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THURSDAY, 23 MAY 2013

The Legislative Assembly met at 9.30 am.
Madam Speaker (Hon. Fiona Simpson, Maroochydore) read prayers and took the chair.

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

V8 Supercars, Townsville

Mr Hathaway, from 271 petitioners, requesting the House to continue the V8 Supercar event in Townsville [2674].

The Clerk presented the following e-petitions, sponsored by the honourable members indicated—

Nambour Railway Station

Mr Wellington from 71 petitioners, requesting the House to allocate the funds so that the upgrade to the Nambour train station to provide access services for disabled customers and to look at upgrading other train stations, like the Dakabin station [2675].

Mary Valley, Property Sales

Mr Wellington from 14 petitioners, requesting the House to put the Mary Valley properties onto the open market to get the best result for all Queenslanders [2676].

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

Redcliffe City Council, De-amalgamation

431 petitioners, requesting the House to conduct a referendum on the proposal to de-amalgamate the former Redcliffe City Council from the current amalgamated local government area known as Moreton Bay Regional Council [2677].

Petitions received.

TABLED PAPER
MEMBER’S PAPER TABLED BY THE CLERK
The following member’s paper was tabled by the Clerk—

Member for Townsville (Mr Hathaway)—

2678 Non-conforming petition regarding request to continue the V8 Supercar event in Townsville

MINISTERIAL PAPER
Revocation of Protected Areas

Hon. AC POWELL (Glass House—LNP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection) (9.32 am): I lay upon the table of the House a proposal under sections 32 and 70E of the Nature Conservation Act 1992 and a brief explanation of the proposal.

_Tabled paper: Proposal under sections 32 and 70E of the Nature Conservation Act and a brief explanation of the proposal [2679]._

NOTICE OF MOTION
Revocation of Protected Areas

Hon. AC POWELL (Glass House—LNP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection) (9.32 am): I give notice that, after the expiration of at least 28 days as provided in the Nature Conservation Act 1992, I shall move—

(1) That this House requests the Governor in Council to revoke by regulation under sections 32 and 70E of the Nature Conservation Act 1992 the dedication of protected area and forest reserves as set out in the Proposal tabled by me in the House today viz
Description of areas to be revoked

Nicoll Scrub National Park
Area described as lot 51 on SP261072 and containing an area of 99m² as illustrated on the attached sketch marked “A”.

Tamborine National Park
Area described as lot 1 and the area shown and described on SP149051 as road to be opened, containing an area of 308m² as illustrated on the attached sketch marked “B”.

Eungella National Park
Area described as lots 1 to 3 on SP235546 and lots 7 and 8 on SP249157 and containing an area of 4.119 hectares as illustrated on the attached sketches marked “C” and “D”.

Maria Creek National Park
Area described as lot 1 on SP239450 and containing an area of 3.027 hectares as illustrated on the attached sketch marked “E”.

Tewantin National Park
Area described as lot 201 on SP255083 and containing an area of 2.1931 hectares as illustrated on the attached sketch marked “F”.

Yurol Forest Reserve
Area described as lot 202 on SP255083 and containing an area of 0.4831 hectares as illustrated on the attached sketch marked “G”.

Glastonbury Forest Reserve
Area described as lot 1 on AP19303 and containing an area of about 55.9 hectares as illustrated on the attached sketch marked “H”.

Kelvin Forest Reserve
Area described as lot 10 on SP253071 and containing an area of 3.931 hectares as illustrated on the attached sketch marked “I”.

Monkhouse Forest Reserve
Area described as lot 14 on SP252498 and containing an area of 900m² as illustrated on the attached sketch marked “J”.

(2) That Madam Speaker and the Clerk of the Parliament forward a copy of this resolution to the Minister for Environment for submission to the Governor in Council.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Chaplaincy Week

Hon. CKT NEWMAN (Ashgrove—LNP) (Premier) (9.33 am): A key election commitment that we made to the people of Queensland was that we would provide a funding boost of over $1 million over four years for chaplaincy and pastoral care in our schools. The school chaplaincy program ensures that students have access to the social, emotional and spiritual support they need to help them overcome any personal barriers to their learning. By providing a range of support options, chaplains and pastoral care workers complement existing school support staff such as guidance officers and youth support coordinators.

Our election commitment has seen a 10 per cent increase in funding to 128 state schools across Queensland and, even more encouragingly, a further 21 state schools have now joined the program. We have intentionally focused on regional schools so that help is available to a diverse group of students, including those studying through distance education.

We have delivered on our election commitment, and this is of particular note given that this week, 19-26 May, is Chaplaincy Week. ‘Chappy week’, as it is called, is an annual event run by Scripture Union Queensland to raise awareness and further funds to support our school chaplains. All this week events will be run in schools across Queensland, and I would encourage everybody to get behind these events and get involved wholeheartedly.

Tomorrow night I will be showing my support for ‘chappy week’ in my electorate by attending Renew 2013, an annual local school chaplaincy fundraising dinner being held at The Gap State High School and hosted by The Gap Chaplaincy Service supported by SU Queensland. I look forward to celebrating the special work of our local chaplains alongside our teachers, parents, local businesses, community representatives and local residents who support them.
We know that young people who have been helped during stressful times are more likely to achieve better results at school. ‘Chappy week’ gives us all a good reason to show our support for chaplains and pastoral care workers and the invaluable work that they do helping countless students across Queensland every single day, and I encourage all members to get involved.

Thursday Island, Community Cabinet

Hon. CKT Newman (Ashgrove—LNP) (Premier) (9.35 am): This weekend I will travel to Thursday Island with my cabinet colleagues for this government’s eighth community cabinet. My ministers will be on the ground there to discuss local issues directly with community representatives and industry leaders. There has been a great deal of interest from local leaders in meeting with members of cabinet because they want to put the Far North front and centre when it comes to creating new opportunities for the state.

Far North Queensland has the potential to be a very dynamic contributor to this state’s economy. Because of that it has its own unique needs, attributes and significant potential. We are a government for all Queenslanders, and this is a great opportunity to discuss how things are progressing and how we can create further opportunities for Far North Queensland.

Of course, David Kempton MP is a strong advocate for the area and I am pleased we have the opportunity to bring community cabinet to his patch. I am positive that this visit will be an extremely valuable and worthwhile experience for me and for my cabinet colleagues, and I look forward to updating this House upon our return.

Mining Industry, Water

Hon. JW Seeney (Callide—LNP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning) (9.37 am): Throughout this year’s wet season our government instituted a pilot mine water release scheme for four mines located in the Fitzroy River basin. Action was necessary to remedy the inaction of the previous government, which had failed completely to deal with the problem that was affecting all Queenslanders.

The extreme rainfall conditions of recent years have impacted mines across Central Queensland. Mines had to reduce, or even cease, production due to the large volume of water retained, and their operating costs were increased as water had to be shifted around mine sites. The flooding of the coalmines caused job losses and it cost the state in the order of $750 million in lost royalties—$750 million that was needed to build our roads, to run our schools and hospitals and for all the functions the state carries out. The previous government failed completely to address the issue.

We promised that the pilot releases that we undertook would be monitored and carried out as the best science dictated. Results of the monitoring of the water quality have been posted online throughout the release period for all to see. Additionally, the government had the whole process independently assessed, and next week I will meet with the Fitzroy Water Quality Advisory Group in Rockhampton to report about the trial and to review the results. We will also hear from the independent assessors of the scheme and chart the way forward to address the legacy water issue on an ongoing basis.

There are those—and those in this House—who have sought to exploit the situation with scare tactics, claiming the pilot water releases were harmful to the Fitzroy Basin waterways, a threat to the residents of Rockhampton and all sorts of other empty, meaningless claims. The science, the statistics, the facts and the numbers all show that they were wrong. They were wrong, as they always are. The assessments by independent water engineers and environmental consultants that will be presented to the water quality advisory group next week find ‘the absence of material effects on salinity levels downstream of the pilot scheme mine sites’.

In other words, there was no harm to the environment, there was no threat of harm to the residents and there was no cause for concern in relation to drinking water standards because of the pilot mine water release. That is not to say there are not issues to be dealt with, particularly with regard to the close proximity to the mine sites themselves. But I assure the people of Central Queensland that we will go about dealing with the issue of legacy mine water carefully, methodically, practically and always guided by the science, the facts and the numbers.

Queensland’s economy, specifically Central Queensland’s economy, is heavily reliant on the mining industry. We need to ensure the mines can operate efficiently and profitably to generate the jobs, investment and spending that sustain Central Queensland’s communities and also sustain the
state economy. We intend to build on this year’s pilot mine water release. We intend to extend the program to enable all mines with legacy water problems to deal with those problems over coming wet seasons. We will not be deterred by those who seek to continue to engage in meaningless scare campaigns.

**Robinson, Mr N**

Hon. TJ NICHOLLS (Clayfield—LNP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade) (9.40 am): Queensland’s construction and built environment industry continues to be recognised internationally, thanks to the dedicated efforts of a group of exporters working tirelessly to sell our state’s expert services globally. It is always pleasing to see these efforts acknowledged. That is why it gives me particular pleasure to report to the House that one such exporter, Queensland architect Noel Robinson, has received nationwide recognition of the work that he does by being awarded a coveted Australian export heroes award.

Export Heroes Awards, awarded annually and administered by the Export Council of Australia, are given to individuals because of their commitment, passion and extraordinary contribution to the growth of exports and the development of a uniquely Australian export culture. Noel Robinson is a Queensland local, a former resident of the great electorate of Clayfield and a Queensland University of Technology alumnus who plied his skills locally before taking them global.

With over 40 years experience, Noel has had a distinguished career, delivering his brand of innovative and original design to the Middle East, South-East Asia, Japan, Korea, the United States and Europe. His contribution to the world’s skylines includes the Tilal Complex in Muscat, Oman; the Dubai Investment Park; the Monarch Beach Masterplan in Los Angeles; and Suva’s Grand Pacific Hotel in Fiji. A testament to his continuing success is the fact that he maintains offices in Auckland, New Zealand; Shenzen, China; Muscat, Oman; and locally in Melbourne, Noosa and right here in Brisbane employing 50 people. One of Noel’s recent successes is the 32-storey, 246-room Sheraton Brisbane Four Points hotel, fronting 99-103 Mary Street. The new hotel, which was announced late last year, is expected to be open for business by January 2014.

Noel was presented with his export heroes award last week at a ceremony at Melbourne’s Government House. As the Minister for Trade I want to congratulate him on his achievement and thank him for his tireless contribution to building trade relationships for the state of Queensland.

Noel Robinson joins a growing list of export heroes including fellow Queensland recipients John Russell of Toowoomba company Russell Mineral Equipment; Paul Henry from Populous, the architects; and Neil O’Sullivan from last year’s Queensland exporter of the year, NOJA Power; as well as fellow Australians the Wiggles; Wolfgang Blass of Wolf Blass Wines; and former Deputy Prime Minister and trade minister the Hon. Doug Anthony.

Noel Robinson joins a remarkable group of people who tirelessly fly the Australian flag with pride at the international level, contributing to both our economy and our global reputation. He is a fine example of the innovative nature of Queensland’s many exporters, and I thank him for his commitment to making this great state one of great opportunity.

**Weapons Amnesty**

Hon. JM DEMPSEY (Bundaberg—LNP) (Minister for Police and Community Safety) (9.43 am): This time last year, just weeks after the LNP was elected, an innocent bystander was shot at a Gold Coast shopping centre in an alleged gunfire. This event not only outraged the Queensland community but also sickened members of this government. We listened to the community, who told us that they find the use of firearms in perpetrating crime disgusting and unacceptable. Queensland police officers also told us they were frustrated to continually see repeat gun crime offenders go through the revolving-door court system, which Labor presided over for almost 20 years. Offenders would walk into court and walk out with fines of just a few hundred dollars.

Within 24 hours of the Gold Coast shooting this government announced we would seek to introduce minimum mandatory prison sentences for those who think it is acceptable to go armed in public. In February of this year mandatory minimum prison terms of one to five years for gun crimes became law. This sends a clear message to criminals that if you commit any type of offence with a firearm you will be locked up.
We also made it clear that those measures are not aimed at those who legitimately own firearms. We set up a Ministerial Weapons Advisory Panel to ensure that the concerns of legal firearms owners were heard. We will not water down the safeguards in place for obtaining a firearms licence; however, once all requirements have been fully met we do not see any point in tying up police and gun owners in layers of red tape.

We also gave a three-month amnesty period to those who were in possession of unregistered weapons so that they could hand them over without legal repercussions. I am very pleased to inform the House that more than 19,000 weapons were surrendered for registration or destruction during the amnesty period—a remarkable number. Some of the more exotic weapons which were handed in included an M72 light anti-armour weapon, more commonly known as a rocket launcher. This particular 66-millimetre weapon has the capacity to penetrate more than 20 centimetres—or eight inches—of steel plate and two feet of reinforced concrete. You can imagine what that could do if it was in the wrong hands. Also handed in was a 60-year-old American Army M2 flamethrower, which was used to clear Nazi fortresses and strongholds. This weapon is capable of shooting a pressurised nitrogen and gasoline fuelled flame a distance of up to 40 metres. Along with these heavy weapons, an arsenal of World War II fully automatic weapons was also passed in to police, including MP40 German machine guns and tommy guns. Getting these dangerous weapons off the streets is a great result, and the fact that there are now 19,000 fewer unregistered firearms in Queensland is also a great result.

For those people who decide to test the new penalties, the message is clear: when you are caught, you will do time. I have said many times that the LNP government is a government which was elected to get tough on crime. We went to the last election with a commitment to the people of Queensland to crack down on serious crime, and every member of the community can rest assured that our promise has been turned into action.

**Dam Management**

*Hon. MF McARDLE (Caloundra—LNP) (Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (9.46 am):* Today the bulk water service provider for South-East Queensland, Seqwater, made available on its website four reports into flood events in South-East Queensland in January and February 2013. These reports, which cover Wivenhoe, Somerset and North Pine dams, are required to be provided by Seqwater to the state government’s dam regulator following a flood event. These reports are being made publicly available because the Newman government is a transparent and open government, and it believes that the people of South-East Queensland have a right to this information. Subsequent to the 2011 flood disaster it is important to reassure the people of South-East Queensland and to demonstrate how these dams can be managed in times of flood.

The rain events in January this year were the second largest on record since Wivenhoe Dam was constructed. This puts in context the scale of the event and the importance of the government’s response and management. I am pleased to make these reports available today to share with members the very professional approach of Seqwater in performing a very important part of their bulk water supply function for South-East Queensland. All four reports conclude that the operations were conducted in ‘full compliance’ with the relevant flood manuals.

I will now present some of the important facts. On 25 January 2013, in advance of the impending rainfall, I declared a temporary full-supply level of 88 per cent for both Wivenhoe Dam and North Pine Dam. This allowed space in the dams for the coming floodwaters. The most intense rainfall fell in the Brisbane River catchment in parts of the Upper Brisbane River, Lockyer Creek and upper Warrill Creek on 27 January. The management of water releases from the dam ensured that the peak flow at Moggill was no higher than approximately 4,000 cubic metres per second. This involved shutting the gates at Wivenhoe so that the floodwaters from Lockyer Creek and Bremer River could pass through. The total flood volume of 860,000 megalitres in Wivenhoe and Somerset dams was approximately half of the 1974 event and one-quarter of the 2011 event.

The North Pine Dam catchment also experienced significant rainfall. The peak inflow to North Pine Dam was 1,650 cubic metres per second, which is equivalent to two-thirds of an Olympic sized swimming pool. This was still a very significant flood event for North Pine Dam, but the total flood volume of 97,000 megalitres was about half that of the January 2011 flood event.

Ahead of the 2013 flood events, the Newman government had implemented an improved and more proactive legal framework. This enabled me to make the early decision—based on the advice of experts—to temporarily reduce the levels of Wivenhoe and North Pine dams. We are considering
more improvements to the dam flood manuals. This will take into account the recommendations which have arisen from the flood reports. These improvements parallel the dam operational optimisation studies, which are well underway. I have recently established an advisory council to provide me with advice on the changes recommended to the dam flood manuals.

With South-East Queensland dams now at a combined supply level of 96.3 per cent, we have security of water supply across our dry months. But I can assure the House that as we approach the wet season of 2013-14 I will again seek expert advice so that I can ensure we are well prepared and ready for action. This is part of ensuring Queensland is a great state with great opportunities.

Oral Health Services

**Hon. LJ SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—LNP) (Minister for Health) (9.50 am): Recently the Newman government signed the national partnership agreement on treating more dental patients in Queensland. This agreement will provide public dental services for up to 80,000 additional patients by March 2015. Despite signing this agreement, I questioned whether Queensland could meet these targets. The way they were calculated placed us at an immediate disadvantage. The Commonwealth had withdrawn $103 million in funding and at that time Bundaberg Hospital and others in Central and South-East Queensland had been disrupted by severe weather. What I did not count on was the determination of Queensland Health’s oral health staff to take on the task of reducing our public dental health waiting lists.

Already we are seeing an impact across the state. The number of patients waiting longer than two years for a routine dental check-up has been slashed by more than 4,000. Due to time constraints, most hospital and health services have chosen to partner with private dental providers to increase capacity. About $6 million in vouchers has been issued to public patients, representing about 7,000 emergency courses of care, 4,000 occasions of general dental care and dentures for 450. By offering emergency patients the opportunity to see a private dentist, HHSs have enabled public dentists to devote more of their time to treating patients from waiting lists. Treatment practices are being monitored to ensure taxpayers receive good value for money. Extra public oral health staff have been recruited. Staff overtime has been approved and additional final-year dental students have been offered placement. In semester 1 this year 62 dental students were placed in public dental clinics across Queensland—a 50 per cent increase on last year.

Examples of initiatives in rural and remote communities include expanding an existing fly-in fly-out arrangement with a private dental practice in Brisbane. In another case, the only local private dentist in a local community will start treating public patients. In a remote part of North Queensland, the employment of a dental assistant and agency dental teams will increase dental services to remote Aboriginal communities. The positive impact of these additional oral health services for eligible public health patients across Queensland in the last three months cannot be underestimated, and I thank our employees and Queensland dentists, prosthetists, dental nurses and technicians for their contributions. I look forward to providing the House with updates in future quarters as Queensland’s oral health workforce strives to meet these national targets.

Friends of Parks

**Hon. SL DICKSON** (Buderim—LNP) (Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing) (9.53 am): This week the Newman government has launched two initiatives as part of the LNP’s Friends of Parks election commitment. Both initiatives are aimed at increasing volunteerism which will enable Queenslanders to learn about, care for and appreciate the natural environment. This will also help showcase our unique natural wonders and grow our four-pillar economy through ecotourism.

Yesterday I had the great pleasure of travelling to D’Aguilar National Park in the electorate of Ashgrove to launch our $500,000 Friends of Parks small grants program. This program, which is open for applications now, involves one-off grants of between $5,000 and $25,000 to support existing and new projects run by not-for-profit community groups within protected areas and national parks. These grants will not only encourage new volunteerism initiatives; they will also support existing efforts by around 1,000 generous community members in more than 100 parks around the great state of Queensland. I want to recognise the many different volunteer organisations and groups, both conservation and recreation, that are already dedicated to these projects in particular parks and reserves around Queensland.
The second Friends of Parks initiative launched this week is the campground host pilot program at beautiful Noah’s Beach in the Daintree in North Queensland near Port Douglas. This role will see volunteers camping at this unique site from the end of May through to November, hosting visitors from all over the world. In recognition of their dedication, the volunteer caretakers will be able to camp free of charge at the site. This is a pilot program which, if successful, could be extended to other national parks and protected areas right throughout Queensland. It is a great opportunity for people to be involved in their local parks and communities and to enjoy Queensland’s unique natural environment.

Volunteers have long supported the management of Queensland parks and forests, and our staff and visitors benefit greatly from their generous contributions. The Newman government’s Friends of Parks program is just one of the many ways we are delivering our commitment to ensure that our national parks are managed effectively and available to be enjoyed by all Queenslanders. By working with the people of Queensland to grow our economy, the Newman government is ensuring that Queensland remains a great state with fantastic opportunities.

Queensland Ballet, Romeo and Juliet

Hon. IB WALKER (Mansfield—LNP) (Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts) (9.56 am): The Newman government is delivering on a key Arts for All Queenslanders election commitment, with the announcement on 14 May of the first Super Star project. I am thrilled that Queensland will be home to an exclusive season of the ballet Romeo and Juliet, featuring internationally acclaimed dancers Tamara Rojo and Carlos Acosta. This is a major coup for our state, with the Queensland Ballet to deliver the famous love story in a production exclusive to Brisbane and never before seen in Australia. Tamara Rojo is an acclaimed Spanish ballerina and artistic director of the English National Ballet, while Cuban dancer Carlos Acosta is a principal guest artist with The Royal Ballet.

The full-length ballet, which is choreographed by the late Sir Kenneth MacMillan, will feature sets and costumes from Birmingham Royal Ballet. Romeo and Juliet will be at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre between 27 June and 5 July 2014 and celebrates the 50th anniversary of the work’s creation and in fact the 450th anniversary of the Shakespearean play.

Kenneth MacMillan was one of the world’s most highly regarded choreographers, and classical companies from around the world vie for the opportunity to stage MacMillan’s works. MacMillan’s Romeo and Juliet is widely considered the best in the world. It is rarely seen outside the United Kingdom and has never before been performed here in Australia. It is wonderful that Queensland has secured this exclusive production and an honour for our state ballet company. Audiences can enjoy a world-class production while our state ballet company will benefit from a unique and exclusive partnership. I know that Queensland Ballet’s Artistic Director, Li Cunxin, joins me in these sentiments, along with countless ballet fans across not only our state but also the country.

Romeo and Juliet will attract world-wide attention, placing Queensland on the global stage and promising great potential—I am sure the Minister for Tourism will be happy to hear—for great cultural tourism opportunities. With our Super Star Fund, a $3 million commitment over four years, we promised to bring international stars to our own backyard, and this project delivers on that with a bang.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Courier-Mail Article

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—LNP) (9.58 am): On Saturday, 4 May 2013, the Courier-Mail took a full page to write what it called a ‘response to Dr Flegg’, including a full-size photograph. I wonder if this is the first time a newspaper has taken a full page, worth about $15,000 in advertising, to make a response to issues that it never reported a single word of in the first place. Readers of the Courier-Mail must have been left scratching their heads. Inaccurate and, at times, frankly malicious reporting by the Courier-Mail is a serious issue for this state. I did the right thing and took my concerns privately to News Ltd. The very first response I got to those concerns was weeks later, on 2 April, when the Courier-Mail ran a further dishonest, inaccurate attack on me and my family.

Only on 8 April did I get an email from Mr Campbell Reid, not dealing with any of the issues that I had raised but proposing a meeting for a verbal response. I agreed only on the basis that it would be a without-prejudice meeting, and this took place on 2 May at the Treasury Hotel. I stuck to
my side of the deal and declined to make public comment about our without-prejudice meeting, but not so the Courier-Mail, which ran without notification or right of reply its response in its newspaper only 48 hours later. My request to Editor-in-Chief David Fagan for space to respond was unsurprisingly refused. Their at-best lame claim that the article was a response not to our meeting but to an ABC interview I did is clearly fallacious, as all of Mr Kim Williams, Mr Michael Crutcher and Mr Steve Wardill were invited to respond on the ABC and refused to do so.

Interestingly, the media is not prepared to be interviewed by other media. It does highlight, however, the importance to Queensland of our independent public broadcaster. For the record, the 4 May article was also grossly misleading. I do not have time to deal with these issues but I have asked the Press Council to investigate this matter.

PARLIAMENTARY CRIME AND MISCONDUCT COMMITTEE

Report; Legal Advice

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (10.00 am): I lay upon the table of the House report No. 91 of the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee. This report sets out the committee’s consideration of a complaint from Mr Scott Flavell about the conduct of the Crime and Misconduct Commission. Mr Flavell’s complaint focuses on the conduct of the CMC in relation to its investigation, public hearings and subsequent report to the parliament on Mr Flavell’s conduct whilst employed as director-general of the then Department of Education and Training. In its 2008 report titled Public duty, private interests, the CMC found that Mr Flavell had a conflict of interest between his personal interests in a private company and his employment and responsibilities as a director-general.

Given the likely damage to Mr Flavell’s reputation resulting from the CMC investigation, including its public hearings and public report, the committee determined to request that the parliamentary commissioner investigate and report to the committee on Mr Flavell’s complaint. The parliamentary commissioner found that, whilst the CMC may have afforded natural justice to Mr Flavell by seeking a submission from him prior to deciding whether to hold a public hearing, the CMC did not act inappropriately in its handling of its investigation and the holding of public hearings regarding its investigation of Mr Flavell’s conduct.

The committee notes its concern in this report that the independent advisory panel, which recently reviewed the Crime and Misconduct Act, relied upon Mr Flavell’s submission. The committee has not had access to Mr Flavell’s submission to that panel but considers that it will likely contain similar concerns from Mr Flavell as were submitted to the committee. Mr Flavell is clearly aggrieved at the investigation and report of the CMC regarding his actions whilst director-general of DET. However, his disagreement with the actions and recommendations of the CMC does not render the conduct of the CMC inappropriate. Conversely, it was the actions of Mr Flavell that contributed to a change in the law in Queensland to prevent such conduct from the state’s employees, particularly senior officials with access to significant departmental information and resources and cabinet material. I thank the members of the committee for their diligent consideration of this matter and the committee secretariat for its assistance. I commend the committee’s report to the House.

Additionally, I table three legal advices provided to the committee by the acting parliamentary commissioner in relation to the committee’s inquiry into the release and destruction of the Fitzgerald inquiry documents.

Tabled paper: Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee: Report No. 90—Inquiry into the Crime and Misconduct Commission’s release and destruction of Fitzgerald Inquiry documents: Advice provided to the Chair of the Committee (Mrs Cunningham) dated 28 March 2013, from Mr Peter Davis SC in relation to the inquiry [1 of 3] [2681].

Tabled paper: Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee: Report No. 90—Inquiry into the Crime and Misconduct Commission’s release and destruction of Fitzgerald Inquiry documents: Advice provided to the Chair of the Committee (Mrs Cunningham) dated 28 March 2013, from Mr Peter Davis SC in relation to the inquiry [2 of 3] [2682].

Tabled paper: Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee: Report No. 90—Inquiry into the Crime and Misconduct Commission’s release and destruction of Fitzgerald Inquiry documents: Advice provided to the Chair of the Committee (Mrs Cunningham) dated 28 March 2013, from Mr Peter Davis SC in relation to the inquiry [3 of 3] [2683].
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Madam SPEAKER: Question time will finish at 11.03 am.

Redcliffe Hospital, Chronic Pain Management Clinic

Ms PALASZCZUK (10.03 am): My question is to the Premier. I refer to the Newman government’s imminent closure of the free chronic pain management clinic at Redcliffe Hospital and I ask: is the Premier aware that the clinic’s low-income patients will now need to access private medical specialists and pay the gap of up to $200? Can the Premier advise if the former LNP member for Redcliffe has made any representations on this issue?

Mr NEWMAN: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. I must say that I am not aware of the circumstances that she is putting forward and I am not even confident that what she is saying is indeed correct because, as we know, so often in this place they make it up as they go along. I can only say this: we increased the Health budget by 7.5 per cent—over $800 million. We set up community hospital and health service boards to properly manage local hospital and health services. They have the money and those skilled people from the medical and nursing professions, laypeople from the community and people from business are there charged with making the important decisions to build up our health service and make it the best in the nation, and they have that increase in funding.

The only health cut that there has been is the federal Labor health cut. That was the cut of just over $100 million that we have all talked about on many occasions in recent times in this place. As we have heard in the last couple of days, there has been a further cut foreshadowed by federal Labor—several hundred million dollars over the forward estimates—that no doubt will again have people having to make some tough decisions as they withdraw that funding. So I can only reflect in that particular way. If the—

Ms Palaszczuk: Are you going to investigate it?

Mr NEWMAN: I am very happy to answer the questions of the Leader of the Opposition. She might show the courtesy of listening to the answers. I have almost two minutes on the clock still and I am quite happy to keep talking about these matters. In answering the interjection, of course I will be looking into the matter but, rather than grandstanding in here, if the Leader of the Opposition was appropriately caring about individuals it might have been a good idea to either ask the Minister for Health, or write to me, or come and see me about the management of patients rather than play political games in this House.

The big problem in this state in relation to health funding is the federal Labor health cuts. The only people who do not want to acknowledge that are people from the Labor Party and people from the Queensland Nurses Union who want to desperately do everything they can to see this dud federal Labor government re-elected. That is the government that continues to sit in office thanks to the Katter’s Australian Party as well, I might add. So when they bleat about regional health services, we will continue to remind people that the Katter party are the ones that keep federal Labor in office.

Taxation

Ms PALASZCZUK: My next question is to the Premier. Regarding the government’s plan for a big new tax on Queensland families, will the Premier advise the House how much this tax will cost each Queensland family? Can the Premier advise when Queenslanders will find out the list of projects to be covered by this big new tax?

Mr NEWMAN: We have a budget in a couple of weeks time and I would urge the Leader of the Opposition on that day, when the best Treasurer this state has had for many, many years hands down that budget, because I know that if there is indeed some new revenue-raising initiative he will openly and clearly and comprehensively describe what it is about and what it will fund and it will be in the budget documents—

Ms Palaszczuk: You said you were going to have a conversation with Queensland.

Mr NEWMAN: There are some interjections to my right. It is interesting to speculate when was the last great Treasurer? I do not know. You could offend a whole range of people, but I do reflect that it would be great if we had the state of the state’s finances when Sir Gordon Chalk was Treasurer,
because there was competence, there was integrity, there was somebody who really knew his stuff. Those opposite do not have quite the same track record. There are people like Keith de Lacy, who I think did a fair job from what I could see. Even Terry Mackenroth did a reasonably good job—

Mr Seeney: Oh, steady.

Mr NEWMAN: It is okay, Deputy Premier. But we know when the rot set in. That is when that Anna Bligh character took over, because when you look at all the metrics for the Queensland budget it all went to custard around about 2007-08. After that the costs go through the roof, the revenues do not go up at the same rate and the staff numbers go through the roof as well. That is when the really poor and reckless financial management came to the fore. That is when we saw the succession of broken promises and increases in taxes and charges.

Those opposite talk about tax. They are the ones who put $7,000 extra tax on the family home. What have we done? We took that away. They are the ones who took us from the most economical motor vehicle registration in the nation and made us the most expensive. We have frozen that. They are the ones who, through their total incompetence and ineptitude, wasted billions of dollars; after denying there was a water supply problem they, in a panic, went off and spent all this money so we have seen higher water prices. We have delivered an $80 rebate to struggling families in Queensland. They are the people who said electricity deregulation would lead to lower prices. Cough! Gasp! What has happened since 2007? We know that they are the ones who argued for a higher weighted average cost to capital—in other words, raising prices. When it comes to the ones who want higher taxes, the Labor Party, those opposite, have form. They are into debt, deficit and deceit as well.

Construction Industry

Mr BERRY: My question without notice is to the Premier of this great state. Will the Premier please provide an update to the House on the importance of the construction industry to the Queensland economy and any recent indications that this sector is set for growth in Queensland?

Mr NEWMAN: I thank the honourable member for his question. Construction is indeed hugely important to the Queensland economy and our future. We know that the Labor Party, particularly around about 2008-09, crushed the property development industry in Queensland. At a time of a financial crisis what did those opposite do? They held a summit at the State Library. The theme of the two-day summit was growth is bad; we have got to stop people coming to South-East Queensland. It was all about how we would actually tie the construction and property development industry up in red tape. That was the entire theme at a time when there was a global financial crisis. We do not hold with that. What have we been doing? We have been getting on with the job of building up construction. We are seeing the government precinct redevelopment. We are seeing the law courts—the old Supreme Court site—being redeveloped. We are seeing approvals of development on Great Keppel Island and at Ella Bay. The list goes on.

This morning I am very pleased to hear the announcement—it is hot off the presses—that James Hardie, a leading Australian company, has decided to spend $89 million to expand construction products manufacturing in Queensland. They will boost output at their Carole Park facility near Ipswich by 40 per cent and also increase the range of products that are going out the door. That involves state-of-the-art technology being built into the Carole Park facility and also improving their product quality. The announcement today by this long established construction industry firm shows that Queensland is rebuilding its reputation as the best place in Australia to do construction and property industry development work.

I am particularly pleased because it comes off the back of the August 2012 business attraction visit to Sydney that I made with the Deputy Premier where we were approached by James Hardie about trying to get this plant upgrade going. They were particularly keen to have some assistance from the state government. I thank the Deputy Premier and the people in his department for the great work they have done to secure this outcome for Queensland. Executives from James Hardie sat down with officers from State Development. They explored several expansion options. They were assisted in discussions with utility providers. They were also helped with site issues. Ultimately we helped build a strong business case for investment here in Queensland. I acknowledge and thank the Ipswich City Council under the leadership of Paul Pisasale for its role in securing the expansion at Carole Park.

This is a government that is out there talking up Queensland. This is a government that is doing practical things to get this sort of investment in this state. Business is listening and responding because this is a great state with great opportunity.
Health Services, Privatisation

Mr MULHERIN: My question is directed to the Premier. I refer to the government’s intention to privatise, through outsourcing and contestability, many health services and I ask: will the Premier commit to telling communities across Queensland how many jobs are likely to be lost from public hospitals under the Newman government’s mass privatisation of health services?

Mr NEWMAN: I am delighted to talk about the Commission of Audit. It is clear that those opposite do not seem to get that we are always happy to talk about the Commission of Audit. The Commission of Audit, whether it be in the health area or in the area of transport and main roads or if it is to do with communities or policing, is about building this state government into the best administered state government in the nation. We want to be the best. We want to deliver the best services and the best value for money for Queenslanders. That is what it is all about.

It is interesting to note that the smallest state government in the nation in terms of its size relative to gross state product, GSP, is Western Australia. It is the smallest state government. The feedback we get is that the people of Western Australia seem to think their state government is performing very well. I guess that it just goes to show that government being small and efficient can lead to great outcomes. We will talk more about that data in the future.

When one is talking about privatisation and what it might mean to workers, one has to look no further than what Curtis Pitt said about it. We have to keep going back to the Curtis Pitt mythbusters—

**MYTH:** There’s no way that these asset sales can be in the interests of workers.

**FACT:** Privatisation does not always mean a reduction in worker numbers.

There are a number of examples around the world, like Canadian National—the national railway of Canada—

**Opposition members** interjected.

Mr NEWMAN: Please, Madam Speaker, those opposite have to hear this. They have to hear Curtis’s words. They are not mine.

Madam SPEAKER: Premier, I would ask you to refer to the member by their appropriate title.

Mr NEWMAN: I beg your pardon, Madam Speaker, they are the words of the member for Mulgrave. I do not want to be silenced because his words must be out. Queenslanders must know the thoughts of the member for Mulgrave.

A government member: Strong leadership.

Mr NEWMAN: This is strong leadership from the member for Mulgrave. These are his words—

There are a number of examples around the world, like Canadian National—the national railway of Canada—which has gone from strength to strength since it was privatised.

Right here in Australia, the Qantas workforce has grown by 16 per cent since it was privatised.

Some businesses need to grow beyond what the taxpayer can afford and they need funding to remain competitive and commercially viable.

I could not have said it better myself. Thank you to the member for Mulgrave for his clear advocacy for the policies that we are about to embark on.

In relation to the health space, there was a bit of the usual verballing in the question. The Minister for Health yesterday made it clear, in terms of our approach to outsource services in the future, that it is for new facilities, new initiatives, new things that build the health system, such as Hospital in the Home, which will give a better level of services to Queenslanders in their home—for example, blood transfusions.

Statutory Regional Plans

Mr KING: My question without notice is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning. Can the Deputy Premier inform the House what progress has been made on statutory regional plans for the Darling Downs, Central Queensland and Cape York?

Mr SEENEY: The government is progressing the development of statutory regional plans for Cape York, the Darling Downs and Central Queensland just as we promised the people of Queensland that we would. We identified these three areas as priority areas for a number of reasons. In the instance of Cape York, the area was identified as a priority because of the need to do
something about the other planning instrument that was oppressing the future of communities there. We intend to replace the wild rivers declarations that have been such an impediment to the development of the communities on Cape York with a proper planning instrument that will find the proper balance between development and the preservation of the special environmental values that exist there.

In conjunction with the vegetation management legislation’s amendments and the final approval of some of the resource projects on the cape, I think we are starting to get a situation where those communities can look forward with a much greater hope for the future. I think that is good news for the people of Cape York, but certainly good news for everybody in North Queensland.

In relation to the Darling Downs and Central Queensland statutory regional planning processes, we are about to release a draft plan. Last week I completed meetings with the regional planning groups in both of those areas. Those planning groups, made up of about 25 representatives from those areas, considered the draft. That is in keeping with the way that the regional planning process has been carried out. It has been an extensive consultation process, both with the regional planning groups and with other groups in those regions, to arrive at a draft plan which will now be released for statutory public consultation beginning in a couple of weeks time.

The draft plan contains some new concepts about identifying priority agricultural areas, for example, areas where agriculture will be recognised as a priority. Agricultural land use will be given the priority it deserves in those high-value agricultural areas. Any other land use will need to co-exist with that priority agricultural area. The plan will also recognise priority living areas. Areas will be set aside for people to live without being impacted upon by other non-conducive land uses. Those are new concepts about land use protection that will be put in place by the statutory regional plans to solve the problems that were causing community disaffection across the Darling Downs and Central Queensland. They are problems that the previous government failed to do anything about. We will advance those statutory regional plans for the benefit of the people who live in the Darling Downs, Central Queensland and Cape York.

Mount Isa Institute of TAFE

Mr KATTER: My question without notice is to the Minister for Education, Training and Employment. In a recent letter to the Alexandra Hills TAFE campus, the minister has given an assurance that it is not one of 25 properties that are being progressed for sale in the government’s response to the Queensland Skills and Training Taskforce report released in November 2012. What reassurance can the minister give that the Mount Isa Institute of TAFE campus will not be progressed for sale under the development of this government’s strategic asset plan or under the proposed TAFE Queensland restructure?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. Of course, we have been dealing with this issue since we came to government. We set up the task force to look at TAFE and training in Queensland to make sure that we have training for real jobs. Over time a situation has developed whereby we have contestability for apprenticeship training under what is called user-choice funding and, of course, there is also VET revenue general. Around the state, we have a number of underutilised TAFE campuses. We have engaged a task force and there is a bill before the House, which I will not refer to, that is coming up very soon. Importantly, we are looking at making sure that we have training for real jobs coming out of the funding that we provide for training.

We are looking at all of those issues while making the commitment to provide adequate resourcing to regional areas. However, one part of government is preventing us from providing the training that we want to provide. We want to have the best up-to-date facilities for our students to study in, but holding us back from delivering the training that we want is the federal government. I am sure that is no surprise to government members, but it should be to members opposite who maintain that they are interested in the wellbeing of people who want to study in TAFEs.

I heard the honourable health minister speaking about a recent national partnership signed in health. Some time ago we signed a national partnership in training and we have been trying to get the implementation plan signed off. There are no issues between us and the federal government in terms of what we want to do in the implementation plan, in other words, as part of the national partnership we have agreed to do everything that is expected of us. However, the federal minister, the Hon. Craig Emerson, who is the third minister I have been trying to deal with over the past month or six weeks given the changes that have happened in the chaos that is the federal Labor government, now has withheld $56 million from the Queensland training sector. That does affect the honourable member for
Mount Isa and I note that it is the great leadership of his father that is helping to keep that chaotic Labor government in power. If there is pressure on the Mount Isa TAFE, I say to the honourable member that it is coming from his father propping up the most chaotic Labor government in the history of this country. He should be doing something about supporting no-confidence motions to get rid of that most chaotic Labor government. Otherwise, the member for Mount Isa should be held responsible for the decay and decline that is happening not just at the Mount Isa TAFE but at every other TAFE that is quietly dwindling away under the leadership of the federal government, led by Craig Emerson.

State Budgets

Mr HATHAWAY: My question without notice is to the Treasurer and Minister for Trade. Can the Treasurer update the House on the state of government budgets across Australia? Is he aware of any challenges facing state governments as they prepare their state budgets? Are there any alternative policies?

Mr NICHOLLS: I thank the member for Townsville for his question because, as we head into the final fortnight before the state budget is brought down, it is appropriate to reflect on the circumstances that governments across Australia find themselves in and the challenging circumstances that we have to deal with here in Queensland in particular. Members will recall that on coming to office we instituted the independent Commission of Audit and we received a preliminary report in June. The preliminary report indicated that the former government had overstated its revenues quite substantially. To use the report’s terms, they were heroic assumptions. Those assumptions, some of which I detailed earlier this week, included things such as transfer growth and revenue growth growing by over $815 million a year, year on year, for as far as the eye could see. Assumptions were put in the budget that defied any normal sense of reality.

One of the first things that this government had to do was, in fact, get the books into the right state of mind. We did that in our response to the interim Commission of Audit report where we indicated that we would do the right thing and write the revenue forecast down. As a result of that, in 2012-13 the revenue for the state of Queensland dropped from $45 billion to $42 billion. Since then, we have also had a midyear economic forecast that showed royalties declining by a further $1.3 billion, on top of a decline prior to that of around about $2.1 billion. Across the forward forecast, we have lost close to $3.5 billion in revenue, on top of the $1 billion that we had to write down when we came to office. While there were very significant hits to funding in the state of Queensland, of course, we were also subject to the storms and effects of ex-tropical Cyclone Oswald, with a further cost to the state budget of $2.5 billion. Some of that was funded by the national government through the NDRRA payments, but that money was not made available in the time frames that were necessary, requiring the state government to find approximately another $700 million in order to meet the claims.

More broadly speaking, the world economy is still soft. Things are still going very slowly in Europe which continues to remain in recession and there is slower than anticipated growth in Asia. The budget is being framed in difficult circumstances, but unlike the federal government that will predict deficits out to the future forecasts, we will make the tough decisions that are necessary to ensure that the budget is put into the black and that future generations of Queenslanders are not taxed into their graves in the same way that Labor did in Queensland and continues to do federally.

Sale of Public Assets

Mr PITT: My question without notice is to the Minister for Energy and Water Supply. I hope that his health is improving. I refer to the Treasurer’s announcement that Ergon Energy’s needs will be supplied predominantly by state owned generators CS Energy and Stanwell. Will the minister immediately release to Queenslanders the modelling that the government used to justify this decision or is it just a platform to fatten up those power stations ahead of sale under the LNP?

