that the Queensland government has recognised that horse riding has long been a part of the state's lifestyle and character. DERM has listed various trails and maps for riders to use and there was a proposed portion through this area to join up to already designated trails and tracks. I have had a very good meeting with the local Seqwater staff who, when they made the decision to close the street, had no knowledge of the non-vehicle traffic that made regular use of the crossing. We have been able to get temporary access for the pony club participants through the provision of a key to one person who will open the gates for these riders, which has been very much appreciated.

There are existing tracks that cut through the Seqwater land that will not take riders near the water treatment works and would give good access. I urge the minister and departmental staff to look kindly on the request to provide pedestrian and horse access through the Grant Street crossing and to allocate a small piece of land to allow for a permanent trail through to Byrnes Road or Protheroe Road. We want people to be active and we want people to encourage their children in wholesome pursuits. What more fantastic activity could there be than pony club and trail riding for those lucky enough to own or have access to horses?

Ashmore Road-Bundall Road Intersection

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (5.43 pm): I rise tonight to speak about an issue that is most important for the road infrastructure of Mermaid Beach and for the Gold Coast region. The intersection of Ashmore Road and Bundall Road leading into Bermuda Street is one of the most congested sections of road on the Gold Coast. The Gold Coast City Council has budgeted \$50 million for an at-grade separation of Ashmore Road and Bundall Road as its more-than-generous contribution to a state government problem. But the state government has ignored this amount and has refused to consider the upgrade and come to the party to upgrade this vitally important, main north-south city-connecting road.

There are no plans and no money allocated for this project by Main Roads and a determined reluctance to take any action on this horrible section of road for the next four years. The government has not even considered the population growth that will occur over these four years and the impact that that increased growth will have on this road. Even though this intersection is part of the electorate of my esteemed colleague the member for Surfers Paradise, the residents of the Mermaid Beach electorate use these roads to go to and from work and school and in their daily activities face this parking-lot tragedy every day where these roads bisect in my electorate. I can remember right back in 1995—16 years ago—when I was in local government the state government had been promising an upgrade for many years. Even with the \$50 million funding commitment from the Gold Coast City Council, the government still refused to consider and go forward with an upgrade of this section which would enable a smoother flow of traffic along the main corridor.

The light-rail proposal currently proceeding will provide a further blockage and impediment to vehicle traffic on the Gold Coast Highway. The implementation of light rail would have an enormous impact on this already overly congested and choked up Ashmore-Bundall roads intersection and Bermuda Street, as traffic transfers from the Gold Coast Highway to Bundall Road. The light rail will force even more local traffic on to these crammed roads that the locals and tourists alike utilise for movement around this section of the Gold Coast.

The state government, through the Minister for Main Roads, has a complete disregard for the population growth of the Gold Coast. I would like to ask the minister what method and model his departmental officers use to determine what road infrastructure is determined and decided upon. This major infrastructure will only get more and more expensive to complete as the years roll by, just like what happened with the Tugun bypass. The upgrade has been promised for the past 16 years, and with the population growing exponentially the Ashmore Road-Bundall Road intersection needs to be upgraded now, before the light-rail project is completed.

Only a can-do government will give road infrastructure on the Gold Coast the high priority that it deserves—on the Gold Coast as well as across the state. We will get roads such as Bermuda Street upgraded, with the appropriate infrastructure delivered. Unfortunately, the Labor Party regards the Gold Coast as tiger country. Until the Labor Party recognises the importance of the Gold Coast and the growth of the Gold Coast, it does not deserve to have any members representing the Gold Coast community.

Year 7

 **Ms JONES** (Ashgrove—ALP) (5.46 pm): Except for the honourable member for Southport, who does a sterling job representing the people of the Gold Coast everywhere he goes.


It is my great pleasure to talk about the transition of year 7 to high school as one of the key educational reforms that this government is pursuing as part of its investment in education across Queensland. One of the great motivators from me to stand for parliament is my strong belief in having a good-quality education system for all children in Queensland no matter their faith and no matter how much money their parents have. That is fundamentally why under Labor governments we continue to see significant investment in our schools and in our school infrastructure.

As part of this reform the Ashgrove electorate has benefited significantly. We have seen the introduction of prep. At the time prep was introduced I had just been elected as the local member for Ashgrove. It was a hotly contested issue and discussed at the time. But ultimately, I know that it is something that all of my schools now think was a very good decision. Similarly, we have seen the rollout and we continue to see the rollout of 240 kindergartens across Queensland. In my electorate, we have seen significant investment with the new Gap Community Kindergarten and also a new kindergarten at Oakley State School at Ashgrove. These centres are now resources that are in my local community that are helping to provide good-quality education for the youngest children in my community.

When I have been out talking to P&Cs, P&Fs and parents about the transition of year 7 to high school I have found that, in the main, people are very supportive of this reform, particularly as we will see for the first time children at the age of 12 and in year 7 receiving specialised education in science, English and mathematics. But, of course, there are legitimate questions that parents have. That is why I have asked the Minister for Education to come to my electorate and meet with parents and give them the opportunity to ask firsthand some of these questions. On 13 September at The Gap State High School parents will indeed have this opportunity. I want to place on the record my thanks to the Minister for Education for making himself available so that they can ask these questions.

From all the information I have seen and the questions I have asked on behalf of parents, I am very confident that we are putting in place all the support mechanisms that are needed to ensure that, just like prep, we will have the investment in both infrastructure and support staff to ensure that this transition is done smoothly, both in the state system and in the Catholic and independent school system. We will see the continued benefit of children getting access to specialised education at an earlier time. So I encourage all parents in my electorate, particularly those whose children are at the age at which they will be going into year 7 in high school, to attend this forum, to ask their questions and to hear the answers straight from the minister's mouth.

Whalan, Ms L

 **Ms DAVIS** (Aspley—LNP) (5.49 pm): I rise to pay tribute to Loretto Whalan, a much adored figure in my local community, who passed away recently at the age of 101. Loretto, or Joan as she was known to her friends and family, lived at the Holy Spirit retirement village in Carseldine for 23 years. In the brief time I have to speak this evening, I could not possibly hope to fully portray the rich and extensive


tapestry that was Joan's life. I am, however, very grateful to Joan's children—Jan, Jim and Jill—for sharing with me some of the quirky and remarkable anecdotes that capture the essence of Joan's humour, compassion and generosity.

Born in Goulburn, New South Wales, Joan was the middle of three girls. At a young age she displayed a keen interest in etiquette and elocution—this would be unsurprising to anyone who knew Joan. She even gained a licentiate from the Trinity College of Music in the art of speech and drama and was recommended to join the Royal Shakespeare Company in London. Her fashion sense developed at an early age. She decided the brim of the school hat was too wide for her small face and so trimmed it with a pair of scissors. It was not a gesture that was well received by the nuns, given many girls subsequently followed her lead. On another occasion, a nun at her school questioned Joan as to why she would not eat the crusts off her bread, saying they would help make her strong and healthy. Joan replied, 'I would prefer to be pale and interesting'.

Despite her artistic talents and sharp wit, Joan did not pursue the theatre arts. When Darwin was bombed in 1942, she joined the Australian Air Force as a nurse. On ANZAC Day this year Joan said, 'I got very emotional about Australia. I didn't want to join when we were fighting for the English, I thought they could look after themselves, but when we were attacked I thought that it was time I offered my services'. It was during this time in her life that she met her husband, Guy. They were married very happily for 61 years until his death in 2006. Interestingly, some of Joan and Guy's children and grandchildren followed them into the armed services.

I had the very great pleasure of attending Joan's 101st birthday celebrations. Having the opportunity to meet people in the community who each and every day inspire those around them is one of those things that makes this job so rewarding. Joan was one of those inspirational people. I will always carry very special memories of Joan, in particular her extraordinary ability to make you feel that you were the only person in a bustling, crowded room. She had a keen interest in people and a deep faith. It was this genuine enthusiasm for life and those she shared it with that made such a lasting impression on so many. Indeed, the longevity of Joan Whalan's life will be matched by that of the memories her loved ones will hold forever. Rest peacefully, beautiful lady. Your passing leaves us with a little less sparkle in the world.