Mr McARDLE: I thank the member for the question. From the start I indicate that the government has made it quite clear that we are only considering whether certain assets should go for sale. The other point is that, if we determine that may be the case, we will do something that the Labor Party never did: we will seek a mandate from the people of this state before we take any action. I think it is very cute for the opposition to stand here, day in and day out, and use the word ‘privatisation’ when the member who actually posed the question supports privatisation, according to the content of his own website. I do not get his asking the question ‘Why are you privatising?’, as he is accusing the government of doing something that he actually supports himself. It is on his website.
He has been tapping away at his little keyboard, indicating that this is the way to go and it is the best way to go for Queensland moving forward. Now he has the audacity to pose the question of this government, asking whether or not we support privatisation. It has been made very clear by the Premier, the Deputy Premier, the Treasurer and members right across the government—and how many times do we have to say it—that we will get a mandate if we determine these assets are to be sold.

Contrast that to what happened in 2009—and there are many members in here who were in here prior to the election in 2009—when the Labor government was asked whether it would privatise assets. They said, ‘Oh, no, we are not going to privatise assets.’ But then the curtain went up. There were all the assets on the chopping block ready to go down the track of being sold off to anybody who wanted to buy them. What a mob of deceitful liars the ALP are—debt, deficit and deceit. It is as simple and straightforward as that.

One thing this government is very clear about doing is looking at the efficiency of the assets we have. What we have done very clearly—

Mr PITT: Madam Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Whilst I did not personally take offence to the statement, I think unparliamentary language was used. I thought it should be brought to your attention.

Mr McARDLE: I withdraw the word ‘liar’ and say ‘untruthful individual rodent’.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr McARDLE: I withdraw that statement.

Mr PITT: Madam Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I actually do find that personally offensive and I ask for that to be withdrawn.

Mr McARDLE: So does the rodent.

Madam SPEAKER: I ask the minister to withdraw it.

Mr McARDLE: I withdraw unreservedly. This government is looking at the most efficient way to utilise these assets. This was a process we looked at to get a better return for these assets moving forward and also to supply power into the Ergon sector in a more efficient and effective manner. We do not apologise for doing the right thing in terms of these assets and by the people of Queensland, and we will continue to do so.

One thing we looked at was how we could use these more efficiently. That is another word unknown to the ALP—‘efficiently’. How efficient was the payroll system? How efficient has that been for the nurses and staff over such a long period of time—the so-called efficient use of government funds to rollout the payroll disaster? We will make the changes to have the assets of Queensland working efficiently.

(Time expired)

**Education Reform**

Mr COSTIGAN: My question without notice is to the Minister for Education, Training and Employment. Can the minister please advise the House of the Newman government’s plans to ensure a high-quality education for Queensland’s growing population?

Mr LANGBROEK: It is with great pleasure that I thank the member for that question. It seems like an eternity ago, but it was only two weeks ago tomorrow, that I joined the member for Whitsunday in what he rightly described as a red-letter day with the opening of the new high school at the Mackay northern beaches. My advice from the member for Whitsunday is that this is the first government school opened in Mackay since the 1990s and the first secondary school opened in almost three decades. Pioneer State High School was the last state secondary school opened in that region and that was opened by the Bjelke-Petersen government in 1986.

I had the pleasure of visiting a number of schools on that day, including Eimeo Road State School, Mackay District Special School, Pioneer Community Kindergarten, Mackay West State School and Mackay North State School. I got to thank a number of P&C representatives the next day at Mackay State High School. That was the day of the Queensland Plan summit.

The new school opened its doors to 300 students in years 7 and 8. Over time it will incorporate all year levels to meet the demand of this high-growth area. I congratulate the principal, Sian Burrows, and the school community who have built a wonderful environment. I also thank the people from my
department and the contractors who helped deliver what is a great school environment. When it is fully operational it will accommodate 1,200 students. That is the capacity to which many state high schools in Queensland are built.

It is a classic example of building schools in areas of rapid growth in Queensland. For the first time in Queensland’s history it was the Newman government that established the Schools Planning Commission. For years the building of schools had been based on anecdotal evidence. Queensland would build schools without rigorous analysis and on the political whim of those opposite. They would also build schools without knowing what the non-state sector was doing.

This year we have built two schools in Queensland—one at Pimpama and one at Mackay northern beaches. I note for the interest of honourable members that the former member for Whitsunday, whom the current member for Whitsunday defeated at the last election, said in her maiden speech in 2001—

I regret that it is too late for my own two sons to attend this local school—

the northern beaches school—

but I know that, upon opening in 2003, this new high school will become a community hub …

That is the record of those opposite.

A government member: A decade later.

Mr LANGBROEK: A decade after it was planned. Yesterday we announced that 10 new schools will be built between 2016 and 2019. I promise they will be delivered on time and on budget. That is in contrast to those opposite who could not build a school for decades and which we subsequently had to deliver. We have delivered two schools this year. Between 1957 and 1969 we went from 34 secondary schools to 101. They were built by coalition or conservative governments. That is our record.

Seniors Week, Funding

Mrs SCOTT: My question is to the Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services. At a time when the LNP is spending $1 million advertising the Queensland Plan, will the minister explain why she has disappointed hundreds of Brisbane seniors by removing the annual $10,000 in funding for the Seniors Week dance, which has been held successfully for more than a decade at the Riverside Ballroom?

Ms DAVIS: I thank the honourable member for the question. The sad reality is that when we came into government we were left with a very big financial mess. Sadly, some decisions have had to be made across departments, including mine, that we would have preferred not to make. That is because those opposite, when they were in government, created a financial mess that we are left to fix.

I very much appreciate what seniors do in our community. I very much enjoy going to our Council on the Ageing meetings and talking to our seniors and understanding what their issues are out in the community because it is my view that seniors contribute a great deal to society. Their history, their knowledge, their past contributions afford our community a great deal of vibrancy and a great deal of depth. I will continue to work with our seniors community in order to achieve the best outcomes we can for Queensland.

At the Queensland Plan summit recently I noted that there were a number of seniors in attendance. That was fantastic. There was a great cross-section of our community from young people—local school students—to seniors and those from different fields such as businesspeople and community workers.

I was pleased yesterday to be part of a volunteers ceremony at Picabeen in the Premier’s electorate of Ashgrove. What I noted was the number of seniors, who contribute as volunteers in our community. I think it is really important that we appreciate what seniors contribute to our community and that their contribution in the past across a range of areas is always admired. We should continue to expect that they will provide us with great insights into the future.

I recently attended a seniors forum out in the Murrumba electorate. I thank the honourable member for inviting me to participate there. It was fantastic to understand the history of seniors in the member’s electorate and what they provided and what their aspirations are not only for themselves
but for their community and the young people who will come after them. Seniors do provide a great contribution to our community. They are great role models for our community. I look forward to a continued relationship with them into the future.

**Rail Freight**

**Mr COX:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. Can the minister update the House on how he is delivering on the Newman government’s commitment to deliver better rail freight services for rural Queenslanders which is important to my region?

**Mr EMERSON:** I thank the honourable member for the question because this is a great story for Queensland and a great story for Queensland farmers as well. I was very pleased last week to travel to Toowoomba and be there with my ministerial colleague John McVeigh and also the local member, Trevor Watts, to make a significant announcement of up to $50 million to be spent on building extra passing loops on the West Moreton line. Those two additional passing loops will see an extra 20 passes per week for trains. What we are stressing is that we want those for agricultural freight. This will be a great win for cotton and grain, a great win.

Where did that money come from? It came from savings from the renegotiation on the deal that the previous government did with Aurizon, formerly QR National. We are locked into that deal until 2015, but we have tried to make some changes to that. We have gained some savings so that money is going to projects like those passing loops. But there are other things that we have achieved as well. We have increased the number of cattle rail movements also. We have increased those by 48 from what the previous government had negotiated—an increase of 48. I also acknowledge the hard work by the member for Gregory and former minister for transport and main roads who knows what these challenges are. He knows what the issues are in that area, and we have been working very hard to get that. I can also confirm that we have made permanent those additional services coming out of Cloncurry and Winton. That is a great result as well.

One other measure that we announced last week was that, given the drought situation we are seeing in Western Queensland, we have agreed to provide, free of charge, pilots for truck movements from Cloncurry to Emerald. We are doing that because of the terrible situation out there. It will cost us about $100,000, but the reality is that we as a government feel that that is important money to spend because it does make a significant difference. That is a great result and we have had great support on that from both AgForce and the Queensland Farmers Federation. They have acknowledged the great work that we are doing.

But this is just the start. There is a long journey ahead of us. We will be releasing our draft freight strategy next month. One of the guiding points the Premier gave me and also Minister McVeigh was that we want to see more agricultural freight on our rail. We want to see more cattle on our rail. That is what we are determined to do. That is what we are achieving. The announcement of the passing loops is a great achievement. With these changes we are making we acknowledge that Queensland is more than just South-East Queensland; it is the whole of the state, and it is our job to work for the whole of the state.

**Flying Foxes**

**Mrs CUNNINGHAM:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection. In relation to a community call for the relocation of a colony of bats where a local council will not be involved in the issue, what process is open to residents adversely affected?

**Mr POWELL:** I thank the honourable member for Gladstone for her question. I know the honourable member takes the concerns of her community very seriously. I applaud her for the work she has done over many years in representing those concerns here in this chamber. We in the Newman government also take the concerns of the community very seriously, particularly as they pertain to the interaction with urban colonies of flying foxes. That is why we have acted in a number of situations already and will continue to act around the health and wellbeing interests of Queenslanders when they do come in contact with these urban colonies.

We do believe that local government is best placed to respond to these concerns. They have the on-ground resources and they have the ability to respond in rapid time to ensure that we get the right outcome for communities at the right time. That is why, as part of our election commitment to streamline the process for approvals for moving on flying fox colonies, we are working to give councils an ‘as of right’ approval. I thank the LGAQ, and Councillor de Wit in particular, for their support of this
initiative. I know that the majority of councils have applauded this in that it will allow them to take that the quick action that I have spoken about. I look forward to working with Councillor de Wit and her colleagues in developing that as quickly as we can.

But I do acknowledge that in some instances councils have taken the decision not to represent the views of their communities. That is frustrating to us as a government. I know that it is frustrating to the Premier and it is frustrating to me as the Minister for Environment. But let me reassure the member for Gladstone that in a number of instances we have taken action outside of the council. I can refer to a situation in Pittsworth where we have worked with the community—and I will come back and talk about that in a bit more detail in a moment—but also in Cairns where we have worked with a business to resolve a matter there regarding an urban flying fox colony.

Returning to the Pittsworth example, we were contacted by a community group concerned about a colony. Officers from my department attended a meeting with that community group on the Friday and talked through the application process that currently is in place. The community group submitted that application on the following Monday and we approved it on the Tuesday. That colony has since been moved on. I am very confident—very confident—that we can achieve a similar outcome for the member for Gladstone’s community. I do not know the specific details of your situation. I do want to find out further details. I will ask officers from my department to contact you to chase this matter up. We will provide similar assistance to you and your community as we have in Pittsworth and elsewhere around the state.

Health Funding

Ms MILLARD: My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. I refer to the federal Labor government health cuts to Queensland that have totalled $103 million this year alone, including a $40 million retrospective cut, and I ask—

Ms Palaszczuk interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition is interjecting while a question is being asked. I warn you under standing order 253A and I ask the member to start again.

Ms MILLARD: Thank you for your protection, Madam Speaker. My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. I refer to the federal Labor government health cuts to Queensland that have totalled $103 million this year alone, including a $40 million retrospective cut, and I ask: is the minister in possession of any documents from the desk of Wayne Swan himself that show the federal Treasurer knowingly and callously stripping his own state of vital health funding?

Mr SPRINGBORG: I thank the honourable member for her question because she, as a local state member of parliament who is embedded deeply within Treasurer Swan’s own federal electorate of Lilley, is suffering firsthand the privations of this person who has not only let down but has ruthlessly attacked the patients of Queensland and has ruthlessly attacked the patients of the Metro North Hospital and Health Service, particularly the patients in her electorate. Indeed, only recently when we analysed those figures, the conclusion was that some $22 million has been stripped out of the budget for the Metro North Hospital and Health Board. That will have an enormous impact. That is equivalent to $40 million over a six-month period. It is equivalent to around 400 nursing jobs. I want to remind people what $103 million would actually deliver. It would deliver 4,622 knee replacements, 4,691 hip replacements, 34,170 tonsillectomies, 15,684 appendectomies and 25,613 normal births. That is what Wayne Swan has done to Queensland over the last 12 months.

The honourable member asked the question: am I in possession of any documents that prove once and for all what Wayne Swan has been denying—and indeed what the honourable members of the opposition have been denying—and that is that there were any cuts whatsoever from the Commonwealth government? Indeed, these were not just cuts with regard to projected funding; these were reductions, these were clawbacks, in funding which actually paid for and delivered operations and services to the people of Queensland. So I thought I would go to the heart of the federal Treasurer’s office—if indeed they did have a heart—and I put in an FOI application. Indeed, it was most interesting what came back. Indeed, what came back was confirmation that the Treasurer authorised by way of a federal executive minute the clawback, the removal, of $40,151,701.97 applicable to the 2011-12 financial year. That is information which we were able to get from the hand of the Treasurer himself. So he has been running around all this time, backed up by his acolytes opposite, basically saying that there has been no cut in funding to Queensland. Honourable
members, this proves that there has been $40 million alone clawed back from a previous financial year which we know was then backed up by another $63 million clawed back in the current financial year.

(Time expired)

**Gold Coast University Hospital**

**Dr DOUGLAS:** My question is to the Minister for Health. Can the minister please confirm that the staff car parking fee cost will be $26 daily at the new Gold Coast University Hospital once the hospital is open for all staff?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I thank the honourable member for Gaven and the parliamentary leader of the united democratic party of Clive for his question. It must be an absolutely wonderful feeling for him to have finally joined a political party which is not about the ego of an individual and is certainly not about the focus on one man. I was listening to his speech a little while ago when he justified his joining the party which was not about ego. I also note that he has been taking some lessons with regard to policy development and analysis from one of the other fantastic recruits, the former member for Burnett, Rob Messenger. He has certainly been off on a flight of fancy with regard to alleged deaths in Townsville in the last 24 hours. There is probably a sense of déjà vu, but I really wish him all the very best in achieving his lifetime aspiration. It is like a neopolitical manifestation of *The Addams Family* backed up by recruits like Rob Messenger—

**Dr DOUGLAS:** Madam Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Member for Gaven, what is your point of order?

**Dr DOUGLAS:** I find the comments offensive and I wish them withdrawn, firstly, and, secondly, relevance.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Please take your seat. Minister, I ask you to withdraw according to the standing orders.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I withdraw, But it should be a lot of fun. They have only just narrowly missed a near-death experience in bringing in the ethical experience of Peter Slipper, but I wish them all the very best with their recruitment program from herein. It will be well and truly worthwhile buying a very large packet of popcorn because this is a show that everyone will want to see.

With regard to car parking fees at the new Gold Coast University Hospital, I undertake to find out what they are and come back to the honourable member. The Gold Coast University Hospital and the contract surrounding it was signed previously. It is a magnificent facility. There is no doubt about that. It is probably somewhat overpriced, as most things the Labor Party do are. There is no doubt about that. If you look at the Queensland Children’s Hospital, which is a magnificent facility, it started life at $680 million and is now somewhere around $1.5 billion. Car parking fees are part of the contract with the former Queensland government. Car parking is something which is important. It does come at a cost. Proper, secure, decent, regular car parking does come at a cost. There is no doubt about it. One of the great challenges that we have is to ensure that we can roll out car parking right across Queensland in some of the areas where we have major challenges in the future including Townsville, Rockhampton, Nambour, Redlands, Redcliffe and Logan. That is one of the challenges and it will come at a cost. These contracts, as I understand it, were signed previously. I undertake to get the information and see what we can do for the honourable member.

(Time expired)

**Natural Disaster Events of 2013**

**Mrs MADDERN:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games. Can the minister please inform the House of any support within her portfolio for any activities in regions affected by the flood events earlier this year?

**Mrs STUCKEY:** I thank the honourable member for her question. What a champion she has been for the people of her electorate of Maryborough by responding so swiftly and so compassionately when we had those very severe weather events earlier this year, as were so many other members in the chamber. We all understand that several parts of Queensland were flooded due to inclement weather. Some of them were hit extremely hard. Whilst most of Queensland is definitely open for business now, there are still considerable flood recovery efforts being undertaken across this great state.
This government recognises the role that regional events play and the importance they have in communities in bringing visitors and tourism to so many of our regions throughout the state. Following the floods I directed Tourism and Events Queensland to implement a one-off Events Flood Assistance Program. This program made available financial assistance for events in council areas that were affected by the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements. I appreciate the close collaboration I had with the Minister for Local Government and many other of my cabinet colleagues.

The funding was available for people to cover marketing costs for events to drive visitation, to engage specialised personnel to develop the event and to hire temporary infrastructure to improve the visitor experience. Unsurprisingly, the response was very healthy. Over 30 applications were received. Today there are going to be some big smiles on a number of members’ faces as we announce a total of 17 regional events receiving a share of $150,000 in support available through this Events Flood Assistance Program. I hope the following members have a big smile on their faces: Bundaberg, Burdekin, Callide, Burnett, Gympie, Keppel, Lockyer, Maryborough and Whitsunday. These events are occurring across some of the hardest hit areas. I really want to commend all the groups in these areas for putting these submissions together that are going to create some fabulous events.

I commend my department and TEQ for their flexibility in making this available. I suggest that members avail themselves of the many events they are going to see in regions around this state. In particular, we have Heart of Gold International Film Festival in Gympie. We have the Tom Quilty Gold Cup in Kilkivan. We have the Tiaro Farming and Lifestyle Field Day, Voices@Cania, the Laidley A&I Annual Show and Rodeo, Bargara Strawberry Fair and many, many more.

Local Government, Boundaries

Mr WELLINGTON: My question is to the Minister for Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience. Recently some community leaders raised with me the appropriateness of the current location of the local government boundary between the Sunshine Coast Regional Council and the adjoining Gympie council, and I ask: what steps would the community have to take if there was a groundswell of support to change the location of the council boundary?

Madam SPEAKER: Order! I am going to allow the question. It is on the edge of being hypothetical, but on the basis that it is asking about a process of government I call the Minister for Local Government.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I am quite pleased to answer the question because there are a couple of matters I wish to address. Firstly, I thank the honourable member for the question and acknowledge he has raised this with me previously. The process for creating a change in boundaries exists through what is called the change commissioner, and it is a process that exists all of the time. What it needs is an application from that community and consensus. It needs to clearly be able to show there is some benefit for both areas. In fact, I have signed off on several in my time as Minister for Local Government where two councils came forward and said, ‘This makes a lot of sense.’ Granted they were in all cases very minor boundary realignments. What the member is referring to is a more major shift. With that major shift will always come controversy, but the process exists which allows that to occur.

Can I also take the opportunity to discuss change of boundaries when it comes to deamalgamations. That is somebody that has been put forward to me many times from many different communities, and I acknowledge the advocacy of the local members. We went into that process very clearly offering a deamalgamation on the former boundaries and we did it for two reasons. The first is that we wanted to clearly show people the financial challenges so they could weigh up the merits of their decision based on those former boundaries. It would not have been possible to just go drawing lines on a map and have people making a decision that would not have been informed. But there was a bigger reason, and that was there was no way we were going to put local communities through what they had been through over the last four or five years. There is no way we were going to embark on another circus of dragging communities from one side of an imaginary line to another.

Right now what this state needs and what this beautiful level of government needs is some certainty to move forward. There have been decisions taken in four communities, and the work for that deamalgamation begins. There are four transfer managers in place to make it occur. This sector needs certainty. It needs the certainty to know that it will have a state government that works with it and that it will have the freedom to be able to make the decisions for their community.
I will conclude by again thanking the local member for the question. The process does exist, but what this side of the House believes is that it has to be driven from the local community. There needs to clearly be benefit for that local area and there needs to be a common view that pushes forward. If that occurs, if you allow local people to make local decisions, they will always be better decisions than when they are foisted upon them.

**Disability Services**

**Miss BARTON:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services. Can the minister please inform the House what she is doing to strengthen disability services in Queensland? Is the minister aware of any past examples of how increased funding to disability services has failed to deliver any tangible, front-line results?

**Ms DAVIS:** I thank the honourable member for the question. On 8 May 2013 the Premier and the Prime Minister signed an historic heads of agreement to establish DisabilityCare Australia here in Queensland. In advance of this historic signing, the Queensland government was already making inroads into enhancing disability services in Queensland. In fact, in December last year the Premier, the Treasurer and I announced an extra $868 million into disability services from 2014-15. That comes on top of the record investment of $959 million in last year's budget.

I am asked if I am aware of any past examples of how increased funding to disability services has failed to deliver any tangible front-line results and, sadly, I have to inform the House that I am. One of the largest funding packages within my department is that of a combination of support and respite services. As both the Premier and I have previously advised the House, at present government provided Accommodation Support and Respite Services accounts for around $145 million per annum and delivers to around 1,091 clients. In contrast to this, the NGO sector provides the same services to 11,104 Queenslanders at a cost of $480 million. So, in short, for 3½ times the investment, NGOs deliver 10 times the number of services to clients.

On the specifics of where the former government's disability investment failed to transform the service enhancement, we need only to look further into those numbers. Between 2007 and 2012 the NGO budget for AS&RS increased from $285 million per annum to $480 million per annum, which is an increase of $195 million. This growth funding translated into 3,000 extra placements, which is a really good and appropriate outcome. But in contrast, during the same period the government-run AS&RS budget increased by about $30 million and was matched by a corresponding increase of only 100 placements. That is not so good an outcome.

Based on those figures, the average cost of an NGO creating a new placement for a person with a disability was about $65,000, while the cost of providing government services was $300,000 per placement. Given the former Labor government's targeted increase to funding to NGOs, we know that the NGOs have capacity to deliver in these service areas.

*(Time expired)*

**Madam SPEAKER:** The time for questions has expired.

**SPEAKER’S STATEMENT**

**School Group Tours**

**Madam SPEAKER:** I wish to acknowledge today a school visiting parliament with captains and teachers from Faith Lutheran College at Plainland in the electorate of Lockyer.

**HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**Report, Motion to Take Note**

Mr RUTHENBERG (Kallangur—LNP) (11.04 am): I move—

That the House takes note of report No. 22 of the Health and Community Services Committee tabled on 17 May 2013.

I think a way that a society and a community are able to determine its health is to look at how it treats or deals with its most vulnerable. We need to talk about dying. If we can talk about dying at a community and an individual level and with our health providers, we will be better able to advance the quality of life for people with a terminal illness.
The committee recognises that it is not possible to expand and improve all palliative care and community care services at once. As a committee, we need to consider and talk about priorities and how we care for people who are vulnerable and people who are dying. While the committee’s report recommends actions by government and will no doubt be considered by ministers and cabinet, I hope that as Queenslanders we will engage in the discussion and help guide outcomes.

I believe this is one of the most comprehensive inquiries held by any parliament in Australia into palliative care and its crossover into community care. The committee determined its focus from the terms of reference and looked at the capacity, future needs, effectiveness, efficiency and adequacy of palliative care services and of community and home care services. Most of the evidence presented to the committee was about palliative care and we heard less about community care. So the report does give more emphasis to palliative care.

Following my speech, my colleagues will speak on various parts of the report, but here is a quick overview. The report argues that care should be centred around the person and be needs based. In many ways, embracing those principles would go a long way towards ensuring that needs are met and the system is equitable, which is a very similar principle to the My Life, My Choice policy.

It was clear to the committee that current needs for palliative and community care services in Queensland are not being met and that the level of need is only going to increase. We believe though that elements of world-class palliative care are in place and can be built on to great effect and very efficiently. The committee’s view is that most palliative care can be provided efficiently with specialist support by GPs and other health providers who are not palliative care specialists outside an acute hospital.

We note that the establishment of Queensland’s network of telehealth access would, with planning and support from Queensland Health, give much better access to palliative care across our state. The committee was convinced by the case put by submissions that Queensland needs to establish a dedicated children’s hospice. The committee recognises the bravery of those parents and others who gave a personal account of their difficult experiences.

Another significant issue was ensuring that people have access to information when and where they need it. The report suggests that we need a 24-hour state-wide telephone service that can offer support and link people to local services for palliative care. We need to think carefully about the impact on carers. Those unpaid families and friends are critical in any shift to more home care. Carers need to be adequately supported, and we hope we have highlighted the importance of their role.

On behalf of the committee, I thank all the people and organisations who made submissions, appeared as witnesses, participated in the committee’s roundtable discussions or assisted in other ways. I know at times committee members were very moved by these contributions.

I thank all committee members, current and past, who contributed to this report for their earnest efforts to deliver a quality report to the Queensland community. Thanks also go to the committee secretariat, with special mention to Sue Cawcutt and Lee Archinal for their outstanding efforts in preparing the report. I also want to thank the Hansard staff for assisting the committee with its work.

I believe this report will be a reference point for conversations and debate well into the future as the community considers palliative care and community care. I trust it will lead to better outcomes for those with terminal conditions and those who need home care. I commend the report to the House.

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (11.08 am): I rise to make some comments in support of the Health and Community Services Committee report on the inquiry into palliative care and community care in Queensland. The report details the committee’s review of the current provision of palliative care in Queensland. From this basis, we considered the future needs of different population groups in a range of settings. The Health and Community Services Committee has made 63 recommendations, and I would urge all members to read this and consider them. As part of the inquiry, the committee received 74 submissions from a wide range of agencies and individuals. Public hearings were held in Mount Isa and Townsville as well as here in Brisbane. The voices that we heard consistently called for more concerted and more coordinated action to expand and improve the provision of quality palliative care.

I would particularly like to thank Dr Marjad Page for his thoughtful insights into the need for culturally appropriate care for the Kalkadoon people and the broader community of Mount Isa. Palliative care is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the
problems associated with life-threatening illness through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems—physical, psychosocial and spiritual.

We tend to think of palliative care as only being required by the very elderly, near death at the end of a long and hopefully fruitful life. This inquiry has made it clear to me that the real-life experience of many people means that such care may be required earlier, at any age—for children, for the young and for the not-so young. I believe that there has also been in the past a widely held view that palliative care is mainly the concern of hospitals and clinical specialists. This is not the case. While hospitals have their place, many of the terminally ill prefer to spend their last days at home with their family or in a community setting with which they are familiar and comfortable. In many cases, spending their last days at home is people’s last wish. It is the responsibility of our health and community care system to ensure that the wishes of the terminally ill are respected and are met, as far as we as a community are able to do so.

I will not speak about all of the committee’s recommendations, but I will address some of them briefly. The committee considers that Queensland should aim to deliver care that is the right service at the right place at the right time. For residents of aged-care facilities, quality palliative care should be available where residents live, delivered by people they know. Initiatives to support this choice, including support and training for GPs and RACF staff, need to be expanded as the population of older Queenslanders increases. Distressing unnecessary and costly transfers from residential aged-care facilities to acute hospitals should be avoided wherever possible. Community care and home care options also need to be expanded. Specialist palliative care services for children, adolescents and their families, including hospices and bereavement counselling, are sorely lacking in Queensland. This must be addressed as a priority.

We need to have a concerted conversation with the community, encouraging families to talk openly about death and dying as being a normal part of life. These conversations need to make advanced health directives as simple as having a will or an enduring power of attorney to make our wishes about our care known to our families and our healthcare providers. Most importantly, we need a state-wide palliative care strategy to guide work to increase the capacity of the health and community services system to meet current and future needs. Such a strategy must include the provision of adequate public funds to make this happen.

Clearly, there is more work here for the government to do in responding to the committee’s recommendations. I take this opportunity to thank everybody who made a submission or attended and gave evidence before this committee. I also place on record my thanks to the committee staff for their outstanding work on this inquiry. But, as I said to my colleagues in relation to this inquiry, the real test is whether this Newman government commits to funding all of the recommendations contained in this report. If funding is not in the budget in two weeks time, it means that the Newman government does not care about palliative patients, their families and palliative health workers.

Mr SHUTTLEWORTH (Ferny Grove—LNP) (11.13 am): I rise to speak to Palliative and community care in Queensland, report No. 22 of the Health and Community Services Committee. I will today be focusing on the area specifically relating to community care. Community care services include nursing care, allied health care such as physiotherapy and occupational therapy, meals and other services, domestic assistance, personal care, home modification and maintenance, transport, respite care, counselling, social support, and case management and assessment. The community services sector is one of the largest sectors of the health and community services sector as a whole at approximately 41 per cent, and they employ approximately 114,100 personnel, or around 4.9 per cent of the total labour force of Queensland. Further, there are approximately 66,000 volunteers within this critical sector. While this is essential for the ongoing delivery of services, it does also present a number of challenges.

The committee’s terms of reference required that we consider the capacity, needs, effectiveness and efficiency of these services. Although we received a limited number of submissions specifically relating to this component, a trend emerged which aligned with other key focus areas. That related to concerns about access to information and the understanding of the eligibility criteria.

The committee sees the benefit in a seamless link between a single phone number, regional information and the assessment service. The committee has recommended the implementation of an information referral assessment and case management service for people in need of community care.
At this point it is worth acknowledging, too, that the government’s commitment to Your Life Your Choice, as announced last year, makes headway towards case funding, which is an established need for people requiring services from a number of service providers.

The service provided by Queensland Community Care will naturally be placed under increasing pressure due to life expectancy increases, the growing population and general health trends. These trends will also produce internal pressure because the workforce providing the services is also ageing, and this will therefore create a future resourcing issue around the recruitment and retention of community care services personnel.

The committee’s recommendations 43 and 44 focus on the need to increase the awareness of the value of working within the care services sector and the need to increase recruitment and retention within the sector to ensure that we can meet our future needs. Community care often becomes an established need once recipients lose independence or mobility. Independent living can be enhanced through the use of medical aids, and a number of submissions focused upon the uncertainty of access to or eligibility for aids and upon the lack of understanding about the interface between Queensland Community Care Services and the Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme. It is the committee’s recommendation that the responsible ministers collaborate in order to implement an effective service model which would facilitate the provision of medical aids and also consider research and pilot projects of assistive technology.

It would come as no surprise, I am sure, that there was some concern expressed regarding uncertainty about state and Commonwealth funding responsibilities and the segmentation of responsibility. Since the beginning of July 2012 the Commonwealth has had responsibility for home and community care services for persons aged 65 years or older—or 50 years or older for those of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent—while Queensland Community Care Services has had responsibility for younger persons.

In the submissions some concern was raised about the potential of people falling through the gaps and about the resulting loss of the continuity of care in that transitional phase. It is worth noting that the Your Life Your Choice funding, a person centred funding model, should overcome some of these issues, as the recipient has the capacity to direct their funding to the provider of their choice, thereby establishing a relationship which will continue throughout the transitional phase.

A further recommendation of the committee is that the minister monitor the impact of this age determined transition and assess the impacts upon providers to ensure that there are not undue administrative imposts on businesses which are required to report the provision of their services through both state and Commonwealth governments.

I would like at this stage to thank the committee secretariat, headed by Sue Cawcutt, our research director; the member for Kallangur, who was the chair; the previous chair, the member for Redlands, Peter Dowling; and all of my fellow committee members and previous committee members for their efforts throughout the process, and I commend this report to the House.

Mr DAVIES (Capalaba—LNP) (11.18 am): I proudly rise today to commend to the House Palliative and community care in Queensland: toward person-centred care, report No. 22 of the Health and Community Services Committee. When speaking about the significance of this report, it is hard not to resort to adjectives which some may consider hyperbole. In my estimation of this report, descriptors such as groundbreaking and life-changing sit very well. The report seeks to provide a road map through the misunderstood and often ignored field of palliative care medicine.

Australia’s ageing and growing population, along with the increase in both chronic disease and people living longer with chronic conditions, will increase the need for palliative care. As those with chronic disease become a larger proportion of those who need palliative care compared to cancer patients, who historically have been the most clearly identified with the need for palliative care services, palliative services will need to respond to various diseases and palliative care trajectories. Some patients may need palliative care services intermittently over long periods of time to manage complex pain while others may need both treatment and palliative care all at the same time.

The committee considered that Queensland should aim to deliver care that is, as was mentioned earlier, the right service at the right place at the right time. The aim is to deliver palliative care which is needs based; high quality, flexible, person centred, sensitive to the individual and cultural differences; accessible to all and delivered in the home and community and across general and specialist areas of the health system; and, finally, provided early enough in a person’s disease trajectory that it can be planned and a person’s quality of life can be maximised. To achieve this, the committee believes that there needs to be a shift to more care in the home and community supported
by consultancy liaison services provided by specialist palliative care services. A number of the committee's recommendations support an approach to planning, funding and service delivery that would support a greater focus on palliative care in the community. The report recognises that there needs to be a shift of general practitioners and other health providers, including enrolled nurses and registered nurses, to provide care using a palliative approach, supported by specialist consultancy, professional development and related services.

The report offers well over 50 recommendations concerning best practice provision of palliative care. While the constraints of time in this place do not allow a comprehensive unpacking of them all, I want to highlight two that jump from the page. Recommendation 3 talks about children’s hospices, and the report clearly identifies the need for a children’s hospice facility in Queensland. Palliative care is intrinsically an emotional subject and dealing with the many submissions during our committee hearings was often an emotional roller-coaster, but none more so, for me at least, than the submissions concerning children. Stories of loving parents having to travel with gravely ill children to Bear Cottage in New South Wales just to get the hospice and respite service that their family needed was very moving for me and highlighted the terrible gap in Queensland's health services.

The second recommendation that warrants mentioning is recommendation 40 relating to specialist palliative care service resourcing and delivery. The recommendation proposes the implementation of accessible specialist palliative care across Queensland that delivers more palliative care services in the home and community, implements case management, ensures discharge planning is carried out, delivers specialist palliative care services that develop greater capacity to deliver care in the home and residential aged care facilities, provides a 24-hour telephone and home visiting support service and adopts models of care that use specialist nurse practitioners.

In closing, I will finish where I started. I believe that this report and its recommendations have the potential to help tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of Queenslanders going forward. While I hope every one of the recommendations is implemented in full, the reality is that even if only 50 per cent became a reality palliative care in Queensland would be world’s best practice. I commend the report and the recommendations to the House.

Mr HATHAWAY (Townsville—LNP) (11.23 am): Today I rise to talk to the Health and Community Services Committee’s report No. 22 into palliative care. Rather than speak to the report, I want to make some personal reflections on my journey through our committee’s inquiry. Today I wear a badge noting that it is Palliative Care Week and it is timely that this report is brought to the attention of the House. Indeed, it was a very personal journey for me through this inquiry and we received many very moving submissions, as my colleagues will recall, and even more moving and emotive, heartfelt testimony at the public hearings. As the member for Capalaba alluded to, we are some pretty big and ugly blokes, but I can tell you: a lot of the testimony moved us to tears. It was quite an incredible moment.

One of the key lessons for me was about the need for education and awareness in palliative care, and I am not just talking specifically here about palliative care specialists; I am talking about the generalists such as allied health—all the people who make up the multidiscipline team that should form for palliative care to provide the best care to a patient in their transit phase at end of life. The journey was also important to me because it reminded me of my own mortality and my own personal frailties. The awareness that this inquiry and this report should bring to members of this House is that it is a discussion we need to have. It is a discussion we need to have with our partners and our children and the like. It is a difficult discussion, but we can only do it if we are informed. It is a discussion that I recommend people take to heart and have as soon as possible, because when you are in the critical phase it is too late to do it then. The importance of end-of-life planning and advanced care planning cannot be understated.

Mortality for us is the great equaliser of life. The only difference is where and when and how, and that is quite significant in our complex state given the distances that make up our state and the complexities of our demographic. We need to understand that there are significant impediments to decent palliative care, particularly in regional and remote Queensland. It was good that the committee could visit Townsville and Mount Isa. In particular, for those who are not aware, Townsville is well served by the Townsville Palliative Care Unit headed by Dr Will Cairns. It supports a demographic of about 650,000 people right across the state. Dr Will Cairns and his workers have made amazing inroads in providing a very good palliative care centre for those people in their final transition of life,
but it was not without its challenges of course. It also provides a very good outreach service through telehealth and the like under the auspices of Professor Sabe Sabesan, who is the head of oncology at Townsville Hospital. The committee enjoyed and took great understanding from the visit to the Townsville palliative care service.

Another visit we undertook in Townsville which was quite moving was to the Townsville Aboriginal and Islanders Health Services. There we spoke at length with Auntie Diane Ross, Emily Marshall and Auntie Liela Murison, who was also at the public hearing in Townsville. It brought home the differences of our Indigenous population. The meaning of country and spirit, particularly in that passage of life, is so key and critical to our Indigenous population, and North Queensland and Townsville obviously have a far higher Indigenous population who come to palliative care with all the complexities of chronic diseases such as diabetes. We need to understand that as providers for palliative care and take that into consideration. One of the other key messages I learnt from the visit was the need to try to improve pathways for Indigenous health practitioners to come up through as an enrolled nurse, registered nurse or practitioner and the like. I am not sure whether the current system enables that to occur, because there are lots of good, caring Indigenous people who are unable to access pathways of training. Ultimately, I want to acknowledge the efforts of all contributors, the committee and my colleagues to what was one of the most moving and heartfelt inquiries.

(Time expired)

Ms BATES (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (11.28 am): I am proud to also stand and speak to the House on palliative care initiatives. Whilst I came along halfway through the inquiry, I certainly want to congratulate the other members of parliament who were actively involved in this review and particularly the wonderful chairmanship of the member for Kallangur. My long history of work within the health sector as both a nurse and in management of hospitals has delivered a personal passion for me in improving health outcomes for Queenslanders.

Palliative care is one of those issues within health that can really pull at the heartstrings and deserves to be accessed by all of those who could benefit from it. There is little more difficult within health than administering to a patient in deep and lasting pain and it would be a rare individual who has seen the benefit of such care firsthand who would not be an advocate for increased availability.

Quality palliative care delivered in a way that is of most benefit to the recipient is something that is simply not available to enough patients. It should be remembered that it is a benefit that is experienced not only by the patients under care going through often one of the most difficult and painful times of their lives but also their families, who are often exhausted, sometimes at the end of a long road and facing the loss of their loved one. We often think of palliative care as something that is required by the elderly in our final moments of life, but in the case of accidents or premature illness it can benefit patients of any age. Our capacity to deliver palliative care within Queensland and our capacity to deliver in-home care when appropriate is dependent on a variety of factors, but a significant restraint is the shortage of specialists and appropriate facilities. We must also keep in mind that many patients who are at a stage where they require palliative care would prefer to be cared for in familiar surroundings at home.

As a registered nurse, I took a keen interest in aspects of this report. I have long been a crusader for opportunities for nurses, whether they be enrolled nurses or registered nurses, to have the ability to further their career in whichever part of the profession they choose. One of the issues that continually rears its head is recognition of prior learning, particularly for enrolled nurses who are wishing to continue their studies as an RN and particularly if they wanted to specialise in areas such as palliative care because, make no mistake, palliative care is a specialised area in nursing and one that not all nurses can deal with, either. As a former lobbyist for the Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery and the author of the coalition’s nursing education policy, I have always found it absolutely extraordinary how difficult it has been for enrolled nurses, particularly those who have trained in hospital based training, to have recognition of their prior learning to enable them to continue their studies. Colleagues may well be aware—or maybe unaware—that if you trained in a hospital as an enrolled nurse, there is no recognition of prior learning, even if you had spent 25 years as an enrolled nurse. The system is inherently unfair given that, currently, enrolled nurses who complete a one-year TAFE course can and do receive a concession of an entire year off their university degrees. That does nothing to encourage hospital trained enrolled nurses, who may well have had many years of experience working in areas such as palliative care, when their prior learning is not recognised.
Currently, in Australia the average age of nurses is between 45 and 50 years of age, which is a bit of a concern, because that is around my age and the time that I trained. Mr Deputy Speaker, my concern has always been that if the average age of nurses is my age, when you and I are 70 and 75, so will be the nurses. So we need to do everything that we can to encourage more nurses into the system.

Nursing is a vocation—it is not a job—and nurses who work in palliative care do a fantastic job. I would also like to see more training for nurses caring for palliative patients and an increased level of teaching in giving high-dose narcotic analgesics to patients who require more narcotics than the average surgical or medical patient. In my experience, many nurses, particularly in aged-care facilities looking after patients at the end of their life, are concerned about giving high-dose analgesics. We need to make sure that they are not only competent but also confident when administering drugs to dying patients. We also need to see if there are any legislative changes that are required to make it easier for RNs to take phone orders in nursing homes or be able to fax prescriptions to pharmacies for medications required out of hours, particularly in the middle of night when pain relief is required and there may not be a medico present. It would also be great to see more nurse practitioners trained in palliative care, as this is a highly specialised area and one that not too many RNs are comfortable with. Again, as we face an ageing population, palliative care and access to such care will no doubt become a greater issue in Queensland. I again congratulate my colleagues for this report.

Dr DOUGLAS (Gaven—Ind) (11.33 am): I, too, am a member of the Health and Community Services Committee. I participated in the palliative care inquiry and review. I regret that I was not able to be present for the public hearings. I was a late addition to the committee for a variety of reasons. I have read those submissions carefully. The great efforts made by those involved in this area of medicine are to be commended and I take on board a lot of the things that have been said so far. I do not entirely agree with all of them but, having said that, I think a lot of things that were said were very good.

Palliative care is the care focused on improving the quality of the care in the best manner that we can provide when those people are facing a life-threatening illness. It does not necessarily always mean that they are going to die, but they might. There is a tremendous amount of support for this type of care. This is Palliative Care Week and there is no doubt that there are many members of the committee who are watching to see what will be the outcome of this inquiry, the report and what has been discussed today. Clearly, this is an area of broad support and most indeed acknowledge how difficult this type of care can be.

When one considers the very comprehensive report as a whole, if only we just improve a little in every area that has been considered—and we have covered I think nearly everything that you would want and usually cover in this area—we will do a lot for those who cannot easily advocate for themselves, and that is both the people who provide that care and the people who, unfortunately, are receiving that care. There are always arguments about how we can possibly improve our priorities with regard to correctly directing where we might deliver the massive quantum of funds in healthcare systems. These difficulties confront us continuously and it is very difficult when you are happy to spend large amounts of money where people might otherwise succumb to their illnesses. You do not always know that at the time and you cannot always dictate and you cannot always determine those things. In many cases, palliative care is often the poor cousin, yet the Medicare data will confirm that over 50 per cent of all recurrent expenditure is being committed to those who have less than five years to live and 50 per cent of all recurrent expenditure is being committed to those who have less than two years to live. This percentage has been unchanged in Australia for the last 20 years.

The report has addressed the problems we face as a system responding to need here in Queensland and that is as it should be. It is very detailed and every step recognises all of those involved. It also makes reference to the national palliative care plan. I congratulate the members of the committee, the chairman who did an excellent job, and also the research staff led by Sue Cawcutt and everyone else. What happened from their end was a very comprehensive approach and for an area that people may not be experienced in, I think they did a wonderful job.

I, like the member for Bundamba, have legitimate concerns about whether the government and the health department have the will to follow through on some of the recommendations that have been suggested. I feel that I can say this after some very unusual comments directed at me by the health minister today. I am a GP of 30 years experience and with many years of providing exactly the type of care about which we speak today. So I can speak with some authority on exactly this topic and most people would not have done that. They would not know much about what is going on. That is not to say that they do not have a commitment to it; it is just that personal experience is one of
those things that teaches you a lot. The health minister made some very broad denials over an area where he has absolutely no understanding of the significance of the problem and the need for correct data on a very difficult issue. When one has a closed mind to everything because they cannot separate their own personal views from what may be occurring in reality, then no progress is ever possible and it happens in real-life situations like we have in here presently. And so it is with palliative care in parts of Queensland and that was raised during the inquiry. Where there is a contrary view and that contrary view becomes so entrenched, it is the patients who suffer. All the practitioners lose—in other words the process—is time. This is the outcome and result of ignorance and intolerance and pretty much this document intends to get around both. Let us hope that that is the outcome.

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

TRANSPORT AND OTHER LEGISLATION (HEAVY VEHICLE NATIONAL LAW) AMENDMENT BILL

Resumed from 19 March (see p. 673).

Second Reading

Hon. SA EMERSON (Indooroopilly—LNP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (11.38 am):

I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Before I begin my second reading speech, I just want to correct the record. As has been brought to my attention, in question time I misspoke and said Cloncurry instead of Clermont.

I would like to thank the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee for its report on the Transport and Other Legislation (Heavy Vehicle National Law) Amendment Bill 2013. The committee recommended that the bill be passed without amendment and the government supports wholeheartedly this recommendation.

I would also like to acknowledge the committee’s hard work on the two previous heavy vehicle national law bills that contain the policy provisions for the reform and allowed the establishment of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator in October last year. This bill is technical in nature and is one of the final steps needed for Queensland to implement the heavy vehicle national law. It contains consequential amendments to Queensland legislation as a result of the introduction of the national law and transitional provisions to ensure a smooth changeover to the national law. The national law is expected to commence later this year after the majority of participating states and territories have passed their own enabling legislation to apply the national law in their jurisdiction. Queensland is committed to ensuring a smooth transition to the national regulatory framework and the high service standards of the industry are maintained.

This bill will take effect upon the commencement of the national law and aligns with this government’s dedication to streamline legislation and remove red tape. It will eliminate duplication by repealing Queensland provisions that will be regulated by the national law. This bill is a key step in completing the process that will see thousands of pages of legislation across the state replaced with one consolidated body of law reducing the regulatory burden on the industry. I would again like to thank the committee for its consideration and its report. As I said, this bill, the third bill, is really technical in nature.

Ms TRAD (South Brisbane—ALP) (11.40 am): I rise to make a brief contribution to the debate on the Transport and Other Legislation (Heavy Vehicle National Law) Amendment Bill 2013. From the outset I wish to advise that the opposition will be supporting this legislation as we have in the past relating to the establishment of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and the heavy vehicle national law. Queensland Labor strongly supports the establishment of a seamless national regime for the regulation of heavy vehicles in Australia. The road freight industry is one that, by necessity, crosses state borders. The work undertaken to date to establish the national regulator based in Queensland and the heavy vehicle national law is an excellent example of cross-jurisdictional cooperation and what can be achieved when leadership at a national level is matched with efforts and determination to put aside politics at a state level.
It must be acknowledged that this occurred chiefly under the leadership and cooperation between a federal Labor government and a state Labor government. This is what it takes to make important reforms such as the heavy vehicle national laws happen. Leadership and cooperation is what it takes to make critical big projects, like Cross River Rail, get off the ground. We know that those opposite and their coalition counterparts at the federal level do not have what it takes to get big critical projects off the ground. In fact, all they have in them is the ability to play politics at the expense of the needs and wishes of Queenslanders living in one of the most rapidly growing areas of Australia. Those opposite have the ability to put politics ahead of the needs of the people of Queensland. They will go down in history as the people who killed off Cross River Rail.

As I have said before on previous occasions when debating legislation on this topic, this important micro-economic reform has its origins on 2 July 2009 when COAG agreed to establish the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and a national body of law consistent across all jurisdictions governing the regulation of all vehicles weighing more than 4.5 tonnes. As I have said before, it was an initiative of the federal Labor government working in partnership with the states. Members will be aware that this landmark reform is predicted to save industry up to $12 billion over the next 20 years Australia-wide. This particular bill comes after this parliament has already enacted the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2012 and the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Act 2012.

This bill is a transitional bill that will make consequential amendments to existing Queensland legislation to remove provisions regulating heavy vehicles that will now be covered by the heavy vehicle national law. The bill also makes changes to the application laws for the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2012 which are needed as a result of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Act 2013 and to address some specific issues about the way the national law will apply here in Queensland.

Finally, the bill will enact transitional provisions specific to Queensland to clarify the operation of the general savings and transitional provisions in the national law. This is to ensure that there is a smooth transition from the regulation of heavy vehicle operations under the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 to the national law. I note that there are also provisions that allow heavy vehicle registration to continue under Queensland legislation until the commencement of the registration chapter in the national law. I also note that this legislation contains no significant policy changes, but that it is merely a transitional bill fulfilling the objectives that I have mentioned above.

A number of submissions from stakeholders and interest groups were made to the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee during its investigation of the bill. Those submissions identified some ongoing issues with the national law that were not within the scope of this bill. Some of those issues include fatigue management and the national registration of heavy vehicles and the decoupling of CTP insurance. I understand that those issues are being addressed and worked through as part of the ongoing work program by the regulator, but are not within the scope of this bill. I look forward to seeing that work progress and I hope that the regulator will be able to resolve those issues to the satisfaction of all parties.

In conclusion, this bill is another important step in the heavy vehicle national law reform process and one that will ensure a smooth transition to the national law which will commence operation on 1 July 2013. I know how much those in the industry are looking forward to the national laws getting up and running. Last week when I attended the Brisbane Truck Show everyone I spoke to within the industry were looking forward to the implementation of the national laws. I hope the other states come on board as quickly as possible.

I want to thank the staff of the Department of Transport and Main Roads, as well as the national regulator, for their work on this legislation. I also want to thank the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee for its investigation, deliberations and report on this important topic. I would also like to specifically thank drivers’ unions and industry stakeholders for their involvement and enthusiastic cooperation in the reform process. Again Queensland Labor supports the establishment of the national regulator and the national law and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr HOBBs (Warrego—LNP) (11.46 am): I am pleased to speak to the Transport and Other Legislation (Heavy Vehicle National Law) Amendment Bill 2013. This is the third stage of a very important bill that puts in place the heavy vehicle national law. The Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee examined this bill in detail. I thank those who made submissions to our committee. We have made a recommendation that the bill be supported.
The objectives of this bill are to make consequential amendments to existing Queensland legislation to remove provisions that regulate heavy vehicles that will be covered by the heavy vehicle national law and to insert references into the national law where relevant. In some cases there will be changes made to state acts and these will have to blend in with the national law. It will also make a small number of changes to the application laws in the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2012 which are needed as a result of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Act 2013 and to address some specific issues about the way the national law will apply in Queensland. While each state will have its own regulations, they will have to blend in with the national approach.

The bill contains transitional provisions specific to Queensland to clarify the operation of the general savings and transitional provisions in the national law. This is to ensure that there is a smooth transition from the regulation of heavy vehicle operators under the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 to the national law. The bill also contains provisions that will allow heavy vehicle registration to continue under Queensland legislation until the commencement of the registration chapter in the national law. That is a significant part of this bill.

These changes will take effect at the same time as the operational provisions of the national law when it commences in Queensland. The operational provisions are scheduled to commence on 1 July 2013 subject to all states and territories having passed the necessary application legislation through their respective parliaments. The bill also contains provisions that allow heavy vehicle registration to continue under Queensland legislation until the commencement of the registration chapter in the national law.

The bill introduces a number of changes to the application law that are needed as a result of the national heavy vehicle act. For example, the provisions specify that under the national law as adopted in Queensland police officers may use force against persons in the circumstances provided for in the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act. Authorised officers are able to use force against property, not persons, for certain powers in the national law such as moving heavy vehicles or gaining entry to places. Authorised officers are able to seize heavy vehicles, for example, if there is evidence of an offence against the national law. The bill also inserts a provision in the application law providing an authorised officer to require a driver of a heavy vehicle to produce their driver’s licence for compliance purposes and inserts provisions to require the Police Commissioner’s approval is obtained prior to a blue light being fitted to a heavy vehicle.

At a public briefing, the committee was advised that the proposed changes to application laws in Queensland relate to specific aspects of the legislative scheme that apply to the national law rather than the national law itself. To give an example of some of the minor changes, the national law allows the application law of each jurisdiction to deal with the use of force against property and people. This bill provides that, in Queensland, force against a person can only be used by police officers and it can only be done in circumstances already permitted under the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000. That means that there is no change to the existing policy for the use of force by Queensland police officers. The bill also permits authorised officers known as transport inspectors to use force against property to enforce certain provisions of the national law. That is entirely consistent with the powers currently afforded to transport inspectors under Queensland legislation and represents no change to policy.

The bill will change how the national law will operate in Queensland with respect to obtaining the consent of the Queensland Police Commissioner for the fitting of a blue flashing warning light on heavy vehicles. This is aimed at preserving the current arrangements with the Police Commissioner and ensuring consistency for the approval of the use of blue lights, which makes sense, for instance, if a fire brigade or some other group wanted to use blue light whereas presently they use flashing red light. Generally, a blue light is associated with the police or enforcement officers and obviously the commissioner would need to give approval in special cases. That sums up a lot of the bill.

The committee was satisfied that changes to application law required as a result of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Act 2013 are consistent with the current Queensland legislative provisions and represent no change to policy. The committee looked at that in great detail. The bill inserts new provisions into the application law that provide for the operation of general savings and transition provisions in the national law. The amendments will ensure that the following are not affected by the commencement of the national law: the enforcement and prosecution of heavy vehicle offences that are committed under the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act, and particular orders that were made under that same act which are still in effect at the time of the commencement of the national law. In summary, the bill inserts a declaratory regulation making power that will enable examples of matters such as accreditations, permits and exemptions that exist
under the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act to be identified in the regulation. It will put beyond doubt that those matters are intended to be transitioned to exit under the national law via the general savings and transitional provisions of the national law. The bill before the House is quite detailed.

The committee noted the concerns raised in some of the submissions in relation to fatigue management and flexibility. At this stage, Western Australia is still reluctant to come on board because it believes that it has better fatigue management regulations under its workplace health and safety arrangements. The committee supports the work being undertaken by the regulator to develop work and rest hour templates, such as a proposed livestock transport template, which aim to improve and increase flexibility for transport operators with specific requirements. There is ongoing work to be done in relation to fatigue management in this state. Ours is a big state. Queensland and Western Australia are very similar in that there is a long distance between ports; it can be a long distance between where the cattle are picked up and where the meatworks or the depots are located. In Victoria, shorter runs are needed. We have different requirements and we have to ensure that the fatigue laws are flexible enough to work in a large state such as Queensland. The committee was satisfied with the bill and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MINNIKIN (Chatsworth—LNP) (11.55 am): I rise in support of the Transport and Other Legislation (Heavy Vehicle National Law) Amendment Bill 2013. This bill is one of the last necessary steps in what has been a complex and significant legislative reform process for the heavy vehicle industry. Queensland has played a key role in the national heavy vehicle reform process, both as the host jurisdiction for the national law and in providing the location for the head office of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. Queensland was appointed as the host jurisdiction because of its positive working relationship with industry and its strong support for previous national heavy vehicle model legislation. As host jurisdiction, Queensland has facilitated the passage of the two heavy vehicle national law bills through this House and now this bill, which contains essential consequential amendments and transitional provisions to facilitate the introduction of the national law in Queensland. The development of these bills required the active involvement of the heavy vehicle industry and transport authorities around Australia. The passage of the national legislation is, indeed, a milestone and an outstanding example of cooperation across all sectors of the heavy vehicle industry.

The National Heavy Vehicle Regulator commenced operations in January this year, providing initial services managing the National Heavy Vehicle Accreditation Scheme and the performance based standards scheme. The regulator will become fully operational once the national law has been adopted in other states and territories and will transform into a one-stop shop for the heavy vehicle industry.

The bill currently before the House is technical in nature, making consequential amendments to existing Queensland legislation and setting out transitional provisions to ensure a smooth changeover to the national law. It is the final necessary step to make this reform work in practice for Queensland. Most importantly, the bill gives certainty to industry, generating efficiencies in their business operations. It does this by ensuring that all matters involving heavy vehicle operations covered by the national law are not duplicated or overlapping with Queensland laws. This will avoid confusion and inconsistency for industry. Any legislative reform that cuts out duplication across the different tiers of government is well worth while and I am delighted to support this bill as it is a pragmatic step in the right direction. As the great Winston Churchill once stated, if you have 10,000 regulations you destroy all respect for the law.

The transitional provisions in this bill also provide certainty for industry by allowing a regulation to set out in more detail the types of permits, accreditations and other documents that will automatically transition to the national law. As the minister said in his explanatory speech, the adoption of a seamless national law will allow Queensland businesses to benefit from productivity improvements. The ability to operate across state borders without the unnecessary burden of dealing with a range of regulators and regulatory interpretations across jurisdictions is just one such benefit.

It is important that the move to develop nationally consistent laws for heavy vehicles does not disadvantage local operators or fail to take into account local transport conditions. For many years, Queensland has worked closely with the heavy vehicle transport industry to find practical solutions to difficult operational issues. As a result, a number of local productivity initiatives were implemented to suit Queensland-specific conditions.
The national law will see the preservation of existing local productivity initiatives, including for primary producers. Over time the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator will move to consolidate and apply productivity initiatives more broadly across all jurisdictions. The resulting application of processes and initiatives on a national basis rather than the current state-by-state situation will yield efficiency gains and a reduction in the cost of regulation. Reducing red tape and improving regulatory efficiency are both core tenets of this Newman government.

With regard to primary producer specific initiatives, a simplified application process for fatigue management accreditation and heavy vehicle access permits, based on the application of consistent criteria from a single government body, will apply. This will allow a primary producer with a property straddling two local authorities to apply to a single body and receive a single determination, which will be a welcome change to the current situation. A more streamlined and flexible approach to fatigue management will allow primary producers and operators to more appropriately schedule livestock transport over long distances without compromising safety or endangering animal welfare.

Initiatives such as the Grain Harvest Management Scheme recognise the uncertainties that exist in the transport of bulk commodities. Accurate load calculations are made difficult because of varying moisture contents and densities. Participants in the Grain Harvest Management Scheme are provided with a certain amount of flexibility above normal mass limits to relieve this uncertainty.

Through the use of agreed administrative processes and compliance activities, industry and the Department of Transport and Main Roads can ensure an efficient grain harvest as well as protection of road infrastructure. These arrangements will continue under the regulator. A further example is allowing access for innovative multicombination vehicles on designated roads in Queensland. These high productivity combinations are safer than comparable sized road trains and provide greater efficiency as fewer trips are required to complete the same freight task.

The new heavy vehicle national law together with the supporting amendments in this bill will provide national benefits at a local level. This government is streamlining regulation, reducing red tape and improving safety and efficiency for the heavy vehicle industry—an industry so integral to the economy of a decentralised state like Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GRIMWADE (Morayfield—LNP) (12.02 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Transport and Other Legislation (Heavy Vehicle National Law) Amendment Bill 2013. I would like to thank the committee secretariat for their hard work in assisting our committee with this bill. As a member of the committee that this bill was referred to for consideration, I want to briefly touch on a few areas for the benefit of honourable members in the House today.

The bill is largely technical in nature and makes consequential amendments to existing Queensland legislation to remove provisions that regulate heavy vehicles that will be covered by the heavy vehicle national law and to insert references to the national law where relevant. The bill is actually the third bill that has dealt with this legislation that our committee has reviewed.

Queensland is working closely with the regulator and other jurisdictions to ensure smooth implementation of the reform and the continuation of high service standards for the industry. The regulator began release 1 operations on 21 January 2013 by operating a national call centre and website and offering National Heavy Vehicle Accreditation Scheme and Performance Based Standards Scheme services nationally on behalf of all jurisdictions.

The regulator and jurisdictions have worked together with industry to ensure operators experienced a quick transition of regulatory services from jurisdictions to the regulator. With the passing of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill in February this year, other jurisdictions are proceeding with the passage of their own legislation to apply the national law. The current intention is for the majority of jurisdictions to commence the heavy vehicle national law from 1 September 2013. It should be noted that the Northern Territory, the Australian Capital Territory and Western Australia have advised that they may not meet the 1 September 2013 date but are progressing. Once the national law takes effect, it is proposed that the regulator will commence administering the heavy vehicle national law with assistance from jurisdictions under service agreements.

Chapter 2 of the national law deals with the registration of heavy vehicles. This chapter will not start at the same time as the other chapters of the national law. This is because a national registration scheme requires significant information and telecommunication infrastructure which will not be in
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place before the national law is commenced. It is unlikely that a national registration system will be in place before 2015. However, I should stress that setting of heavy vehicle registration fees will continue nationally through the heavy vehicle charges determination developed by the National Transport Commission and approved by ministers.

In the meantime, each participating jurisdiction will continue to manage heavy vehicle registrations under its own laws. In Queensland this means that heavy vehicle registrations will continue in the usual way with no changes for the industry. The bill contains provisions which recognise heavy vehicle registrations under the laws of participating jurisdictions until the commencement of the registration chapter in the national law. Every other participating jurisdiction will have similar interim registration provisions in their application laws. The Department of Transport and Main Roads will work closely with the regulator in the interim to ensure seamless customer service to the heavy vehicle industry.

Questions have been asked as to why the bill amends the Police Powers and Responsibility Act 2000. Since the enactment of the Police Powers and Responsibility Act 2000, wherever possible all police powers have been located in the act rather than spread across the statute book. Queensland police currently have various powers under the act for transport matters, including, for example, powers to stop, inspect and search vehicles and to require production of a driver’s licence. These powers are used by the police to enforce the requirements of the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995.

With the commencement of the heavy vehicle national law, the Police Powers and Responsibility Act 2000 is being amended to refer to the national law. This will enable Queensland police to continue to exercise their transport powers under their own act when enforcing and ensuring compliance with the national law. The retention of these powers in the Police Powers and Responsibility Act 2000 is strongly supported by the police and it streamlines enforcement and simplifies training requirements for police officers in Queensland. For national consistency and in order to ensure that drivers and operators of heavy vehicles will be subject to the same penalties, this bill includes a provision to align the maximum penalties applying under the Police Powers and Responsibility Act 2000 with those that apply to the equivalent offences under the national law.

I have also been asked why the requirement to produce a driver’s licence is included in the bill. In Queensland police officers and transport inspectors are authorised to require the driver of a heavy vehicle to produce their driver’s licence. The production of a driver’s licence is necessary to establish whether the person is complying with the relevant transport laws applying to them—for example, determining whether they are the person to whom the work diary has been issued.

The heavy vehicle national law makes it a requirement that the driver of a heavy vehicle must produce a document that is required to be kept under the national law. However, the requirements to keep a driver’s licence remain in the laws of the jurisdictions. This was a purposeful decision based on the fact that driver licensing was out of the scope of the national law. This bill provides that authorised officers may continue to require the production of a driver’s licence for the purpose of determining compliance with the national law and maintains the status quo in Queensland.

As I said when I started my speech, this piece of legislation is largely dealing with technical aspects of the heavy vehicle national law and with cleaning up the legislation after the passage of the two bills that were previously introduced into this parliament. It is with this in mind that I keep my contribution very brief today and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr SHORTEN (Algester—LNP) (12.07 pm): I rise to speak on the Transport and Other Legislation (Heavy Vehicle National Law) Amendment Bill 2013. Can I first put on the record my sincere thanks to the members of the transport committee, led by the very competent chair, Howard Hobbs, the member for Warrego. I thank the hardworking and dedicated secretariat who provide unlimited support to all members on the committee.

The principal policy objectives of the bill in front of us are to make consequential amendments to existing Queensland legislation to remove provisions that regulate heavy vehicles that will be covered by the heavy vehicle national law and insert references to the national law where relevant. The bill will also make a small number of changes to the application laws for the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2012, which are needed as a result of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment 2013, and to address some specific issues about the way the national law will apply in Queensland.

The principal objectives are also to include transitional provisions specific to Queensland to clarify the operation of the general savings and transitional provisions in the national law. This is to ensure that there is a smooth transition from the regulation of heavy vehicle operations under the
Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995, which is a Queensland act, to the national law. The bill also contains provisions which allow heavy vehicle registration to continue under Queensland legislation until the commencement of the registration chapter in the national law. The operational provisions are scheduled to commence on 1 July 2013 and that, of course, is subject to all states and territories having passed the necessary application legislation through their respective parliaments.


The bill introduces a number of small changes to the application laws which are needed as a result of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act. For example, the provisions specify that, under the national law as adopted in Queensland, police officers may use force against persons in the circumstances provided for in the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000; authorised officers are able to use force against property, not persons, for certain powers in the national law, such as moving heavy vehicles or gaining entry to places; and, also, authorised officers are available able to seize heavy vehicles, for example, if they are evidence of an offence against the national law. The bill also inserts a provision in the application law allowing an authorised officer to require a driver of a heavy vehicle to produce their driver’s licence for compliance purposes and inserts provisions to require that the Police Commissioner’s approval be obtained prior to a blue light being fitted to a heavy vehicle.

The bill principally also makes a number of consequential amendments, particularly to the TORUM Act, but also amends the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000. The following matters will continue to be dealt with under the TORUM Act: heavy vehicle driver licensing, including accreditation of driver trainers for heavy vehicle driver licensing; transport of dangerous goods; road rules and matters related to traffic movement; and drink driving and drug driving. The Transport Operations (Road Use Management—Accreditation and Other Provisions) Regulation 2005 will continue to be used to accredit approved inspection stations, at which heavy vehicles are inspected to ensure that they meet vehicle standards; approved examiners, who conduct the inspections of heavy vehicles at approved inspection stations; and approved persons, who certify modifications to heavy vehicles.

Authorised officers appointed under the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995, which includes all Queensland police officers, will continue to have enforcement powers for heavy vehicles in relation to the matters outlined above which are not covered by the national law. For example, authorised officers will continue to have powers to stop, inspect and search heavy vehicles for matters associated with driver licensing, driver training, the transport of dangerous goods, requirements for tow trucks and compulsory third party insurance. The Queensland Police Service will continue to enforce breaches of the Queensland road rules and drink and drug driving by drivers of heavy vehicles.

I put on record my respect and admiration for the men and women who drive heavy vehicles across this state and across this nation. I am the youngest of eight children and one of my elder brothers is a heavy vehicle driver. He is an interstate truck driver. So I know the hard life that these men and women endure, the many hours on the road going from one place to another, picking up freight and expecting to be somewhere else at a certain sometime. When I was a sales rep on the road for a major manufacturing company in this state, I remember passing many trucks, particularly on the way to Toowoomba, and there was a bumper sticker which sticks in my mind and it goes like this—and I think everyone knows this one; the member for Gregory would probably know this one—‘Without trucks Australia stops’. I commend that to the House. It is absolutely true. Without the men and women of the trucking industry this state and this nation would come to a standstill. As the committee recommends in its report that the Transport and Other Legislation (Heavy Vehicle National Law) Amendment Bill 2013 be passed, I commend the bill to the House.
This bill seeks to make consequential amendments to the existing Queensland legislation in order to remove provisions regulating heavy vehicles that will be covered by the heavy vehicle national law. A small number of these changes to the application laws for the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2012 are needed as a result of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Act 2013, as well as to address some specific issues about the way the national law will apply in Queensland. The national law will apply to heavy vehicles with a mass of 4.5 tonnes and will seek to regulate vehicle standards, mass, dimension and loading of heavy vehicles, heavy vehicle access to the road network and management of heavy vehicle driver fatigue.

The Newman government will pass this bill to ensure that there is a smooth transition from the regulation of heavy vehicle operations under the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 to the national law. Furthermore, heavy vehicle registration will be allowed to continue under Queensland legislation until commencement of the registration chapter in the national law.

Queensland’s regulation regarding police powers over heavy vehicles needs to be brought into line with the changes introduced by the Commonwealth government. As a result of the national law, changes will made to the powers of police officers who may use force against persons in the circumstances provided for in the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000. Also, under the national law, authorised officers are able to use force against property, not persons, for certain powers in the national law, such as moving heavy vehicles or gaining entry to places, and authorised officers are able to seize heavy vehicles if they are evidence of an offence against the national law.

The bill inserts new provisions in the Queensland application laws which provide for the operation of the general savings and transitional provision in the national law. These amendments ensure that the key aspects of the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 are not affected by the commencement of the national law in Queensland. These include the enforcement and prosecution of heavy offences committed under the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 and particular orders that were made under the act and are still in effect at the time of commencement of the national law.

The bill also inserts a declaratory regulation-making power that will enable examples of matters such as accreditation permits and exemptions that exist under the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 to be identified in a regulation. The Queensland government is committed to developing a simple process of approvals through a single permit.

These changes will result in increased productivity for the heavy vehicle industry and will optimise use of the road network, while also taking into consideration infrastructure protection and safety issues. Most aspects of the heavy vehicle regulation will be dealt with under the national law. Since the commencement of the project to create a regulator, it has been acknowledged that some matters affecting heavy vehicles will continue to be dealt with under state based legislation.

The Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 will continue to deal with heavy vehicle driver licensing, transport of dangerous goods, road rules and matters related to traffic movements, and drink driving and drug driving. Authorised officers appointed under the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995, which includes all Queensland police officers, will continue to have enforcement powers for heavy vehicles in relation to the matters outlined above which are not covered by the national law. Authorised officers will continue to have powers to stop, inspect and search heavy vehicles for matters associated with driver licensing, driver training, the transport of dangerous goods, the requirements for tow trucks and compulsory third party insurance.

The Registration and Licensing Task Force of Austroads plans to continue to improve driver licensing matters and will develop several projects in order to efficiently licence Queenslanders. Moreover, the Queensland Police Service will continue to enforce branches of the Queensland road rules and drink and drug driving of heavy vehicles.

In closing, I would like to thank those stakeholders who participated in the process through their submissions. I would also like to thank the committee secretariat and my fellow committee members for their work throughout this process. I again thank the Minister for Transport and Main Roads for introducing this bill. I am pleased to commend this bill to the House.

Mr Johnson (Gregory—LNP) (12.20 pm): I would like to make a brief contribution today to the Transport and Other Legislation (Heavy Vehicle National Law) Amendment Bill 2013. This is a very important and integral piece of legislation relevant to the national uniformity of heavy vehicle driving regulations, and there are certain aspects that need to be brought to the attention of the
House. I think interstate drivers should have a better understanding of the road conditions that we are subjected to here in Queensland. This is also very applicable to Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

This piece of legislation today will revisit police powers and the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act. Many parts of the old Queensland legislation of 1995 will be dismantled and incorporated into national law. I applaud this because it is moving forward and making this country aware of the conditions of other state jurisdictions. That is what needs to be a very integral part of interstate driving when they come to Queensland.

There are many pieces of state legislation relevant to the road transport industry but some of them are very difficult to uphold because of the tyranny of distance in many cases. I will use the chain of responsibility legislation as an example. That is one which from time to time is especially applicable to the livestock transport industry or the fruit and vegetable industry where they have to meet market demands and time frames, and that is very difficult sometimes. I know that driver fatigue management is an integral part of the road safety strategy of the national law, but it is also a very important part of the make-up of our state operation.

Recently I was travelling on the Landsborough Highway just south of McKinlay in the north-west down to Kynuna and I passed five semitrailers carrying wide loads—prefabricated buildings for use probably as mining camp huts. Those configurations were about 12-feet wide. As we know, from the outside of the coaming rails of a semitrailer we are talking eight feet wide and then we go either side, whatever it is. In this case, it would have been about 12 feet in broad daylight and they were all about 50 metres apart. I could not believe it when I saw it. These trucks were from interstate. Unfortunately, I had to get right off the side of the road. I was on a river crossing. For someone with a car and caravan, some of these irresponsible situations are going to cause grief.

When it comes to heavy vehicles, 99 per cent of our heavy vehicle operators are very responsible people. This is what gives the industry a bad name. At the end of the day I appeal to the law enforcement people to be more observant of some of these configurations because I know for a fact that they are breaching road laws and regulations. Now under the national heavy vehicle legislation one size will fit all state jurisdictions. That is going to be the good part about this. Whilst Transport and Main Roads and our Queensland Police Service do an exemplary job, they cannot be everywhere all the time. They are certainly not God. There are people running the gauntlet, and I think we need to be more observant of these people.

I know of one driver who was recently unloading cattle in Longreach. He was half an hour over in the logbook and he got a substantial fine and a loss of points. We need to look at some of these issues. There needs to be some flexibility in upholding some of this legislation. In a situation involving livestock or produce there needs to be some flexibility at either one end or the other. As I mentioned earlier, it comes back to the chain of responsibility legislation. There are many people out there, especially some producers, who are not doing the right thing by the road transport industry. At the end of the day the authorities are going to need to level a charge at some of these people to bring them into line.

Transport inspection services are another matter that I want to reference today. As we can appreciate, Queensland is a very large and geographically disadvantaged state. I know in the central west at the moment the only place where an inspection can be done is Longreach. You can probably go back to Roma and Emerald and move further north to places like Cloncurry and Mount Isa. I want to make a point today—and I hope the minister might check this out—which is applicable to my brothers. I do not have an interest in the transport industry as such, but they have an operation at Tambo where they have a pit. Queensland Transport has been doing inspections not only on their operation but also on other vehicles that have been brought to their facility for inspection. This has been a great initiative in the past. Operators do not have to take their road trains or their vehicles all the way to Longreach, which is 300 kilometres away, and meet a time frame for a transport inspector to be there. With things like this we need to put in place some flexible strategies that will enhance the opportunity for these people to take advantage of those inspection points on certain allocated days and allotted times. I know there are people who do their own inspections, but I also know that in places like Charleville, for example, transport officers have used a pit there from time to time to do these inspections.

Before I sign off, the other thing I want to touch on is fatigue management. Fatigue management is one of the worst factors we still have on our roads in the heavy transport industry. Whilst there are a lot of people who think they know how the situation works, I can tell you now that
they do not. I will give you an example. Say you were loading cattle on the territory border west of Boulia this morning at daylight and those cattle are going to come through to Winton where you might unload them or you might keep going to Longreach and spell them there. If there is a problem and those cattle do not get through in the time allocated, they might have to pull up somewhere like halfway between Longreach and Winton and rest those cattle because they are out of hours. If that is the case, nobody sleeps in the middle of the day. The midday sun is beaming down. It is not good for the welfare of the animals. It is this type of situation that I appeal to the minister and departmental officials to watch, because it is one that can be detrimental to the industry. At the end of the day we do not want animal welfare people causing grief in an industry already afflicted with problems because of drought. Whilst the police and transport inspectors do a good job with fatigue management, I know a few drivers in recent times have been apprehended for not filling out their logbooks. Officers have gone back through logbooks for a month or six weeks and drivers have been getting substantial fines—anything up to $1,200 and a loss of three points—as a result of having a minor discrepancy in their logbooks.

I appeal to the minister regarding this as it is very unfair. A lot of these people are professionals and are no different to any other type of professionals. People do not just decide to go out and get a road train licence. They have to go through the preliminary stages of that apprenticeship to learn how to handle those configurations, whether they are type 1s, type 2s, BAB quads, B-doubles or B-trebles. We have to make certain that there is an understanding of the professionalism of this operation and the people behind the wheel of these configurations. I support the legislation.

Dr DOUGLAS (Gaven—Ind) (12.30 pm): This is the third part of the national template legislation. It does not appear to be anything but consistent with industry, state and national objectives. We, too, support the bill. I listened carefully to the speech of the member for Warrego and I acknowledge his long-running stewardship of these regulations as the relevant committee chair. In fact, I was in Western Australia when he was pursuing these things some time ago. I think he did us all great credit at that time. The input from the committee certainly appears to have added synergy to the process.

Whilst most submitters were happy, I note that the submission from Suncorp regarding CTP matters and registration plates may lead to an increase in the cost of compulsory third-party premiums. If this is indeed the outcome, then it behoves us all to consider how we might mitigate it at best and try to take on board some of their views to try to diminish it. Other submissions were generally supportive.

In my electorate of Gaven there are quite a few drivers working in a variety of arrangements with the transport companies on the ground. Almost all are very happy with what has happened and what is to happen. If the third tier of this legislation delivers the same type of positive outcomes that the first two pieces of template legislation did, then we will all be a lot safer and we will be in a more transparent place.

After the last bill passed through the House I received some correspondence from a Western Australian trucking company owner about some comments that I and some others had made. He indicated his unhappiness with national template legislation. Certainly not everyone can be placated where change is often difficult to accept. The concern at that stage was that the Western Australians were not going to go ahead with the national template legislation.

Our local concern is based on the M1 because it moves directly through the middle of my electorate, and I know that it goes through a few other electorates as well. It certainly goes right through the middle of my electorate, through Nerang, up through Pacific Pines and on through Coomera. So there are literally thousands of massive B-doubles, semitrailers and all manner of heavy vehicles moving north and south, powering the state and driving our gross state product. In fact, we are dependent upon it.

In recent times the drivers have had a far easier set of timetables for interstate truck driving. I was listening to the member for Algester say that two of his brothers were in this industry. It is largely a male-dominated industry. It probably lends itself to that, but there are certainly lots of families that are dependent on that industry. They have all said to a person that the roads are safer, their families are more content, they have better health outcomes and they have more efficient outcomes in the running of their businesses and also of the businesses that they run for the trucking companies. Certainly, the initial view from some of the majors was that that might not happen.

Our concern on the coast is the recent change to the road volume patterns of heavy vehicles, with an extra hour on the pattern on either side of the previous 10.30 pm to 3.30 am peak zone, which is the time zone in which the freight companies are moving both out of Brisbane and into Brisbane. Of
course, they are trying to get loading times. The volumes in the previous zones are as they were before but there is an extra load. There are large numbers of people on the road, particularly those commuters—and there are huge numbers—who are commuting to Brisbane. They are actually competing for the same road space. We know that B-triples are coming, although most do not believe that. Certainly, the stopping distance of those vehicles is much greater and the wind effects from those vehicles are also much greater. The concern is in these lower tonnage vehicles—and remember, there are a lot of vehicles on the road that are old now. Those people who commute do not all drive new-age Commodores. Their vehicles certainly weigh less than one tonne and they can have a lot of problems on the road. We have to confront the need for heavy rail and standard gauge passage into Brisbane sufficient to handle the bigger loads with the cost efficiency that rail can provide for the hundred tonne-plus loads. That is purely to address this issue of current volume loading on the roads.

I realise that the Bruce Highway and the second range crossing for heavy road transport are desperately needed infrastructure but if we do not place them high enough on our own set of priorities, they will never be placed on the list of national priorities. That is not to say that it has not been placed on that list already, but it does appear that it is not on the national set of priorities or on that of any of the federal Labor or Liberal National coalition members. I do acknowledge that the current National Party leader has stated that the second range crossing is a very critical part of their policy. However, for some, myopia is more common when distance is greater, and we are certainly a long way from Canberra. I know the Western Australians feel that consistently, but sometimes in the most distal of states where most of the income is derived it is harder to get access to the greater share of income that is needed for that major infrastructure. It is easier when the resident government is compliant and focused on lesser issues, and we probably need to address that issue.

These major initiatives will be state building and will build public confidence. We need to approach them with the kind of diligence that they will deliver the kinds of care. There is a lot of talk about the fact that the nation stops when the trucks stop, but it will certainly be a lot worse if those trucks are absent. I think we need to consider that if volume loading on the roads becomes so atrocious that there is competition between heavy vehicles and individuals for access, we are going to have a problem resulting in those people being diverted to other sites and, unfortunately, we could lose them.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Watts): Order! Before I call the member for Dalrymple I would like to recognise our visitors in the gallery from Boondall State School. Welcome.

Mr KNUTH (Dalrymple—KAP) (12.36 pm): I rise to speak to the Transport and Other Legislation (Heavy Vehicle National Law) Amendment Bill 2013. This bill relates to what has developed here in Queensland and, likewise, in New South Wales. No doubt there are many issues regarding transport operations in the transport industry and a combination of different factors—including licensing, cost of registration, fatigue management and annual approved inspections—is detailed in the bill. The member for Gregory spoke earlier about vehicle inspections being conducted in rural and regional Queensland. A lot of these truckies are trying to book in their vehicles for a vehicle inspection and sometimes cannot do that within the required time frame. They then commit an offence in driving a non-inspected vehicle due to the massive backlog of vehicle inspections. Somewhere along the line local garages—and I believe this is being worked on currently—in rural and regional areas must be able to participate in the vehicle inspections.

With regard to fatigue management, we have seen that over the years it has been overly policed to the point that it has become a virtual dictatorship. Everywhere we looked we would see transport operators pulling over truckies, checking their logbooks and checking that the t’s were crossed and the i’s were dotted. There was one particular incident which was very disturbing. A landowner in the Einasleigh area had 200 heifers in the yard that were to be trucked to Hughenden. That afternoon. The truck driver was picked up and inspected at Charters Towers. By the time he reached Forty Mile Scrub he was picked up and inspected again after previously also being picked up and inspected at the Lynd Junction roadhouse. He was picked up three times before he was able to get to the destination. By the time he got to the destination he had exceeded his fatigue management limits and he could not move those cattle to Hughenden. That is something that needs to be looked at. It is overly policed.

One of the most important things in terms of the heavy vehicle national law amendments is the need to ensure our truckies have good roads and good access. For example, after Cyclone Yasi the Bruce Highway was cut for 10 days. Vehicles could not get through and could not provide supply—neither north nor south. Once people realised there was an inland route available between Charters
Towers and Mount Garnet on the Atherton Tablelands, there was a convoy of vehicles on that road. It is important that we upgrade inland highways. I refer to areas such as Fletcher Creek and Snake Creek. The bridge over the Clarke River needs to be upgraded. It is great that the bridge at Innis Hot Springs is receiving attention at present. If we want to relieve traffic congestion and reduce traffic accidents along the coast, we need to ensure we have inland highways. When we have a cyclone or a natural disaster, transport operators need to be able to move goods without any delays or hiccups.

If we want to save money, the best way is to take pressure off only one area and distribute the load equally across other areas. I mentioned Fletcher Creek and Clarke River. If the bridges over Basalt River, Sandy Creek and Stockyard Creek are upgraded, an inland highway will be created. This is about nation building in the area of transport infrastructure.

Hon. SA Emerson (Indooroopilly—LNP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (12.42 pm), in reply: This bill contains amendments to Queensland legislation needed as a result of the adoption of the national law and transitional provisions which will assist in a smooth transfer of responsibilities to the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. I thank honourable members for their contribution to today’s debate on this bill and for their involvement in the debate on the policy that establishes the regulator and heavy vehicle law. This bill is one of the last major steps needed for full implementation of the national law later this year. Other states and territories are beginning to bring their laws before their parliaments, with Victoria and South Australia recently introducing legislation to adopt the national law.

On commencement of the national law later this year, heavy vehicle drivers and operators will be subject to a single rule book across Australia. As I advised the House during the debate on the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill that we passed earlier this year, what began as 12 individual model laws is now one, single national law to govern heavy vehicles across Australia. This represents significant red-tape reduction for industry and regulators. It is forecast that, with the establishment of the regulator, there will be a productivity benefit of $162 million per year accruing to industry. These reforms have been many years in the making and I am pleased that we are now very close to implementing a regulatory environment that will continue to improve safety and productivity for our heavy vehicle industry.

Some may find it strange that the member for South Brisbane’s comments on road transport focused on rail. Those of us who know her are not surprised that she does not know the difference, but I will provide a brief response. We are continuing to lobby both the federal coalition and federal Labor to get the best deal possible for our transport priorities including the Toowoomba second range crossing, the Bruce Highway and Cross River Rail.

Ms Trad: Thanks to a federal Labor government.

Mr Emerson: However, we will not sign up future generations of Queenslanders to decades of debt. The member for South Brisbane mentioned the offer from the federal government on Cross River Rail. Let me briefly concentrate on that.

This week the member for South Brisbane wanted to sell out Queenslanders because the member for South Brisbane puts her federal Labor mates in Canberra ahead of Queensland. The reality is that when federal Labor proposed to pay only 25 per cent of the cost of that project the member for South Brisbane responded that we should sign up immediately. What would be the consequences if we signed up to a deal whereby federal Labor contributed only 25 per cent of the total project cost? It would mean that Queenslanders would pay an additional $1.25 billion to satisfy the federal Labor mates of the member for South Brisbane. Where would Labor suggest Queensland finds that extra $1.25 billion? Do members know who would pay? Labor would get public transport users to pay. They would do exactly what they have done in the past: put up fares. That is what they would do to find that extra amount.

In terms of fares, what does $1.25 billion in extra payments mean? On a rough calculation, that would mean a fare increase of 15 per cent each year. That 15 per cent fare increase probably rings a bell with members, because that was and continues to be Labor’s policy. They increased fares by 15 per cent a year, year after year, and they also had plans to increase fares in the future. That had always been their plan, and that is their plan now.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Watts): Order! Members, you will not interject or debate across the room. If you want to have a conversation, please leave.
Mr Emerson: As members know, it has always been Labor's plan to put up fares. Their only public transport policy has been to put up fares by 15 per cent a year, year after year after year. If we did pay the extra $1.25 billion and sign up to that Labor deal that sells out Queensland, what would that mean in terms of fares? If Labor's plan was already to put them up by 15 per cent, the extra $1.25 billion would mean an additional 15 per cent, on top of that. We would then see 30 per cent fare increases. That is Labor's plan: a 30 per cent fare increase every year. That would have been the consequence of Queensland Labor's plan to sign up with their federal mates.

It is a sad fact that at the moment we have a federal Treasurer from Queensland who has sold out his home state. He wants to short-change Queensland. But we should not be surprised, because the state Labor Party also want to short-change Queensland by getting this government to sign up to a con job of a deal which would see Queensland pay an additional $1.25 billion. Let us not forget what the state Labor Party wanted to do when they were in office. How much did they want the federal Labor government to pay? Was it 25 per cent? No. Was it 50 per cent? No. They wanted the federal Labor government to pay for 75 per cent of the project. That is what they thought was a fair deal.

What we offered to the federal government—which we thought was fair—was a genuine 50-50 partnership. When I spoke with Minister Albanese on 24 April I said that we wanted concessional treatment for this project in terms of GST. What happened? He said, 'Put it in writing. I'll go away and talk to my mate Swannie. I'll talk to Swannie. He's a Queenslander. He'll do the right thing.' Then he came back and what did he say to us? What did Swannie say, that good Queenslander—that alleged Queenslander? Albo said, 'I couldn't get him across the line. I could only get him to 50 per cent. That's all he can do.' He wanted to short-change Queensland again. He wanted to sell out Queensland, and that is what state Labor wants to do—sell out Queensland. That is all it wants to do and will continue to do. I once again say that we will not sign up to an unaffordable deal. We will not sign up to a deal that sells out Queensland despite state Labor wanting us to sell out Queensland only to defend its Labor mates in Canberra—desperate deal, con job, and that is all it wants to do.

The member for Warrego noted that this bill is necessary to support the national law to ensure that there is no duplication between our state law and what will be provided for under the national law. I take this opportunity to thank members of the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee for being closely involved in the heavy vehicle reforms and for their important review of all three bills to establish the heavy vehicle national law in Queensland. I also note that at the time the committee was briefed on this bill the commencement date was expected to be 1 July 2013. Commencement of the heavy vehicle national law is now scheduled for 1 September. This shift in commencement date has been necessary to allow other jurisdictions time to ensure the passage of applying legislation through their own parliaments.

The member for Chatsworth and the Assistant Minister for Public Transport made the very important point that local productivity initiatives will be maintained under the national law to ensure that efficiency gains to the industry continue to be delivered. While this is a national law, it is important that local operator needs for Queensland's heavy vehicle industry are recognised and supported under this law. I also note the contribution from other members, particularly the member for Gregory, who is a great supporter of these reforms for not only the trucking industry but across transport completely. As a former transport and main roads minister, he understands the challenges and particularly the logistical challenges across this very large state. He also raised some important issues in terms of the management of our laws but also our dealings with industry, and I take on board those comments by the member for Gregory.

In conclusion, I want to thank my ministerial staff and departmental staff for their continuing hard work and dedication in preparing this legislation. It has been a significant journey—a long journey. This is the third bill. While this third bill is technical in nature, many hours have been put in to get these significant reforms through. Let us not forget what they achieve as part of this legislation when it is put in place across Australia. We will see a significant reduction in regulation. We will see significant improvements in safety. We will see significant improvements across the industry that have been called for by industry for many years. On the weekend I spoke to the livestock and road transporters conference in Brisbane. Many of them are aware of this legislation. They recognise the importance of the legislation. They also recognised this government's improvements in terms of freight and safety, and I do appreciate the industry's support. They understood the significance of this bill and also understood the significance and the efforts that the government has put in. I again thank my ministerial staff and departmental staff for the many, many hours and hard work on this bill. 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

Clauses 1 to 105, as read, agreed to.
Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

Hon. SA EMERSON (Indooroopilly—LNP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (12.54 pm):
I move—
That the bill be now read a third time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a third time.
Motion agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Long Title

Hon. SA EMERSON (Indooroopilly—LNP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (12.54 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.

TAFE QUEENSLAND BILL

Resumed from 16 April (see p. 962).

Second Reading

Hon. JH LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Minister for Education, Training and Employment) (12.55 pm): I move—
That the bill be now read a second time.

I want to thank the Education and Innovation Committee for its report tabled on 16 May 2013 supporting the passage of the TAFE Queensland Bill 2013, subject to some recommendations for minor amendments. Although the committee only had a short time to examine the bill, it has prepared a comprehensive report on the bill. I note that the committee received a detailed briefing from the Department of Education, Training and Employment, considered written submissions from stakeholders and invited selected stakeholders to a hearing before preparing its report.

I am pleased to note that the committee was supportive of the bill and recommended that it be passed. The committee also made a number of recommendations for amendments to the bill. Recommendation 2 was that the headings of part 4 and clause 50 of the bill be amended to ensure clarity and reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation. The government does not support this recommendation. The government considers that the headings of part 4 and clause 50 are sufficiently clear and would not allow for regulations to be progressed that are unrelated to the restructure of TAFE. Part 4 is titled ‘Restructuring TAFE’ and all of the clauses in part 4 relate to actions necessary to restructure TAFE. Clause 50 is titled ‘Transfer of assets, liabilities etc. to a relevant TAFE entity’ as it provides for the transfer of various matters between TAFE entities. The government considers that the meaning of these provisions is clear and the current headings are appropriate.

Recommendation 3 was that clause 69(b) be amended to remove the words ‘as soon as possible’ and replace them with ‘as soon as practicable’. The government does not support this recommendation. I have been advised that, from a legislative drafting perspective, the words ‘as soon as possible’ indicate more urgency than ‘as soon as practicable’. It is the government’s intention that the first operational plan for TAFE Queensland be developed as soon as possible. Recommendation 4 was that clause 12 be amended to ensure that the minister’s nominee is subject to the qualification
requirements in clause 14 and is treated as a member for all purposes. The government does not support this recommendation. With respect to the committee, the nominee is a member for all purposes in the bill and the government considers that this is sufficiently clear from the words of the bill. The nominee is not required to meet the qualification and experience requirements in clause 14 as the nominee represents the minister on the board. The committee also raised a number of points for clarification in its report. Responses to these matters are contained in the government’s response to the committee’s report, which I now table.

Tabled paper: Education and Innovation Committee: Report No. 15—TAFE Queensland Bill 2013, government response [2684].

This bill is an important part of the government’s broader agenda for reform of the VET sector. Establishing TAFE Queensland will position our public provider to provide training that meets the needs of students and industry and contributes to better employment outcomes for Queenslanders. In addition, the new TAFE Queensland will ensure that the government gets value for money from its investment in vocational education and training. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12.58 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the TAFE Queensland Bill 2013. The opposition will be opposing certain clauses of this legislation. We are not able to support clauses in this legislation that allow for the removal of negotiated workers’ conditions without consultation. I acknowledge that the minister when introducing the bill stated that this legislation is about ensuring ‘continuity of those employees’ contracts or employment arrangements’. I hope that the minister is genuinely committed to not changing working conditions such as set out without consultation. The opposition has an objection to this legislation providing the minister and government with broad powers. It is the broad nature of the powers afforded in this legislation that is problematic. These broad powers include the power to establish work performance arrangements that are not transitional; the power to unilaterally override awards and agreements and alter working conditions by regulation, in particular set hours of work; and the power to potentially change employment conditions by transfer direction.

Debate, on motion of Mr Mulherin, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.30 pm.

PUBLIC HEALTH (EXCLUSION OF UNVACCINATED CHILDREN FROM CHILD CARE) AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (2.30 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Public Health Act 2005 for a particular purpose. I table the bill and explanatory notes. I nominate the Health and Community Services Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Public Health (Exclusion of Unvaccinated Children from Child Care) Amendment Bill 2013 [2685].

Tabled paper: Public Health (Exclusion of Unvaccinated Children from Child Care) Amendment Bill 2013, explanatory notes [2686].

The objective of the Public Health (Exclusion of Unvaccinated Children from Child Care) Amendment Bill 2013 is to give the person in charge of an education and care service or child-care service the option to refuse to allow children who are not fully immunised to enrol in the child-care facility or to participate in particular activities or services provided by the facility. This bill places conditions on exclusion actions, including timely written notices to parents, and allows for certified exemptions on medical grounds. The proposed amendments in this bill apply only to child-care facilities, including preschools and kindergartens, and not to primary or secondary schools.

Members may be aware that the National Health Performance Authority published a report last month that found 70,000 Australian kids are not fully immunised at ages one year, two years and five years. This report identifies the Sunshine Coast region as the area of Queensland with the lowest rate of compliance with the national immunisation schedule. Some 1,502 local children on the Sunshine Coast are not fully immunised. The rate of immunisation for children in the Noosa, Nambour, Surfers Paradise and Kuranda areas is comparable with that of developing countries such as Angola and Uganda. The report also shows that in Brisbane’s inner city there are 3,371 unvaccinated children and fewer than 85 per cent of five-year-olds are fully vaccinated.

This trend is not confined to Queensland. The shadow minister for health in New South Wales, Dr Andrew McDonald, a paediatric specialist, has advised me that the New South Wales Leader of the Opposition, John Robertson, will be shortly introducing into the New South Wales parliament a similar bill to that introduced here today.
There has been a concerted community response across Australia about the risk to healthy immunised children by those persons grossly exaggerating the risk of vaccinations. Ill-informed choices by some parents, advocated by anti-vaccination lobby groups and some irresponsible sections of the media, are contributing to the recent decline in immunisation rates. Vaccinations are a tried and true public health initiative that saves lives. This bill will encourage more parents to vaccinate their children and protect them from preventable diseases. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (2.33 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Referral to the Health and Community Services Committee

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Cunningham): Order! In accordance with standing 131, the bill is now referred to the Health and Community Services Committee.

CLASSIFICATION OF PUBLICATIONS (BILLBOARD ADVERTISING) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction

Mr KNUTH (Dalrymple—KAP) (2.34 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Classification of Computer Games and Images Act 1995, the Classification of Films Act 1991 and the Classification of Publications Act 1991 to regulate advertising on billboards through classification. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Classification of Publications (Billboard Advertising) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013.

Tabled paper: Classification of Publications (Billboard Advertising) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013, explanatory notes.

Katter’s Australian Party has drafted a policy to determine the geographical placement of billboard advertising based on mandatory classification ratings in compliance with the Commonwealth act. This policy will also determine a framework for mandatory billboard geographical zoning based on classification ratings. This will reduce the risk of exposing communities to the displaying of moderate—Mature (M)—or strong—Mature Accompanied (MA15+)—content in areas highly occupied by families and children.

A failure to implement this policy will result in negative effects upon society. This is resonated in the following extract from Victoria’s Child Safety Commissioner submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Sexualisation of Children in the Contemporary Media Environment 2008—

... sexualising influences within the contemporary media and popular culture, there is a need to focus specifically upon the portrayal of children in a sexualised way in advertising and marketing material.

This bill amends the Classification of Publications Act 1991 to allow the government to mandate a regulatory framework for billboard advertisement governed by the introduction of the billboard geographical classification zoning policy as part of the classification of publications and protection of children and families by conditions for displaying certain unrestricted publications. As part of this policy, Katter’s Australian Party has developed the mandatory billboard geographical classification zonal framework that will ensure Queensland families and children a mandated regulatory process limiting inappropriate billboard advertising in public spaces highly populated by families and children.

This bill also establishes a state billboard geographical classification zonal panel. Stakeholders will include families and children’s advocacy associations, the Australian Medical Association, industry groups and government. The role of the panel will be to regulate billboard advertising content, determine the geographical classification zoning for billboard advertising and community consultation.
This bill is simple. It categorises the billboards in certain areas. For example, the G-rated billboards will be used around schools, sports fields and swimming pools. This bill is about protecting our children and establishing a healthy society.

First Reading

Mr KNUTH (Dalrymple—KAP) (2.36 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Referral to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS

Carindale, Quota Club

Mr MINNIKIN (Chatsworth—LNP) (2.37 pm): Mahatma Gandhi once told us—

The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.

With that in mind, I rise to bring to the attention of the House the tireless work and unwavering commitment of the Quota club of Carindale. The Quota club of Carindale is a service club in the truest sense of the term. The club is neither large nor extravagant. It is simply a wonderful group of dedicated members who meet at the local library once a month and who are committed to helping make the Chatsworth community and beyond a much better place. They are motivated by the Quota International motto, ‘We share.’ That is a simple sentiment that is often overlooked in a fast paced, modern society.

Throughout 2012 and 2013, the club has certainly embraced this motto, diligently raising funds to provide a helping hand to a number of worthy causes, including CleftPALS Queensland, the school chaplaincy programs at Mayfield State School and White Hill State College and the Asperger’s support group. The club has also offered assistance afield to the communities of Condamine and St George, who were devastated by the effects of ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald, and has prepared gift parcels for Australian troops serving overseas.

The Quota club of Carindale does an outstanding job of organising and hosting an annual art and craft fair, which is now in its ninth year. This fantastic event, held in the heart of the Chatsworth electorate, draws visitors from across Brisbane and is a major fundraising event for the club. Quota International is an organisation committed to fostering a sense of community between members of different clubs from throughout Australia and the world. Quota International of Carindale has embraced the opportunity to work with other clubs and has hosted conferences on two separate occasions for the 16 clubs in the 30th district. Recently it was my distinct pleasure to attend the club’s installation of officers ceremony. As always I was struck by the members’ generous hospitality and the wonderful sense of camaraderie in the club. It is therefore no surprise that there is also a strong social side to the club with members regularly partaking in themed social dinners and vintage film nights.

In November 2012 Quota International of Carindale celebrated 25 years of sterling service. I would like to commend the work of the club over this time and wish them all the very best as they continue to serve our wonderful Chatsworth community. It is my absolute pleasure to commend the work of the club and the leadership of their president, Janette Taylor, to the House. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the ladies from Quota International of Carindale here in the chamber today. Long may they continue to do the fantastic work that they have done over 25 years. Ladies, I salute you. To the next 25 years! Thank you.

Currumbin Electorate, Ecotourism

Hon. JA STUCKEY (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games) (2.40 pm): As the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games and member for Currumbin it gives me great pleasure to
update the House on some exciting ecotourism initiatives happening on the southern Gold Coast, particularly in theCurrumbin electorate, the gateway to Queensland. A few weeks ago I was fortunate enough to launch the Surf 2 Sky helicopter tour of our picturesque and truly remarkable ‘green cauldron’ landscape. This new tourism ecotour was a breathtaking experience and further evidence that we live in a truly stunning region. First we travelled north along the coastline from Point Danger to Surfers Paradise, then headed inland across luscious valleys to the top of Mount Warning before returning along the Tweed River and turning into the Gold Coast Airport. The variety and beauty of our natural and man-made attractions is truly remarkable. Tourists and locals alike will be in awe at the diversity we have to offer from our stunning beaches to our lush rainforests. I would like to acknowledgeCurrumbin Wildlife Sanctuary CEO Jonathan Fisher, who is a tireless promoter of ecotourism in our state and a key stakeholder in this initiative coming to fruition alongside Andrew Mills from ABC Helicopters. This is a fantastic ecotourism project that is a unique and exciting way to showcase the southern Gold Coast.

In more exciting news for our region, I recently opened the aptly named Dreamridge Retreat in our exquisitely beautifulCurrumbin Valley. I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Shaun and Donna Williams for what they have created—living proof that dreams mixed with dedication are a powerful combination. Dreamridge is a purpose-built executive tourism accommodation facility on 24 acres with landscaped gardens and 180-degree views from Springbrook to the ocean. It really is one of a kind and so elegantly showcases our beautiful greenery. My visit is etched firmly in my mind as I recall the authentic handcrafted furniture and meaningful accessories throughout this majestic property. There is a saying in tourism: ‘promise good, deliver great’ and Dreamridge does exactly that and will surely surpass visitors’ expectations. On Sunday, 18 May Dreamridge Retreat hosted a very successful open day that attracted hundreds of visitors keen to view the properties on Tomewin Mountain, includingKallora Bed & Breakfast, Vira Historic Residence, Tallowood Gardens and Freeman’s Fruit Stall. An overwhelming feeling of tranquillity surrounds you when you view these hidden treasures that seem a world away from our beautiful beaches and that variety of options contributes to the simplicity and true beauty of our region and is no doubt a large drawcard for the many visitors to our area.

The Newman government’s DestinationQ strategy highlights the importance of promoting and developing ecotourism experiences. It is an emerging and exciting niche industry and it is extremely pleasing to see some local ventures developing in this field. Queensland is committed to regaining its position as a world-class ecotourism destination.

Boonah Show

Mr KRAUSE (Beaudesert—LNP) (2.43 pm): I rise today to congratulate the Boonah Show Society on holding an exceptionally well attended and great show for the Boonah community last Saturday. It was a terrific crowd which was estimated to be the second highest recorded in the history of the show, the only higher one being in 2011. This was in spite of the fact that for the first time the Ipswich Show was held on the same weekend. It was an unfortunate occurrence that the Boonah and Ipswich shows were held on the same day. It meant that some showgoers from around the region were forced to choose between them. I hope this circumstance does not occur in the future. Hopefully there can be an amicable solution reached between the show societies.

The Boonah Show Society did not allow that to faze them. They put on a terrific show. On Friday morning I was there bright and early to see the judging of the prime beef section, followed by the prime beef sale on Friday afternoon and the cattlemen’s dinner that night, which saw a record crowd of over 200 cattlemen from all over the district get together for the awards to be presented for the prime beef section. It was an honour to be there and talk to people about the industry and let them know what this government is doing to support the beef industry in Queensland.

Congratulations to RossOppermann for organising this section, which continues to go from strength to strength and is a real asset to the show and the local industry. Congratulations to Tom and Joyce Surawski for taking out the prize for the most awarded exhibiter in the prime beef section. Thank you to all the sponsors for this section, includingTerry Foote from Foote’sPharmacy and CRT Farmcraft. A lot of judging in other sections, from stud beef, equestrian and produce—including custard apples, a section my nearly two-year-old son entered an exhibit in but unfortunately was not awarded this year—to cooking, flowers, schoolwork and Lego took place on Friday. It was a real community effort. Many were involved in judging, stewarding and organising the event. Local high school students in the Boonah Junior Show Society assisted with stewarding and ran their own night program both on Friday and Saturday—something I was very glad to sponsor. We need to keep
encouraging the junior show society. I congratulate the president, Tenneill, on a very well-run program. We need to keep these younger people involved and encourage them to take ownership of the show society so that we can continue to have great events like we had last weekend into the future.

Saturday was a glorious day all over South-East Queensland but particularly in Boonah. It brought several thousand people through the gate for what was a magnificent day. Congratulations to all members of the Boonah Show Society and the organising committee for what was a wonderful event and for your service to the Fassifern every year, delivering on behalf of the entire community: president Jim Harvey, secretary Beth Hern, and all executive officers. These things do not just happen. It takes a lot of work and I thank them all very much for it.

Mr CRANDON (Coomera—LNP) (2.46 pm): Congratulations to the schools in the Coomera electorate. Recently the South-East Queensland regional Showcase Awards for Excellence in Schools 2013 were held. Eagleby State School, for their program, the Village People, received a showcase award for excellence in community or industry partnerships; Eagleby Learning College, for the program It All Starts Here, received the RemServ showcase award for excellence in innovation; and the Woongoolba State School, the smallest school in my electorate, won an educational excellence award for their program, We are Leaders.

Last Thursday was the Queensland Police Service official medal presentation for the Coomera district. I thank Jack Dempsey, the Minister for Police and Community Safety, for coming along to that event to present the awards.

Last Friday the Pimpama State Secondary College student leader induction ceremony occurred. The inaugural leadership team for the school was inducted. Pimpama, one of two new state schools to open in Queensland, is excited about its future. We are all excited about the new primary school announcement for Pimpama coming on line in a PPP program.

Also last week the Coomera principals forum was held at the Pimpama State Secondary College, the newest school in our electorate. The Hon. John-Paul Langbroek came along and took the time to speak to all but one of the principals in the Coomera electorate. All principals thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon. Many thanks to the school for hosting this event. Much discussion and feedback was given to the minister on the day.

This morning in this place I had the pleasure of hosting three Chappies from the Coomera electorate at breakfast. It was fantastic to see chappy Fiona from Eagleby South State School and chappies Long and Todd from Helensvale State School and Helensvale State High School.

I wish to remind all members that the Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show is on. It started today and will continue until this coming Sunday. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show. People can Google Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show for information on special parking and free bus pick-up points to the event. Anyone who comes along will thoroughly enjoy themselves.

Hon. MF McARDLE (Caloundra—LNP) (Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (2.49 pm): Today I rise as the member for Caloundra to speak about the arrival of a truly magnificent piece of Australian history, the F-111 strike aircraft. The F-111 A8-129 aircraft has been delivered to the Queensland Air Museum in Caloundra, on loan from the Royal Australian Air Force following an extensive eight-year campaign by the museum and the wider community. The long-awaited fighter jet was due to arrive earlier in the year, but due to weather conditions that was delayed. The jet is now being reassembled by a team of 10 defence personnel and air museum volunteers, who are hoping to unveil it to the public generally this Saturday.

The F-111, otherwise as the ‘Pig’ because of its still unsurpassed ability to operate at low level with its nose pointed towards the dirt, has been placed in the Queensland Air Museum, which is the only civilian museum and one of only six in the entire country to have an F-111 on display. This aircraft was the fifth model of the original Australian order placed back in 1963. The aircraft is among...
the first six that were delivered to the RAAF base at Amberley on 1 June 1973. It is the only aircraft available from the first delivery and it is one of the six aircraft that flew on the last day of F-111 operations. Given its history, the A8-129 was the museum’s first choice.

Of the 45 F-111s imported into Australia, the RAAF has secured the preservation of 13 aircraft, representing nearly 30 per cent of the total. This particular aircraft has flown more than 7,000 hours with countless pilots and all across Australia, New Zealand, the Cocos Islands and even the United States. The aeroplane has been fully restored to immaculate display standard by the same people who lovingly maintained the F-111 during their years of service to the nation.

The plane will be on display from this weekend. On the weekend of 29 to 30 June, the museum will hold an open cockpit weekend to formally welcome the F-111. I encourage all Sunshine Coast residents to attend to see this great piece of our military history. I congratulate the Queensland Air Museum, Mr Cameron Elmes and members. There were thousands of such aircraft produced over the years and they did thousands of sorties in the defence of this great nation.

Teneriffe Festival

Mr CAVALUCCI (Brisbane Central—LNP) (2.52 pm): I rise to speak about a popular upcoming event in my electorate, the Teneriffe Festival 2013. On Saturday 6 July, the fourth annual Teneriffe Festival will burst into action, drawing over 30,000 people to the riverfront boardwalk and streets of Teneriffe. This free community celebration is one of the biggest and most recognised street festivals in Brisbane, created to mark the area’s rich heritage and its place in Brisbane’s unique history, to promote Teneriffe as a great location to visit, shop and dine, and as a showpiece for the creative and hardworking Teneriffe area.

Importantly, the event has been given a new lease of life and support from the Teneriffe Chamber of Commerce, local associations and government representatives. I am particularly proud of the achievements of the local chamber, as one of my first tasks as the new member for Brisbane Central was to assist in launching the Teneriffe chamber and it has made impressive progress.

This year the festival will have something for everyone, including Kids World, Tastes of Teneriffe, live entertainment, historical displays, arts and crafts and markets, which are all designed to celebrate Teneriffe’s rich history and unique heritage. The festival formally commences at 10 am with the live sheep parade and will stretch along Vernon Terrace through to the riverfront park and the London Laneway. This year’s festival will see extended main stages, including a river stage located in the riverfront parkland area that will host a full line-up of live bands, entertainment and activities throughout the day and night.

Everyone gets involved in the Teneriffe Festival. The most popular events draw big attendances, particularly around the highly featured Infiniti Cars Fashion Parade in the London Laneway and the accompanying jazz and blues from the stage area. Importantly, the fashion is local, with Tracey Watkins from White Lable Noba directing the fashion parade, showcasing the best of local ‘wears’. Corporate support has been stronger than ever with the likes of Westpac, Energetix, the Brisbane City Council, Infiniti Cars, Mirvac, Merthyr Village, Teneriffe Realty, Merlo Coffee, Place Estate Agents, Nova 106.9FM and the Brisbane Airport Corporation all being instrumentally involved. I commend them for their support of this great community event.

For the food lovers in this parliament and elsewhere, your taste buds will be ecstatic with the ‘Tastes of Teneriffe’, a collaboration of local restaurants offering a range of feasts for everyone. Claret House, The London Club, Nant Whisky which is one of my favourites, Green Beacon Brewery, Alfred and Constance, Chilli Wow which makes the best chilli dogs, Yellow Tail Wines and Eves Pizza Bar are just a few well-known local experts offering a great diversity of food and beverages. It will be great for those local hospitality businesses to get such exposure and support. The little ones are well catered for with the Noah’s Farm Barnyard Babies, piglet races, sheep shearing and sideshow attractions like laughing clowns, lucky ducks and more.

I commend the organising committee, event providers and supporters for their efforts already. In particular, I commend Murray Sutherland and Basis Group for their superb application to all the detail involved. I invite all honourable members of this House and all members of the public at large to come down and enjoy themselves on Saturday 6 July.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Observance Days

Hon. GW ELMES (Noosa—LNP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs and Minister Assisting the Premier) (2.55 pm): I encourage Queenslanders to commemorate and celebrate three significant dates during the remainder of this month and June in
recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This coming Sunday, 26 May, is set aside for Australians to observe National Sorry Day to remember and honour the stolen generation. This day was first observed in 1998 to acknowledge the survivors of past government policies that allowed the forcible removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. Sorry Day is a significant day. It recognises the ongoing pain and suffering for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were forcibly separated as young children from their families and communities. This year’s theme is ‘Sorry. Still Living on Borrowed Time’, which focuses on the stolen generation’s ongoing quest for justice.

The day after Sorry Day marks the commencement of National Reconciliation Week. This week, which will be held from 27 May to 3 June, marks two other significant dates in Australia’s history. On 27 May 1967, Australia held a referendum that saw Australians vote to give the Commonwealth the power to make laws for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and recognise them in the national census. On 3 June 1992, the High Court of Australia overturned the principle of terra nullius or vacant land, as claimed by the British when they first arrived in this country. This day is now recognised as Mabo Day and this year celebrates its 21st anniversary. This year the theme of National Reconciliation Week is ‘Let’s Talk Recognition’. The week is a time for Australians to learn about our shared histories, cultures and achievements, and to explore how each of us can join the national reconciliation effort. The 1967 referendum was a significant event when more than 90 per cent of Australians supported the right of Indigenous Australians to be recognised as equals. Some progress has been made in the past 46 years to redress Indigenous disadvantage, but we still have a long way to go to reach any sense of equality.

One area where we have made significant progress is in the recognition of the connection Australia’s first peoples have with the lands they inhabited for thousands of years before white settlement. The 1992 decision by the High Court in recognising the special connection Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with the land has paved the way for land rights now known as native title. Eddie Mabo became a national identity for the tireless battle he led to secure land justice for his people. I had the pleasure to be on his home country of Mer Island in the Torres Strait for the handover of the island to Indigenous ownership late last year. During that visit, I was privileged to visit Mr Mabo’s grave and felt very humbled by the experience. Across Queensland a variety of events are being held to commemorate and celebrate those three significant days and I encourage all Queenslanders to participate.

Kawana Electorate

Hon. JP BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (2.58 pm): Today it is my absolute pleasure to talk about three worthy community champions of Kawana: Lieutenant Stuart Glover of the Salvation Army Caloundra Corps; Karen McCord, the senior school principal of Meridan State College; and Luke Wyatt, the rugby manager of Sunshine Coast Rugby Union. I was pleased they were able to accompany me to the Queensland Plan summit in Mackay. Stuart, Karen and Luke have strong ties to the community and, as expected, they had much to contribute to discussion surrounding state-wide issues. The Queensland Plan is a unique opportunity for all Queenslanders to have a say on our future. I salute the Premier for this initiative, which is helping to ensure that Queensland remains a great state with great opportunity.

Karen, Luke and Stuart will join a larger group of community minded Kawana locals on my new advisory group called Advance Kawana, which I am delighted to announce today. Advance Kawana will meet for the first time next week and will assist me, as the local member, to identify and address the issues that matter most to local residents, community groups and the business sector.

The 12 members represent a broad array of interests, and they bring a wide range of topics, skills and perspectives to the table. The members are: young member Jordyn Archer; Bob Clements; Marion Costin; John Edds; Stuart Glover; Jo Hall; Karen McCord; John Pearson; Glensy Powell; Bruce Warrell; Josh Williams; and Luke Wyatt. I am pleased to have representation across a range of issues including: the environment; seniors; business; Indigenous affairs; sport; education; and community safety.

The formation of this group will tie in well with the Queensland Plan. It will serve as an interface for the wider Kawana community to have a say on the future of our great state and our great electorate. I look forward to the inaugural meeting of Advance Kawana next week. I thank all of the participants for accepting my invitation to join.
On another note, I pay tribute to the honourable Minister for Transport, who is in the chamber, for a couple of safety initiatives in Kawana. One is at the Meridan State College where we had the situation where the private sector pulled out of funding school crossing supervisors. I am glad to say that the Minister for Transport came to the rescue and has provided funding in perpetuity for them so the safety of the kids at Meridan State College is maintained.

The other government safety initiative provided by the Minister for Transport is flashing school zone lights. Kawana State College had their flashing school zone lights and the 40 kilometre an hour reduced speed limit signs installed a few weeks ago. It is going down a treat. The principal loves them and the P&C loves them.

Again, thank you to the Minister for Transport—it is all praise for the Minister for Transport today—for approving the funding for traffic lights at Thunderbird Chase on Nicklin Way. Again that is about making sure kids can travel safely across Nicklin Way, which is a fairly major road in the Kawana electorate. This is all about improving safety for the community.

I wish all participants in the Kawana Relay for Life this Saturday every success. I will be there. I have been doing it for five years now because my mother is a survivor of melanoma and cancer. We will be there supporting the cause. I will be doing the candlelight ceremony. I thank all participants in the Kawana Relay for Life this Saturday evening.

Cross River Rail

Ms TRAD (South Brisbane—ALP) (3.01 pm): This week the Premier and the Minister for Transport and Main Roads killed off Cross River Rail—a very important project to my electorate of South Brisbane. This is a critical project to meet the growing public transport needs of our region. It is an important project that is shovel ready now; a project for which the money is on the table now. But the only thing now standing in the way of this project is the LNP. It is LNP recalcitrance. It is LNP belligerence. Ultimately, it is the LNP playing politics. These are the factors motivating the Newman government’s rejection of the only offer on the table to fund and build Cross River Rail. Following the federal budget, Mr Brian Nye of the Australasian Railway Association said—

This could be the best opportunity the Queensland Government will ever have to step up and ensure this project gets underway.

Those opposite and their federal coalition counterparts have killed off our state’s best opportunity. Tony Abbott confirmed that a federal coalition government would not provide a single cent in funding for Cross River Rail—following in the tradition of the Howard-Costello government of antipathy towards Queensland and our infrastructure needs. Take the Bruce Highway as an example. Federal Labor is investing more than twice as much in the Bruce Highway—$5.7 billion—in half the time compared with Howard and Costello. Indeed, federal Labor has spent more on public transport than all previous federal governments since Federation combined, and Queenslanders have been the ones to benefit.

Gold Coast light rail, the Moreton Bay rail link and now Cross River Rail have all received the financial backing and support of the federal Labor government. When it comes to Cross River Rail, on the one hand there is Labor’s offer of $715 million and half of the availability payments and GST concessions into the future.

Mr Emerson interjected.

Ms TRAD: This is exactly what the minister asked for. I take this opportunity to table the correspondence which is evidence of that fact.

Tabled paper: Correspondence, dated 30 April 2013, from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads, Hon. Scott Emerson, to Hon. Anthony Albanese, regarding the Cross River Rail project [2689].

Tabled paper: Correspondence, dated 8 May 2013, from Hon. Anthony Albanese MP to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads, Hon. Scott Emerson, regarding the Cross River Rail project [2690].

On the other hand there is Tony Abbott and the coalition’s offer which is nothing—zip, zero; nothing now and nothing forever. Faced with that obvious choice, what decision did the Premier and LNP make? Well they chose to play politics rather than seal the deal, roll up their sleeves and get on with building this critical project. Ultimately, commuters will pay the price through a decline in rail services and a looming capacity crisis that will bring our rail network to a screeching halt. Ultimately, Queenslanders are beginning to see what we on this side of the House witness every day. This is not a ‘am’ government. This is a ‘can-complain’ government. This is a ‘can-whinge’ government. This is a ‘can’t-do anything’ government.
**Toondah Harbour**

Dr ROBINSON (Cleveland—LNP) (3.04 pm): The Newman LNP government is getting Cleveland and Redland city back on track by approving Toondah Harbour as a priority development area, a PDA. Previous governments and councils have dreamt of a major upgrade of Toondah Harbour for the last 30 years, but this decision to fast-track Toondah Harbour by declaring it a priority development of the state will help bring it to pass.

On 16 May the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning visited the Cleveland electorate to announce the long anticipated decision. This announcement was great news to the residents of Cleveland, North Stradbroke Island and all of the Redlands which all stand to gain from the proposed development at Toondah Harbour. I thank the Deputy Premier and his staff for his visit and the historically significant announcement.

The Toondah Harbour upgrade will improve the harbour’s transport facilities, open up tourism, boost local small businesses, generate much needed local job opportunities in the construction and tourism and hospitality industries and provide for the future of North Stradbroke Island. The creation of many new jobs locally will also ease congestion on our roads as fewer workers travel to and from the city for work. Fewer apprentices and tradies in the construction industry will have to take the drive into the city every working day. Our youth and seniors in the tourism and hospitality sector will be able to get to and from work without clogging up the roads or adding to public transport pressures.

The PDA declaration was the first step in opening up a number of mixed use proposal ideas for the Toondah Harbour site. The potential major components of the proposed development are dedicated ferry terminals, a marina, tourist and retail areas—including cafes and restaurants—residential units, a convention centre and public open space areas. Various permutations of these kinds of developments are all possible.

I would like to commend the work of Economic Development Queensland in identifying the Toondah Harbour site. The EDQ worked closely with the Redland City Council and Mayor Karen Williams. The fact that the local Redland City Council was able to work so well in consultation with the Newman government is a testament to how projects can be resolved when both parties maintain the same agenda. This kind of cooperation is one of the reasons for this 30-year breakthrough.

This announcement is a welcome commitment by the Newman government to the future viability and growth of North Stradbroke Island. The improvement of transport facilities to North Stradbroke Island will lay the foundations for growth in the all-important tourist industry throughout the Redlands. To ensure that this industry is given the room to develop, it is essential that we make sure the gateway or front door to North Stradbroke Island is accessible and advanced in a way that sustains a growing economy.

I also thank federal member Andrew Laming and my state colleagues Peter Dowling and Steve Davies for their ongoing support.

**Diabetes**

Mr YOUNG (Keppel—LNP) (3.07 pm): I rise in the House today to talk about the very real issue of diabetes. Diabetes is the fastest growing epidemic in Australia and every day approximately 60 Queenslanders are diagnosed with type 2 diabetes and two people are diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. As many members would know, diabetes is a medical condition where the body fails to process blood sugar or glucose in a normal way.

The scary reality is that one in four adults over the age of 25 years has either been diagnosed with diabetes or pre-diabetes. Diabetes is a complex condition that turns lives upside down. It can burden a person’s everyday life and if poorly managed can lead to nerve damage, limb amputation, blindness and kidney failure.

Although this disease has been around for a long time, many people still do not understand the seriousness of it. The symptoms of diabetes are subtle and are often not taken seriously. Such symptoms include feeling lethargic, feeling thirsty and blurred vision. These symptoms are often mistaken for daily stress or age related issues. Education is the key to early diagnosis. People need to be aware.

Diabetes Queensland is a not-for-profit organisation which is dedicated to helping the lives of those with diabetes and spreading awareness about the condition. Diabetes Queensland works hard to improve the lives of people affected by all types of diabetes and provides ongoing education, support and advice to people with diabetes, as well as health professionals, government, researchers and the broader community.
At the moment they are promoting the Swap It campaign across Queensland which encourages Queenslanders to make lifestyle changes to reduce their risk of developing a chronic disease and change the obesity epidemic which is significantly impacting our health system. Recent statistics by the Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service show that more than 3,300 people in the Keppel electorate live with diabetes, while a further 3,600 are at an increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes. These rates are alarming and show the need for action to be taken. I recently had contact from a representative of LiveLife Pharmacy at Yeppoon who was shocked by these rates and wants to fight back against these worrying statistics.

As a pharmacist, Jacqui understands the role played in assisting weight loss and healthy lifestyles and has proposed a health and wellbeing campaign to assist weight loss in the Yeppoon community. With the support of a personal trainer, the challenge will involve healthy eating and lifestyle advice through the pharmacy and exercise and wellbeing advice from a personal trainer. The campaign will be from a community perspective and, rather than a competition based on individual results, the challenge will be measured by Yeppoon’s total weight loss. This is a great campaign to get people active and more aware of the obesity epidemic and the resulting diseases which may occur. I want to take this time today to urge people to exercise regularly, only drink alcohol in moderation and maintain a healthy diet, low in fatty and sugary food.

Keys, Mr M

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—LNP) (3.10 pm): This afternoon I want to pay tribute to a man who has given 37 years of his working life to the Queensland Police Service—none other than Inspector Mick Keys of the Longreach police district who is retiring. Mick Keys started his police service at Coorparoo 37 years ago. From Coorparoo he went to Goondiwindi and then Roma. He joined the Roma stock squad and then went on to the Rockhampton CIB, the Rockhampton stock squad, the Longreach stock squad and the Rockhampton CIB. He was then transferred to Springsure and then to Warra, Cunnamulla and Toowoomba. There he joined the Toowoomba stock squad and then went on to work in State Crime Operations Command. He then became a coordinator of the State Flying Squad, the officer in charge at Toowoomba and staff officer to Assistant Commissioner Peter Swindells at State Crime Operations Command. From there he went to Mackay where he became an inspector and then on to Longreach where he served the last 4½ years as the inspector in charge of the Longreach police district.

As a result of the regime change here in Queensland, Mick Keys knew that he had to make an adjustment in his career and decide whether to stay in the Queensland Police Service or to move on. I am sad to say that this great officer has decided to take an early retirement and as of this Friday, tomorrow, will be retiring from the Queensland Police Service after 37 years.

Mick Keys is a man of compassion, love, care and understanding of his fellow human beings. He has been complemented in his policing life with the support of his wife, Sue. And I have to say that in the years that he has been at Longreach Sue has played a very integral role in the support that she has given to the spouses of other police officers who live in Longreach. It is not an easy task being a police officer anywhere, but when you come from somewhere else and get to know people, to know you have a mother figure and a father figure there like Mick and Sue Keys, you know the operation is going to run like clockwork.

I have seen Mick work in situations like the 2011 and 2012 floods at Alpha and Jericho and the bushfire situation we experienced a couple of years ago, and I have seen his close working connection that he has with his team throughout the Longreach police district. Mick Keys is an honourable man, a man of great decency, great integrity and respect for others. The Queensland Police Service is going to be the poorer for his departure. A send-off in Longreach on 1 June will mark the end of a 37-year career of a great Queenslander, a great Australian and a great policeman. I wish Mick and Sue all the best in their future life, and may God bless and protect them both.

(Time expired)

Electricity Prices, Cane Growers

Mr COSTIGAN (Whitsunday—LNP) (3.13 pm): I rise in the House to voice the concerns of cane growers in the Mackay-Whitsunday region in relation to soaring rises in electricity charges and their fears that further rises into the future will bring into question the viability of their farming operations. In my electorate, from Foulden to Foxdale, our farmers are worried. They are deeply worried that power prices are becoming unsustainable, with the Queensland Competition Authority process nothing more than a joke when you consider that in our part of the world, like other parts of regional Queensland, there is no competition.
The sugar industry has been the mainstay of our region’s economy since the early days of European settlement. When I have a cup of tea, I opt for two sugars—one for Farleigh and one Proserpine—in honour of the two mills in my electorate, alongside the other three mills in our region or, in cane-growing speak, the central district. Sadly, the central district and other cane-growing areas that rely heavily on irrigation—places like the Burdekin and the Wide Bay-Bundaberg area—are under siege from the QCA. It recommends that we jack up power prices for farmers like there is no tomorrow—17.5 per cent every year for the next seven years. For the average farm that equates to losses of more than $80,000 over that period, and this is at a time when the Newman government is proudly pushing ahead with plans to double agricultural food production by 2040—a pre-election commitment to feed a growing world population.

This out-of-control pricing regime will simply undermine the international competitiveness of our proud sugar industry, an industry worth up to $2 billion nowadays and accounting for something like 15 per cent of workers up and down the Queensland coast. Power prices are already too expensive. Our farmers today are paying double what they paid for power seven years ago, just before Labor embarked on that record-breaking spend-a-thon as the former government completely trashed the state’s finances.

Everywhere I go up and down the highway I hear rural constituents on the warpath about power—people such as Gary and Peter Simpson, John and Scott Simpson, Peter Quod, Sam Deguara, George Pratt, Tony Hinschen, Lindsay Altmann and the list goes on and on. They have all had a gutful of whopping increases to power prices and, with agriculture back on a pedestal as one of the four pillars of a re-energised Queensland economy, the QCA should take the tip and start doing the right thing by our farmers, especially given that last year was the Year of the Farmer. They do not want special treatment; they just want a fair go.

Surely the system can be fixed better than this. I say bring in competition to retail areas so that farmers do have a choice, instead of the take it or leave it approach of the monopoly that is Ergon in the case of people in the Mackay-Whitsunday region. Secondly, why not have an off-peak tariff that makes it feasible for farmers to irrigate their paddocks under the night sky? And, last but not least, how about some rises that are more in line with the CPI, instead of them being way off the Richter scale? Our farmers deserve a fair go; they certainly need a fair go.

Alzheimer’s Disease

Mrs MADDERN (Maryborough—LNP) (3.16 pm): From Maryborough, Victoria, to Maryborough, Queensland—2,100 kilometres on a bicycle in aid of research into Alzheimer’s disease. They called themselves Team M2M and their team leader was Peter Hayward. They left 20 days prior and were waved off by the federal member for Wannon, Mr Dan Tehan. After 19 days riding and one rest day, they arrived in Maryborough, Queensland, at 3 pm on 15 May.

It was my great pleasure to meet them as they rode up to the town hall, to greet them on behalf of our federal member, the Hon. Warren Truss MP, who was in parliament in Canberra, and to present to the team leader greetings and a gift to take back to their member. There were 12 riders plus two ladies catering and those two ladies then shared a bike ride. The riders ranged in age from 45 to 67, with more than half of the riders being over 60. The ambition of these riders was to raise $21,000—$10 for each kilometre of the ride for research into and treatment of Alzheimer’s disease. On checking the website this morning, funds raised so far total just over $19,600, so they are well on their way to their goal.

Alzheimer’s is a cruel disease. It slowly and inexorably takes away a person’s capacity to think rationally, to plan a process and to carry it out. It often involves personality changes. The sufferer loses all social skills, the capacity to interact with any other person including loved ones, the capacity to remember, the capacity to care for himself or herself, and the capacity to do anything physical including talking and eating. The ultimate outcome is death but it may take 10 to 15 years.

This disease does not respect age, although it most often hits those in later life. It does not respect intelligence or education, having impacted on the lives of some of our most prominent citizens including Hazel Hawke. Aside from the impact on the sufferer, family and friends also suffer, feeling guilt, grief and despair at watching someone they love very dearly often turn into a person they do not like, a person who gradually fades away into nothingness, leaving a body which needs constant caring. I know. My mother died from this disease. So the trip made by Team M2M was something very special for me and I hope one day to visit Maryborough, Victoria, to thank them so much for their contribution but also to see their railway station, which they told me was designed for Maryborough, Queensland, but built in Maryborough, Victoria.
Teen Suicide

Mrs SCOTT (Woodridge—ALP) (3.19 pm): I seek leave to table a non-conforming petition with 968 signatures including an e-petition.

Leave granted.

Tabled paper: Non-conforming petition titled ‘Stop Teen Suicide’ [2691].

The heading reads ‘Stop teen suicide’. It is a confronting and intensely troubling issue which must be addressed. The petitioners seek to draw to the attention of the House the epidemic of bullying which is causing youth depression and teen suicide. They request that an education and awareness program be introduced into our schools and that information be provided to parents to assist them in active listening, behavioural changes, contacts, who to call and how to speak to your kids about this extremely difficult issue. I ask members to contrast this issue with the announcement that our students study the Queensland Plan in our schools.

Last week I met Heather, one of the principal petitioners, along with the 19-year-old sister and the stepmum of a beautiful 16-year-old student who devastatingly took her own life on 28 February. Candice-Lee was described as a beautiful young lady who was victimised by bullying. Twenty-one days earlier her cousin, who was her best friend, committed suicide and then four days later her boyfriend followed. There have been six or so youth suicides in Logan recently, prompting many young people and family members to cry out for help to spread a message of hope, of caring for each other, of trying to understand how we might stem the tide of self-destruction which is now stealing the lives of so many of our young people.

Young lives are being sacrificed by depression, bullying and a sense of despair and a loss of hope. The internet is a remarkable tool and has altered so much what we do from day to day, but it has also brought with it some great challenges and some worrying evils. With social networking sites such as Facebook, a phone in the hands of a detractor now has the ability to slander and bully a vulnerable young student, sometimes to the point of deep depression causing them to drop out of school, become reclusive and, in extreme cases, as I heard last week, to take their own lives. It is hard for me to understand the inability to turn off the device, change a phone number or not look at networking sites. However, I recently heard of some new acronyms: FONT, fear of not knowing; and FOMO, fear of missing out. Facebookers are often compelled to return again and again even though the message may be personally hurtful. There is a desperate need for young people to learn resilience, to care for their mates, to help bullies to understand what they do and to have a revolution for good. I believe there is a groundswell beginning.

(Time expired)

Gympie Show

Mr GIBSON (Gympie—LNP) (3.23 pm): It was with great pleasure that last week I was called upon to officially open the 125th Gympie show. When the first show was formed, Gympie was but a booming mining town in the young colony of Queensland. But, even though mining was the primary activity, those entrepreneurial businessmen saw an opportunity within this community for an agricultural and mining show. Fast forward 136 years and this year we celebrated our 125th show. The show was not held during the war years or during the Great Depression, but it highlights the resilience of our community that in Gympie we were able to continually see 125 shows over 136 years.

Much has changed since the first show. The location has been shifted and the displays that are shown are also very different, but one thing has not, and that is the community spirit behind organising the show. Credit must go to Lars Hedberg and his committee for carrying on the great work of the various other show committees that have brought it to this day. All of those individuals have done it without any sense of glory, without any sense of reward, but simply wanting to make sure that we put on what is inarguably the very best show in regional Queensland.

The Gympie community has seen so much over the past few years. The show this year in particular, with two floods back to back, was an opportunity for the community to gather together and to simply have a good time and see what is great about our community. Whether it was the prize bulls or the rides in sideshow alley, there was something at the Gympie show for everybody. I know from wandering around that so many people had such a great time.

What was also of great support was to see how the business communities had come together and supported the show. You only had to walk down machinery alley to see some of Gympie’s finest businesses sponsoring the show and, importantly, to see some of Gympie’s people buying farm equipment and cars and engaging in commerce activities at the show.
As a fundraiser, I have to mention that we cleaned toilets at the show. I had my arm around the S-bend on a toilet that was blocked, unfortunately, but it was a great opportunity. I want to thank our Senate candidates who came down to assist us in cleaning because, whilst it is a dirty job and one that we had appropriate gloves and protection for, it is one that is well regarded by our community and we thank everybody involved. We learn from our past but we look to the future. We can learn from 125 shows about what makes a great country show, and we know that for Gympie we will continue that into the future.

Small Business

Hon. DF CRISAFULLI (Mundingburra—LNP) (Minister for Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience) (3.26 pm): I would like to speak briefly today about what is a very important group in my electorate and, indeed, in this great state. It is a group that over recent years probably feels a little unloved. We have heard a lot of things from many different sectors of our community, but small and medium sized businesses in this country are hurting at the moment. There is no question as I get around my electorate that is a message I am consistently receiving. There are some factors like the economy that are playing a big role, but in many cases they feel like they have been overregulated or regulated out of existence. There is no question that the uncertainty in the federal parliament at the moment does not help. It seems like in many cases a lot of people simply put their pencils down until there is an election in September and a clear parliament. Many people simply are not investing. I hope that with a clear result in September we will get that certainty and move forward.

There are a lot of things that we can do. We have spoken about the need to cut red and green tape, and that process has begun. We have enacted the Queensland small business strategy and action plan. As members know, that is a strategy that underpins five priorities—lowering unemployment, making it easier to do business, increasing opportunities, stronger business in government engagement, and maximising business potential. All of those things are very important.

Today what I want to announce is a very small but local initiative that I want to try in my part of the world to see if we can do a little something, and that is to announce that I am going to be running a series of regular promotions through electronic media such as Facebook to promote businesses in my electorate that are doing something different. It might be the local fish and chip shop owner who is using environmentally friendly oil, or it might be a mechanic who is trialling something special. It might be any array of small business that is doing something different. I want to highlight it. I want people unashamedly to be very proud of the small businesses that are based in that great part of Townsville that I represent. I want people to support them.

This is a unique opportunity. I want to create that sense of community that comes with shopping locally. I want people to understand that in many cases not only are you supporting someone who most likely lives beside you whose kids go to the same school as you, but in many cases you are getting goods and services that you can rely on. Today I announce that as a call to action. I ask each and every member of the House to look at ways that you can promote it in your part of the state. Let us be proud Queenslanders and let us try to get small and medium sized businesses off the canvas in this great country.

National Volunteer Week

Mrs RICE (Mount Coot-tha—LNP) (3.29 pm): Last week was National Volunteer Week, Australia’s largest celebration of volunteers and volunteerism. I was delighted to establish and host the Mount Coot-tha Volunteer Awards to acknowledge and thank the volunteers who contribute so much to the community I represent. Last Thursday volunteers and representatives from a range of local organisations including sports clubs, schools and charities gathered at the Red Hill Community Sports Club to celebrate. I was delighted that the Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, the Hon. Tracy Davis, was keen to join us to present the awards and celebrate over morning tea.

As I read through the nomination forms of the volunteers I noticed three common characteristics that these volunteers exhibit. Firstly, they are all givers: they give their time, skill and wisdom. Secondly, they often fly under the radar. They are described as the ones who are not afraid to roll up their sleeves and get stuck into whatever task comes their way. Thirdly, they are contributors and their work goes a very long way towards creating a stronger community for everyone.
I wish to recognise and congratulate the following 2013 recipients of the Mount Coot-tha Volunteer Award: Lorelle Hawes and Ric Ceccato, volunteer aunty and uncle from Aunties and Uncles Queensland; Heidi Flintoff, volunteer team leader at the Red Cross retail store in Fortitude Valley; Lyn Baxter, President of the Australian Textile Arts and Surface Design Association; Bettye Chappel, parish councilor at Christ Church Anglican Church, Milton; Leanne Cronk, sacristan at Christ Church Anglican Church, Milton; Patsy Schofield, from The Pantry at Community Queensland; Cat Holland and Kelly Keating at Hands on Art; Loretta Cowan from Australian Red Cross Jeays Street Community Centre; Maureen Richardson from Jubilee Community Care; Elizabeth Johnson from Milton State School; Jill Brose from Queensland Spinners, Weavers and Fibre Artists; Barbara Roads from Rainworth State School P&C; Merv Turner, committee member of Red Hill Community Sports Club; Faye Briggs, Jane Wright and Alistair Brown, volunteers at Red Hill Special School; Kaylene Perissinotto, P&F President at St Ignatius School; Peter and Janet McFadden, Kilometre Club volunteers at St Joseph’s School; Molly Coughlan and Laura Eadie, year 12 students at Stuartholme School; Michelle French, from the Flower Project Foundation; Scott Maxwell from Men of the Trees; Col Gray and Les Chamberlain from Toowong Bowls Club; Leigh Chamberlain, Secretary of the Toowong and District Historical Society; Dominik Suchinsky, Manager of the Birralee Blokes; Bob Wilkinson, volunteer at West Toowong Bowls and Sporting Club; and Fay Kiely, Veterans Support and Advocacy Service Australia Inc.

I would also like to congratulate Reverend Peter Devenish-Meares, who was recently awarded the National Emergency Medal for services to the community during the 2011 flood and for his work at the Australian Red Cross at the Exhibition evacuation centre. The National Emergency Medal is an award of the Australian honours system given for sustained service during a nationally significant emergency. I was pleased to present him with his medal on behalf of the Governor-General during our volunteer awards ceremony.

In closing I would like to say a very big thank you to all of the colleagues, family members and friends who joined me to celebrate—

(Time expired)

Newman Government, Performance

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (3.32 pm): I rise to take up the invitation from the Queensland leader of the United Australia Party, the member for Gaven, to respond to his address that he made in parliament on Tuesday. It was not that long ago when we saw the political arm of the Liberal National Party in Queensland being run from outside of parliament. The state election came and went, the state government changed but what remained consistent was the influence of lobbyists on the political wing of the Queensland Liberal National Party and now the Queensland government. I believe the Queensland leader of the United Australian Party was spot-on when he drew the connection between the Newman government’s privatisation of government services, asset sales and the influence of its mates employed in lobbyist firms around the state who now have the opportunity to be involved in buying up significant Queensland assets on the cheap. I say that Queensland is not broke, as Premier Newman would have us believe. We are a wealthy state with valuable assets. Selling off our schools is just another cash grab by the Newman government, which has slapped a big ‘for sale’ sign on Queensland for vested interests.

Under this Newman government no longer do our nurses and health workers have job security. We see hospital beds closing, but guess who has security? It is some of our lobbyists who have that job security. To see an example of this close connection between the Newman government, the Liberal National Party and lobbying firms honourable members need look no further than the Liberal National Party federal candidate for my area on the Sunshine Coast, Mr Ted O’Brien. For the purposes of accuracy, I table a document downloaded today from the Barton Deakin lobbyist firm website. Guess who is front and centre? Mr O’Brien! It states, ‘Mr O’Brien set up the lobbying group’s operations in Queensland but has now resigned to stand for the federal seat of Fairfax as the Liberal National Party candidate.’

Tabled paper: Print-outs from Barton Deakin website [2692].

I also refer to the copy of the lobbyists register of contacts tabled in parliament last year by the former government minister Ms Ros Bates in which Mr O’Brien and his lobbying business was mentioned. There is more. I also table three pages downloaded today from news.com.au in which mention is made of this very close connection between the Liberal National Party aligned lobbyists and these Newman government ministers.

Tabled paper: Article from the Sunday Mail, dated 25 November 2012, titled ‘Details tabled in Parliament reveal access LNP-aligned lobbyists have to Newman ministers’ [2693].
I believe that voters on the Sunshine Coast need to be aware of this important information so they can make an informed decision on who they believe will always put their interests first and not those of vested interests. We need someone who will not just be a puppet and do what they are told to do; we need someone who is going to stand up and speak up for the people they want to represent.

I will be voting for Clive Palmer at the September election because I believe that, if we can get Mr Palmer, we will see our community put first, he will speak with a loud and strong voice and never again will the Liberal National Party take—

(Time expired)

Stevenson, Mr D

Mr KAYE (Greenslopes—LNP) (3.35 pm): I rise in the House today with sadness to speak on the unexpected passing of a former colleague, Inspector Dave Stevenson. Along with many current and former police officers, I attended Dave’s funeral, which was conducted with full police honours, on 15 May 2013. Both my wife, Louise, and I had the absolute pleasure and honour of working with Dave. Deputy Commissioner Pointing delivered the statement of service and valedictory at the funeral and also kindly passed on Dave’s service history, and I thank him for that.

David Andrew Stevenson was born in Brisbane on 15 February 1966. Dave was sworn in as a constable on 27 September 1985, serving his first year in Brisbane at Fortitude Valley and Mitchelton stations and the Brisbane Traffic Branch. In October 1986 he transferred to Mount Isa and then to Burketown. In September 1992 Dave transferred to Hervey Bay where he served the community for four years.

In January 1996, Dave was promoted to the rank of sergeant at the Human Resource Development Branch at the Oxley Police Academy. Dave was subsequently promoted to senior sergeant in February 2001 to the position of Education and Training Officer, Metropolitan South Region. In March 2006, Dave was promoted to the rank of inspector at the Legal Education Unit and was subsequently seconded at the rank of superintendent to the Australian Federal Police for two years managing uniform police for the Brisbane domestic and international airports. Dave returned to the QPS following his deployment and worked as a regional duty officer in the Metropolitan South Region until his sudden passing on 7 May 2013. Dave passed away at work doing the job that he loved. He was just 47 years old.

During his career Inspector Stevenson was the recipient of the following honours and awards: National Police Medal, Queensland Police Service Medal, 20 Year Clasp to the QPS Medal, 25 Year Clasp to the QPS Medal, Queensland Flood and Cyclone Citation and 1st Clasp to the National Medal. Dave was a boss that you could talk to. He was approachable and fair, a good listener and an all-round good bloke. Bosses like Dave make the QPS a better organisation and many could learn from his style of leadership.

Dave kept it real and did not suffer fools. He called it as he saw it. He possessed two very important qualities necessary to be a good police officer: common sense and the ability to talk to people. In the words of Deputy Commissioner Pointing at Dave’s funeral—

Inspector David Andrew Stevenson leaves behind a legacy of selfless commitment, high achievement and supportive leadership that those he came into contact with, and many current and future leaders in our organisation, aspire to. The Queensland community and the Queensland Police Service is far better for having had Dave as a valued member. He was highly thought of, widely respected and he will be greatly missed.

Dave is survived by his wife, Carren, and four children. I would also like to pass on my thanks to Dave’s family for everything that they would have given up so Dave could serve the people of Queensland. Police officers like Dave sacrifice their family time so that you and I can feel safe in the community. Thanks for everything, Dave. It was a privilege to work with you. You will be sorely missed by all who knew you. On behalf of the people of Queensland, I say thank you for your service to the state. You will not be forgotten. Rest in peace, mate.

National Volunteer Week

Mr KING (Cairns—LNP) (3.38 pm): Last Wednesday I had the great honour of launching the Cairns Volunteer Week and today I would like to pay tribute to the National Volunteer Week award winners and, indeed, all volunteers in my great electorate of Cairns. I do not think there is one sporting or community event that would exist without volunteers. Volunteers are in our schools, on the
sidelines at kids’ sporting events, in our hospitals, in our homes and in our emergency services. ‘Thank you’ simply cannot be said enough. So in line with this year’s National Volunteer Week slogan, I say thanks a million and then some.

I believe National Volunteer Week is one of the most important weeks of the year because it celebrates a community spirit that forms the backbone of our communities. We use this week to recognise the many thousands of people in our community who volunteer their time and their kindness, either on a regular basis or in times of crisis such as natural disasters. Cairns and Far North Queensland is a prime breeding ground for amazing volunteers because of our extreme weather events and we would not survive without them.

While it is during times of crisis that volunteers are often most visible, Volunteer Week is an opportunity to remind ourselves that volunteers work hard for our community every single day. I was extremely honoured to present certificates and awards to the incredible group of outstanding volunteers chosen for their long and selfless dedication to community groups in Cairns and Far North Queensland. I sincerely congratulate the winner of the FNQ volunteer of the year, Mary Skene, for her remarkable work with the organisation Protect All Children Today. I also congratulate this year’s local runner-up, Margaret Quigley from the Douglas Shire Community Services Association. Finally, I say a very big ‘well done’ to finalist Shawn Wright from the Leukaemia Foundation, Margaret Pollack from Guide Dogs Queensland, Flora Talbot from STEPS, Lil and Frank from Innisfail PCYC, Amanda Butcher from Hambledon House Community Centre and Christopher Hunter from Conservation Volunteers Australia.

Thanks a million to all of the amazing Cairns and Far North Queensland volunteers. Our community would not function the way it does without your ongoing dedication to your community. I sincerely thank you for all of the work you do.

Royal Historical Society of Queensland; Beenleigh

**Mr LATTER** (Waterford—LNP) *(3.40 pm)*: In 2011, as the Brisbane River flooded, another event was occurring at much the same time. A burst water pipe under William Street saw the collapse of a block wall. That wall crashed through the side of one of the most historically important buildings in Brisbane: The Commissariat Store, which was commissioned in 1829. That store is currently the headquarters of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland and is also a museum.

On Monday night I had the absolute pleasure of being at the rededication of that building by the Hon. Tim Mander, Minister for Housing and Public Works. I was accompanied by the member for Algester, Anthony Shorten; the member for Pine Rivers, Seath Holswich; and the member for Ferny Grove, Dale Shuttleworth. It was an absolute pleasure to be shown around that building in the company of such fine and illustrious people as the president of the RHSQ, Helen McMonagle; the immediate past president, Carolyn Nolan; and former president Denver Beanland, who is also a former member of parliament, a former Attorney-General and an author in his own right.

History plays a very big part in our lives. Certainly I have a great appreciation for it. I would encourage anyone who has an interest in our history—certainly our colonial history and that of the Moreton Bay penal colony, which that building was a part of—to go down and, for a very modest fee, look at that facility and all it has to offer.

While on the subject of history, I point out that we are approaching the 50th year of the Beenleigh Cane Festival. That is pipped to be a fairly exciting event. It is also the 50th anniversary of the Beenleigh Child Care Centre. Next year the town of Beenleigh will be 150 years young. I have no doubt that the celebrations will be worth attending. In the meantime, I should also point out that the Beenleigh Historical Society, which maintains a village comprising buildings of all shapes and sizes showcasing industries of our past, is a very exciting place to be. I would encourage anyone who has the time and opportunity to get down to the Beenleigh Historical Village. I understand that in the very near future they will be opening their brand-new building, which is jointly funded by the state and federal government. There is a lot of work going on in this area. I should also acknowledge on behalf of my good friend the member for Logan that Logan Village will very soon be celebrating its 150th year.

School Chaplaincy

**Hon. TL MANDER** (Everton—LNP) *(3.43 pm)*: I rise to acknowledge that this week is ‘chappy week’—the week we celebrate school chaplaincy in our state school system throughout Queensland. It was great this morning to share breakfast with 200 people,
40 of them being members of parliament from all sides of the House. This represented a great gesture of bipartisan support for this fabulous program. It is always very inspiring to be with these chaplains and hear the great stories of things that are taking place in our schoolyards on a daily basis.

A chaplain is someone who is seen as being independent, who is there for the pastoral care of our kids and who is working in partnership with the other professionals in our schools—whether they be guidance officers, counsellors or psychologists—to provide holistic care for students in the state school system.

This program has been incredibly successful over the past 20 years, and particularly in the last five or six years, with funding coming from the federal government. One of the great policy initiatives of the Howard government was to provide funding for the school chaplaincy program, and the previous state government and this state government have continued to fund school chaplaincy as well to show that bipartisan support.

I want to pay tribute to the five chaplains in the Everton district. Glen Weatherford, at Albany Hills State School, is a great guy with a wonderful sense of humour who plays a major role in maintaining the school’s great morale. He is very well respected. The chaplain at Albany Creek State School is ‘Big’ Pete Gavel. His time is divided between Albany Creek State School and Mitchelton State School in the Premier’s electorate. Pete is a larger-than-life character who is a great asset to the school community. Byron Adams, at the Everton Park State High School, is a passionate supporter of his community. The school is currently undergoing challenging times as its future is being contemplated. Dave Webber, at Albany Creek State High School, is a great young fellow who has just been married, an event which has been the source of much regret on the part of the young ladies there because he is quite a charmer. Jason Li, the newest chaplain, is at the Mitchelton Special School. That is a great community, and Jason is the right person to help serve the children at that school. Thumbs up to school chaplains. Great work!

Road Safety, Cyclists

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—LNP) (3.46 pm): The roads of our cities are for the use of all of our citizens. A recent court decision throws into serious doubt the view held in some parts of the community that existing road laws are adequate to protect cyclists on our roads. Last year, on a notoriously congested, narrow, inadequate and dangerous stretch of Moggill Road, between the Kenmore roundabout and Chapel Hill, a wonderful young life was lost when Richard Pollett, a gifted young musician, was fatally injured by an overtaking truck. The truck was 2.5 metres wide. The lane where Richard’s body was found is 3.1 metres wide and is only 3.4 metres wide at its widest point.

What more stark illustration could there be that a metre matters? Under the law in Queensland, a bicycle is a vehicle which has the same right to use the road as every other road vehicle and is therefore obliged to abide by the same rules as every other road vehicle. Richard was doing the right thing by traffic on that road by keeping to the left to make it easy for small vehicles to pass him. He could have legally ridden in the middle of the lane of traffic. The court’s decision to dismiss the charges against the truck driver would appear to be through a loophole in the Criminal Code, which states that a vehicle, including a truck, can overtake a cyclist without allowing any particular margin providing the driver of the vehicle has a reasonable belief that it is safe to do so. There is now no question that existing laws do not adequately protect cyclists.

When I was asked to sponsor a petition by Mr David Sharp from Safe Cycling Australia, I did not hesitate to do so. I have always believed that legislation which prescribes a minimum distance when overtaking should be introduced to protect cyclists. A distance of 1.5 metres is good practice and good courtesy. One metre should be the barest minimum allowed by law. It is not safe to overtake if there is not a distance of at least one metre. Over 4,000 people have already signed this online petition, and I urge members and the community to get on board and sign it at the parliamentary website.

Whilst you can get an idiot on a bike, just as you can get an idiot in a car, I cannot stress strongly enough that the vast majority of car drivers and truck drivers are safe and responsible, as are the vast majority of bike riders, who try to minimise the inconvenience caused to traffic.

Whilst the road toll has dropped in the last decade, bicycle deaths in Queensland have not. There are around 6,000 cyclist emergency department presentations per annum in Queensland, most of them children. This is a large human toll. The economic cost to the state is $450 million annually. If
we want to save lives and save the huge human toll of very serious injury, the government and the community need to act. We do need better bicycle infrastructure, particularly in the western suburbs, and I note that the push to legislate is strongly supported by the Amy Gillett Foundation, which is also doing wonderful work for bicycle safety.

(Time expired)

Burnett Electorate, Agriculture

Mr BENNETT (Burnett—LNP) (3.49 pm): I rise to share with the House the significant reforms of this government, providing a new era of productivity for Queensland farmers. It is important to acknowledge the hard work already done in relation to agriculture. For regional Queensland, Ergon receives a significant community service obligation payment from government to enable it to supply electricity to regional areas at a reasonable price. This cost is estimated in 2014-15 to increase to $700 million. In addition, local irrigators have been given the opportunity to take part in local management reviews of Queensland’s irrigation schemes. This is about giving organisations like the Bundaberg Regional Irrigators Group an opportunity to demonstrate how these schemes could be transferred to viable, long-term local entities.

I want to highlight the practical reforms that have been introduced to assist the farming sector in my electorate—practical reforms to Queensland’s vegetation management framework passed in state parliament this week, restoring the balance to vegetation laws and marking the end of years of neglect of the agricultural sector. These new vegetation management laws represent the most significant reforms to legislation affecting the rural sector in decades and mark the beginning of a new era of agricultural production in Queensland. Landowners will save time and money with the introduction of self-assessable codes and routine vegetation management such as weed and pest management. The completed land audit shows that the Newman government was right to make agriculture one of its four pillars of the economy. The audit will provide a range of useful information to help investors and farmers and to guide regional local planning in our state. It has been 30 years since an equivalent study of this nature has been undertaken. This government will assist local farmers and landowners affected by flooding. Growers will be able to benefit from $20 million for an on-farm productivity and riparian recovery program to deliver practical on-ground solutions to repair damage and better prepare for future events. The government’s fight for the full category D assistance package accelerated the recovery process for local farmers and growers. This announcement will help keep the resilience for which cane growers are known. They want to get on with the recovery as quickly as possible so they can get back to the business of growing cane.

The establishment of a stand-alone agriculture department has seen significant advances. The investment in sugar industry research and development is further evidence that this government is committed to the Bundaberg region’s families and the industry. Additional biosecurity officers and recovery officers are some of the many reforms implemented to assist the farming families in my electorate. As always, we are happy to work with the Bundaberg and Isis cane growers in our area, and of course the Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers provide an important part of the gross domestic product for my region. With that, I assure the cane growers and the growers of the Bundaberg regional area that we are here to help and that the government is doing significant work with reforms to ensure agriculture is one of the four pillars of this government and will continue to be very important in the future.

Broadwater Electorate, Seniors Forum

Miss BARTON (Broadwater—LNP) (3.52 pm): Today it gives me great pleasure to rise to inform the House of an incredibly successful seniors forum that I held in my electorate about a fortnight ago with the Minister for Energy and Water Supply, the honourable member for Caloundra. I am very blessed in that approximately 30 per cent of my electorate is made up of seniors and I felt that it was incredibly important that I make a conscientious and concerted effort to ensure that they understand exactly how utility prices are set, understand what is happening with solar power, understand the breakdown of their electricity bill and what is happening with regard to water from a state government point of view and from a council point of view. The minister was fantastic. He was able to speak to people in my electorate for approximately an hour and was able to answer people’s questions. The feedback that I received was that it was great to finally have a minister who was accessible so that constituents could talk to ministers about what was happening, why things were happening and so forth. As I said, it was an incredibly successful forum in that we had to start turning people away because we had such an overwhelming response within the first few days after we had
invited all of the seniors in my electorate to attend. I want to thank the minister for taking the time to come to the great electorate of Broadwater. I want to thank Blair and Barb in my office for helping me on the day and Brian and my mother for helping with the tea and coffee.

That same day there were birthday celebrations for the ladies club of the Paradise Point Bowls Club. They celebrated their 43rd birthday.

Mr Hart: Did you make a cake?

Miss Barton: No, member for Burleigh, I did not make a cake, but the cake that they did have was a very delicious cake indeed. It was great to be able to join the ladies as we celebrated what was a fantastic milestone. Forty-three continuous years for that club is indeed a great thing. It is a fantastic club. It is one of the biggest bowling clubs on the Gold Coast and it is certainly central to the Paradise Point community. Indeed, the Paradise Point Bowls Club always holds an Anzac Day ceremony that attracts many people. I am proud to be able to support that particular bowls club by sponsoring an event coming up later in the year. I also want to pay tribute to the chaplains in my electorate—Naomi at Coombabah State School and John-Paul at Biggera Waters State School and Labrador State School. It was my great pleasure to host them for breakfast this morning, and John-Paul did enjoy meeting the education minister—another John-Paul—and they enjoyed discussing their name.

Motorcycle Safety, Children

Dr Douglas (Gaven—Ind) (3.55 pm): I rise to highlight the need for children to wear helmets and protective clothing when riding motorcycles in light of a study of the impact of motorcycle trauma on Queensland children. Ten children—all boys—ranging in age from six to 15 lost their lives riding motorcycles between 2007 and 2009 and more than 600 children were admitted to public hospital for periods exceeding 24 hours with injuries from motorcycle accidents throughout the state. An additional nine fatalities in minors aged 16 to 17 were identified but not included in the study. The study did not include quad bikes, which have featured in recent media. I agree with the study that motorcycle riding is a dangerous pastime for children and, despite its popularity and the associated risk of off-road motorcycling on private property, the activity is unregulated. Child and off-road riders are not protected by law or government policy, yet governments recognise the vulnerability of adult motorcyclists on roads. For example, adult road riders must attend rider training courses, maintain a safe motorcycle and wear an approved helmet. But there are no regulations protecting children or non-licensed riders on private property.

The study found that the most common injuries that children suffered from motorcycle accidents were fractures, open wounds and abrasions or contusions. Of the fatalities, 90 per cent received a head or neck injury, 30 per cent had not worn any head protection, and 20 per cent used inadequately secured or adult sized helmets. Sixty per cent of the fatalities involved a second vehicle and half occurred during recreational riding. The Coroner cited young age, inexperience, decision-making ability, excessive speed or substance misuse in 70 per cent of cases. Of the remaining three children, all who received head or spinal injuries, none was wearing a helmet. The majority of incidents happened in outer regional or remote areas and 60 per cent were in areas with low to very low income, education and skills. Six fatalities were on-road and four happened off-road, although children under 16 years are not legally allowed to ride on public roads. As the report states, motorcycles used by children have a shorter wheel base and lower weight; rapid acceleration and turning may contribute to falls or loss of control; and often children do not have the physical, cognitive or hazard evaluation skills to ride safely. It is not known if off-road riding is riskier than on-road riding, but off-road users often face hazardous terrain and environmental challenges. This is the first population study of paediatric motorcycle trauma in Australia and I want to acknowledge the authors, and I table the report.

In light of this report’s findings, I urge the government to introduce regulations of safety equipment for child motorcyclists. They should be compelled to use properly fitted and fastened clothing, helmets, boots and a back protector, which offers them protection. As well, the study calls for children to undertake appropriate training and ride a well-maintained bike suited to their skills and physical abilities. I will certainly push for these implementations to ensure the safety of all child off-road riders. Our children are our future and they deserve the full protection of responsible and informed legislation. Let us stop this terrible loss of life. Our children are the most precious commodities and we need to do something about this.

(Time expired)
Mr STEWART (Sunnybank—LNP) (3.58 pm): This afternoon I rise to further draw the House’s attention to the issue of rooming accommodation and to table a report prepared by a community consultative committee on social accommodation issues that are currently and have been of concern to residents for some time. For the past nine months the consultative committee representatives of the greater Sunnybank community have met with subject matter experts to address concerns with social and rooming accommodation in Sunnybank and surrounding areas.

After much deliberation the committee has formulated recommendations to be presented to interested parties, including universities, the state government and the Brisbane City Council. The committee recognises that international students make an enormous contribution to the Queensland economy and that any reduction in the number of international students could have negative financial implications. In 2011, international education activity alone contributed $15.7 billion in exports to the Australian economy. However, the committee also believed that maintaining acceptable urban lifestyles in Queensland is an important issue. Both the need to encourage the influx of international students and the need to safeguard community and social expectations were factors taken into account in the recommendations that the committee formulated.

This report provides 11 direct recommendations that will greatly encourage international students through better protection from unscrupulous landlords and will help protect Sunnybank as a low-density family-friendly area. Some of the recommendations are concerned about making the law relating to rooming accommodation more accessible. For example, the consultative committee would like the rules of accreditation to be simplified to enable the system of self-assessment to operate efficiently. Other recommendations aim to achieve consistency in the law by aligning the definitions and tests of the Residential Services (Accreditation) Act 2002 with the Brisbane City Council plan. This would also encourage a whole-of-government approach to some of the issues relating to rooming accommodation.

Finally, recommendations are simply the product of changing political and social understandings. For instance, the consultative committee would like the student exemption under the Residential Services (Accreditation) Act 2002 to be removed. The committee has heard considerable firsthand evidence that students, especially international students, are vulnerable and that this exemption is no longer acceptable.

This report has been prepared at an opportune time, with different reviews being undertaken into residential services and the BSA. At this time I would like to thank all members of the executive committee for their involvement and willingness to work together and learn together for our community. I would also like to thank Geri Quinn and John Duthie for their tremendous support and assistance in producing this report. I would like to encourage all interested members of the House to obtain a copy of this report and acquaint themselves with the findings of the Sunnybank committee. I table the report of the Sunnybank Social and Accommodation Consultative Committee titled Social and accommodation review of May 2013.


Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): Order! The time for private members’ statements has expired.

TAFE QUEENSLAND BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from p. 1797, on motion of Mr Langbroek—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (4.02 pm), continuing: I am particularly concerned about the powers afforded to the minister to change set hours of work in employment conditions. Recommendation 3.5 of the report of the Queensland Skills and Training Task Force states that the government should—

... pursue a revamped industrial relations arrangement for the TAFE workforce that addresses, at a minimum ... the need for a wider spread of hours and contact time.
The legislation at clause 50 will allow the government to remove the hours prescribed in the TAFE teachers award by regulation with no consultation. Moreover, it appears that the transfer regulations have been framed to continue after the new TAFE entity is established. In its submission to the Education and Innovation Committee, the Queensland Teachers Union raised these powers at clause 50 as a concern. It would be very disappointing if the minister used the broad powers of this legislation to override workers' negotiated industrial conditions. So far, this LNP government has form when it comes to slashing jobs and unilaterally removing workers' negotiated conditions.

I note that the legislation will also involve TAFE staff no longer being employed under the Public Service Act 2008, with staff to be employed directly by the new TAFE entity under the Queensland industrial relations system. Although clause 55 provides protection from changes by regulation to employees' total remuneration, superannuation, recreation, sick leave or long service leave, it does not provide the same protection for changes by transfer direction and nor does clause 55 provide any protection for changes to the hours of work.

The opposition is also concerned that this legislation does not require union representation on the newly established TAFE entity board. I hope that the minister will consider the needs for union representation when making these board appointments. The opposition also has some reservation about the reform model being proposed in this legislation. The objectives of the new TAFE entity board include that it must be commercially successful whilst still performing the role of a public provider for what are inherently uncommercial public activities. These two aims are incongruous: the objective to operate commercially while providing services that are by their definition uncommercial or not profitable. The legislation does not delineate clearly the roles and responsibilities for what TAFE ultimately stands for: technical and further education. It would be disappointing if this new TAFE entity abandons essential public services on the basis that they are not profitable.

It would also be disappointing if the consolidation of the 13 TAFE institutes into one statutory authority in this legislation is used to justify mass redundancies and cuts in services. A reduction in TAFE services has the potential to have severe impacts, particularly on regional communities. Cuts to the TAFE sector flowing from this legislation have the potential to impact on a broad range of workers, including metalworkers, plumbers, electricians and child-care workers to name a few.

The prioritisation of profitability over the public good also has the potential to result in courses being focused on cost and efficiency at the expense of industry safety. This is a particular concern for the training of electricians. There are also risks for particular parts of the community, such as for people from disadvantaged backgrounds and people with a disability. The TAFE sector has played a big part in Queensland in providing equality of opportunity to people from disadvantaged backgrounds and people with a disability. There are substantial costs to the community and the economy if TAFE programs that assist these people, who are at greater risk of being unemployed over a long period, are scrapped. Already, the minister for employment has scrapped the Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative, which supported 26,000 job seekers each year. The minister, who includes 'employment' in his title, has scrapped this successful program by using the rationale that employment is a federal responsibility.

If the LNP were genuine about the reform of the TAFE sector, it would wait for the Commonwealth House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment to hand down its report on investigating the TAFE system. This Commonwealth committee includes within its terms of reference the investigation of adverse funding decisions by state governments for the future sustainability of TAFE. It is worth noting that the LNP has not committed any new funding for skilled trades, apprentices and trainees until 2014-15—the same year that Treasury expects strong economic growth. By this time, the investment will simply be too late, with not enough time provided to respond to skill shortages.

There are parts of this legislation that the opposition supports. In particular, the provisions to protect the TAFE brand through an offence provision and the ability to apply for injunctions to restrain the inappropriate use of the TAFE brand are to be commended. That will protect the TAFE brand from being misused by private providers. These provisions also have the full support of the Queensland Teachers Union in its submission.

That said, the opposition is not able to support parts of this legislation that allow for the unilateral removal of workers' rights. They are those elements of the legislation that allow for the change of working conditions by regulation rather than negotiation. These changes would apply well beyond the establishment of a new TAFE statutory authority. The legislation also provides even broader powers to transfer directions and fails to establish union representation on new TAFE entity boards.
The opposition has serious concerns about the government’s reform model for the TAFE sector, which involves the closure of up to 38 TAFE campuses across Queensland, including some in regional areas. The opposition calls on the minister to start engaging genuinely with the unions as the government proceeds with this reform agenda—a reform agenda that involves the closure of TAFEs, which was not flagged prior to the election. It is disappointing that the government excluded the Queensland Teachers Union from membership of the Queensland Skills and Training Task Force and has again failed to consult with it on this legislation prior to its introduction. This LNP government needs to start treating its workers with respect and I call on this minister to lead the way.

Mrs MENKENS (Burdekin—LNP) (4.10 pm): I am very happy to support the TAFE Queensland Bill. I commend the minister, John-Paul Langbroek, for bringing it to the House and for his farsightedness in setting up a VET system in Queensland that will take us through the 21st century. TAFE is one of the most valuable institutions within the state government. It has been accepted state-wide that an overhaul of the VET sector was necessary. This was certainly evidenced in the recent Skills and Training Taskforce report that was delivered in November last year. This bill implements part of the government’s response to that report.

The TAFE Queensland Bill was referred to the Education and Innovation Committee on 16 April this year and the committee’s report was tabled on 16 May. Eight submissions were received from stakeholders and several witnesses attended for a public hearing. I offer my sincere thanks to the staff of the Department of Education, Training and Employment for their in-depth briefing and assistance with the committee, as well as the witnesses who appeared for the public hearings. The parliamentary research staff, under research director Bernice Watson, have done a magnificent job in the fairly short time available and on behalf of the committee I offer our thanks and appreciation for their efforts.

The main objective of the TAFE Queensland Bill is to establish TAFE Queensland as an independent public provider of vocational education and ensure that TAFE Queensland operates in an effective and efficient way and is commercially successful. Currently the TAFE sector is the largest vocational education and training provider, servicing 230,000 students each year. This equates to two-thirds of all training provided in Queensland, with private providers supplying the remainder. TAFE is a significant service provider. At present there are 13 institutes with 70 campuses across Queensland delivering 800 different courses.

The aim of the restructure of TAFE is to establish TAFE Queensland as a statutory body, commercially focused, separate from the department and accountable directly to the minister. It is important to give a level of autonomy to this entity to ensure that VET delivery is more flexible and more competitive. This restructure will ensure that TAFE Queensland can function independently, but will allow the minister to have oversight of the performance and delivery by the organisation. TAFE Queensland will be a body corporate, have a common seal and may sue and be sued in its corporate name.

For many years TAFE has had the reputation of delivering quality training and service provision. Having spent many years teaching and being involved in the TAFE sector myself, I certainly do not wish to sound at all biased, but I guess I do need to declare a former interest of some years ago. In all seriousness, the level of quality that has been the trademark of TAFE training must continue to be retained, which is one of the concerns that the QTU raised in its submission. I have no doubt that with the increased flexibility that this legislation and restructuring of the sector will lead to, high quality training and service delivery will become much more efficient and effective. The quality of the training will be a given. I look forward to a new look TAFE Queensland when it is finally rolled out in July 2014.

TAFE Queensland will be a not-for-profit entity with a commercial focus but will also perform its community service obligation as a public provider. To achieve this end a TAFE Queensland Board will be established. Under the legislation the minister will appoint the chairman. A seven to nine member board, with those members having appropriate commercial or industry experience, will be appointed. To ensure that transitional arrangements occur in a timely fashion, provisions have been made within the legislation to allow the restructure to occur. These provisions have granted certain powers to the minister to fast-track the restructure process which is certainly deemed necessary.

The lack of a sunset clause on these powers was raised by submitters. But as the restructure could be an ongoing process a sunset clause would not be appropriate. The committee requested further clarification on the regulation making powers within this bill. I thank the minister for providing that in comments in his speech today and also in the document that he tabled this morning. I thank...
the minister for that because there were quite a few points that the committee asked for clarification on which the minister certainly has given this morning. It is noted that staff will not be disadvantaged during the restructure process. Certain provisions exist within the legislation to that extent.

The TAFE brand has protection with this bill and that is certainly extremely sensible and an important part of the bill. It is important to ensure the protection of TAFE’s intellectual property as well as ensuring that consumers have confidence that they are purchasing a genuine TAFE product. Penalties do apply for the inappropriate use of the TAFE brand by others.

I am privileged to have two TAFE campuses within my electorate—the Burdekin campus of the Barrier Reef Institute which opened in 1985 and the Bowen campus which opened a little later. It is disappointing though that unions, such as the Together Union, have been whipping up community angst by putting out erroneous statements that these campuses are on the point of closure. The media articles and incorrect comments made by these groups are disgraceful because they cause unnecessary anxiety amongst staff and students alike, as well as within the community. No such decisions have been made and to say that they have is very wrong.

TAFE has been running on an uneconomic basis for many years under the 20-plus years of Labor and that is why the Skills and Training Taskforce was set up. TAFE is a very important part of our local communities. TAFE is a vehicle for industry and community alike. My message to my community in the electorate of Burdekin is that we must use our TAFE campuses. It is very pleasing to see that the Bowen community has pulled together and has had a couple of meetings with stakeholders and industry groups. They have been very proactive and are already rising to the challenge that this facility needs to be used. They are looking at alternate uses for these excellent facilities. The Bowen campus is beautiful, as is the Burdekin campus. I have no doubt that the minister will encourage the use of those facilities. One suggestion that has been put by the Bowen group is that the campus could become a training and employment hub for private providers and commercial entities as well as TAFE, which makes great sense: a one-stop shop. There have been certain moves in that direction. I commend the community for taking ownership of its TAFE. It appreciates its value and how important it is to keep it. They are proactively working towards that. It is important that our small community campuses be utilised much more. We all know the message in all sorts of areas: use it or lose it.

These are the hard decisions that the TAFE board, when it is appointed, will make after this bill is passed and TAFE Queensland is established, which will be after 1 July this year. There will be a huge amount of work to transfer across, but the regulation powers within this bill to deal with transitioning assets, staff, legal proceedings and various other issues will allow that transition process to occur. The Newman government is committed to building the economy of Queensland by delivering the four pillars of agriculture, construction, resources and tourism. Vocational training within TAFE is integral to that delivery in every one of those pillars. One of TAFE’s major functions is to liaise and work with industry to deliver the training needs of the state. I have no doubt that this new board will focus on not only delivering training but also working and liaising with industry to ensure that TAFE can move with the needs of industry.

I am very excited about the changes that will be made to TAFE. I believe this transition to a statutory body will see a new start and a very positive future for vocational training in Queensland. It will see TAFE Queensland become a model for other states. I have very much pleasure in commending this bill to the House and I look forward to an exciting future for TAFE Queensland.

Mrs RICE (Mount Coot-tha—LNP) (4.19 pm): I rise in support of the TAFE Queensland Bill 2013. On coming to office last year, the Newman government wasted no time fulfilling our election commitment to establish the Skills and Training Taskforce to do a once-in-a-generation review of VET in Queensland. When the minister addressed the task force for the first time, he said very clearly that we do not intend on doing this again. That was a reference to the many other inquiries into the VET sector or TAFE separately and why it is not working as well it could or should. The TAFE Queensland Bill before the House is a direct response to the recommendations of the Skills and Training Taskforce that reported last year. The objectives of the bill are to establish an independent body, TAFE Queensland, to be the public provider of vocational education and training, and to ensure that TAFE Queensland operates in an effective and efficient way and is commercially successful.

The Newman government recognises the importance of skills and training to the economy. To improve our state’s economic performance we need to not only encourage economic growth but also boost productivity. We can only do that if we have the skills on the ground, in the areas we need them and we have enough of those skilled workers to facilitate a productive economy. The task force was
charged with providing advice to improve the operations and outcomes of Queensland’s VET sector. The performance of the public provider, TAFE, was one of the three terms of reference for the task force. Very quickly it was decided that without a strong public provider we could not have a strong VET system. Importantly, though, it must stand on its own two feet. A new TAFE Queensland was one of four key elements of the task force recommendations. In its report, the task force acknowledged the professionalism of individual TAFE teachers and their commitment to students. The task force also recognised the concerted and continual efforts by all TAFE institutes to achieve efficiencies in an ever tighter fiscal environment. However, at its core the final report of the task force outlined that TAFE is sick and it is sick because as times have changed it has not. It is sick because under those opposite TAFE was ignored. The infrastructure footprint and industrial arrangements for TAFE were established in the 1970s and reflect the role and purpose of TAFE then. They are antiquated, they are outdated and they need to be modernised if TAFE is to survive.

What we need to do is make sure our campuses are full and thriving. No business can survive with utilisation rates below 50 per cent. Around Queensland there are sites with barely any activity. There are sites that are simply not viable. A classic example is the South Bank Institute of Technology, just across the river from where we are today. We have a beautiful facility at South Bank. It is one of the very best VET facilities in the nation. It is modern, close to central transport nodes and the city itself. It is used 51 per cent of the time. Between 6 pm and 9 pm, the traditional night-time class times, it is used five per cent of the time. Across the state, the utilisation rate is 40 per cent. When the minister and I have visited TAFE campuses across the state, the common message from the TAFEs themselves is that they want to be freed from the shackles that impact on their goal, that is, the delivery of quality training to students across this state. One of those shackles is certainly the continued management and maintenance of campuses that are no longer in use, are used by only a few and, more importantly, are no longer fit for purpose. Another issue standing in the way of increasing utilisation is an industrial instrument for TAFE teachers written in the 1970s. In all, the task force suggests the current industrial arrangements have a negative impact on productivity of 30 per cent and I note that negotiations have begun in relation to a new enterprise bargaining agreement.

The Queensland government is committed to growing a four-pillar economy focusing on resources, construction, agriculture and tourism, as well as reducing unemployment in Queensland to four per cent over the next six years. Strengthening the state’s VET sector is a key part of delivering on those commitments. The ongoing increase in enrolments to private colleges, coupled with a move to a fully contestable market, means the landscape across Queensland VET will be at a competitive high. Defining the future role of the public provider in Queensland is an important element of the government’s commitment to strengthening the sector. As such, this bill fulfils the key aim of separating the purchaser and provider, which will enable TAFE to be freed from many of the departmental shackles it has also had to deal with in recent years. This bill establishes TAFE Queensland as a statutory authority, a stand-alone entity where its budget and revenues, personnel and physical assets, new business practices and flexibilities can be free to deliver on the quite different requirements of the training market to those of the schooling sector.

As I mentioned earlier, the ongoing increase in enrolments to private training providers, coupled with a move to a fully contestable market, means the landscape across Queensland VET will be at a competitive high. On this point, it is important to note that it was the federal Labor government that proposed to the states and territories the new National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform at the beginning of 2012. It is this national partnership agreement that requires a national shift towards a demand driven framework for skills and training that, in turn, will lead to a more contestable training market. In moving to a more contestable VET market, the national partnership agreement focuses on the need for structural reform of the VET sector, of which TAFE is a significant component. For this reason, support for the public providers in the transition to a more competitive training system is specified under the agreement. Queensland has agreed and signed up to this national partnership agreement and the bill before the House is a key component in meeting Queensland’s requirements under the national partnership agreement to support the public provider in its transition to a more competitive training market. On this point I also note that, while the federal Labor government is right behind these reforms, the fact that they continue to play political games or the three different federal ministers we have had in this area over the past 12 months continue to play political games with Queensland’s future by not signing Queensland’s implementation plan associated with the NPA is utterly disgraceful. Unlike the federal Labor government, the Newman government takes its responsibilities seriously and we remain committed to doing what we signed up to. Regardless of Labor’s games, the future of education and training in Queensland and the future of TAFE is too important not to continue with these reforms.
The Skills and Training Taskforce was clear: if these systematic issues are not addressed, the state will not be able to deliver the increases in participation required by industry to grow employment, businesses, improved productivity and prosperity for all Queenslanders. The government intends to deliver an industry led, demand driven skills and training sector that can boast a strong and thriving TAFE. I am sure all parties agree that a renewed emphasis is needed for training to help shape a quality workforce that is ready to sustain a vibrant Queensland economy into the future. To that end, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr BENNETT (Burnett—LNP) (4.27 pm): I rise to support the TAFE Queensland Bill 2013. It is important to acknowledge my fellow committee members, although sometimes they were hard to get along with—I jest! I thank the committee staff: Bernice, Emily, Greg and Carolyn. Without those wonderful staff members, our roles would have been a lot more difficult.

Mr Gibson interjected.

Mr BENNETT: I can tell the member for Gympie that that was said in jest. They are a wonderful group and we do push through a lot of work. It is great to be a member of the Education and Innovation Committee.

I am a product of TAFE and all my children have studied at TAFE to some degree, so we know all too well the importance of Queensland’s vocational education and training sector. TAFE can be a pathway to further education, skills and development. The policy objectives of the bill are commendable and will establish an independent body, TAFE Queensland, to be the public provider of vocational education and training. However, most importantly, the bill will ensure that TAFE Queensland operates in an effective and efficient way and is commercially successful. The bill allows the transitional arrangements to establish TAFE Queensland. We all know that TAFE is a major part of Queensland’s training future. TAFE Queensland is the largest vocational education and training provider in Queensland. As we know, TAFE delivers quality practical and industry-relevant training to more than 230,000 students each year. The college comprises institutes in a state-wide network of 13 institutes and 70 campuses across city and country Queensland, delivering more than 800 courses.

With the VET sector needing review the government last year commissioned the Skills and Training Taskforce. This independent task force provided recommendations on vocational education and training in Queensland. The review needed to examine not only Queensland’s VET sector but also the ramifications of the national initiatives on things like performance, governance, regulatory and funding arrangements and importantly the process for industry and community engagement in this very important industry—the training industry.

The task force reviewed the appropriate role of TAFE in supporting our economy given the impacts and contributions of registered training organisations and the increasing role of schools. Operational efficiency and asset management, workforce management and operating systems were all included in the review. With the emerging pressures on the VET sector to address economic and market expectations the government responded to the task force recommendations by creating the new TAFE Queensland that is fit for the intended purpose of providing training into the future.

During the committee’s deliberations it became clear that the demand for vocational education and training comes from the students, industry and skills needs. We had great representation from key stakeholders. We all agree that we need to improve responsiveness to industry demand while addressing skill shortages.

TAFE Queensland needed a parent entity outside the current department of education structure to be a statutory body. This will allow for a more commercially focused board constituted by and accountable directly to the minister. This is a positive step to drive training and business focused operations supporting products and services of the VET sector.

With the change proposed, that being for TAFE Queensland to operate in a more commercially focused environment, it is important that there is a higher level of flexibility to discuss employment conditions directly with staff to be able to meet the entity’s new business needs. This bill allows TAFE Queensland to employ staff outside the Public Service Act 2008 so that it has more capacity to determine employment arrangements, like common law contracts and structured awards. The bill’s intention to enable a contemporary, flexible and more productive approach to employment is important if we are going to make the public VET provider competitive and commercially viable. It also needs to be commercially focused.

The TAFE brand issues were addressed. The brand will be protected through the creation of an offence against the unlawful use of the brand. The committee submitters, including union and industry representatives, support this bill in principle, though it is acknowledged that there were some
concerns around the industrial relations provisions. There is broad agreement that the changes will stimulate further competition within the existing private training sector and will allow progress towards TAFE being the VET provider of choice in Queensland.

From the committee’s consideration of the bill and from the many submissions received, it is clear to me that the VET sector needs to be able to respond to industry demand. The bill supports that goal by establishing TAFE Queensland as a body that can be more responsive and flexible. We have witnessed issues locally with the Wide Bay Institute of TAFE wanting to progress training outcomes only to lose the opportunity to private providers operating from back rooms or under houses and undercutting VET services. What we need is guaranteed quality training and the TAFE providers are excellent. Having direct industry experience as a criteria for board membership is seen as a significant step forward.

After many years associated with the TAFE sector—either as an employer of apprentices receiving training or as a student, firstly when I did my carpentry and joinery apprenticeship many years ago and then my further qualifications in project management and business and attaining builder qualifications—I knew that TAFE needs to operate in an effective and contestable market. We as Queenslanders have large TAFE assets in key locations and we need to see these state assets utilised to develop skills for the future.

In my area the Wide Bay Institute of TAFE is held in high regard. We do look forward to the reforms that this bill proposes. It is with much pleasure that I commend the minister and his department for bringing this bill to the House. It is with great pleasure that I thank the committee and commend the bill to the House.

Mr BOOTHMAN (Albert—LNP) (4.33 pm): I rise here today to contribute to the debate on the TAFE Queensland Bill 2013. This bill can be seen as the biggest revolution to the very fabric of TAFE Queensland since its humble beginnings back in 1882. To put it simply, the world is changing, expectations are changing and we need to change to remain viable in tomorrow’s market. Before I speak in detail about the bill I would like to thank my fellow committee members, the committee chairperson, Rosemary Menkens, and committee staff, Bernice Watson, Gregory Thomson, Emily Booth and Carolyn Heffernan.

This bill will establish a new independent statutory body, TAFE Queensland, to be the public provider of vocational education and training. This change is designed to ensure TAFE Queensland operates in an efficient and effective way to meet the challenges of future educational requirements and is commercially successful.

The Queensland government commissioned the Skills and Training Taskforce to identify the competitiveness of the current vocational education and training system. This resulted in TAFE Queensland since its humble beginnings back in 1882. To put it simply, the world is changing, expectations are changing and we need to change to remain viable in tomorrow’s market. Before I speak in detail about the bill I would like to thank my fellow committee members, the committee chairperson, Rosemary Menkens, and committee staff, Bernice Watson, Gregory Thomson, Emily Booth and Carolyn Heffernan.

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The need for education to meet current and future demands is paramount. We need to be prepared to meet the demands of technology. A year 7 student may undertake a career pathway in the future that has not even been thought of yet. Our schools are fighting to meet the challenges in education.

I seek the indulgence of the House to mention a wonderful program in one of the schools in the electorate of Albert. That is the multitier model at Pimpama State School, a truly wonderful state school in my electorate. This school recently won a Queensland government showcase award for excellence. This sort of innovation is what TAFE Queensland needs to be able to undertake to meet the challenges and adapt to the rapidly changing needs of industry.

The Skills and Training Taskforce recommended the creation of a new entity that replaces the existing TAFE institutes and STIs with a board that has strong commercial and industrial experience to oversee the operation of the new entity. I would like to mention that such an entity would be independent of the Department of Education, Training and Employment but accountable to the minister.

This bill is about engaging the industry and delivering vocational education and training in an efficient and effective manner. We must steer ourselves away from the traditional supply driven model to a demand driven model to help deliver real job outcomes. Building a demand focused model is
crucial. This will have direct ramifications on a broad spectrum of society through building necessary employment outcomes for all employable age groups. Furthermore, this gives hope to younger generations and school leavers who are looking for their first full-time employment. Preparing these individuals for a demand driven economy should be on the list of any good government.

The Australian Council of Private Education and Training Queensland supplied statistical information to the Education and Innovation Committee which demonstrated TAFE reforms in Victoria had led to an increase of enrolments in both TAFE and private training organisations.

This bill focuses on multiple aspects in establishing a new statutory body for TAFE Queensland. Firstly, as an independent body, TAFE Queensland will be a commercially focused, independent statutory body. It will be a not-for-profit entity that will have control of its own budget, staffing arrangements and revenue. These arrangements provide TAFE Queensland the flexibility to deliver services, reduce costs and streamline investment into public funded training.

Commercially focused boards are a key focus of this legislation. The TAFE Queensland Bill 2013 gives the board overseeing TAFE Queensland the ability to incorporate industry demands into learning outcomes. This board will be made up of industry based professionals who possess qualifications and experience in their given fields.

The TAFE Queensland brand is a true educational icon in Queensland and requires safeguards to ensure its protection. This bill creates the necessary safeguards by rendering the unlawful use of the TAFE brand as an offence. The bill also intends to enable a more flexible and productive approach to employment which is designed to make vocational education more competitive and more focused on commercial and industry outcomes.

As I have previously stated, this bill establishes TAFE Queensland as an independent statutory body. This will give TAFE Queensland the powers of an individual, including the powers to manage its own budgets, revenues and assets, and the ability to develop innovative business practices. This bill also negates the role of the Queensland government as the government retains oversight of TAFE Queensland through governance, reporting frameworks and accountability.

This bill also ensures TAFE Queensland adheres to other legislation such as the Financial Accountability Act 2009 and the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982. These two protections can be found in part 3, planning and accountability, clauses 37 to 48.

This bill is designed to ensure that safeguards are maintained, even to the extent that clause 34 provides for criminal history checking of all and any members and staff appointed to the board. Board members have enormous responsibility for the oversight of the publicly funded entity. Therefore, it is important to maintain high levels of safeguards with limited effects on individual’s liberties. The bill includes smooth transition provisions to provide for the transfer of staff, contract assets, legal proceedings and student enrolments.

This bill has received support in principle by the Queensland Teachers Union and the Resources Registered Training Organisation Association. Both of these groups believe that the changes will stimulate further competition within the existing private training sector and assist TAFE Queensland to become the provider of choice by having the drive to develop innovative business practices and the ability to deliver in a competitive marketplace.

This is a once in a lifetime reform to vocational education and training in Queensland. This government stands by its commitment to build a four-pillar economy, and to do this we need to provide our youth, and those who wish to be retrained, with the education and training resources to meet these future demands.

I reiterate that there are students in year 7 who will be undertaking career pathways in the future which have not even been thought of yet. Having an education system ready to meet these challenges only enhances outcomes for both students and the economy. Furthermore, with continual changes around the world, more than ever we need a commercially focused TAFE system that can adapt to our ever changing world. Lastly, I wish to thank the Minister for Education for his forward-thinking approach in tabling this wonderful piece of legislation. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr LATTER (Waterford—LNP) (4.44 pm): I rise to speak to the TAFE Queensland Bill 2013 but should first like to acknowledge the work of my colleagues on the Education and Innovation Committee. This bill provides for the establishment of TAFE Queensland as a statutory body. The establishment of TAFE Queensland as an independent body with a commercial focus will provide
TAFE Queensland with the ability to be more responsive to the needs of industry and flexible in its service delivery. TAFE Queensland will have control of its own budget, revenues and staffing arrangements and will be able to operate in a commercially successful way.

As a statutory body, existing accountability frameworks in the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982 and the Financial Accountability Act 2009 will apply. The bill also sets out a process for TAFE Queensland to submit its operational plan to the minister for approval. The minister will retain the power to give directions to TAFE Queensland where it is necessary in the public interest.

TAFE Queensland will be a not-for-profit entity as it will perform the role of the public provider, including the provision of training to students and communities, including rural and remote communities, which cannot be provided by the private sector due to the high cost of service delivery. As I mentioned previously, the establishment of TAFE Queensland as an independent body will ensure that it functions in a way that is efficient to reduce the costs of the public provider and allow the government to maximise the value of its investment in publicly funded training.

In order to achieve a level of commercial success while performing the role of public provider, it is important that TAFE Queensland has a board with sufficient experience in commerce and industry to develop TAFE Queensland’s strategic vision and deliver on that vision. The bill provides for the establishment of a board of seven to nine members for TAFE Queensland. One of those members will be a nominee of the minister, with the remaining members being persons with appropriate commercial or industry experience. The bill also provides for the integrity of board members through requirements to disclose conflicts of interest which arise during the board members’ appointments.

The bill includes provisions that disqualify persons from appointment if they have a conviction for an indictable offence, are an insolvent under administration or are not able to manage a corporation because of part 2D.6 of the Corporations Act. This bill recognises that it is necessary for the board overseeing TAFE Queensland to have similar experience and qualifications to those skills presently valued in successful private providers or like industry. The TAFE Queensland Board will be expected to focus on ensuring that the entity is commercially successful whilst performing the role of a public provider.

TAFE Queensland will have a chief executive officer responsible for the day-to-day management of the provider and accountable to the TAFE Queensland Board. The board will appoint the chief executive, with the prior written approval of the minister.

I note that it was the committee’s position that the government’s investment in the TAFE brand should be protected, and I was pleased to see this achieved by provisions which make it an offence for a person to use ‘TAFE’ or ‘technical and further education’ in association with training products unless the person is a relevant TAFE entity or has the approval of the minister. Without such provisions, the government would be limited to taking legal action against the inappropriate use of the terms ‘TAFE’ or ‘technical and further education’.

To enable a more flexible approach to employment arrangements, the bill will enable TAFE Queensland to employ staff directly and not under the Public Service Act 2008 and will negotiate a modern enterprise bargaining agreement for TAFE teachers. I think it is appropriate at this stage to acknowledge and thank the Queensland Teachers Union for their submission and contribution to the committee process. While the QTU expressed some concerns, there was generally support for the direction the government is taking in this instance.

TAFE Queensland will have the flexibility to engage in interchange and work performance arrangements in the same way as Public Service departments under the Public Service Act. These arrangements will be used for a range of purposes, including having DETE staff provide services to TAFE Queensland until TAFE Queensland has established its own employment arrangements. In the longer term, these arrangements will be used to allow departmental employees to work in TAFE Queensland or for TAFE Queensland staff to work in other government agencies. It is necessary to ensure that Public Service officers or TAFE Queensland staff are not disadvantaged by moving between the Public Service and TAFE Queensland, and this bill addresses those concerns.

Given that the Metropolitan South Institute of TAFE plays a critical role in my community, particularly through the provision of education and training available at the Loganlea campus, I would stress the vital importance of maintaining access to education and training for all. This bill will ensure that TAFE can continue to be a public provider for those courses that meet the diverse needs of the community, including the disadvantaged, while adopting a new and exciting direction with a
commercial focus and the flexibility to deliver courses that meet industry needs. I must take the opportunity to commend the minister for the work that he has put into this. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs SCOTT (Woodridge—ALP) (4.50 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the TAFE Queensland Bill 2013. As a member of the Education and Innovation Committee, I wish to commend our research staff; committee chair, Rosemary Menkens; other members of the committee; and the many who forwarded submissions and attended and presented to our hearings.

At the outset I wish to say a few words about our Logan campus of the Metropolitan South Institute of TAFE and I mention MSIT Director, Kaylene Harth, and the head of the Logan campus, Jane McPhee. This campus has been so responsive to the needs of our Logan City population. Over the last decade they have undergone many changes but always in a positive way. Where once we had vocational training in such trades as refrigeration, air-conditioning and so forth, these were moved to SkillsTech at Acacia Ridge, which I always likened to a university for tradies. It is a wonderful, unique concept, and we have the Hon. Tom Barton to thank for having the foresight to purchase the old BHP steelworks.

The Loganlea campus now plays host to many refugees and migrants from every corner of the globe learning the English language, taking computer courses and so much more. They also have a very strong component for people with disabilities. Their hairdressing and beauty salon is a modern, attractive facility offering excellent training as is the new commercial kitchen for hospitality training, which has a fully functioning dining facility. One of the most impressive facilities is the fully fitted out hospital ward with functional ‘patients’ allowing for very real training. Other areas of training include business, children’s services, community welfare, horticulture and so much more. A visit to Logan TAFE is a delightful experience. You literally feel like you have visited the United Nations.

This legislation will consolidate 13 TAFE institutes into a single statutory authority. I am particularly concerned by the government task force’s recommendation to close four SkillsTech campuses and what the consolidation of 13 institutes into a single entity will mean for the future of SkillsTech. The government task force report praises the work of SkillsTech and states that they are ‘likely to be capable of forging their own futures, value-adding to Queensland’s skilling outcomes with good forward-thinking policy settings’. There is no clear reason provided by the government’s task force as to why four SkillsTech Australia campuses should be closed.

In my electorate SkillsTech Australia has been engaged in valuable work with Woodridge State High School, linking young Queenslanders with fantastic employment opportunities. The SkillsTech campus at Acacia Ridge, as mentioned earlier, is a truly wonderful facility and includes the largest functioning foundry in the Southern Hemisphere and advanced training facilities to develop skills for heavy vehicle maintenance, electrical goods and engineering, carpentry, plumbing, furniture manufacture, interior design, painting and so much more. The previous government invested more than $200 million in the development of SkillsTech Australia facilities and I would hope that this government decides to support and to continue to grow this campus.

The work of SkillsTech shows how the previous government was already acting with the support of Skills Queensland to link industry demand with technical and further education. However, as I outlined in the committee report, the opposition has some reservations with this legislation. The opposition cannot support legislative changes that fail to protect the employment conditions of TAFE teachers. The legislation in its current form will allow particular working conditions to be unilaterally altered without consultation. The opposition is also disappointed that there is no provision in this legislation for union representation on the new TAFE entity board.

One issue I would like to bring to the attention of the minister is the present inability of Pacific Islander students who arrived in Australia after 2001 on the Trans-Tasman agreement via New Zealand to undertake training at SkillsTech. I took a group of Samoan students with leaders on a tour and they were so impressed. However, Australian citizenship is a requirement. There are many young people who would gladly undertake training in this facility if it were to open up this possibility. However, we are generally supportive of this bill with a number of reservations, as I have mentioned.

Mr SYMES (Lytton—LNP) (4.55 pm): I rise as a member of the Education and Innovation Committee, which has been given the task of evaluating the TAFE Queensland Bill 2013. The two main objectives of the bill set out by the Newman government include the establishment of an independent body, TAFE Queensland, to be the exclusive public provider of vocational education as well as ensuring that TAFE Queensland operates in an effective and efficient way and is commercially successful.
Since 1995 Queensland’s VET courses have been the subject of numerous reviews, specifically centred around the rationalisation of TAFE facilities from 32 down to 13 institutes spread across Queensland. Since the Newman government came to office it has commissioned a Skills and Training Taskforce which identified problems around competitiveness with the current VET system and courses in the skills and training sector. One issue outlined in the review was the high cost to the Queensland government of delivering the current network of TAFE institutes. The taskforce report outlined the need for an independent body as the current governance arrangements within TAFE Queensland were found to be fragmented and inconsistent. Under this amendment bill, it is proposed that TAFE Queensland will be an independent body that is commercially focused whilst being directly accountable to the education minister.

I welcome the Newman government’s commitment to the protection of the investment in the TAFE brand. It does this by including provisions in the amendment bill which make it an offence for other providers in the skills and training industry to use ‘TAFE’ or ‘technical and further education’ in their training products unless they are a TAFE entity or have direct permission from the minister and the government of the day. It should be noted that the TAFE brand is very well known and is respected in numerous industries such as the fashion, electrical and building industries, just to name a few.

The estimated cost of implementing the amendments in the bill will be met from existing resources as outlined in the explanatory notes, which no doubt will be welcome relief for the Treasurer, who will be handing down his second budget as the Treasurer of Queensland in a few weeks time. I also note that in the Queensland Teachers Union and the Queensland Council of Unions submissions to the committee they had reservations about the length of community consultation conducted before this bill was brought before the House. However, the task force conducted extensive consultation with industry directly, with the Australian Skills Quality Authority, Queensland Commission of Audit, TAFE Queensland Council of Chairs, Central Queensland University, TAFE Directors Queensland and the Australian Council for Private Education and Training, and the list does go on.

We as a government are committed to the skills and training industry in Queensland to improve the sector and so we must restructure for the future in order to be effective and efficient for students, staff and the wider Queensland community. The Newman government went to the 2012 election to build a four-pillar economy around construction, tourism, agriculture and resources, and TAFE Queensland courses will provide the learnings for young people and mature age students as well as the opportunities and the knowledge to enter their respective workforces to help build Queensland’s four-pillar economy.

But in order to make TAFE cost-effective and efficient there needs to be a change. There needs to be a platform that protects the TAFE brand in the industry, and the operations of the institutes of TAFE Queensland effective while undertaking future planning for growth in specific courses and reductions in others. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr PUCCI (Logan—LNP) (4.59 pm): I rise to contribute briefly to the debate on the TAFE Queensland Bill 2013. In keeping with this government’s commitment to streamline operations offering front-line services to Queenslanders, this bill sets out to unify suppliers of vocational education throughout the state and establish a single statutory body to oversee the delivery of technical and further education for Queenslanders.

TAFE Queensland has come a long way since its humble beginnings with the first technical college, founded in 1893 after students gathered for a class in mechanical drawing. That soon expanded to include geology, bookkeeping, French, German and the history of the British Empire. Today TAFE is the largest provider of VET in Queensland and is an integral part of the vocational education and training system. In total, TAFE has provided quality, practical, industry relevant training for over seven million students. TAFE Queensland currently offers over 800 courses across its state-wide network of 70 campuses. TAFE provides a total of three-quarters of all external training in Queensland.

As a significant partner in the education industry, we must take steps to make TAFE as commercially successful as possible. The Skills and Training Taskforce was appointed by this government to make recommendations about ways to improve the VET sector in Queensland. As outlined in the Skills and Training Taskforce report, TAFE Queensland is currently facing numerous challenges which must be addressed to rebuild the capability of TAFE Queensland and ensure it is fit for purpose.
The government is committed to TAFE Queensland as the public provider of vocational education and training in Queensland for the long term. To ensure the viability of TAFE for future generations, the time has come for a significant overhaul. This bill provides the tools needed to secure the future of TAFE Queensland for the industries, communities and people it serves.

Change is not new for TAFE Queensland. In its 130-year history TAFE has undergone many changes and has had to adapt along the way to the environment in which it operates. Over the years there has been a transition from trade and technical training to paraprofessional training. More recently we have been seeing the introduction of alternative delivery methods including videoconferencing and online training delivery. There have also been structural changes to accommodate the initial growth in the number of technical colleges—to an organisation that once had 32 institutes—to the current structure of 13 institutes.

The government is committed to modernising Queensland’s skills and training sector to drive economic growth, employment outcomes and prosperity for Queenslanders and our communities. The task force report found that the current structure of 11 TAFE institutes and two statutory TAFE institutes is fragmented and does not allow for a clear focus on delivering training that meets the needs of students, employers and industry. Currently there is not sufficient training in the areas that are needed in industry that will drive our state’s economy.

This bill provides TAFE Queensland the power and functions to develop and implement a clear vision, strategy and action plan for the public provision of training in Queensland for the future. TAFE Queensland will be responsible for managing the provision of training through its network of individual TAFE institutes and will be held accountable for the strategic delivery of efficient and effective VET services. TAFE Queensland will control and direct funding, determine its delivery locations and modes, employ its workforce and otherwise operate as an independent, accountable public provider.

TAFE plays a critical role in securing the economic and social prosperity of Queensland and its communities. A dynamic and responsive VET sector, closely aligned to the evolving needs of the industry and students, will provide training and skills matched with real job outcomes. A labour market with the right skills will lead to employment and productivity gains, driving growth in the four-pillar economy areas of tourism, resources and mines, agriculture and construction.

I am a product of TAFE Queensland, which I attended to further my qualifications in management, training and assessment, and occupational workplace health and safety. My wife also went to TAFE to gain her qualifications in interior design. It is a great place to study, and I wholeheartedly recommend it.

TAFE Queensland is in an excellent position to reform. The task force has provided a clear direction, and students and industries are calling for change. There is support from both the government and TAFE leadership.

I would like to commend the Education and Innovation Committee—of which I was a proud member—and their parliamentary support staff for their efforts to improve delivery platforms for education in this great state. I also want to congratulate and thank the honourable Minister for Education, Training and Employment and his ministerial and departmental staff for their efforts, which have come to fruition today. I commend this bill to the House.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (5.05 pm): I rise to speak to the TAFE Queensland Bill 2013. For many years TAFE has provided excellent and affordable educational opportunities to many people. Over the last few years, however, many people have been excluded from attending TAFE courses because they have not been affordably priced. I note that the current legislation states that TAFE Queensland is to perform its functions on a not-for-profit basis. If this is changed to a cost-recovery basis, there will be issues in relation to affordability for some people. I acknowledge that not all courses are hugely expensive, but some courses can run into the thousands of dollars. Quite a number of potential students who see TAFE as an educational option do not have sufficient financial resources. Accessibility in terms of affordability is an area which needs to be carefully examined.

We have a TAFE campus in Gladstone which has very good infrastructure and potential. We are unique in Gladstone in that there is a very well advanced proposal for the amalgamation of Central Queensland University and TAFE. In some ways, this legislation may not apply to our TAFE in particular. The amalgamation is an issue that has been very precious to Scott Bowman, the vice-chancellor of CQU. I know that he has met with the minister and other departmental officers with regard to progressing that proposal.
The TAFE campus at Gladstone for many years was potentially a great educational tool, but over the past decade—and prior to this government—a number of training options were phased out. There is a full commercial kitchen for training front-of-house and back-of-house staff at the campus, but the use of that kitchen was gradually phased out. The training courses which utilised that kitchen were reduced to the point where they became economically unviable, but thankfully the kitchen is still there and has not been stripped bare. Prior to its closure, students from the supported learning centre at Rosella Park School attended to learn skills for which they received certificates in hospitality. As a result of being able to use that TAFE kitchen, those students subsequently became employable as front-of-house and back-of-house staff. When those students graduated, they held a morning tea or luncheon to showcase their skills.

Nothing gave them greater empowerment than for these students, of whom some had been deemed unemployable, to show that they had not only learnt the skills but mastered the skills and that they had a place in employment. TAFE has filled some really wonderful roles. It still provides courses for industry in the region, although I have to say that over time industry has looked for alternatives. For example, when it was stated that for certain courses there had to be 12 or 13 people—this was the money side of it—and that number was not reached a day or two days before the course was due to start, TAFE would cancel the course—and I do not think Gladstone would be unique in that. Therefore, industries started to look at other RTOs to provide the training. That in great measure undermined the breadth of influence that TAFE had. The other biggest change that started the downturn at Gladstone TAFE was when a TAFE director embedded at the Gladstone TAFE was promoted to Rockhampton and took the position with him—I raised this issue a few years ago—and for a little while that TAFE lost its way. It did not have somebody free of other structural responsibilities to champion TAFE among the industries and it never really built back up to the position that it was in before that position was removed.

Training organisations like the Australian Technical College have school based training and school based apprenticeships in both technical skills and IT skills with Gladstone State High, Toolooa State High and Tannum State High—and some of the private high schools are involved as well—which train in industry, in industrial environments and in industrial work time frames so that those students who take up those training opportunities gain very practical skills that increase their employability. They come out with first- or second-year apprenticeship qualifications, depending on their skills and abilities, and when they leave school they are incredibly employable. Most of them have an apprenticeship and an indenture signed before they even leave school. There are huge opportunities in my electorate for the TAFE to build on this training function.

As I said, the amalgamation between CQU and TAFE is well advanced. One of the protections that needs to be built into that amalgamation is that TAFE does not lose its identity. I remember when the university next to Parliament House used to be a vocational educational facility and it took on university type terminology. I do not know that there are too many people there doing TAFE type courses—I do not know in any detail—but certainly in the last couple of decades reference to that facility and that campus as a TAFE type training area just does not occur. I have had discussions with Scott Bowman to ensure that after the CQU and TAFE amalgamation the TAFE component is not lost over time and the value of the TAFE training is not lost over time and it just becomes a tertiary institution where the assets are divested over time to help fund the university's function. The TAFE facility is critically important in the industrial area that I represent. The skill sets—including closed spaces training, height training, electrical, plumbing and all of those training opportunities that TAFE provides—are critically important to be maintained. As I said, some RTOs have taken over where TAFE was not providing the training in a timely manner, but because it was not in the past does not mean it should not in the future. I certainly support the role of TAFE in many electorates but particularly in my electorate. TAFE teachers do a wonderful job, and many of them are practically trained. Rather than being teachers in state primary and secondary schools, they are normally technical people who go into the training arena post trade. They do an amazing job. They are very practical people and they want to see the students under their care, control and learning come out as well-trained and prepared students.

I commend our TAFE teachers and all of those who work in the TAFE environment. If the CQU/TAFE amalgamation goes ahead, we have to ensure that their terms and conditions are protected; that their status is given adequate protection in the long term, not just in a transitional period; and that their contribution to the community is recognised. Either without that amalgamation or in the process of that amalgamation, their contribution to our community should be recognised in the
long term so that any amalgamation does not disenfranchise them or disadvantage them as they continue to contribute to training. I look forward to the comments that the minister will make in his summing-up.

Mr GULLEY (Murrumba—LNP) (5.14 pm): Madam Deputy Speaker Barton, I rise to speak to the TAFE Queensland Bill 2013 and note that the mood of the chamber is much more subdued tonight than it was the last time you were in the chair. I speak on behalf of the Murrumba electorate, and as the chamber knows Murrumba is the Aboriginal word for good place. I am very mindful that Murrumba is primarily served by several TAFE campuses, including the TAFE campus at Redcliffe and also the Brisbane North Institute of TAFE at Bracken Ridge and the Caboolture TAFE campus. I am not too sure about the $15 million block of land that TAFE bought in North Lakes a number of years ago which is still sitting idle. As for the plans for that campus, clearly the last government lost its way on that planning. I speak tonight drawing on my own career experiences. Having performed both governance and executive roles within education, primarily finance and business manager roles, I have a depth of understanding of how education facilities operate and also importantly the aspirations and needs of not only staff but the client base that has and will continue to be served by TAFE and other education facilities over the decades.

I note the Skills and Training Task Force report delivered to the minister on 5 November 2012 and recognise the challenges facing the TAFE system. We should recognise the high level of state funding in a competitive but federally regulated VET system and that this system requires reform to meet the current challenges. I note the task force report recommendations of establishing an independent body, TAFE Queensland, to be the public provider of VET services and that the report recommended an effective and efficient operation of TAFE Queensland. Tonight I want to talk about the independent body and note the 1 July 2013 starting date, which is clearly soon. This independent body will replace 11 DETE facilities, two semicommercial bodies and two statutory bodies. This TAFE body will be responsible to the minister and have its own budget. Importantly, TAFE Queensland, the new entity, will be charged with the provision of training students in communities, including regional and remote communities, that cannot be serviced by the private sector. To give my two cents worth, we also need to ensure that the publically funded services currently offered to new migrants for ESL and other courses and also life skills currently offered to those with disabilities are continued to be supplied and/or supported directly or indirectly by the new body.

This body is charged with being commercially focused. The board certainly needs to be commercially focused to ensure it has a maximum outcome from taxpayer funds. Government money does not come from a money tree; it comes from hardworking Queenslanders who are already suffering from the high cost of living expenses as a legacy of wasteful governments. However, we also recognise the balance between commercial and financial prudence, and being seen as a universal public provider is a heavy balancing act to be undertaken. The bill also addresses the protection of the TAFE brand and I support this relatively uncontroversial legislative addition. Looking close to home at, say, the Redcliffe TAFE, locals have a good understanding of the services provided by TAFE and it is important that this public perception space remains within the public hands that generated that goodwill.

I turn now to industrial relations. We need to recognise that with change there are challenges faced to ensure that the new entity is productive and financially viable and that we recognise that teaching staff costs are the majority costs of all education facilities. This bill takes the important step to give the new TAFE Queensland its own enterprise bargaining agreement that can provide a vehicle to ensure that the conditions match the current VET sector that TAFE Queensland operates in rather than the 1970s employment model that it currently operates in. I am mindful that changes for staff members often comes at a time that is not of their choosing. That said, the TAFE staff who I have met are true professionals and have the skills to meet the desires and aspiration of young and old alike. Teachers universally enjoy teaching and gain professional satisfaction from watching their students grow on their learning journeys.

I am also mindful that TAFE today no longer operates in isolation or as a predominant supplier or sole provider of VET courses. I acknowledge that certificate level training is provided by schools in my electorate, including at North Lakes State College, which provides certificate courses in catering and trades. I certainly enjoyed the catering services of North Lakes State College when Christopher Pyne recently visited my electorate. Deception Bay State High School, through its Aspire program, is providing child care certificate courses for young mums who are enrolled at school. I would like to take this opportunity to compliment Principal David Friis, his wife, Wendy, and Deputy Principal Kyrra Mickelborough for their inspiration and efforts to establish this certificate course. Arethusa College at
Deception Bay, which recently received a $1 million grant from the Commonwealth government for a trade training centre, is doing a great job in providing certificate courses as a special assistance school. I know that Minister John-Paul Langbroek attended the opening of that facility. In the neighbouring electorate at Scarborough, the Australian Trade College North Brisbane also offers certificate courses. I see their name on buses in many electorates, including mine, and I note the absence of a TAFE sign on buses to the same extent.

VET education delivery has moved on from the 1970s and that is a good thing. I wish the new board of TAFE Queensland the very best in the challenges it faces in the current market. To conclude, I would like to compliment Minister John-Paul Langbroek, the Minister for Education, Training and Employment, for this bill. I would also like to acknowledge Saxon Rice, the Assistant Minister for Technical and Further Education, for all of her work in this field. On behalf of the Murrumba electorate—a good place—I commend the TAFE Queensland Bill 2013 to the House.

Dr DOUGLAS (Gaven—Ind) (5.22 pm): There seems to be an interesting slant on this bill from the conservative side of politics, contrasting with the traditional Labor view. Both sides are either describing a great new plan and a visionary future or waxing lyrically about the past. The comparison is very much a question of ‘what if’ as to opposed to ‘what was’.

The implementation strategy of the vision of the Campbell Newman government includes all the things that one might expect from it—lots of statements about re-engineering the future, a bright future for VET, rationalisation, which by default includes the closure of four sites, and modern representative boards, which merely seem to rotate too many former unionists with too many LNP true believers. There is a healthy dose of contestability statements from the government for the VET government sector—the now single independent provider of TAFE—to fulfil its mission statement. There are also very heavy multiple jingoist statements about the TAFE brand and how well it is regarded. That said, in the next breath we are also being told that TAFE must be cost-effective and proactive. The inherent difficulty with anything in education is to achieve what some might believe is a satisfactory level of cost-effectiveness. Those two do not necessarily go together.

TAFE provides a pathway to advancement for those members of the public who are largely wishing to grow in their professional lives. It was interesting to hear the member for Logan say that he pursued his career via the TAFE pathway. He needs to be congratulated for both doing so and saying so. For many years TAFE has provided the skills training for many trades and our community has been well served by those trades or craft-skilling teaching environments. The RTOs have added to those capacities. In some places they have replaced TAFE. Largely, TAFE could not compete because the level playing field is not level owing to the environment being totally different with regard mainly to staff wages and conditions of employment. The transition that is laid out in this legislation will address that anomaly. It will enable TAFE to have a future, when in all likelihood, without change and in the absence of guaranteed long-term regular capital grant top-ups or emergency top-ups, it will become extinct.

At this stage I would like to congratulate my local TAFE, which provides great alternative pathways for people who wish to continue their learning beyond secondary and tertiary studies. Under the direction of the CEO, Aaron Devine, the Gold Coast Institute of TAFE provides learning opportunities for 16,000 students across five campuses, with a diverse range of learning areas from business and marketing to hairdressing, mining, community services, child care, hospitality, music, media and trades. The Gold Coast Institute of TAFE also offers a program of tailored solutions to business so that their current employees can continue their education, upskilling and updating to further their careers. In fact, most recently, electrical trades people have made enormous advances on the campus and also at some new facilities on the campus in Ridgeway Avenue at Ashmore.

The Gold Coast Institute of TAFE offers pathways to apprenticeships and university through preparation diploma programs, which take into account prior learning. International students are welcome with student support. It is unfortunate that, particularly on the Gold Coast, we certainly do not have as many international students as we used to have. But with that student support those international students, with their personal career counselling service in place, often find careers both locally and also in their home countries when they go home. A lot of them do go home.

Academia is not for everyone. Practical skills will always be in demand. The Gold Coast Institute of TAFE is providing a platform for building those skills. In fact, there is a report in most of today’s papers that are published in Australia, but certainly in the American publications, which states that 50 per cent of all people who progress through these sorts of environments will have employment in the future and those who do not will not have employment in the future. That is an interesting statistic.
To Aarron Devine and his hardworking staff, I thank them for their efforts and hope they will continue to provide this very valuable service to the Gold Coast. I think the bill gives TAFE a future and that is to be commended.

Mr MOLHOEK (Southport—LNP) (5.26 pm): I rise to speak in support of the TAFE Queensland Bill 2013. This bill is a long overdue reform of TAFE and will position this public provider to focus on meeting the rapidly evolving training and skills needs of industry within our state.