Mining Exploration, Buffer Zones


 **Mrs PRATT** (Nanango—Ind) (5.52 pm): I rise to talk about the fact that roughly 79 per cent of Nanango electorate towns could potentially become another Acland and will have no protection against big mining companies wishing to explore on their very doorsteps. I am being conservative when I say that roughly 33—some may not be classified as townships by this government—have under 1,000 residents. The Premier's recent announcement to impose a two-kilometre buffer zone shows that the government has grasped the concept of buffer zones and the importance of them and although heading in the right direction it has a long, long way to go. Health issues arise within a five-kilometre radius of any kind of mining operation. This one-size-fits-all approach does not take into account prevailing wind, terrain and other considerations.

We believe this restriction is discriminatory and does not go anywhere near far enough. The government is making a decision that effectively classes some houses as less worthy of protection than others. Our communities will become known as protected or sacrificial communities. The latter, without sufficient voting power to make a difference, will be offered up on the altar of mining. To me that reeks of discrimination. Both the government and the opposition I believe will grab the royalty revenue. I also believe that this decision will divide rural property owners from rural communities and make it harder for farming voices to be heard as many communities adopt the 'I'm-all-right-Jack' approach and the sparse farming population will be lost.

This government seems hell-bent on destroying farming land and, although I know they are making moves to protect land, I have yet to see a definitive way of achieving this. Mining companies do try to rehabilitate their land very much, but I have yet to find anyone, including mining companies and governments, who can unscramble an egg. That is what we are asking mining companies to do with the land that they disturb. None of us are opposed to progress and growth, whether it be mines, wind farms, energy corridors or even rail corridors, but it must be done with consideration for those who were there in the first place.

The Brisbane Valley, the Darling Downs and the South Burnett are all currently suffering from mining exploration fever. Their populations are unsure of their futures. It is not the right of any government to decide that one person's home is worth protecting over another's, regardless of the number of residents.

Outback Education Tour Subsidy Scheme


 **Mr HOOLIHAN** (Keppel—ALP) (5.55 pm): I believe that it is very important to our community and society that our children are versed in the history of the country and are given the opportunity to see what made this country what it is today. It was with much pleasure, therefore, that I accompanied the Premier to Emu Park State School on 10 August. The Premier was governing Queensland from Rockhampton. Emu Park State School was the first school to make an application for the rebate to take their students outback to see what made this country great. They were the first to make the application and the first to get the grant. The Premier was very pleased to talk to the children.

From Monday this week they travelled to Barcaldine, Longreach and Blackall to see some of those things that also provided a great economic boost to Queensland. In Blackall they were going to visit the woolscour in the Jackie Howe Memorial and the Black Stump. In Barcaldine they were going to the Workers Heritage Centre and in Longreach they were going to the Qantas Founders Museum and the Stockman's Hall of Fame.

The children did not know a lot about the west and because I came from there I was able to give them some idea of what they might see. I told them, and rather surprisingly the Premier agreed with me, that when they stopped in Alpha they should stop at the local bakery which makes the best pies in Queensland—Snow's Pies. The children told me that that is a red food in schools and they did not think they would be able to stop there. They were also going to travel through Ilfracombe. The museum in Ilfracombe, I was able to point out to them, has a policeman's baton, baton No. 123. That baton used to belong to Sergeant Duffy. It is reported—not only in folklore—that when Banjo Paterson wrote *Waltzing Matilda* there were not three troopers, there was one trooper and it was trooper 123 and that was Sergeant Duffy. I do not think that the children believed me, but that is the way that folklore has grown up.

The children were looking forward very much to travelling with their teachers and parents to see outback Queensland. I would encourage all the members in this House to talk to their local schools about obtaining assistance to undertake these sorts of trips because it does allow our students to get a grip on the history of Queensland.

Chatsworth Electorate, Public Transport

 **Mr KILBURN** (Chatsworth—ALP) (5.58 pm): I am glad to be able to take a couple of minutes to tell the residents of the Chatsworth electorate some great news about public transport. I do not think three minutes will be long enough to give them all the good news. When the new busway extension opens this weekend—the members for Greenslopes and Bulimba and I will be there—a whole range of bus services will start, bringing 100,000 new seats a week into the eastern suburbs of Brisbane.

For the benefit of the residents of my electorate, a new P205 service will run from the top of Scrub Road, through Carindale and into the city. This new route will mean that people will not have to drive to the Carindale bus interchange anymore. They can catch buses directly from the top end of Carindale into the city via Carindale shopping centre, the Buranda busway and the Captain Cook Bridge. There will be more 222 services on weekdays and weekends. From Monday there will be a route 222 service every 10 minutes in peak and every 15 minutes off-peak between 6 am and 11 pm, seven days a week.


There is also some news for the residents of Cannon Hill and Belmont. From Monday, the new route 213 will give Cannon Hill and Belmont residents a fast and frequent peak-hour service to Carindale, with quick connections to the city on the 200 and 222 buses, which leave every five minutes from the Carindale shopping centre. The 213 bus will leave the Cannon Hill shopping centre and go directly to the bus interchange every 15 minutes between 6 am and 9 am, and between 4 pm and 7 pm.

There will be more Sunday services for people who use the 204 service from Carindale into the city. New services will commence on Monday and customers will have access to an additional 24 trips every Sunday. This means that the route 204 will now operate every half an hour on Sundays and public holidays. The good news keeps on coming. The P217 route that takes people from the Carindale bus interchange via the new Langlands Park busway will now stop at Queens Street. It will run every 10 minutes between 6 am and 9 am, and between 4 pm and 7 pm.

There is even more good news for people who like to shop at DFO. A new bus route 590 operates from Garden City and travels through the Carindale bus interchange to the airport DFO. That will allow people to travel to the shopping complex and will also provide a cheap and effective way to get to the airport. That service will run every 15 minutes during peak hour and 30 minutes during off-peak.

For the uni students in my electorate, the 209 will be even quicker than it is now, as we have cut out the loop through Woolloongabba. There is a separate bus to get to Woolloongabba. The bus will go straight down to the new busway, past the PA, across the green bridge and into the university. This will cut down the time. It runs every 15 minutes. It is all good news for public transport in my electorate. It is something I have been working on since I was elected. I am glad to see the results are starting to flow.

Mission Beach, Tourism

 **Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (6.01 pm): I rise to draw to the attention of the House the triple whammy of setbacks that have hit the Mission Beach community and threaten to seriously undermine its economic recovery after Cyclone Yasi. Firstly, the decision by the current owners of the Dunk Island and Bedarra Island resorts not to rebuild those resorts has devastated not just tourism operators but also the whole Mission Beach community. Dunk Island is not only a tourism icon at Mission Beach; it is also a sentimental favourite for recreational use by local residents across the Cassowary Coast. The Bligh government must prioritise the re-establishment of infrastructure on the spit on Dunk Island and the walking tracks in the national park area to facilitate day-trip tourism and recreational visits by local residents. Tourism operators and locals want the infrastructure on the spit rebuilt and reopened as soon as possible.


Secondly, the Bligh government has released a new draft plan for a number of island national parks in my electorate. Proposals in this draft plan threaten to restrict the activities of the tourism industry and further restrict the recreational activities of locals, including on Dunk Island, which is a cornerstone of the tourism industry at Mission Beach. I urge local residents and tourism operators who have an interest in these island national parks to make a submission on the draft plan. Amazingly, it fails completely to recognise the significant damage done by Cyclone Yasi and the opportunity to replace damaged infrastructure with better or more appropriate infrastructure. The Bligh government's draft plan proposes to refuse permission for new infrastructure, further restrict access to the islands and extend fishing restrictions in certain areas. More regulations, red tape and lockouts would be a serious blow to tourism and the lifestyle of local residents in my electorate, particularly at Mission Beach.