It is essential that any reform of the VET sector in Queensland will ensure that the sector is able to meet the current and future skills needs of our state’s economy. Queensland’s industries and businesses, supported by strong government policy and quality VET providers, are central to developing appropriately skilled Queenslanders who will deliver on the economic growth and employment potential of this state. This bill will position TAFE to meet industry demand for relevant and timely training and provide a sustainable supply of skilled workers for Queensland’s employers.

The Skills and Training Task Force was appointed by this government to make recommendations about ways to improve the VET sector in Queensland. According to the task force report, Queensland’s industries have been faced with chronic skills shortages for nearly a decade. Skills and training have not kept pace with the rapidly expanding economy. An analysis provided to the task force indicates that there has been no growth in VET student numbers in Queensland over the past decade, despite the growth in state population over the same period. Traditional approaches to the public provision of vocational education and training have not met the rapidly evolving needs of Queensland’s employers and the expanding demand for skills such as advanced trade and para-professional skills.

Fundamental to increasing the state’s productivity is raising the skills and qualifications profile of the population to match the occupational and employment needs of the labour market. Queensland needs an increasingly skilled workforce that is relevant to the requirements of industry to support the establishment and growth of businesses, to enable major industries to capitalise on national and global market opportunities and to support industries undergoing transformation requiring new and different skill sets.

The challenge for the government is investing in the right skills and ensuring that the right training is delivered at the right time. Past experience has shown that ad hoc industry consultation will not lead to significant improvements in the TAFE training delivery that is required by individuals, industry and the state. This bill ensures that TAFE Queensland will be responsive to our industries’ training needs.

TAFE Queensland will compete in an increasingly contestable training market where the government will purchase training from public and private training providers linked to job outcomes. A parent entity with a commercially focused board will respond to the needs of the training market and industry. This is a new approach to the public provision of VET to ensure employer demands are being met by the public provider. TAFE Queensland board members will be selected on the basis of their commercial and industry experience to ensure the board has the skills required to operate TAFE Queensland in a commercially successful manner. Board members experienced in commerce, industry and training will inform the strategies and operations of TAFE Queensland. The board will also offer critical links within various industry sectors which will support TAFE Queensland in establishing its formal industry engagement arrangements.

This bill provides that one of TAFE Queensland’s functions is to contribute to and actively engage with industry. This government is committed to the requirement for deep industry engagement as outlined in the task force recommendations to ensure TAFE is a sustainable quality public provider of vocational education and training. The revitalised TAFE Queensland will engage directly with business, enterprise and industry leaders, as well as establish relationships with other training providers, universities and the education sectors to ensure that it is positioned to efficiently respond to the needs of the markets in which it operates. It is anticipated that TAFE Queensland will establish regular forums from consultation with industry sectors to better understand their long-term skills and training requirements as well as taking stock of the rapidly evolving needs of those industries undergoing transformation.

TAFE Queensland also faces the significant challenge of operating successfully in a highly competitive market with contestable funding arrangements. The provisions of this bill empower TAFE Queensland to pursue commercial arrangements at a whole of TAFE level with both international and domestic partners. Only through deep engagement with the industries that TAFE Queensland serves, and those providers it may compete or collaborate with, will TAFE Queensland be positioned to
operate successfully within the increasingly competitive VET market. While the specific arrangements for industry engagement for TAFE Queensland will ultimately be a matter for the board, through inclusive industry engagement under the functions of TAFE Queensland and requiring a commercially focused board, this bill provides for the skills and training needs of Queensland businesses to be met.

In my own electorate of Southport, the Gold Coast Institute of TAFE is one of the leading providers of health and community services training not just on the Gold Coast but nationally. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate our CEO, Aaron Devine, for his outstanding leadership. The investment of the new Gold Coast University Hospital has strengthened the attractiveness of the Gold Coast as a destination for study and led the Gold Coast Institute of TAFE to look to increase its training provision. Students from all over Queensland and around the country are currently studying online with the Gold Coast Institute of TAFE to complete a diploma of enrolled nursing. These students are choosing Gold Coast TAFE on the basis of its online learning materials, its links with industry, its learning support and its professional approach to clinical placement. While most learning is supported online, many students undertaking the course travel to the Gold Coast for residential intensives, supporting not just our education industry but also tourism.

Since July 2009 student numbers in health and community services have grown significantly. In health training, such as enrolled nurse training, Gold Coast TAFE has achieved a 92 per cent increase in student enrolments from 928 to 1,778 student enrolments—a tremendous example of what a contestable TAFE can achieve in a very competitive environment. In community services Gold Coast TAFE has seen a 75 per cent growth in student enrolments—from 677 to 1,187. The nominal hours of training in this sector have grown from around 600,000 hours of training to just short of 1.2 million hours of training. Figures for the current financial year, while not yet available, will show even further growth.

Gold Coast Institute of TAFE currently has over 440 registered inquiries from students for the next intake of their diploma of enrolled nursing which will begin in semester two of this year. This will be their largest ever enrolment in the program. It is anticipated that up to half of these students will be outside of the Gold Coast. More intakes later in the year are planned to meet the growth in training demand. Gold Coast Institute of TAFE is increasing its staff levels in these areas and is undertaking a very active role in enhancing the concept of the Gold Coast as a health and knowledge hub.

In speaking to this bill I particularly want to acknowledge the great work of the Minister for Education, Training and Employment, Mr John-Paul Langbroek, the member for Surfers Paradise. I also want to acknowledge the work of Saxon Rice, the Assistant Minister for Technical and Further Education and member for Mount Coot-tha. I commend the work of the committee under the member for Burdekin’s leadership, Rosemary Menkens. I commend again the great work of members of the leadership team on the Gold Coast at the TAFE within Southport and other parts of the city for their hard work in demonstrating what a successful TAFE can achieve. I suggest to the House that this is just one of the institutions that will really benefit and thrive under these new arrangements.

Our government will continue to set training priorities and purchase qualifications that match training with job opportunities. To inform decision making, this government is committed to rejuvenating industry engagement arrangements. As an initial step, an industry reference group has been established to begin the process and ensure training provided by TAFE meets the needs of the industry. I am proud to offer my support to this bill to reform TAFE and provide solutions to the skills and training needs of our industry and the future economic development of this great state. It is with great pleasure that I stand in the House tonight to speak in support of this bill. I am happy to commend this bill to the House.

Mr WATTS (Toowoomba North—LNP) (5.36 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the TAFE Queensland Bill 2013. I thank the minister for bringing the bill into the House. The key objectives of the bill are to establish an independent body of TAFE Queensland to be the public provider of vocational education and training and to ensure that TAFE Queensland operates in an effective and efficient way and is commercially successful. This is a very important change to TAFE. I am very lucky in Toowoomba to have the wonderful Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE—affectionately known as SQIT—right in the heart of my electorate. There is a great team of people who work there who have had good success over many years. Trevor Schwenke leads our TAFE and has been working hard. Several of the members who work in the TAFE organisation in Toowoomba have worked with me and for me at the university: Neville Siebenhausen; Rob McGrath, who works in hospitality and ensures that that program works; and one of the candidates who I picked for the Queensland Plan Forum, Sorita McGrane. SQIT provides a great opportunity for the young people of Toowoomba.
This bill will help bring our TAFE up to date. Toowoomba and the surrounding regions of the Darling Downs and the Burnett are facing a potential boom time with the advent of the coal seam gas industry and growth in the agricultural sector. That is starting to spark increased commercial activity and building. All of these sectors are in desperate need of VET trained people. The Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE has been providing them to the region for a long time. If we are going to achieve our objective of reducing unemployment in this state it is important to make sure that we have people who are effectively trained and ready to take up the positions. To be able to do that institutes, such as the SQIT campus in Toowoomba North, need to be nimble on their toes, adjust to changing environments, adapt their programs and be commercially focused.

I thank the minister for bringing this bill forward. I thank the member for Mount Coot-tha for doing the work in this area. The Skills and Training Taskforce delivered a good report. Many of the changes that are proposed will allow the institute based in Toowoomba to take up the challenge of ensuring we have well trained VET graduates in the many areas that we need for our region to grow.

I might mention a little quirk of history, which is that the Toowoomba TAFE campus is located in Bridge Street because a former member of this place, Mike Horan, who worked for the Toowoomba show, moved the show to new showgrounds out of town at Glenvale and so the TAFE campus was built in Bridge Street. The TAFE campus is right in the heart of our city. It is very accessible. Many students have great opportunities to access VET education there. I believe that the changes that have been put forward here will help ensure that the people and the youth of Toowoomba have good opportunities in VET training going forward.

In Toowoomba, TAFE has always received good cooperation from local schools and the University of Southern Queensland. Toowoomba is well known as an education hub. In my small urban electorate there are 19 schools. They are great schools. Many school based apprentices get their training and VET provision from the Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE. My daughters have many friends in year 11 at the moment who are just beginning their journey on the VET program. Those young people want to make sure that they have skills that are job ready. They want to make sure that they are ready to take their place in the workforce. It is important for a TAFE institute to provide the sort of programs that students need. It is important that it has an independent board and an independent set-up that is commercially focused, ensuring that it is meeting industry needs in a way that is both cost effective and efficient for students who choose to enrol in the VET path.

This is a wonderful bill. I believe it will be very helpful for my local TAFE and for all TAFE campuses, particularly with the development of a western corridor as the expansion of the coal seam gas industry and other resource industries to our west start to take off. There will be lots of job opportunities. A TAFE sector that is able to compete on a contestable basis with other providers will ensure that it is a strong sector going forward.

I commend the bill to the House. I thank the minister and the member for Mount Coot-tha for bringing it forward. I am sure that the people who work on the campus in Toowoomba will be very happy with the changes because it will bring more and more opportunities, not only for good educational outcomes but also for employment growth for the teaching staff and other staff who work on the campus as more and more programs are delivered because they are commercially effective and they are what industry wants. With that brief statement, I thank the minister for the bill, which I commend to the House.

Mr Pitt (Mulgrave—ALP) (5.42 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the TAFE Queensland Bill 2013. Since coming to power last year, the LNP government provided no direction to Queensland TAFE colleges, which have been in limbo. Then the government announced its proposed changes to the TAFE sector; changes formulated by a government task force that did not include the Queensland Teachers Union.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): Order! I am sorry, member for Mulgrave. Members, if you want to have conversations please take them outside. The noise level is increasing and I am struggling to hear the member.

Mr Pitt: The consolidation of TAFE institutes, which is at the core of this legislation, could result in the closure or sale of 11 campus sites in North Queensland, which would be a reduction from 26 to 15. If those closures become a reality, it could cost jobs in the north and have a disproportionate impact on regional areas where TAFEs are central to the livelihood of communities. It will also see a reduction in the range of courses available in many areas. None of that was announced by the LNP prior to the election. In regional communities, there were no LNP letterbox drops promising to take
away local TAFE facilities. Why would there be? This LNP government should have been upfront with the more than 30,000 TAFE students in the Cairns region, including Innisfail, the Cape, Townsville or Mount Isa as to the impact this plan will have on their education and eventual job prospects.

The opposition will be watching closely to see whether the government uses these reforms to lower funding to the TAFE sector. In Far North Queensland, the TAFE campuses at Cairns and Tagai are already running very lean and will not cope with any cuts. Partnerships such as SchoolTech at Woree and co-location at campuses like Innisfail State College and Atherton are already well evolved. As Skills Queensland has previously set out, and the government’s taskforce report details, the previous government’s investment in the TAFE sector was already below the national average. The Report on Government Services 2013 sets out that in 2011 Queensland’s expenditure on TAFE as a percentage of education expenditure is lower than any other state in Australia. At that time, Queensland also had a lower participation rate in TAFE as a percentage of the population than any other state in Australia. If anything, we need to continue to increase our investment in opportunities for technical and further education; not reduce it. That is what the previous government was doing: increasing investment and opportunities for technical and further education.

In contrast, the LNP government’s own task force report details that it is decreasing the overall level of investment in tertiary education, skills and training this financial year. While we were increasing investment in TAFE, the LNP government’s own task force report details that the hourly costs of training had been in steady decline since 2002. The cost of training delivery fell substantially from 2009 to 2010. Further, as the government’s task force report sets out, there are reasons that TAFE services cost more in Queensland than the national average. Key reasons include Queensland having the most decentralised population in the nation, along with more people studying higher level qualifications in the TAFE sector. This is not to say that the opposition does not support the TAFE sector being more responsive to the needs of industry for particular skills. That is precisely why we established Skills Queensland, an industry led statutory body to link technical and further education with industry needs. Skills Queensland provides regular skills and employment plans, with input from the Queensland Resources Council, to match training with the needs of industry.

When you take all those facts into consideration, it poses this question: what are the real motivations for this legislation, which fails to protect particular employment conditions of workers transferring to the new TAFE entity? This legislation also fails to establish union representation on the new TAFE entity board. As outlined earlier, the opposition will be opposing those parts of the legislation.

To conclude, I have reservations about whether the establishment of a single TAFE entity will deliver on its intended outcomes to achieve a sharpened commercial focus without undercutting the quality of training. The contestability model for TAFE already implemented by Liberal governments in Victoria and New South Wales has led to higher fees, lower enrolments and reduced course quality. We have already suggested that in Queensland ‘contestability’ is a euphemism for ‘privatisation’. It is a model that will create skills shortages and lead to a sudden influx of private providers with no proper verification as to whether they are delivering proper or safe training.

An example often given to me is that, say, you have a provider that may not be providing the service in the same way as a TAFE. You have a room full of students who are learning how to fillet a fish, but in the classroom there will be only one fish. All the students will crowd around it. They will be given a detailed look at it and then told, ‘This is how you do it’, and they will tick off that exercise. It may not go down the path of having proper competencies such as we would like to see. In the current TAFE model, all students in that classroom would have a fish. This is a pretty important distinction and we want to ensure that the training standards will not decline under any of these models. We must see that private providers, in their bids to under-price TAFE, will not be incentivised to cut corners and lower standards. In Victoria this led to builders being trained to use sand instead of concrete in house construction. As a former Victorian trainer said, ‘You wouldn’t build a house on sand.’ We cannot have the many pillars of the Queensland economy being made from sand.

Speaking of pillars, there is a concern that a move to focus courses offered on the LNP’s four pillars of mining, construction, tourism and agriculture may leave out one of the most important growth areas. Mining is the only pillar that has seen large jobs growth and it has grown at only around one-third of jobs in the health and community care sectors. That is an important point. While we support the provisions in this legislation to protect the TAFE brand, we have strong reservations about other parts of the legislation and the general direction of the government for the delivery of technical and further education.
Mr SHORTEN (Algester—LNP) (5.48 pm): Tonight I rise to make a brief contribution to the debate on the TAFE Queensland Bill and to support this government's continuing efforts to provide vocational education and training to all who wish it and to respond to the needs of industry.

The bill sets two specific objectives for technical and further education in Queensland. They are: firstly, to establish an independent body, TAFE Queensland, to be the public provider of vocational education and training; and, secondly, to ensure that TAFE Queensland operates in an effective and efficient way and is commercially successful.

Established over 130 years ago, TAFE Queensland has been the centrepiece of this great state's training environment and today provides students with more than 800 courses across the length and breadth of Queensland. Over the past decade several reviews of the public VET system have been conducted. But none of the changes made by the previous government have made a significant difference to the delivery of courses and the outcomes achieved.

Even initiatives such as those that created the likes of SkillsTech have only been able to deliver minimal efficiencies. Nice new buildings, but the organisation is still heavily hamstrung by thinking and operating in a public service mentality. For the past decade TAFE Queensland has operated in a fashion that saw TAFE dictate terms and conditions to industry, with a one-size-fits-all, take-it-or-leave-it program for the many businesses, large and small, whose ongoing viability was so heavily dependent on TAFE executing its role in the training environment in a professional, timely and efficient manner. Too many times those businesses have been bitterly disappointed. This bill will change that.

This bill sets out to create an independent body separated from the department and accountable directly to the minister. This board will have the oversight of all TAFE operations throughout Queensland and provide synergies and economies of scale with all TAFE campuses operating in one fashion, not the fragmented and inconsistent system we currently see. Some TAFEs are institutes, some are semicommercial and two are statutory bodies. This is no way to run the state's largest training provider—one TAFE, one system.

The board overseeing TAFE will operate in a commercial manner and the board members will have the experience in commercial and industry sectors to enable them not only to develop TAFE Queensland's strategic vision but to deliver it as well. The explanatory notes to the bill state on page 2—

In order to achieve the objective it is necessary for the board overseeing TAFE Queensland to have similar experience and qualifications to the board of a large private training provider.

This means that the people driving TAFE Queensland will not only make decisions on the basis of what industry needs and how they need it delivered but also have the experience and qualifications to do so. They will make decisions with their mind on the commercial aspects, ensuring TAFE is commercially successful while still performing the role of a public provider. Right off the bat, this bill changes the top-down culture and thinking of TAFE and provides it with greater flexibility to respond to industry needs. But the benefits of the bill do not stop there.

Despite what I have said earlier in this speech, TAFE has a strong brand and reputation, as evidenced by most people colloquially referring to undertaking VET training as going to TAFE. This bill seeks to protect the brand and the name, making it an offence for private training providers or other organisations to inappropriately use the terms ‘TAFE’ or ‘technical and further education’. This will allow TAFE to stand strong amid the bevvy of training providers that will seek to inhabit this space over the coming years.

The bill will also seek to restructure TAFE’s industrial relations and will allow the board, through the chief executive officer, to employ teaching staff directly with TAFE and not through the Public Service Act 2008, as is currently the case. These current instruments are not based on contemporary industrial relations arrangements and this further limits the manner and methodology of delivery of training courses. It also restricts, in many ways, the efficient and timely use of TAFE’s most valuable commercial assets, its buildings and campuses. A more flexible and efficient industrial system for the teaching staff will allow TAFE to offer better services to the industries that rely on the training they provide and to its most important user, the students.

If Queensland is to move forward and build on its four pillars of the economy then it will need an ability to train the workforce it needs now to maintain current skills and ensure that the workforce of tomorrow is ready and on hand when it is needed. To achieve this Queensland will need a professional, strong, relevant and reactive TAFE to take on the lion’s share of training now and into the future.
This bill to establish the independent body and provide TAFE with the tools to respond to the needs of industry in a timely and effective manner will serve Queensland businesses, apprentices and trainees well. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr WOODFORTH (Nudgee—LNP) (5.54 pm): I rise to speak in support of the TAFE Queensland Bill 2013. This bill will establish a new TAFE Queensland and forms a central part of this government’s plan to reform the vocational education and training sector in Queensland.

This government is committed to growing a four-pillar economy and reducing unemployment in Queensland. A revitalised VET sector will play a pivotal role in fostering economic growth through improved productivity. The government’s reforms aim to modernise and improve VET in Queensland to meet the needs of individuals, communities and industry and achieve improved outcomes from public investment in training. The objectives of this government’s significant skills reform agenda include: building the capacity of Queensland’s training market; strengthening Queensland’s apprenticeship system to increase flexibility for users and increase completion rates; and reforming TAFE.

The government is keenly aware of the need to move quickly on VET sector reform and has already achieved much in this space. The first step was forming the Queensland Skills and Training Taskforce and undertaking a broad consultation process to identify ways to improve the VET sector. The second step was the government response to the task force report in which the government supported 35 of the 40 recommendations of the task force and detailed the intended actions to be implemented.

This bill to establish TAFE Queensland as an independent statutory body from 1 July 2013 marks the beginning of a significant program of work to overhaul the skills and training system in Queensland. In the short to medium term, the key milestones are: establishment of the TAFE Queensland parent entity; amalgamation of TAFE institutes; negotiation of a enterprise bargaining agreement for TAFE teachers; and completion of a machinery of government change to transfer assets and resources to the parent entity. Work has begun on implementing a range of reforms to the training and TAFE system stemming from the task force findings.

Transitioning to the new governance model for TAFE, with the suggested consolidation of 13 institutes to six or seven regions, requires a great deal of careful planning and testing. A change process is underway which includes the transition of strategy, structure, people, processes, financial arrangements and information technology. The focus of the change program is to ensure a collaborative approach including administrators and teaching staff.

A team of leaders from within TAFE institutes have been appointed to drive TAFE reform within their respective regions. This core team provides direct access to the knowledge and skills at an institute level, as well as combined knowledge through using a collaborative approach across the regions.

A series of roadshows are about to begin to engage staff in the transformation program and to communicate the key milestones. The government’s reform agenda for TAFE Queensland will be supported by a change and communications program that will continue over the next 12 to 18 months to support the transition of each of the current institutes to the new operating model.

TAFE Queensland must continue to have the ability to attract and retain high-quality staff while having the flexibility to meet the needs of modern learners and clients. This government is committed to ensuring that TAFE Queensland is established with the flexibility required to respond to student and employer demand, including the way in which training is delivered. The government’s policy is to negotiate a new enterprise bargaining agreement with staff which will determine the conditions of TAFE Queensland employees. Negotiations are underway between the government and the relevant unions.

This government has made significant progress in the first six months of implementation of the TAFE reforms. While this government knows we must move quickly on VET reform, it is vital we get it right for both Queenslanders and our industry. Reform is never easy, but we must continue with this journey to improve the operations and outcomes of Queensland’s VET sector. We will continue to work with this industry, students and the community to implement the overarching reform of TAFE Queensland. I proudly support the passage of this bill as an important part of this government’s significant reform agenda for TAFE and training in the Queensland.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): Order! Before I call the next speaker, I would just like to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of a group from the great state electorate of Broadwater and welcome them to the parliament.
Mr KATTER (Mount Isa—KAP) (5.58 pm): I rise to speak on the TAFE Queensland Bill 2013. The Mount Isa Institute of TAFE plays an important role in the vocational education and training sector in my electorate. The institute itself has two smaller offices in Cloncurry and Normanton, delivering nationally recognised vocational education and training to remote areas, not just in these small centres but in outlying regions such as Burketown.

The Mount Isa TAFE was established in 1972 and is geographically Queensland’s largest institute, with a service area covering 30 per cent of Queensland. Mount Isa TAFE’s core business is education and training in automotive, mining and engineering fields—such as diesel, electrical, fitting/machining and metal fabrication—as well as business, administration, management and IT, and community services such as child care and aged care. These are all essential training fields for our region and are tailored to serve the needs of industry in my electorate. Mount Isa TAFE and the neighbouring Spinifex State College Senior Campus, which is physically next door to the TAFE campus, together formed a senior educational precinct of knowledge, which has been working well for the past few years. It is an excellent facility.

Let’s have a look at what the passing of this bill will mean to Mount Isa. Cairns, the Barrier Reef and Mount Isa TAFEs will come under one unit. That may be very good from a delivery perspective for Mount Isa but is bad for the identity of TAFE in Mount Isa and its satellite campuses in rural and remote areas. Mount Isa’s TAFE already works collaboratively with other TAFEs and other training organisations, bringing in teachers to teach courses such as fitting and turning and diesel training—skills that are vital for a mining city such as Mount Isa. A big downside of the restructure will be the loss of identity for Mount Isa’s TAFE and possibly the loss of smaller campuses at Cloncurry and the lower gulf campus at Normanton. Identity is important in the north west of Queensland. Will Mount Isa TAFE become the Barrier Reef Institute of TAFE or the Cairns Institute of TAFE? Both options are worrying for a mining resource city 1,000 kilometres from the coast.

The Commission of Audit report says private registered training operators have been able to gain a higher market share in Queensland than TAFE, while TAFE’s decline in market share in Queensland has been steeper than other states, falling by over 20 percentage points between 2007 and 2011. I appreciate that fact, but the logical conclusion is that if we move towards more RTOs, even with trying to make TAFE more competitive, it would seem that the RTOs will keep losing the day and I do not think they can promise the same service delivery that can be ensured by keeping this service firmly within the grip of the government and making sure that we have our fair market share. I think the more prominent the RTOs are the more the industry becomes privatised. I am not sure that this is the only way to go to combat that. Government delivery of these services ensures that there is a buffer between the commercial challenges brought by the tyranny of distance in remote areas such as Mount Isa.

This may be used as an argument for reforming TAFE, as this bill does, and to reinforce the concept that TAFE is an expensive and inefficient provider of training. But at the same time the Commission of Audit report states that higher training delivery costs may be attributed to the delivery of higher level qualifications—certificate III and above—as well as Queensland’s geographic spread and growing numbers of disadvantaged learners accessing training. TAFE is the benchmark, the leading body in subject delivery for vocational and further education in Queensland. My fear is that the baby will be thrown out with the bathwater and the ones who will suffer will be those students and TAFE institutions in remote and rural locations such as Mount Isa, Cloncurry and Normanton. It is important to factor in the nature of Queensland’s geography as well as the unique needs of people in rural and remote communities.

Under the new model, people with concession cards may miss out on TAFE education. If you do not have a healthcare concession card, what other process will be available to identify students who are financially not in a position to pay the fee? That could be a definite barrier to further education, and this bill will limit those who can access publically funded education. The big question for me and for those involved in TAFE in my electorate is: what will the funding model look like for remote institutions like Mount Isa? Previously Mount Isa has been funded at a higher rate than other TAFEs due to remote its location, and I dearly hope that this will continue.

I want to tell the House how vital Mount Isa TAFE is to my electorate. In Mount Isa we have a desperate shortage of child-care facilities with waiting lists of two years. This prevents mothers going back to work, exacerbating the shortage of staff we have, especially in the service industries. It impacts on our local economy. The Mount Isa TAFE serves very well to fill that gap.
Mount Isa TAFE also focuses on Indigenous students in rural and remote communities. Our First Australians rely very heavily on this service for them to be engaged back in the workforce. Let me quote from a recent report which comments on Mount Isa TAFE’s success with Indigenous students. The report states—

Mount Isa Institute of TAFE in Queensland offers a ‘wrap round’ program for local Indigenous students. Co funded by the provider, religious charity and the local mining company, the program offers students assistance with transport, food, addressing gaps in literacy and numeracy and also an Indigenous mentor to help them through the qualification. Because so many of the students face multiple disadvantages this additional support is necessary to help students stay in the course.

These things are unique to the area that are often difficult and not captured properly when something is run remotely from the coast. It takes that special type of local engagement and understanding, and the integrity of that model is compromised by this proposal. A chill of fear always runs down my spine when I see moves like this that smack of decentralisation. Decentralisation is a great enemy of remote towns and cities like Mount Isa and other towns within my electorate, and this does move towards that. You could say it is rationalisation and streamlining and it saves us money. It may do, but pardon my cynicism for seeing this as a move towards decentralisation. I see that will be a problem.

I have spent a lot of time with the manager of TAFE in Mount Isa and he has said that there are some good parts to this bill that will offer some benefits to the area and help him be competitive. I appreciate that, but I am at the same time mindful that we preserve our services and our staffing in Mount Isa which is something I flag as being very important with this bill.

Mr CHOAT (Ipswich West—LNP) (6.05 pm): I rise to speak in support of the TAFE Queensland Bill 2013. This bill is part of the government’s response to the Queensland Skills and Training Taskforce report commissioned by this government in 2012 and represents the first step in implementing the many reforms detailed by the task force which is so important for the future of vocational education and training in this state.

As members know, I worked in the vocational education and training sector from 1988 until 2012. During this time I worked extensively in and across TAFE Queensland. Specifically, I spent a number of years working at both the Brisbane North Institute of TAFE at the Ithaca campus and others and also of course at the very important and fantastic Bremer Institute of TAFE at Bundamba.

This experience gives me a great insight into the workings and objectives of the TAFE sector, and I can say that the many hundreds of TAFE teaching and ancillary staff I have met and worked with over the years are the reason TAFE has been so successful—and I have to say that that is in spite of the mismanagement of the previous government. Their dedication to the many thousands of Queensland apprentices, trainees and students over the years has served Queensland, and I believe Australian, industries well. However, the system has been held back in recent years by successive Labor governments who have not provided appropriate support to ensure that all colleges across the state are provided with the resources and strategies needed to ensure their continued viability.

Of course, being one for a plug, I must take this opportunity to mention the new vocational education and training centre that is going to be opened soon at the Ipswich State High School in my electorate. The students and staff at that high school are looking forward to this event. I am sure that Simon Riley and his team out there will do a great job, and I look forward to what that will do for surrounding schools including Lowood and Rosewood high schools, because I believe that that will give them the opportunities to go on to do further studies within TAFE. I take this opportunity also to say that I believe Trevor Schwenke, who is looking after the interests out there between the old Bremer Institute and the Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE, will do a marvellous job. Of course I have been very pleased with the work done by Deidre Stein in recent times.

In June 2012 this government commissioned the first industry led review of Queensland’s vocational education and training sector. The Queensland Skills and Training Taskforce was asked to provide independent advice and recommendations to the government to inform the significant changes to be implemented within Queensland’s VET sector to align its operations and outcomes with the requirements of our state’s industries, communities and, of course, our students. The task force examined the sector’s performance, governance, funding arrangements, industry engagement, apprenticeship and traineeship arrangements, the role of statutory bodies within the sector and the strategic direction of TAFE Queensland. As we have heard, TAFE has been neglected for a number of years and has been left to operate without a clear vision, strategy and action plan, resulting in poor outcomes and escalating costs.
In its review of TAFE, the task force focused on the appropriate role for TAFE in supporting the economy; the offerings and outputs of TAFE and the quality provided; industry involvement in TAFE; and operational efficiency including asset management, workforce management, organisational structures and operating systems. It is interesting because one of the roles that I had whilst working in the head office of the then department of employment and training was a review of the valuations of TAFE’s land and buildings, or its holdings. That also included plant and equipment and things like condition assessments and all those sorts of things. It was very obvious that there had been a run-down of those facilities. When looking at some of the assets I can remember that we had apprentices that were using lathes and equipment that were developed pre-World War II. I think that was quite a sad thing because a lot of those apprentices would then have to go out into industry and use the latest equipment. Sadly, over the last 20 years TAFE had been left to languish in the Stone Age.

Informing its recommendations, the task force drew on the experience and expertise of a broad range of stakeholders, a comprehensive review of many previous reports and recommendations and more than 90 submissions from industry and community stakeholders. The task force released its final report in November 2012 which set out 40 recommendations, encompassing industry engagement, the vocational education and training funding model, the apprenticeship system and of course TAFE Queensland. The government response supported 35 of the 40 recommendations made by the task force. The task force found that currently TAFE institutes face significant challenges in terms of financial viability, balancing administrative burden and overheads, disparity in size and varying levels of efficiency and effectiveness. To address these changes, the task force made a number of recommendations to revitalise TAFE. These recommendations included a contemporary employment model, smarter asset management strategies and the establishment of an independent body to deliver vocational education and training as the public provider in Queensland.

This bill marks the start of a significant journey of reform outlined by the task force for TAFE and will enable the transition to a new TAFE Queensland through enacting the task force recommendations that a TAFE Queensland parent entity be established outside the current department structure as a statutory body and the parent entity for TAFE Queensland be driven by a commercially focused board constituted by and accountable directly to the minister responsible for training and drive a business focus to TAFE Queensland’s structure, locations, operations and supporting products and services. Consultation undertaken by the task force demonstrated that stakeholders agreed that it was necessary to reform the Queensland VET sector and supported the proposed direction from the task force. This is the time to act on TAFE reform. There is an impetus for change and this bill provides the tools needed to position TAFE Queensland to remain viable in the current VET market.

Finally and most importantly, implementing the task force recommendations to revitalise TAFE is pivotal to deliver on this government’s commitment to growing a four-pillar economy, encouraging investment and reducing unemployment through developing a labour market with the skills and knowledge that are matched to industry requirements and, ultimately, the needs of our people.

It is interesting, too, that with the recent meeting in Mackay on the Queensland Plan I can certainly see how TAFE fits in. Over the next 30 years I am sure that it will play a role in making sure that not just our young people but also Queenslanders who wish to reskill, upgrade their skills or learn new skills and knowledge will have an opportunity to play a real part in taking Queensland to where we want to be in 2043. I am excited at the opportunities this will give the Bremer Institute of TAFE, as I mentioned earlier. I am honoured to support this bill to implement the task force’s recommendations to reform the TAFE Queensland I know and love. I commend this bill to the House.

Hon. JH LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Minister for Education, Training and Employment) (6.13 pm), in reply: I would like to thank all members who contributed to this debate, in particular those members who recognise the urgent need to reform TAFE so that it does not wither on the vine but, rather, so that it thrives in a contestable market and a vibrant economy. I especially want to thank the members of the Education and Innovation Committee for their contribution. I also wish to thank Saxon Rice, who is my assistant minister, who made a contribution and who has a very important role of chairing the TAFE reform board that also includes the immediate former chairpersons of the two statutory TAFE institutes, Gold Coast and South Bank, and the immediate former chair of SkillsTech Australia.

Importantly, as we look at the conclusion of this debate and we speak about the future of TAFE in Queensland, it is important for us to acknowledge what was happening before the election and over the last number of years in TAFE and vocational education and training in Queensland and why in the
lead-up to the election we promised a skills and training task force to look at the matters that affect TAFE and VET training. On coming to government we did that; we established the Skills and Training Taskforce which identified a number of key challenges that are facing TAFE in our rapidly changing training market. I want to put some of those into *Hansard* because I do not think there is any question about these issues that many members have raised.

There is a lack of clarity about the role of TAFE as a public provider. There has been a loss of market share to non-TAFE providers. There is an asset base that is not fit for purpose. It has an outdated industrial relations and employment model, complex decision-making environments and financial arrangements that limit reinvestment. I note that the final contributor to the debate was the member for Ipswich West, who noted that the task force made 40 recommendations of which the government accepted 35. The task force recommended that an independent body be established outside the Department of Education, Training and Employment to be the public provider of vocational education and training. The government committed to establish TAFE Queensland as an independent body by 1 July 2013 and that is what we are doing. The bill implements this recommendation by establishing TAFE Queensland as a statutory body with a commercially focused board.

I note that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition expressed concerns about whether it is tasked with delivering commercial activities when it is supposedly unable to deliver commercial outcomes. The government would say that there are certainly some aspects of commerciality that TAFE could deliver but is not able to because of its current set-up and form. We are not expecting TAFE to deliver absolutely everything commercially, and we have acknowledged that there are always going to be community service obligations. We have said quite publicly and quite openly that, with the representation that we have in our party and as the government comes from right across Queensland, it is important that we maintain those CSOs and also our commitment to all of Queensland—rural and regional as well as metropolitan areas.

However, many of the views that are expressed about TAFE come from people who have not been in them for a long time. They have not seen what they are like inside. They have not seen that they have a very low utilisation rate which the task force identified as being as low as 40 per cent. That means for 60 per cent of the time there is no-one there. As the honourable member for Ipswich West just mentioned, people have said to me that they trained on lathes 35 years ago and they could take you to the TAFE where they trained and go back to the same lathe on which they trained. It is very unlikely that they would go into a commercial environment and be forced to work on equipment of that sort of vintage and, therefore, there would be a lack of practical application that they would need in the job environment. So we are saying as a government that we want to make sure that we are training people for the 21st century in 21st century infrastructure and making sure that all the other aspects of the things that TAFEs are supposed to provide are up to date. Otherwise, we will continue to see what we have seen up to now, which is people electing—choosing—to go to other providers and, increasingly, private providers.

It can be a confusing area of policy if you are not involved in the training sector. The apprenticeship sections of training money, which is called User Choice, has seen an increasing number of apprentices go through private providers. It is the other part of training money, which is called VET Revenue General—and I answered a question from the honourable member for Mount Isa in question time this morning on this. Increasingly, we have seen that more and more people would choose to go to other providers and, increasingly, private providers.

It is also important to note that Queensland has the second highest level of contestable funding in the country and that we have accepted a recommendation that contestable funding should be increased over the next couple of years, but we will do it in a very measured way. We also want to make sure that we do not make the mistakes of other jurisdictions that have tried to do too much too quickly. I cite Victoria as a classic example. Over the last few years students there were encouraged to study under a system that was often touted to me when we were in opposition as an example for us to be looking to.

Limited training dollars and allowing students to study whatever they wanted—there was not enough regulation about what students could study or the subsidies provided by government—lead to a major cost blow-out and real problems for TAFEs in Victoria. Those TAFEs subsequently incurred losses which the government had to cover—another impost on its budget. This has meant that $300 million has had to be pumped back into the Victorian system.
We have to deal with the issues of infrastructure and assets and course offerings. In their contributions some speakers have mentioned having not a supply driven model but a demand driven model—in other words, a flexible TAFE system that is able to cater for what the market is demanding. It does not mean that we want to deny TAFE or their staff the ability to provide these courses. We want them to be more nimble so that, for example, with the recent growth in the CSG-LNG industry, they can provide courses that train the drillers needed to drill those wells. It has been predicted that we will need thousands of those drillers. That is the sort of flexibility we want our TAFE system to have, but with a change to the industrial relations instruments so that they can be competitive in an increasingly competitive world. That is not to say that we do not support the public provision of TAFE. The bill ensures that TAFE Queensland will be responsible for the public provision of technical and further education in Queensland.

I wish to respond to a number of issues raised in the second reading debate. First, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the member for Mackay, who I think was deputising for the official shadow minister, raised concerns similar to those raised by the Queensland Teachers Union about the ability of the minister to amend industrial arrangements by regulation and not through the enterprise bargaining process. It is the government’s clear intention that we will resolve all industrial issues through enterprise bargaining arrangements, but that does not mean that the minister should not have the power to intervene in extraordinary circumstances. In any case, the power only exists with respect to the restructure of TAFE, so the minister cannot just flippantly change industrial arrangements in TAFE. I understand that the shadow minister will raise this issue during consideration in detail, and I look forward to that debate.

On the issue of union representatives on the TAFE Queensland board, I advise the member for Mackay and those opposite that we will not have union quotas, as those opposite did. There was union representation on the task force. It was a member of the CFMEU. I do not remember them necessarily being associated with the LNP in terms of what they believe or their associations. The QTU made a very late submission to the task force, but we are not going to necessarily mandate their representation. As I said, the CFMEU was represented on the task force board. I note that the member for Mulgrave raised the issue of the Queensland Teachers Union. They made a very late submission and the issues they raised have been dealt with.

It is unfortunate that, for all that the member for Mulgrave mentioned Skills Queensland, I do not think people in industry, who the member for Mulgrave maintained are looking for particular outcomes from TAFE, would say that Skills Queensland has been an unmitigated success. I am sure that has something to do with the fact that we on this side of the House are interested in outcomes without the imposts of what the unions actually demand—that is, always taking care of themselves and their members as opposed to achieving the outcomes that we on this side are interested in. That has been the problem. I have inherited a range of boards littered with union representatives. All they ever do is argue for the status quo. They say, ‘We do not want any change. We want to make sure there will be no disadvantage from anything you are talking about changing.’ They are not interested in providing for a modern Queensland of the 21st century. That has been the problem in this sector for too long.

We cannot continue to have an antiquated system. Union representation that is guaranteed without any expectation of an acknowledgement that the sector needs to change is a sure-fire way to keep the VET system in the past. We are not ruling out union members but we prefer to hear from teachers, not their union. I have found this in the other part of my portfolio. Many members here will know that as I travel around I attend principals’ forums and meetings with 30 to 50 teachers per week. There are approximately 1,700 schools across all three sectors in my portfolio. The Queensland Teachers Union is increasingly isolated from the grassroots, coalface perspectives of those principals and teachers. That is why we want to hear the views of people at the coalface and not necessarily the views of their unions, because the views of each are very different.

It is obvious in the lead-up to the federal election that not just the Nurses Union—as I hear from the Minister for Health—but also the Queensland Teachers Union in particular have ceased to represent their members. Rather, they dance to the tune of Julia Gillard and their Labor political masters. That is very disappointing because unions should be ensuring that they represent their members in a practical way which leads to outcomes for them and the people we are trying to educate to ensure that we have a vibrant, robust economy into the 21st century.

I always say to principals and teachers that if they think they will achieve anything by standing outside of Parliament House singing Solidarity Forever they are in the Dreamtime. Most Queenslanders would say that is something from the 19th century, and it does not fit with what we
The member for Mackay expressed concerns that unions were not represented on the task force. Michael Ravbar of the CFMEU was on the task force. The QTU handed in a rushed submission at the last moment, and the lack of innovative ideas in that submission concerned me.

The member for Mackay claimed that students from disadvantaged backgrounds and students with disabilities would miss out. I find that offensive because this government is committed to the inclusive learning framework. As part of drafting the VET five-year action plan that we promised in the current six-month plan, the issue of supporting students with disabilities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds is paramount. Recently I had a request from the ministerial council—of which I am a member as the Minister for Education, Training and Employment—for me to be the champion for students with disabilities and to represent all of those ministers. I was happy to accept, acknowledging that students right across this state need this support.

Every student should have a guarantee of a VET qualification should they wish to undertake and complete training. This guarantee would be useless if we did not pay real attention to those who require extra support during their studies. The member also claimed that courses would only be focused on cost and efficiency. I am once again concerned because the government’s response to the task force has clearly explained that the courses that we want are the courses that we need.

Debate, on motion of Mr Langbroek, adjourned.

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Report

Mr CRANDON (Coomera—LNP) (6.28 pm), by leave: I lay upon the table of the House report No. 28 of the Finance and Administration Committee.

Tabled paper: Finance and Administration Committee: Report No. 28—Inquiry into the operation of Queensland’s workers’ compensation scheme.

This report covers the results of the committee’s inquiry into the operation of Queensland’s workers compensation scheme which was referred to the committee by the parliament on 7 June 2012.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank those who took the time to provide submissions and meet with the committee and provide additional information during the course of this inquiry. I also wish to thank the departmental officers for their cooperation in providing information to the committee on a timely basis throughout the inquiry process. I commend the report to the House.

COMMITTEE OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Portfolio Committee, Reporting Date

Mr STEVENS (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (Manager of Government Business) (6.29 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That the date for the Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee to report on its examination of the Nature Conservation (Protected Plants) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013 and the Agriculture and Forestry Legislation Amendment Bill be extended to Monday, 19 August 2013.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 6.30 pm to 7.30 pm.

TAFE QUEENSLAND BILL

Second Reading

Resumed, on motion of Mr Langbroek—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Hon. JH LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Minister for Education, Training and Employment) (7.30 pm), continuing in reply: Before the adjournment of this debate I was saying that as a government we just do not want to provide training for training’s sake; we want to provide training for real jobs, and they are of course the jobs we need in the economy. We will provide training
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TAFE Queensland Bill

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to the level of the modern workplace, and I made some extensive comments about the workplace as it is in 2013 compared to some of the facilities that students are being asked to train in under the current situation. To do that we need to modernise TAFE and the entire VET sector, and this bill is an integral part of this plan. The member for Mackay asserted that there will be mass redundancies or a mass reduction in services. I reiterate for the member opposite and for other members that we want more training. TAFE has a strong brand—and that is acknowledged in the bill with protections for the brand—and in a contestable market it will thrive if it is able to adapt to the changing economy and training needs. To be vibrant and to survive in the contestable market, this bill is necessary and TAFE reform—difficult reform at times—needs to occur.

The member also asserted that we are not committed to investing in VET. During the election campaign I am concerned that the opposition may have missed the announcement that we are investing $86 million into 10,000 apprenticeships over six years. I am also concerned that those opposite need to acknowledge that those who are taking the money out of VET are actually their colleagues in Canberra, and I made that point this morning in question time. With regard to the end of the Productivity Places Program, that cost this state, I am advised, about $50 million, and of course we signed a national partnership on skills reform in April last year and the Gillard government currently owes Queensland $56.1 million in training money as part of that national partnership.

The important issue is that this is all to do with the implementation plan. We have said that we want to meet all of our agreements with the national partnership, but unfortunately that is the reality as to why there is less training money in our system—a federal program called the Productivity Places Program, $50 million down and then of course the implementation plan that has not been signed off on even though officials continue to work on it. It is very frustrating because, as a result of that move, we have lost almost 20,000 training places in Queensland and our participation rates are down by about 10 per cent.

So it is the Gillard government that is gutting VET simply because it thinks it is second rate to its obsession with universities. On the one hand it tried to allege that our side of the parliament—and I have seen articles by Craig Emerson suggesting this—did not want people aspiring to go to university and that we have some kind of class war. It is a class war that is being conducted only by the Labor side. Someone like me, who has come from a very humble background as a migrant, would attest to the fact that it is the opportunities that were offered to me through the public system and going to university that many Australians aspire to achieve. So the federal government is gutting VET simply because it says on the one hand it wants people to go to universities and yet on the other it is taking money out of early childhood and universities to supposedly fund the Gonski reforms. That is why people are so perplexed and angry at the federal government. The party of the workers has become the party wonk.

We also heard from the member for Woodridge that the Newman government was all about closing TAFEs. That is just wrong. We have taken a responsible approach to managing a $1.4 billion TAFE property portfolio, so let us look at the facts. In Queensland there were 13 empty TAFEs—completely empty: no students, no teachers, just sucking up government dollars in maintenance, security and repairing vandalism. So this government decided to act to try to recoup some of the valuable taxpayer dollars to reinvest in training. Another 12 campuses are being transferred to the Central Queensland University if the merger with the Central Queensland Institute of TAFE goes ahead, and these sit outside the reforms in relation to campuses.

With regard to the member for Gladstone, subsequent to the merger we have made sure that we have put safeguards in place. We do want the merger to go ahead, but it is important to acknowledge that the Central Queensland University is looking to get about $73 million from the federal government from the investment fund that it has been allocated. The Queensland government is putting in nearly $160 million when you count the assets and the training money which we are guaranteeing for three years to those TAFEs. That is an important acknowledgement. We have also put protections in place so that, whilst the assets may be transferred, Scott Bowman, the Vice-Chancellor of the Central Queensland University, acknowledges the importance in Central Queensland especially of the blending that you get with the practical skills that you learn in TAFE with the theoretical skills that are often associated with a university in an area of Central Queensland where the mining sector is so important.

There is no doubt that the money from that implementation plan is implicated in a way with the merger because we are handing over training money with guarantees associated with those 12 campuses. I keep negotiating with Minister Craig Emerson, who took over from Chris Bowen, who took over from Chris Evans—all of that within a couple of weeks. I have been trying to negotiate with
three separate ministers about an issue that is vitally important to the people of Queensland but on which we have not been able to get an agreement yet with the federal government. So when members opposite say that anyone is gutting TAFE or affecting VET training, then it is obviously their people in Canberra and we would appreciate any assistance to get that merger signed off on and also to ensure that we get that money from the implementation plan that has been agreed to. Our officials are negotiating with the federal government every day about this and it is important that we get those issues resolved.

So in answer to the member for Woodridge, who asserts that we are closing TAFE down, it is simply not true. We want to revitalise a training sector that has been withering on the vine. We are redefining the state’s training infrastructure because that is an important element of the government’s plan for VET that will underpin the state’s ability to build the capacity of Queensland’s training sector and increase opportunities for individuals to access vocational education and training in Queensland.

The member for Woodridge also mentioned the vexatious issue of students from New Zealand and Pacific Islands who go to school in Logan. This is also an issue in Inala when I visited Glenala earlier this year. These students are then unable to join an alternative pathway to further education because of their lack of citizenship. The silence from Labor on this issue is deafening, and when I say ‘Labor’ I mean the federal mates of those opposite. After the Logan summit and after I had attended Glenala high—where it was made very clear to me that those outstanding students, some of whom are from the Pacific Islands, might achieve a good OP in school and therefore wanted to go on to further study but were unable to because they are unable to access loan funds such as HECS to enable them to go to university and that means they cannot afford to go to university—I wrote about that issue immediately to the immigration minister, but of course he was dumped by the time my letter got there and his replacement has not written back. So I have had nothing back from the federal minister.

The member for Woodridge likes to blame the Newman government for everything. Immigration remains a federal government responsibility. As we have seen with health and education, which are state government responsibilities, it is obvious that the federal government would rather speak about health and education than immigration and defence and taxation on the eve of a federal election because it is far more interesting. But it is a state responsibility; immigration is a federal responsibility, and there are significant issues.

When Prime Minister Gillard spoke with the Prime Minister of New Zealand, the Hon. John Key, I would have thought that this was an issue that would have been raised—and the member for Woodridge could have been lobbying Craig Emerson, because he has a very important relationship in terms of his ministerial responsibilities in negotiating those sorts of agreements with New Zealand and the Pacific Islands—because I understand that a lot of those people go to New Zealand first and then come to Australia. So that is something that the member for Woodridge could be taking up with her own side as the federal government is responsible for those things.

I want to thank the member for Gladstone for her contribution. I understand her concerns about the affordability of further education post secondary school. It is something that we understand and stand ready to help. I have mentioned already that the federal Labor government is sitting on $56 million of training money that could be helping the students of Central Queensland. When I visited the Gladstone campus I noted that they had a significant application in for another one of those investment funds, for which they were unsuccessful in getting. That was to do with facilities to help with the CSG to LNG industry. That is a very valuable part of training provision in Queensland and one that we want to support.

We agree with the member for Gladstone on accessibility. We want people in our TAFEs. Part of that would be introducing a higher education VET fee help scheme for government subsidised qualifications so that students could study now and pay when they are earning a decent wage. Can we do that? No, we cannot and that is because our training money is sitting in Canberra instead of with training organisations in Queensland. We want our students to be able to access vocational education so that they can join Queensland’s economy as the Newman government gets it back on track.

TAFE’s new commercial structure will ensure a holistic view of TAFE across the state, recognising the differing needs and social responsibilities for regional communities. The proposed funding model changes are part of the government’s response to the Queensland Skills and Training Taskforce final report. The department is currently consulting with providers and industry on this framework. Under the model, eligible students will have access to a government subsidised certificate
Ill and related foundation skills or lower-level qualification delivered by any registered training organisation approved to deliver training under the program. The program will be open to Queensland residents aged 15 and over who do not hold a certificate III or higher qualification. This excludes certificate III qualifications undertaken whilst at school.

Then we had the member for Mulgrave—I know I have referred to a couple of his comments before—asserting that the Newman government had no direction for TAFE. If I can say, with respect, that is a ridiculous statement. We came to government with a mandate to do something about TAFE and vocational education in Queensland. Within two months of getting into government, we had set up the Queensland Skills and Training Taskforce, where industry and training leaders spoke about why TAFE was not working and is not working and what needed to happen. I know that action plans can be a bit scary for those opposite, but we are not frightened of taking on the challenges and doing something to make things better for the people of Queensland. Those opposite had no direction. They had no policy for training since the completion of the Queensland Skills Plan in 2010, leaving vocational education in limbo for two years.

On the issue of disadvantaged students without a healthcare card being able to access concessions through TAFE, this matter has been raised in the consultation process currently being undertaken by the department and will be considered as part of that process. Instead of having a policy for training, those opposite occupied their time commissioning myriad reports into TAFE and why it was not working and then they just sat on the reports. We have looked at those reviews. We are doing something about them. Then the member for Mulgrave had the hide to speak about the Newman government building the economy on pillars of sand. Can I say that we have a plan to get the state back on track. The Newman government is committed to getting TAFE going again. We have no intention of closing down TAFE. We have every intention of giving TAFE the opportunity and the right organisational structure that will allow it to thrive. 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

Clauses 1 to 13, as read, agreed to.

Clause 14—

Mr Mulherin (7.44 pm): Clause 14 sets out the eligibility criteria for appointment as a member of the board for the new TAFE entity. The opposition believes that this clause should specify at least one union representative on this board. I suppose this gets down to a debate about ideology, but we want that on the record. We cannot support clause 14.

Mr Langbroek: The important thing to note is that we have put that process out for applications. I am not aware of exactly who has applied, but I have been advised that we had over 100 people who applied for membership of this board. There is a process and timing that is very clear. We want to make sure that we have applications in and we are going to have a selection panel that assesses them. There is no reason that we are not accepting union membership on the board. There is no exclusion of unions being on there. The important thing is that we make sure that we have a board that allows TAFE to have the autonomy to be able to operate and engage commercially. It needs to make sure that TAFE is agile. As I say, there is no real problem with anyone applying. We will make sure that we have all of the parameters fulfilled that will enable those things that I have mentioned that will enable TAFE to not only be able engage commercially but also at the same time be agile.

Clause 14, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 15 to 29, as read, agreed to.

Clause 30—

Mr Mulherin (7.46 pm): Clause 30 allows the chief executive officer to enter into work performance arrangements. The Teachers Union was advised by the Department of Education, Training and Employment that these arrangements were only intended to be transitional. However, the legislation has been framed so that these arrangements will continue indefinitely. Although the opposition recognises the importance of allowing staff to move between parts of government, it does not support ongoing arrangements being established unilaterally after the completion of the TAFE restructuring.
Mr LANGBROEK: The important thing is that these are transitional arrangements. It is also important to note that any future certified agreements negotiated between TAFE Queensland and its workforce will be governed by a no-disadvantage test under the Industrial Relations Act 1999. It is intended that TAFE Queensland staff will come under the Queensland Industrial Relations Act 1999.

Of course, an amendment is required to the Queensland Industrial Relations Regulation 2011 to declare TAFE Queensland a non-national system employer. As I said, I am sure that I can reassure the member of our intentions and that the no-disadvantage test is something that most people will be understanding of. I am sure the unions will.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: The clause that I wanted to refer to is probably a bit later on in the bill. The minister is saying that all of the conditions and entitlements that TAFE employees currently enjoy will transfer in perpetuity to the new organisation or only for a short period of time?

Mr LANGBROEK: Clause 30 gives TAFE Queensland the same power that Public Service departments have of allowing an officer employed by one agency to perform work for another. This is similar to a secondment arrangement, except that the person continues to be employed by their own employer and not TAFE Queensland. Work performance arrangements are preferable to a secondment, because TAFE Queensland employs outside the Public Service. Work performance arrangements were used in statutory TAFE institutes, as most staff were employed by DETE but worked in the STI.

Clause 30, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 31 to 49, as read, agreed to.

Clause 50—

Mr MULHERIN (7.49 pm): Clause 50 allows the government to unilaterally override awards and agreements and alter working conditions by regulation. In particular, this clause allows for unilateral changes to set hours of work to be made without consultation. Changes to set hours of work were recommended by the Queensland Skills and Training Taskforce as part of this restructuring process. The opposition will not support the unilateral alteration of workers’ employment conditions.

Mr LANGBROEK: It is proposed that, subject to its passage, the TAFE Queensland Bill will be proclaimed to commence on 1 July 2013. We are expecting TAFE Queensland to be fully operational by 1 July 2014. We have a reform implementation unit that has been established to support planning for and the execution of the transition of TAFE Queensland from the department to a statutory body. There is a change of management strategy along with detailed project plans. It has been developed to ensure a smooth transition to the new entity. It is a long-term reform program. Its full implementation is expected to take up to five years.

Clause 50, as read, agreed to.

Clause 51—

Mr MULHERIN (7.51 pm): Clause 51 provides the minister with broad powers to issue a transfer direction. The limited protection for employees at clause 55 in relation to transfer regulations do not apply to this clause. While broad powers are generally needed for transfer directions in the restructuring process, the opposition has reservations about how these powers could be used considering this government’s track record when it comes to changing employees’ conditions.

Mr LANGBROEK: It has been made clear to me that this allows the minister to give a transfer direction to a relevant entity, being TAFE Queensland, or an entity prescribed under section 49. It allows the minister to tell the relevant entity how to effect a transfer necessary for the restructuring of TAFE. But I would have thought that it is not something the minister will need to do because this is something that will be done by the relevant body in the interests of making sure that how they are running the show is the proper way to go.

Clause 51, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 52 to 54, as read, agreed to.

Clause 55—

Mr MULHERIN (7.53 pm): Clause 55 provides some limited protection to employees’ superannuation, recreation, sick or long service leave from being changed unilaterally by regulation. However, no protections are provided here for other employment conditions, including set hours of work. It is not good enough that the government has failed to provide protection of employment conditions, particularly when the QTU has been excluded from the Queensland Skills and Training Taskforce review and input into this legislation prior to its introduction. The opposition has concerns that the government will use this legislation unilaterally to alter working conditions.
Mr LANGBROEK: I want to reassure the honourable member opposite that the bill provides that those rights and entitlements, such as total remuneration leave balances and superannuation, are preserved. The transfer to the department will not amount to termination of employment. The bill and regulation ensures that staff who might have been employed directly by statutory TAFEs or who may have been seconded from a Public Service position or employed directly from outside the Public Service, both of those types of staff, can transfer to the department. But I will confirm that the bill does include a regulation-making power in clause 50 that allows a regulation to provide for the transfer of staff and their terms and conditions. This regulation can override the Industrial Relations Act 1999 and an industrial instrument. This regulation can only change terms and conditions that are not protected by clause 55 which, as I have already said, are total remuneration leave entitlements and superannuation. An example of the type of term or condition that could be under a regulation is the spread of hours, because in a specific industry environment it may not be possible to effectively deliver service under the terms and conditions set out in the relevant industrial instrument. For example, the spread of hours in the instrument may not meet the needs of the training client. In that scenario the transfer regulation could be used to address the specific circumstances of the particular environment and change the spread of hours.

Clause 55, as read, agreed to.
Clauses 56 to 70, as read, agreed to.
Schedules 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

Hon. JH LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Minister for Education, Training and Employment) (7.55 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a third time.
Question put—That the bill be now read a third time.
Motion agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Long Title

Hon. JH LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Minister for Education, Training and Employment) (7.56 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.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Mr STEVENS (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (Manager of Government Business) (7.56 pm): I move—

That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 9.30 am on Tuesday, 4 June 2013.
Question put—That the motion be agreed to.
Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr STEVENS (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (Manager of Government Business) (7.56 pm): In consideration of the very late nights we have enjoyed this week on Tuesday and Wednesday, I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Queensland Women’s Rugby League

Ms TRAD (South Brisbane—ALP) (7.57 pm): I recently spent a great Saturday afternoon down at Souths Leagues Club in Davies Park watching the Queensland women’s rugby league team take on New South Wales in the Queensland Women’s State of Origin. It was just like any other State of Origin contest: the rivalry was fierce, the play was tough and Queensland smashed the Blues,
winning 30 to 12. I take this opportunity to place on record my congratulations to the Queensland women’s State of Origin rugby league team. It was a great afternoon and the sports skills were fantastic. I encourage all south side locals to get down to Davies Park and support our local women’s rugby league team.

After the game two members of the Queensland women’s team, Karyn Murphy and Renae Kunst—both West End locals—made contact with my office. Renae has played in the second row for Queensland and Australia for the last six years, while Karyn is the current Queensland and Australian half-back who for the past 10 years has also had the great honour of captaining her country. Both women were also recently selected as part of the Australian Jillaroos to take part in the 2013 Women’s World Cup in Leeds, London. This is yet another great honour for two very talented local athletes. Despite their success, it is clear from their story that women’s sport, and in particular women’s rugby league, still struggles to get the financial backing it deserves. Each representative selected to play in the World Cup this year, including Renae and Karyn, are required to pay a $2,500 levy to cover the basics, including flights, accommodation and training gear. This comes at the same time that female participation in regular rugby league competitions has increased by 20 per cent in a year, with the biggest growth recorded in Queensland. Indeed, the junior girls’ rugby league competition is the fastest growing part of rugby league across Australia.

In the lead-up to this year’s World Cup, Karyn and Renae are not only training hard but also appealing for financial assistance through sponsorships and donations. Upon hearing Karyn’s and Renae’s story, it was clear that those local women have not received the recognition they deserve, even in our local community. That is why they were awarded the Undiscovered Legends Award at the inaugural Local Legends Awards ceremony hosted by Councillor Helen Abrahams and myself not too long ago. Over the next few months the south side community will continue to rally around those women, holding fundraisers to help support them financially and show our support generally for their achievements in the sport. The Queensland Rugby League team is made up of talented athletes who represent Queensland with skill and pride. It is time they were properly recognised, including financially, for their achievements. I urge all Queenslanders to get behind them.

West Moreton Anglican College

Mr CHOAT (Ipswich West—LNP) (8.00 pm): Tonight I want to speak to the House about a great school in my electorate, West Moreton Anglican College or WestMAC as it is affectionately known by locals. WestMAC offers an extremely broad based curriculum that allows students to select subjects that will ensure their individual success as well as satisfy their aspirations. The students at WestMAC achieve great academic results and students excel in all areas, including the dynamic Vocational Education and Training Program that is available and the college’s notable agriculture program. Recently I saw the absolute knockout quality of the students’ beef cattle exhibits at the Marburg Show, where they always do extremely well. I had the privilege of presenting some prizes that I had donated.

The school is ably led by Principal Geoff McLay and a team of staff who excel in their care for the school and its wonderful students. I would like to single out two of my favourites, Deputy Principal Mrs Janelle Lecinski and the lovely Carol Bandy, who is the executive assistant to Mr McLay. Both women do a wonderful job and always make me feel so welcome.

Recently my wife, Nicky, and I had the absolute pleasure of attending the WestMAC production of Guys and Dolls. I am sure honourable members will be familiar with that famous musical. I can say proudly that the show was magnificent. The cast and crew never missed a beat. They looked fantastic and they sang beautifully. They were natural and convincing in their roles, which were all delivered with very distinctive New York accents. The people behind the show’s success are, of course, Principal Geoff McLay, Mr Neil Flottmann, Mrs Jenny Morris, choreographer Erin Judd and the show’s music director, the excellent Mr Rowley Moore.

The two leading lady roles were split. Two students did two shows each, as the four girls are so talented that they all needed to have a go. Miss Adelaide was played by Annabelle Harbison and Laura Fox, and Sarah Brown was played by Bronte Mitchell and Lauren Rogers. We saw the show with Laura Fox and Lauren Rogers performing. They stole the show and I do not hesitate to say that they stole some hearts as well. Just as outstanding were the two male lead roles. Nathan Walton played Sky Masterson and William Hartung played Nathan Detroit. I know Nathan Walton’s mum, Anne-Marie, was the proudest mum in the house, and with good reason. I seek leave to have the names of the cast and crew of this great production incorporated in Hansard. I have spoken to Madam Speaker about this.
**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Dr Robinson): Order! You have shown this to Madam Speaker and it has been cleared?

**Mr CHOAT**: My word.

Leave granted.

### THE CAST

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<td>Mrs Arvide Abernathy</td>
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<td>Miss Adelaide—Thurs 7.30pm, Sat 2pm</td>
<td>Annabelle Harbison Adelaide's girlfriend and bridesmaid—alternate shows</td>
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<td>Martha of the Mission</td>
<td>Brianna Gough</td>
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<td>Sarah Brown—Thurs 7.30pm, Sat 2pm and Mission Girl</td>
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<td>Laura Fox Havana lover and Adelaide’s bridesmaid—alternate shows</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sarah Brown—Fri 7.30pm, Sat 7.30pm and Mission Girl</td>
<td>Lauren Rogers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rusty Charlie/Walter</td>
<td>Matthew Eden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sky Masterson</td>
<td>Nathan Walton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Havana and Hot Box Dancer Bushel and Mink scenes</td>
<td>Shani Andrews</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hot Box Dancer. Mink scene</td>
<td>Stephanie Graham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Havana and Hot Box Dancer: Bushel and Mink scenes</td>
<td>Tahlia McCoy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hot Box Dancer: Bushel scene</td>
<td>Tameeka Catterall</td>
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<tr>
<td>Havana and Hot Box Dancer: Bushel and Mink scenes</td>
<td>Tanita Hurst</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agatha of the Mission</td>
<td>Tiarrelle Zach</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Cartwright/Shady Lady</td>
<td>Whitney Perkins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nathan Detroit</td>
<td>William Hartung</td>
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### SUPPORT ROLES AND CHORUS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Actor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crapshooters Chorus, Havana and more</td>
<td>Balin McDonald</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lady of the Evening/Waiter</td>
<td>Charlotte Hughes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobby Soxer</td>
<td>Clare Convery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crapshooters Chorus, Havana and more</td>
<td>Dylan Woods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apple Seller</td>
<td>Elena Bonetto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist Guide/Guy</td>
<td>Emily Stein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Man</td>
<td>Emily Tupper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Police Officer</td>
<td>Emma Huggins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crapshooters Chorus, Havana and more</td>
<td>Isabel Goody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographer</td>
<td>Jenna Finn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Texan Wife/Havana Dancer</td>
<td>Joshua McKay-Spencer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crapshooters Chorus, Havana and more</td>
<td>Josephine Anderson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper Seller</td>
<td>Juwai Pitkin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobby Soxer/Havana Dancer</td>
<td>Kaitlyn Wright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highclass Doll</td>
<td>Lara Ingram</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newspaper Seller/Highclass Doll</td>
<td>Madeline Beutel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Police Officer</td>
<td>Margaret Colbrahams</td>
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<tr>
<td>Highclass Doll/Manager</td>
<td>Matilda Roberts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bobby Soxer/Waiter</td>
<td>Melissa Schunemann</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mission Girl</td>
<td>Millicent Lupton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tourist/Havana Lover</td>
<td>Morgan Brown</td>
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<tr>
<td>Madame/Waiter</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Crapshooters Chorus, Havana and more  Nicholas Gill
Dancer Renee Donoghue
Shady Lady Sally Sherson
Celebrity Shari Hawthorne
Tourist Sin-Yan Lee
Tourist Skye Reid
Waiter/Business Man Stacey Burrow
Crapshooters Chorus, Havana and more  Tobias Edmanson
Havana Dancer Zoe Farrington

THE ORCHESTRA
Bass Darien Gough
Bass Georgina Utz
Cello Allan Hall (staff)
Cello Angus Smith
Cello Mitchell Foy
French Horn Daniel Sherson (alumni)
Percussion Amaris Moxon
Percussion Amy Thompson
Percussion Nicholas Lenihan
Piano Bruce Ramm (staff)
Reed I Clarinet/Reed f Alto Sax Iain Hunter
Reed I Flute/Piccolo Kalinda Large
Reed II Alto Sax Nicholas Johns
Reed II Clarinet Jon Farquhar (staff)
Reed III Oboe/Cor Anglais Jenny Flottmann (staff)
Reed III Tenor Sax/Reed III Clarinet Jordan Waldock (alumni)
Reed IV Tenor Sax/Reed IV Clarinet Emma Ritchie (staff)
Reed V Baritone/Bass Clarinet Leon Wensley (staff)
Trombone I Hannah Smith
Trumpet I Malcolm Liddell (staff)
Trumpet I Ryan Waldock
Trumpet II Elizabeth Moxham
Trumpet III Georgia Toft
Trumpet III Joshua Smith
Viola Felicia Clarke
Violin A Bonnie Hogan
Violin A Nathan Hui
Violin B Emma Barnes
Violin B Sarah. McDonald
Violin C Katelyn Gough
Violin C Peter Smith (alumni)
Violin D Lauren Easey (staff)

PRODUCTION TEAM
Director Jenny Morris
Producer Neil Flottmann
Choreographer Erin Judd
Music Director Rowley Moore
Assistant Director Robyn Colton
Stage Manager Heath Del Favero
Publicity Manager Bianca Coleborn
Set Coordinator Leonie Mac Lennan
Set Designer Elliot Harvie
Set Advisor George Hogg OAM
Production Manager Anne-Marie Walton
Production Assistants Jayne Perrett, Michelle Armsden, Vanessa Stein
Rehearsal Accompanist Bruce Ramm
Set Construction Team Andrew Mac Lennan, Errol Anderson, Ian Mac Lennan, James Spargo Peter Kraschnefski, Robert Noble, Ross Mac Lennan, Stuart Denigan, Tim Spina
Set Painters Adam Holischier, Allegra Bonetto, Brooke McLauchlan, Cheyenne Oxnam, Eleanor Fo’ley, Elena Bonetto, Ellie
Cattle Industry, Live Exports

Mrs MENKENS (Burdekin—LNP) (8.03 pm): Federal Labor’s axing of the live export trade to Indonesia two years ago has done untold damage to graziers across northern Australia. As a result, many properties and families have their backs against the wall and the industry is in a parlous state. I commend Minister McVeigh for his initiative to visit Indonesia last week to start rebuilding trade relationships with Indonesia.

The live export industry has been the target of totally unfair attacks by extremist groups in recent years, so this evening I will share a few facts about the industry. Australian exporters are committed to animal welfare and must comply with strict state and federal government animal welfare regulations. The Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System makes livestock exporters responsible for meeting global animal welfare standards throughout the entire supply scheme in overseas markets. Australia is the only nation to regulate international welfare standards from paddocks to the point of processing. Australia now exports animal welfare education to the world and is working in many countries to effect that change.

Live export is only a small part of Australia’s cattle markets, but it is an essential one for northern Australia. Ninety-two per cent of Australian cattle are processed in our country and eight per cent are exported live to meet market demand. Australia exports over 65 per cent of all beef produced and is the second largest beef exporter in the world. In 2012, Australia exported over 960,000 tons of beef to over 140 countries.

Australia is very good at processing meat and value adding, but there is still a strong market for livestock. The live export market is mostly sourced from the north-western grazing areas—that is, the open rangeland areas that make up two-thirds of Australia’s landmass. Much of that country is not cattle fattening country and cannot finish cattle to slaughter weights, thus live export is the most suitable and often the only market for those landholders. To have lost a major portion of that market, as well as now suffering severe drought, is a huge impost. As graziers have said, they can handle droughts and low prices but not the removal of the market with no notice.

This federal Labor government has much to answer for. For Labor politicians to then insist that all meat should be processed and exported frozen shows their utter ignorance about the industry and some of the Third World countries that import livestock, where many families do not even have refrigeration.

The live export industry is an essential part of Australia’s marketing and is imperative for the survival of the northern cattle industry. A 2006 study found the industry contributed nearly 13,000 jobs, including more than 11,000 jobs in rural and regional areas. Those figures would be different today.

The northern cattle industry is on its knees. The Newman government has shown its support by opening up some national parks to assist landholders, but all the Gillard government has done is criticise. By working for the people of Queensland to grow our economy—

(Time expired)
Nicklin Electorate, Volunteers

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (8.06 pm): On Wednesday, 15 May, I had the honour of hosting a morning tea and presenting certificates of gratitude to worthy volunteers on behalf of the Nicklin community on the Sunshine Coast. Our ceremony was held at the Nambour Country Women’s Association hall, and it was great to see friends and supporters of the award recipients in attendance and a part of our very special ceremony.

Volunteers are the backbone of our community and there are many organisations and important services that would not exist without the support of our volunteers. In our community we have many people who do so much for so many, for no monetary reward, but often they go unnoticed. This ceremony was my way of saying thank you on behalf of our whole community to some recipients who had been nominated by others in the community. The recipients’ efforts are very much appreciated and our community is a much better place because of their hard work.

I recognise that there are many worthy people in our community who quietly and without fanfare regularly give freely of their time to help others in need. I hope that those people will be nominated by their colleagues for future recognition ceremonies.

The 2013 volunteer recipients for the Nicklin electorate were: the Kenilworth First Response Group; the Cooroy Family Support Centre; Christine Jones; Michael Ballinger; Jacqui Deane from the Burnside State High School STEM program; Betty Jenkins; Marion McDonald from Friends of Sundale; the Teralba Association; Lorrae and Vince O’Rourke; the Blackall Range Care Group; Jack Townsend, who was unfortunately absent on the day; Fay Crouch; Mac Cooper-McKenzie and Julie McKenzie; Chilemwa Nkowane-Poole; Endah Lestari and Bill Higgins, and Bill was also unable to attend; Gail Deignan; Shirley Hastings; Marty and Jane McComiski; Donna Anthony; Dawn Read; Rhondda Poor; and the volunteers from the James Grimes Care Centre. On behalf of our community, again I say thank you to our hard-working volunteers.

One of the highlights of the morning was the interaction of the volunteers and the sharing of information about the various services within our area. I would also like to say a special thank you to my wife, Jenny, my staff, Vicki and Robbie, and the Nambour Country Women’s Association members who assisted with our ceremony and the morning tea.

Public Hospitals, Waiting Lists

Mr SORENSEN (Hervey Bay—LNP) (8.08 pm): I rise to address the House on hospital waiting lists and how they have been reduced under the LNP government. I acknowledge the hard work of my colleague the Minister for Health, Lawrence Springborg, who has done this government proud with his determination.

On the Fraser Coast there were some 650 to 700 people on the waiting lists for ophthalmology services, and that is a conservative figure. Today there are about 289 people on the waiting list for ophthalmology services. Some may say when they hear that figure that it is way too many, but compared to 15 months ago it is considerably less, and we will keep reducing it.

Minister Springborg was able to make the surgery which my constituents desperately needed available. The LNP government has done in 12 months what the Labor government could not do at all—that is, reduce the waiting lists. I asked those opposite nicely to do it, I told them to do it, and then I appealed to them to think of how they would feel driving home with reduced vision. They did not care. I was watching people in Hervey Bay go blind. They did not care about this. It was an absolute injustice. Today I am coming out of that nightmare. Having people come in to see me who are worried about not being about to get their driver’s licence is scary. We have a way to go yet, and it will take some time, but it is great to see that this government acknowledges the problem and is doing something to fix it. What we need is no more waiting time.

A government member interjected.

Mr SORENSEN: A ‘can-do’ government. We will have to wait for a little while longer for our cancer clinic and the dental chairs on the Fraser Coast. It will take about 10 months to complete the building work which is expected to start early next year. This was something that was flagged in the last four Labor government budgets but no outcome was in sight.

The LNP has also made available $2 million for endoscopy exploratory surgery connect to reduce the waiting list. Under the Bligh government there was a waiting list for the waiting list to see a specialist to get on the waiting list for the operation. So I again thank Minister Springborg for his hard work and determination in carrying out his duties for the people of Queensland. We needed Minister Springborg in his portfolio many years ago, but he is doing a wonderful job now and making great inroads into the mess he was given.
Adjournment

Daintree Coast, Boat Ramps

Mr KEMPTON (Cook—LNP) (8.11 pm): During the election campaign the LNP promised to upgrade three boat ramps on the Daintree coast, which is an iconic stretch of tropical coastline and, of course, in my electorate. This promise was funded in the first budget of this government—a government that keeps its promises. This promise came closer to fruition on 15 May when the senior planner from TMR’s marine infrastructure division and I travelled from Cairns to Cape Tribulation to inspect boat ramps and talk to locals and fishermen.

On that day the member for Nanango, Deb Frecklington, was in Cairns in her tireless pursuit of red-tape reduction. It was only after considerable pressure that I was able to persuade her and Jason to take a day off from her busy schedule to visit my electorate. We travelled the famous Captain Cook Highway to Port Douglas and north across the Daintree River and met with an enthusiastic group of locals at the spectacular Cow Bay beach, one of the boat ramp options. We moved on to Coopers Creek, which is an estuary in the heart of the Wet Tropics World Heritage area and another potential boat ramp site.

During our trip there had been much talk about crocodiles and the usual question: can we see one? At Coopers Creek I saw my mate Ernie who runs a crocodile tour. He was quick to respond to my whisper and said, ‘Follow me.’ A very trusting member for Nanango and her ever faithful husband marched off into the mangroves and bundled into Ernie’s tinnie and we pushed off quietly into Coopers Creek. Within minutes we came across two crocodiles basking in the sun. One was a male about five metres in length and, on cue, he opened his jaws and smiled at my wide-eyed visitors. Our next stop was Thornton’s Beach, which had all the prerequisites for a suitable launching site. From there, it was Lync Haven for a tropical lunch and then south to Rocky Point and Newell Beach—two more favoured launch sites.

Whilst this was a very enjoyable day, and the member for Nanango has been vying for Cook ever since, there are two strong messages. Firstly, TMR had mapped out several options for the three boat ramps and after talking to the locals was prepared to go back to the drawing board. The locals could not have been happier at having input and being listened to. At every opportunity MPs should get the decision makers and their communities together. Secondly, I encourage all members to visit other electorates at every opportunity as it not only strengthens our ties but also raises our awareness of the issues that other members bring to this House.

Nyanda State High School

Mr JUDGE (Yeerongpilly—Ind) (8.14 pm): I rise to speak about the Newman government’s proposed closure of Nyanda State High School. The government has set four specific and arguably convenient criteria to determine whether or not a school is viable. These include enrolments, accessibility, curriculum and resourcing equity. A point in time finding may indicate that Nyanda State High School fits the government’s essentially quantitative criteria for closure, but I argue that such a decision lacks qualitative data and would be very short-sighted and flawed. Before making a decision, the Newman government should also consider the emotional, socioeconomic and community impacts of such a decision and the future potential of Nyanda State High School, which is situated in a planned high-growth area of Brisbane.

During the initial community consultation, students from diverse and multicultural backgrounds told their stories of travelling distances to proudly attend and enjoy the caring environment, sense of belonging and education provided at Nyanda State High School. The positive and supportive school environment was also affirmed by a number of parents with children attending the school’s special education unit. Another parent also spoke about removing her four children from a nearby Aboriginal and Islander community school, known as the Murri School, and enrolling them at Nyanda State High School. She took this action so that her children could be exposed to a broader community and curriculum while still being supported in a smaller school setting.

This highlights the role Nyanda State High School is playing in terms of helping to close the gap and integrate children from diverse backgrounds, including those with special needs, into the broader community. But qualitative criteria like these are disappointingly not being measured by the Newman government. The Newman government has a proven history of failing to get community consultation right. The bus cuts survey is the most recent example of this. Accordingly, I urge the Premier to lift his eyes from the bottom line of the state’s finances and begin to look at people’s faces.
I ask him to listen to people’s concerns and respect the sense of community created by schools like Nyanda State High School. Nyanda State High School is a great school with great teachers that are achieving great results for students. It is my firm belief that it is a school with even more potential.

I submit that the Newman government would do better by retaining and investing in the future of Nyanda State High School, but, if the Premier and his government ignores the potential and the public’s position and chooses to close Nyanda State High School, I reassure my community that, unlike the Labor government, which also closed schools, a future United Australia Party government will resume and restore the school immediately after the next state election.

**Forestdale, Glider Forest**

Mr SHORTEN (Algester—LNP) (8.16 pm): I welcome all visits to my electorate by ministers of the crown and last Wednesday was no different. The Minister for Natural Resources and Mines popped out to my electorate on that day. I would normally just happily welcome him but it was an even better day because he came bearing gifts, which was wonderful.

The gift I speak of was $300,000 to protect a strategic environmental part of the Flinders Karawatha corridor. Some 125 hectares of state government land on two lots will now be fenced with 3.7 kilometres of three-rail fencing similar to that which the BCC uses to fence its nature reserves. This piece of land is absolutely crucial to the environment in that part of the world. It contains three species of gliders which is unheard of. I am told that it is unusual for three species of gliders to live in the same area.

Mr Costigan: Glider central.

Mr SHORTEN: Glider central; I am sure that is what the minister called it when he came out to my electorate to announce this.

I am very proud to be a member of the LNP government that has been able to deliver something that the Forestdale community in my electorate have been fighting for for 15 or 20 years. They have wanted to protect this environmentally sensitive piece of property. Unfortunately, because it has not been looked after, fenced and protected we have seen the illegal dumping of asbestos, refrigerators and old cars.

We have come to the party. I lobbied the government and I lobbied the minister on this. The minister and the department recognise that the Glider Forest is of significant environmental value and is an important link in the Flinders Karawatha corridor reserve and should be transferred from a reserve for strategic land management to a reserve for environmental purposes.

We will fence Glider Forest at a cost of $220,000. We will have a team of people go in to clean up the asbestos. This will all be done by the end of this financial year. It is a win-win for the environment and a win-win for the Forestdale community.

**North Queensland Helicopter Rescue Service**

Mr KATTER (Mount Isa—KAP) (8.19 pm): I rise in the House to draw attention to the issue of funding for the RACQ NQ Rescue helicopter base in Mount Isa. This is a relatively new base. It was established in 2007 and received approval to be an accredited operation in the emergency network of Queensland in late 2011. That approval was granted by the previous government on the condition that they would not supply any state funding. So far they have raised all the money for their operations themselves, with generous sponsorship from RACQ and other mines in the area. They raise $1.3 million a year but unfortunately have lost the sponsorship of Legend International, which has temporarily pulled out of the region. All they are seeking is a further $200,000 to fully fund their service seven days a week. They have already proven that they can fund themselves for six days and five nights a week, and a bit of help from the government would ensure that they could employ another pilot to cover the region full time.

The Queensland government funds every other rescue helicopter service in the state except for this one, which, with a staff of five, covers almost a quarter of the state—over 500,000 kilometres. I would like to think that the government would see the unfairness of not funding this extremely vital rescue service that has saved many lives in the short time of operation. In their first 17 months of operation they have already saved 44 lives, with an average of one call-out per week. The charter of this essential not-for-profit charity is to provide a full-time dedicated community rescue helicopter service to the people of the north-west.
The RACQ NQ Rescue helicopter brings a ‘flying hospital’ to people in need— at the side of the road after a motor vehicle accident, at the workplace after an industrial action or particularly at a remote mine or in a remote area where a sick or injured person desperately needs to be airlifted to the specialised care and treatment of a hospital. Most recently, last week, it went up to the gulf to rescue a remote fisherman.

The service provided by the helicopter significantly enhances the existing services by offering a highly specialised emergency medical response service for the critically ill and injured. The RACQ NQ Rescue helicopter service works hand in hand with the Queensland Ambulance Service, with the aircraft permanently manned by intensive care flight paramedics. The service also works with the Royal Flying Doctor Service, the Queensland Police Service, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and other agencies. The helicopter not only offers highly specialised medical services but also assistance to local government in times of natural disasters. Seventy per cent of their workload is jobs—road accidents, station accidents, search and rescue. Although each mission carries a significant cost, the service is provided at no cost to the patient and is regarded as a boost for rural health, medical and emergency services in the region.

This is an essential service in the north-west, where road accidents, station accidents and even mining accidents can occur hundreds of kilometres from the nearest clinic or hospital. Since every other rescue helicopter service in the state is funded by the government, I can see no reason why the government cannot provide some funding to the RACQ North Queensland Helicopter Rescue Service.

Federal Member for Griffith

Mr DILLAWAY (Bulimba—LNP) (8.22 pm): Tonight I rise to talk about the hypocrisy of my local federal member for Griffith, Mr Kevin Rudd. This is a man who states that he is standing up for the south side, but most recently he has certainly gone missing on the federal issues that are surrounding our area, and I would like to give some examples if I may.

The first one is Gonski funding. This is a man who states that he is standing up for the south side and standing up for the south side schools, but under our current figures five schools across my electorate are going to be between two and 6.5 per cent worse off, and that is including schools like Balmoral State High School and Morningside State School. Interestingly enough, Morningside State School is the school that he boast that his kids once attended.

Another issue that he has gone missing on is homelessness. No funds are going to be provided for this next year—nothing. He has not spoken about it once. Then there is the issue of computers in our schools. Have we heard anything from the member for Griffith? No, nothing. Then we have the budget deficit of $19 billion this year and $18 billion next year that was just handed down by his good friend Mr Swan. Have we heard anything from the member for Griffith? No, nothing. Then of course today we had confirmation that $103 million was cut from our health budget this year? Have we heard anything from the federal member? No, nothing.

Mr Minnikin: That’s a disgrace.

Mr DILLAWAY: That’s a disgrace. So the federal member is more interested in talking about state issues than about federal issues, and I know why that is the case: there is no good message coming out of the federal sphere and most of his media at the moment is all state based. So I ask this question of the House: is he making a play for state politics? For all Queenslanders I certainly hope not, because some in the House may very well remember what happened last time he was involved in state politics under the Goss government—mass Public Service sackings and a massive Public Service restructure.

Mr Minnikin: ‘Dr Death’.

Mr DILLAWAY: That is right. I take that interjection. He was well known as ‘Dr Death’. But I have also found that during that time there were school closures. My research shows that at least seven schools were closed during the period 1989 to 1992 when Mr Kevin Rudd was the chief of staff. If that is not hypocrisy, I do not know what is. Even in the Bligh-Beattie years, 89 schools have been closed in the past 14 years. But we did not see him out there in the media. We heard nothing again from the federal member for Griffith. It is absolute hypocrisy. He is running scared of Dr Bill Glasson and ‘Glasson’s Gladiators’. I can certainly say here tonight: go, Dr Bill!
Government members: Hear, hear!

Mr DILLAWAY: Hear, hear! I know you will look after the people of Griffith and every day you are looking more and more like the member for Griffith and not the media and long-haul flight junkie we have today.

Question put—That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 8.25 pm.

ATTENDANCE

Barton, Bates, Bennett, Berry, Bleijie, Boothman, Byrne, Cavallucci, Choat, Costigan, Cox, Crandon, Cripps, Crisafulli, Cunningham, Davies, C. Davis, T. Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Dillaway, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, France, Frecklington, Gibson, Grant, Grimwade, Gulley, Hart, Hathaway, Hobbs, Holswich, Johnson, Judge, Katter, Kaye, Kerppton, King, Knuth, Krause, Langbroek, Latter, Maddern, Malone, Mander, McArdle, McVeigh, Menkens, Millard, Miller, Minnikin, Molhoek, Mulherin, Newman, Nicholls, Ostapovitch, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Powell, Pucci, Rice, Rickuss, Robinson, Ruthenberg, Scott, Seeney, Shorten, Shuttleworth, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stewart, Stuckey, Symes, Trad, Trout, Walker, Watts, Wellington, Woodforth, Young