Thirdly, we recently found out that the Bligh government has withdrawn the marine development area designation of the Clump Point boat harbour reserve under the new Queensland Coastal Plan. Planning for enhanced marine facilities was formalised many years ago, with the former Johnstone shire requesting the reserve in 1984. The Bligh government made the decision without any consultation with the Mission Beach community. The draft QCP that circulated for public consultation included the MDA. If the draft plan had proposed to remove it, the community would have spoken up. I have written to several ministers strongly objecting to this decision.

For years local boaties and tourism operators have struggled with the inadequate existing facilities and demanded safe and modern boating infrastructure. The withdrawal of the MDA will significantly set back the progress of an application to establish new infrastructure at Mission Beach and will increase the cost of any future proposal. I cannot believe the Bligh government has taken this decision after Mission Beach was so seriously impacted by Cyclone Yasi. Infrastructure projects will be very important to the economic recovery of business and tourism. This decision will significantly undermine business confidence at Mission Beach. It is critical that the Bligh government restores public infrastructure, not forces its restrictive draft island plan on tourism and locals, and that it overturns the removal of the MDA at Mission Beach.

(Time expired)

Dobinson, Mrs N

 **Hon. RG NOLAN** (Ipswich—ALP) (Minister for Finance, Natural Resources and the Arts) (6.05 pm): Last month the Ipswich cycling community experienced a terrible loss when Narelle Gwen Dobinson passed away after being knocked from her bicycle by a car. Mrs Dobinson was the third member of the Ipswich cycling club to be killed by a car while out on their bike over the past few months.

The cycling community is a tight one and at the heart of every cycling community is the bike shop. Mrs Dobinson was the mother of Troy Dobinson, who owns Ipswich's favourite Yellow Jersey Bike Shop. She was actively involved in the Ipswich cycling club as its treasurer, and the most terrible and sad irony is that, as part of the club, she was very involved in running bike safety courses for others. Mrs Dobinson was well known in the Ipswich community as a mother of four: Troy, Brett, Dave and Donna. She was a Taylor, a well-known Ipswich family. Her brother Craig was a world-champion cyclist.

July and August had been really exciting months for cyclists. Every night people who like riding had been staying up late to watch Cadel Evans's progress in the Tour de France and then turning up early the next morning, bleary-eyed, to ride together and talk about how Cadel had done. On Saturday night Cadel Evans won the time trial, meaning that he would ultimately be the winner of the Tour de France. On Sunday morning Mrs Dobinson was hit. She died in hospital a week later as a result of her injuries.

In Mrs Dobinson's name, her family have established the 24/7 Cycling Safety Fund, the purpose of which is to raise money for a specific cycling facility and possibly criterion circuit in Ipswich and to promote the interests of cycle safety. So far, the family has raised some thousands of dollars and has managed to put this critical project on the public agenda. The next stage will be for the Ipswich City

Council to choose a location for the circuit so that they can approach the state for fifty-fifty funding, as is the normal course of action in such cases. I pledge my whole-hearted support to what is and has always been a critical project.

At the funeral, Mrs Dobinson's son Troy said that he wanted to imagine his mother cycling forevermore on a sunny day, with a tailwind behind her. I would like to imagine her in a similar way. I also hope that her legacy will be to have contributed to safer cycling for the rest of us who continue to share the road.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 6.08 pm.

ATTENDANCE

Attwood, Bates, Bleijie, Bligh, Boyle, Choi, Crandon, Cripps, Croft, Cunningham, Darling, Davis, Dempsey, Dick, Dickson, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Farmer, Finn, Flegg, Foley, Fraser, Gibson, Grace, Hinchliffe, Hobbs, Hoolihan, Hopper, Horan, Jarratt, Johnson, Johnstone, Jones, Keech, Kiernan, Kilburn, Knuth, Langbroek, Lawlor, Lucas, McArdle, McLindon, Male, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Mickel, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nicholls, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Powell, Pratt, Reeves, Rickuss, Roberts, Robertson, Robinson, Ryan, Schwarten, Scott, Seeney, Shine, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Spence, Springborg, Stevens, Struthers, Stuckey, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wellington, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson